É. Conte, *"Marriage crisis" or "reproductive revolution"? North Africa's eventful demographic transition*, in «Afriche e Orienti», (2), 2023, pp. 114-157,
DOI: https://doi.org/10.23810/AEOXXVII202325

DOSSIER

afriche e orienti

by Édouard Conte

"Marriage crisis" or "reproductive revolution"? North Africa's eventful demographic transition

Abstract

This article addresses in anthropological perspective the interplay of demographic transition in the countries of North Africa and gendered processes of kinship and marriage predicated on the transgenerational continuity of patronymics (*nasab*) which underpins individual filiation and legitimacy. The present analysis departs from a comparative, diachronic approach to variations in fertility decline, the rise of the age at first marriage for both genders, persistent age gaps between spouses, contextually distinct rates of consanguinity, delayed marriage versus final celibacy, and the prevalence and effects of son preference. These facets entertain complex interrelations with national, regional, and international migratory patterns, high youth unemployment, the increased cost of marriage and housing and, last but not least, women's access to education correlated with their persistent margnalisation from the labour market. These dynamics, manifest in reduced fertility, touch at the heart long-established modes of social reproduction and gender inequality and configure intense public debate over a perceived 'marriage crisis'. Yet, the emergence of novel modalities of non-conventional or unregistered forms of marriage and, conversely, the feared emergence of 'terminal celibacy' remain statistically limited. Indeed, 'classical' matrimony remains an almost universal aspiration and, albeit with deferral, remains the keystone of the social order. This constant renders apparent the contested yet perduring hold of the *nasab* complex.

Keywords

Demographic transition, North Africa, 'marriage crisis', fertility decline, nasab

DOI:https://doi.org/10.23810/AEOXXVII202325

Tidings of doom propagated by advocates of the "great replacement" myth foretell waves of African migrants poised to submerge Europe (e.g. Camus 2011; Smith 2018; or Ye'or 2005). Such rhetoric found stark resonance during the French and Italian national elections of 2022.[1] Sadly, it is now echoed in the Maghreb. On 21 February 2023, president Kaïs Saïed of Tunisia waved the spectre of "hordes of illegal migrants" bent on destroying his country's Arab identity.[2] "There is a criminal plan", he claimed, "to change the composition of the demographic landscape in Tunisia".[3] Yet, in the countries of North Africa, more intimate anxieties mark public debate concerning population issues. Strong concerns have emerged regarding a perceived "marriage crisis" ('Abdullah 2005; Abdel Aal 2010; Hasso 2011),[4] corroborated, many claim, by a persistent rise in levels of celibacy among younger adults ('Abdullah 2005; Charpentier 2015). Partisans of this view invoke the impressive increase in the age of first marriage for both women and men observed since the 1960s in North Africa and, more broadly, all Arab nations. This development was accompanied by a marked decline in fertility, recorded from Morocco to Egypt (Ouadah-Bedidi and Vallin 2000; Tabutin and Schoumaker 2005; Ambrosetti, Angeli and Novelli 2019). The parallelism of these two trends is consonant with the second phase of demographic transition, characterised by concomitant decreases in mortality and fertility; for demographers, it raises no alarm.[5]

In actors' eyes, however, the perception of a marriage crisis reveals the deep frustrations of singles "in waithood" (Singerman 2007), struggling to establish independent households in a context of higher marriage prestations and scarce housing (Engelhardt and Schulz 2017; Bonci and Cavatorta 2021; Singerman 2021).[6] From Morocco to Egypt, un- or underemployed youths are impaired in achieving full-fledged (gendered) adulthood through motherhood or by becoming stable providers. Young women find themselves at pains to escape the control of their parents and agnates by way of marriage and are at the same time apprehensive of remaining single beyond their "prime" (Asaad and Krafft 2015; Charpentier 2015; Asaad, Ghazouani and Krafft 2018). More generally, potentates are wary of the supposed propensity of frustrated youths *(shabāb)* to foment social and political turbulence (Fargues 2017: 3), even as conservatives, notably among clerics, denounce the "spread of vice" they attribute to the "excessive" emancipation of women and the "spinster revolution" (Yamani 2008: 52).[7]

The convergence of these tensions touches at the heart long-established modes of social reproduction and gender hierarchy. It must be recalled that

for Muslims marriage alone enables access to both legitimate sexuality and affiliation to a patrifocused, kinship-based collective through *nasab*. This foundational descent process guarantees the transgenerational continuity of patronymics and legitimacy with afferent rights and duties shared by kin and in-laws, two categories which frequently overlap in clusters organised around still frequent cousin or arranged marriages (Conte and Walentowitz 2009: 218). The benefits of belonging to an extended network of solidarity include support in daily life and conflicts, intergenerational solidarity, certain inheritance rights, and, not least, facilitated access to marriage for oneself and one's offspring. Inversely, however, *nasab* affiliation subordinates the individual to multiple social obligations, sometimes including constrained marriage. By implication, illegitimate birth, or paternal abandonment, entails a denial of basic rights, notably that to carry a recognised patronymic as well as to inherit and acquire nationality (Conte 2020; 2021). Extricating oneself from the web of kinship is often central for youths aspiring to autonomy yet can imply severing irreplaceable ties of relatedness.

Beyond this nexus of impediments and misgivings individuals may experience as a "marriage crisis", does the universal deferral of matrimony amongst younger cohorts denote a broad societal disruption? Or should the ongoing debate over transformations of marriage practices and personal status laws be taken, rather, as a point of accumulation at which antagonisms between evolving gender regimes (see Hafez 2012), a persistent dearth of economic perspectives, and increasing socio-religious conformism converge? Seen in this perspective, women's successful pursuit of higher education often proves ineffectual as gender bias still restricts access to durable employment after marriage; the preponderance of the informal sector generates employment insecurity for all; rapid and intense urbanisation widely degrades conditions of habitat; and massive domestic and international migration flows risk fracturing webs of relatedness among kin, further skewing patterns of marriage and reproduction. Despite all, the recourse to non-conventional, unregistered forms of marriage in response to the "crisis" and, conversely, the feared emergence of "terminal celibacy" remains statistically limited (see Muṭlaq 2002; Dimashqī 2005; Sindawi 2013; Guessous 2018). Indeed, "classical" matrimony remains an almost universal aspiration and, albeit with deferral, dominant practice throughout the Arab world (Hasso 2011; Salem 2015: 3). This constant reflects the contested yet perduring hold of the *nasab* complex (Conte and Walentowitz 2009; Conte 2022).

The demographic trends that underpin this sociological evolution will here be addressed in anthropological light; shall be considered fertility decline, the rise of the age at first marriage for both genders, persistent age gaps between spouses, contextually distinct rates of consanguinity (defined as unions between first or second cousins), delayed marriage versus final celibacy (set at age 49), and the intensity and effects of son preference. Studying this panoply of enmeshed factors is no simple undertaking; for national surveys present substantial discrepancies in their framing, dates of completion, and degrees of precision. While nuptiality and fertility are well-studied, estimations regarding cousin marriage are particularly heterogenous; for they are rarely addressed in censuses, rather generated through local anthropological studies or medical surveys regarding the transmission of hereditary illnesses. Moreover, care must be afforded to disambiguate non-Arabic terms such as "family", "kinship", or "consanguinity", which diverge semantically and contextually from their Arabic analogues used by concerned actors. Resulting ambiguities may obfuscate interrelations between statistically framed demographic trends or rates and the gendered processes of kinship and alliance one seeks to elucidate.

Aspects of Fertility Transition

From the 1970s to the 1990s, all countries of North Africa experienced remarkable declines in fertility rates, which proceeded in concert with a steep fall in mortality (Tabutin 1993; Puschmann and Matthijs 2015, Graph 7).[8] Fertility reduction reached maximum pace between 1986 and 1993. Libya presented the fastest and Egypt the slowest rate of decline (Zagaglia 2019: 45, Table 1, 48). In Tunisia, Morocco and Libya, total fertility rates [TFR] tended toward replacement level - i.e. the average number of children per woman at which a population remains constant from generation to generation - which stands at about 2.1 in North Africa. This level was only fully attained in Tunisia, however (Assaad, Ghazouani and Krafft 2017: 8). In Algeria and, foremost, Egypt, while the decline was also consequential, the final stage of decrease from a TFR of 3 to 2 children has not materialised. Indeed, at the beginning of the 2000s, a fertility regression occurred, slight in Tunisia, significant in Algeria, and pronounced in Egypt, where the TFR appears, by 2018, to have stalled just above the three-child level, at 3.11 (Sayed 2019: 22).

Table 1: The sharp decrease of Total Fertility Rates in North Africa 1960-2023

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2023	Decline
Morocco	7.04	6.67	5.73	4.02	2.80	2.59	2.35	2.27	67.8%
Algeria	7.50	7.64	6.95	4.56	2.57	2.84	2.94	2.77	63.1%
Tunisia	6.94	6.52	5.10	3.47	2.05	2.10	2.11	2.04	70.6%
Libya	7.37	8.10	7.22	4.97	2.85	2.60	2.51	2.35	68.1%
Egypt	6.79	6.12	5.58	4.48	3.44	3.21	2.96	2.84	58.2%

Source: https://population.un.org/dataportal/data/indicators/19/locations/504,12,788,434,818/start/1956/end/2023/table/pivotbylocation

Demographers designate the increases in the singular mean age at first marriage [SMAM] observed throughout the region as the major proximate determinant of fertility decline (Ouadah-Bedidi and Vallin 2000; Ouadah-Bedidi, Vallin and Bouchoucha 2012). Both outcomes were shaped by a multiplicity of interacting factors, prominent among which are (women's) degree of access to, and duration of, education and labour market participation at successive stages of individual reproductive careers, a process favoured by an increased use of modern contraceptive means. Fertility levels, as opposed to the SMAM, often stand in inverse correlation with degrees of urbanisation, education, and wealth. Spanning the local variations of these indicators, the prohibition of sexual relations, let alone childbearing, outside of marriage implies on aggregate that any delay in the age of marriage restrains fertility (Ouadah-Bedidi, Vallin and Bouchoucha 2012: 2; Ouaddah-Bedidi and Saadi 2014: 5). With this context in mind, certain country specificities of fertility decline should be considered.

National specificities

In Morocco, the decrease of women's age of marriage from 26.3 in 2004 to 25.5 years of age in 2018 went hand in hand with a longer-term progression in contraceptive prevalence, which progressed from 19.4 per cent at the beginning of 1980s to 70.8 per cent by 2018. In recent years, fertility continued to descend at a slow but regular pace from 2.41 in 2018 to 2.27 in 2023.[9] Higher fertility among young women in the 15-19 age group, which affected Casablanca and Tangier to a greater extent than rural zones,[10] could be indicative of a persistence of early marriage in cities, and possibly, too, of a rise in extra-marital

births (Conte 2021: 80-1). Moreover, moderate fertility increase was also observed among women over 35, reflecting a deferral of marriages.[11] Overall, the proportion of married women went up notably, increasing from 52.8 per cent in 2004 to 58 per cent in 2014. The rise of nuptiality was particularly marked for 20- to 24-year-old women, progressing from 38.7 per cent to 47 per cent during the same period. Notwithstanding a surge in female celibacy at age 50, which progressed from 5.3 per cent in 2004 to 9.6 per cent in 2014, neither the recent evolution of fertility nor that of nuptiality announces a "marriage crisis".

In Algeria, the decline of fertility rates proceeded at a slower pace than in Morocco in the 1980s and 1990s (Zagaglia 2019: 46, Fig. 1, Table 1), and, as of 2000, remained well above replacement level. Indeed, after a high of 7.7 in 1965, the TFR reached a low of 2.46 in 2002 yet today (2023) stands at 2.77 (Table 1).[12] This evolution was marked by the economic crisis of the 1980s and was subsequently aggravated by the civil strife of the "black decade" (1991-2000) with its estimated 200,000 fatalities (Kouaouci 2013: 117). During these years, some 1.5 million people were internally displaced, even as marriage and birth rates plunged (Kouaouci and Rabah 2013: 104, 120). After 2003, however, "the end of terrorism in Algeria likely engendered a need to reassert the importance of family ties through earlier couple formation and childbearing" (Ouadah-Bedidi, Vallin and Bouchoucha 2012: 4). Fertility having touched a low of 2.46 in 2002,[13] indeed of 2.2 according to Ouadah-Bedidi, a rapid rebound ensued, favoured by the increase in contraceptive prevalence, which concerned circa 1/4 of married women in the early 1980s, and 2/3 by the 2002 turning point in the fertility trend.[14] Notwithstanding a post-conflict doubling of nuptiality in the 2000s and 2010s and a stabilisation, if not reduction, of women's age of marriage, moderate fertility decline set in as of 2014, slipping from a high of 3.1 in 2016 to 2.77 in 2023.[15] Noting a parallel with the other North African countries, Ouadah-Bedidi, Vallin and Bouchoucha (2012) attribute the overall decline in fertility primarily to mothers' advancing level of education, which converges with increases in the cost of child-rearing. Education offers women options other than early marriage, which is notably less common in Algeria than in either Morocco or Egypt. Moreover, schooling most affects the fertility behaviour of the least educated, favouring the reduction of inequality among women (Ouadah-Bedidi, Vallin and Bouchoucha 2012: 3).

In 1960, Tunisia had a total fertility rate of 6.94; today, though, Tunisia is the only country in the North African region with a TFR stabilised under replacement level, at 2.04 in 2023, slightly above the 1.97 low registered in

2002.[16] In contrast to Morocco or Algeria, no significant upturn has been registered during the 2000s, even as contraceptive prevalence, almost nil in the 1960s, attained a maximum of 70.5 per cent in 1999, yet decreased to 51 per cent by 2018 (Frini and Müller 2023). This fertility trajectory is unique among the Arab countries - save Lebanon - and cannot be fully understood without reference to two "external" fields, namely law and education:

Firstly, the Tunisian Personal Status Code of 1957,[17] while retaining certain key tenets of sharia, was framed in a clearly secularist vein characterised as "state feminism" (Grami 2008: 350-4; Yacoubi 2016). In spite of the staunch opposition of conservative circles, the Code stipulated for the first time in the Arab world that marriage requires the consent of *both* parties (Art. 3); unions must be validated by an authentic act (Art. 4); adult women may conclude marriage without the approval of their closest agnate or guardian (Art. 9), and may impose contractual conditions (Art. 11); further, the law forbade polygyny, or plural marriage (Art.18) as well as repudiation *(ṭalāq)* (Art. 30) and mandated that either spouse may initiate divorce proceedings (Art. 31). Subsequent statutes authorised full adoption,[18] and non-therapeutical abortion.[19]

The second decisive factor is the impressive progress of Tunisian women as regards educational achievement. Female literacy increased from 36 per cent in 1984 to 77 per cent in 2021.[20] Notwithstanding the perduring gender gap in literacy, women have overtaken men in tertiary education, where the proportion of female graduates reached 68.9 per cent in 2018 (see Assaad, Ghazouani and Krafft 2017).[21] Assaad, Gazouani and Krafft argue that this advancement contributes to women "having fewer children, giving them the opportunity to go back to work after raising their children and to invest more in the human capital of their children" (2017: 9). Indeed, fertility is falling fastest among the most educated women, whose decision-making power in the couple is enhanced vis-à-vis often less educated husbands (Assaad, Ghazouani and Krafft 2017: 8-9), thus tending to reverse a "traditional" order of gender precedence.

Libya was the last North African country to experience marked fertility contraction. From the highest regionally recorded maximum TFR of 8.13, in 1971, the rate fell continuously, receding to 2.85 in 2000, 2.35 by 2023.[22] According to one analysis, the TFR even reached near-replacement level at 2.12 in 2023.[23] In the early 1980s, the authorities had favoured large families to promote the increase of the sparse indigenous population.[24] Yet, while Libya today presents both the lowest contraceptive prevalence in North Africa, the fertility rate, somewhat counterintuitively, is at par with that of Tunisia. This apparent par-

adox could, to some degree, stand in relation to the near disappearance of early marriage, now on 0.9 per cent.[25] Bedouin heritage remains manifest, however, in that Libya presents the highest regional ratio of kin marriages, estimated at 41.5 per cent of all unions in 2014 (UNFPA 2018, Fig. 13. See too Bozrayda, Shoeib and El-Shakmak 2019: 6691).[26] In Libya, though, this practice is not coupled with higher fertility, particularly among the young.

Census figures indicate that the 2011 uprising against the Gaddafi regime temporarily slowed population growth,[27] and household size diminished from c. 6 in 2007 to c. 5 by 2016.[28] More broadly, the accelerated transition from a pastoral to an oil economy saw rapid urban extension, with Libya today posting the second highest rate of urbanisation in Africa, at 81 per cent in 2021.[29] Today, however, Libya has the third lowest fertility rate in Africa.[30] On the one hand, this trend was induced by women's improved access to health care, education and, compared to other North African nations, slightly better access to the labour market.[31] On the other hand, jural factors still severely constrain women's agency. Both Article 6 of the Libyan Constitutional Declaration of 2011, which states that all Libyans - presumably including women - are equal before the law, and the 1973 statute criminalising extra-marital sexual relations and allowing the exoneration of rapists through marriage with their victims are still in force.[32] The transformation of reproductive behaviour in Tunisia, largely facilitated by early, systemic legal and societal reform, proceeded in Libya, by contrast, from an abrupt, often violent, socio-economic transition, during which gender inequality remained firmly anchored in law and in society.[33]

In Egypt, while fertility transition began as early as the 1960s, thus somewhat in advance of the other countries of North Africa, it proved more hesitant in pace (Zagaglia 2019: 46-8). The TFR, already under 7 in 1960, was the lowest among the five. Initially, the decline was sustained by a comparatively high level of school attendance and prosperity, and notable progress in combatting infant mortality (El-Zeini 2008: 2-3). So too, Egypt introduced family planning in the early 1960s. The path toward replacement fertility thus seemed well traced, as the TFR descended to 3.2 by 2003. Yet, since the early 1990s, it diminished at a slower rate than in the four other countries and then, from 2008 to 2015, underwent a reversal, before stalling at c. 3 (Rashad and Zaki 2012; Zagaglia 2019: 44-7).[34] The relative "exceptionalism" of Egyptian fertility transition was often attributed to a "demographic regime […] characterized by nearly universal and relatively early marriage, first births soon after marriage, and a common aversion to one-child families" (El-Zeini 2008:

161, with reference to Eltigani 2000).[35] This assessment is consonant with the above-mentioned, progressive transition path and a low rate of celibacy. Yet, as John Casterline observed, "why marriage remains distinctly younger and more universal in Egypt as compared to its peer Arab societies is as yet an unsolved puzzle".[36] And still, the "marriage crisis" is prominent in public debate ('Abdullāh 2005; Abdel Aal 2010; Conte 2023).[37]

Egypt developed family planning in the early 1960s in support of an explicit state policy of population reduction (Ambrosetti, Angeli and Novelli 2019: 224-5; Inhorn 2018: 148-50). There remained, however, a still unmet need for family planning. This shortfall reflects both "missed opportunities" (Rasha and Zaki 2012: 4) as well as contraceptive discontinuation, resulting in unwanted births, even among couples who only desire two children (Eltigani 2000: 77; Khalifa et al. 2020). Egyptians do see advantages in having fewer children, be it women who may find that smaller families offer increased possibilities for self-fulfilment (El-Zeini 2008: 163), or parents who struggle against low-quality employment and the increased costs of child-raising in times of economic hardship, as today (Assaad and Krafft 2015; Zalak and Goujon 2017: 1016, 1019). Material constraints notwithstanding, however, "most women are weakly attached to [the two-child] goal and, indeed, perceive other advantages to having at least three children (including a higher probability of having at least one son and at least one daughter)" (El-Zeini 2008: 171).[38] Ambivalence toward the two-child model notably prevails among the young, despite the al-Sissi government's policy of *Ithnayn kifāya* or *Two is enough* (Rasha and Zaki 2012: 5; Ambrosetti, Angeli and Novelli 2019: 228, 240) and the increasing promotion of contraceptive use among Egyptian men (Inhorn 2022: 326).

Fertility behaviour thus evolves in a field of antagonistic forces and goals, where the "commercialisation" of marriage attached to rising costs of dower, housing and childbearing (Singerman 2007) can flaunt representations of the ideal family size.[39] Despite economic pressures, these consistently override the national goal of achieving replacement level fertility (Rashad and Zaki 2012: 4). In this situation, even as many poorer Egyptians delay marriage, some 3.6 million labour migrants working in the Gulf region do often dispose of the resources required to raise children,[40] and moreover, it has been argued, might tend to favour numerous progeny under the influence of Peninsular socio-religious conservatism. Although the potential effects of migration on wealth differentials and the timing and levels of procreation have not been fully assessed, it has been shown that all educational categories have tended

toward fertility convergence (Al Zalak and Goujon 2017: 1000), with a higher birth rate observed among the most educated, and presumably better-off, women.[41] In parallel, a slackening of women's age at first marriage appeared in the period from 1998 to 2012 (Salem 2015: 6). Dissonances between the above-mentioned factors could help better to understand the persistent, if imperfectly realised, ideal of early and universal marriage, even in the face of what has been termed "poverty-activated Malthusianism" among wide sectors of the Egyptian population.[42]

Thoughts on fertility

Since the demise of foreign domination in the mid-twentieth century, all the countries of North African saw fertility decline at pace for decades, yet stall, indeed rebound, at or before reaching replacement level. Casterline refers to the widely invoked proposition that without making either sterilisation or induced abortion on request, or both, available as a means of fertility control, "rates at replacement level (or below) are almost never achieved".[43] The Tunisian transition is clearly a case in point, for abortion was authorised by laws of 1965 and 1973 in the wake of a profound reform of personal status legislation (Feather 2020: 82). By contrast, in Libya, replacement level is being achieved although sterilisation is not practised, abortion is generally illegal under the penal code,[44] and contraceptive prevalence remains distinctly lower than elsewhere in North Africa.[45] More so even than in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, fertility decline in Libya is strongly associated with the deferral of marriage, and thus the curtailment of sexual activity during potential parents' years of highest fecundity.

Analysts often attribute extended marriage deferral to economic constraints, including deficient labour and housing markets, longer periods of education, or the "commercialisation" of marriage,[46] which weighs financially on both families concerned due to the increased cost of both dowry *(mahr)* and dower *(jihāz)*. The centrality of the jural factor, though, is not always given due consideration, although laws impose crucial limitations on reproductive behaviour and the enactment of the marriage process. One only attains full adulthood at marriage, and even this crucial *rite de passage* requires confirmation through ensuing parenthood, preferably leading to the birth of a male heir. The sexuality procreation presupposes can only be legitimated by the validity of prior marriage, which alone founds the offspring's filiation by right of agnatic descent

(nasab). This requisite excludes recourse to plenary adoption *(tabannī)*, with the notable exception of Tunisia. Whereas the norms of marriage are regulated through sharia-inspired personal status law, pre- and extramarital relations, it must be stressed, come under the purview of penal law and are thus subject to *ḥadd* sanctions. The total government of sexuality and reproduction by means of the articulation of civil *and* penal statutes is pivotal to the perpetuation of prevalent gender inequality. In their relations with the opposite sex, the young, observes Chakib Guessous, used to fear the police; today, they are increasingly apprehensive of religiously motivated, societal reprobation (2018: 233-234). The "new Arab family" (Hopkins 2001) emerges with a jural handicap that underpins the frustrations conveyed in speaking of a "family crisis".

Spousal age gaps and early marriage

This section examines the evolution in recent decades of spousal age gaps in the five North African countries by comparing the singulate mean age at marriage for both sexes,[47] as recorded in the successive censuses and health surveys available to us. We ask whether successive levels of spousal age gap follow a manifestly descending trend or, rather, perdure to a significant extent despite jural and societal changes that should *a priori* favour their reduction in the context of an evolving gender regime. A preliminary overview suggests that as the age at first marriage starkly increased for both men and women throughout North Africa, significant age gaps between spouses persisted. Apart from Egypt, the increase in the marriage age has been more pronounced among women than men. This persistent discrepancy arguably counters the potential gender-balancing effects of more than proportional increases in women's ages at first marriage.

National specificities

Examining the Moroccan case, Bouchra El Bidaoui compares survey data concerning the years 2004, 2011 and 2018,[48] which signal an increment in the average age gap between spouses from 7.2 years in 2004, to 7.7 in 2011, and 7.9 years in 2018.[49] She clearly associates this progression, observed in both rural and urban settings, with the agnatic bias characteristic of the *nasab* complex: "[…] men, whose goal is to perpetuate their lineage and increase their chances of procreation, generally opt for younger women who are not under pressure of the biological clock, whereas women favour men of stable economic status

who will guarantee the security and material comfort of their children and consequently increase their chance of survival".[50] There ensues a self-sustaining process through which "numerous younger women find themselves on the marriage market whereas men, in accordance with a timeless pattern, arrive with delay in order to accumulate financial resources" necessary to cover the costs of marriage and establish a separate residence; conversely, "the deficit of young men on the marriage market […] incites young women to marry older men". A circular dynamic is thus maintained, whereby "men cumulate the power of being male with that of being older"; only "educated and actively employed women are more inclined to marry men close in age",[51] and they remain a minority. Further, the low level of female employment that continues to prevail in all North Africa (Bonci and Cavatorta 2021: 256-7) both enables and entertains the gender asymmetry reflected in persistently high spousal age gaps. Notwithstanding national and regional specificities, these forces are at work from Casablanca to Cairo.

The situation observed in Egypt contrasts with that of Morocco. As discussed above, the total fertility rate stalled and again slightly rose before descending to 3 in Egypt, while it bordered on replacement level for some years in Morocco (Adedini, Ogunwemimo and Luqman 2021: 15). In Egypt, between 1977 and 2017 the rise in the SMAM was modest (1.4 year for men and 0.9 year for women) as opposed to Morocco (6.9 years for men and 6.4 for women from 1971 to 2018). Salem even points to a slight ebb in the age at first marriage of Egyptian women and men of 15 to 24 between 1998 and 2012 (Salem 2015: 3; 2016: 239). This trend is sustained by "the lack of jobs for women in the public sector and the inadequacy of the private (formal and informal) employment sector" (Al Zalak and Goujon 2017: 1022); general un- and underemployment "appear to have induced young married couples to have children earlier" (ibid.). Thus, "young women […] are marrying and bearing children earlier than previous cohorts even though they are more educated" (ibid.: 1021). Despite these divergences, both Egypt and Morocco have consistently presented high spousal age gaps since the 1970s, suggesting that age differential is a systemic facet of an historically rooted gender regime which, for now, appears largely impervious, on aggregate, to women's improved autonomy regarding access to education and their increased age of marriage.

One much debated practice that contributes to maintaining high average spousal age gaps is early marriage. According to tallies advanced by the Moroccan Ministry of Health, "in 2011, 18.7 per cent of women ages 20-49 married before the age of 18".[52] In 2022, UNICEF concluded that "31.5 per cent

of married, divorced or widowed women had been victims of early marriage before age 18, 41 per cent in the country and 26.3 per cent in cities".[53] In Egypt, too, female early marriage has not appreciably decreased: never-married 15- to 19-year-old females numbered 84.5 per cent of their age group in 1988 and 85.3 per cent in 2014 (Al Zalak and Goujon 2017: 1003). This outcome is arguably reinforced by the fact that notwithstanding the 18-year minimal age of marriage stipulated in the reformed Moroccan *Mudawwana* (Personal Status Code) of 2004, family judges still acquiesce to some four out of five parental requests for early marriage.[54] The situation is analogous in Egypt, where UNICEF estimated the prevalence of child marriage (measured as the proportion of 20 to 25-year-olds who married before 18) at 19.5 per cent in 2000 and 17.4 per cent in 2014.[55]

In all countries where Islamic family law, codified or not, prevails, such unions are religiously "valid" if the arrangements made respect the minimal sharia requirements. "Customary" or so-called *fātiḥa* marriages, concluded by parents wishing to circumvent the legal age of marriage, are often portrayed as "engagements" (Yavuz-Altıntaş 2022: 29-31).[56] The degree of asymmetry tolerated between spouses is sometimes such that one can legitimately speak of human trafficking rather than "marriage".[57] In Egypt, notably, child marriage remains a burning issue.[58] By contrast, the evolution of early marriage practices in Algeria and Tunisia followed a distinct pattern. Spousal age gaps here were lower in the 1970s than in Morocco or Egypt, and evolved little by 2013-2014; at once, the increase in the SMAM was significantly higher than in Morocco and Egypt (see above).

As regards Algeria, between 1966 and 2008, the SMAM increased by 11.3 years for women as opposed to 8.8 years for men, i.e. by 62 per cent as opposed to only 37 per cent (Kateb 2011: 18). A strong correlation appeared between the rapid increase in girls' school attendance and a narrowing of the spousal age gap: whereas only a third of girls went to school in 1966-1967, 97.9 per cent did in 2010-2011 (Belarbi 2017: 282). Finally, when women took up shorter-term employment before (but more rarely after) marriage to constitute their dowry *(jihāz)*, it is estimated that labour force participation delayed marriage by as much as three years (Kateb 2011: 18). Concomitantly, rates of early marriage plummeted: in 1966, one half of Algerian women married before reaching age 20 and 90 per cent had done so by age 24 (Belarbi 2017: 282); the proportion of women marrying before age 18 fell to 2 per cent by 1998 and stalled at 3 per cent in 2013.[59]

Turning to Tunisia, at independence in 1956, 43.9 per cent of women married before reaching age 20; ten years later, the proportion had declined to 19, then to 6.7 per cent in 1984, and today stands at 3.5 per cent.[60] Ouadah-Bedidi, Vallin and Bouchoucha find that from 1956 to 1994 spousal age gap decreased from 6.6 to 3.7 years, only then to undergo a slight inversion of trend [increasing] significantly (from 3.4 years in 1994 to 4.6 in 2011) (2017). Historically, the impressive rise in women's age at first marriage and the parallel waning of early marriage following the 1957 prohibition of polygyny and of agnatic guardianship at marriage were accompanied by greatly increased access to schooling for both sexes. Departing from a situation of dominant illiteracy at independence in 1962, 72.2 per cent of females and 86.1 per cent of males were literate by 2014. Access to schooling doubtless contributed much to increasing women's marriage age, thus containing spousal age gap.

Just as in matters of fertility decline, Libya constitutes a singular case regarding spousal age gap. Again, data are sparse. Its estimated decline, though, from a difference of 5.9 years in 1973 to 4.3 years in 2014 would at first view support the assumption that a high rise in women's age of marriage does contribute, over time, to closing the gap. Yet, in Libya, men's age of marriage rose proportionately much more than anywhere else. Although women's SMAM jumped by an impressive 60.8 per cent from 1973 to 2014, men's age increased by 61 per cent, thus limiting the decrease in the age gap. Both estimates are twice as high as in any other country considered. The fact that "64 percent of adult women have reached at least a secondary level of education compared to 45 percent of their male counterparts"[61] could contribute to further limiting spousal age gap if accompanied by a reduction of the high prevalence of consanguineous marriage (see below).

Marriage in "proximity", matrimony between peers

Ambivalences

In demographic and sociological surveys, marriages between first or second-degree cousins, i.e. between children or grandchildren, respectively, of two same- or opposite-sex siblings, qualify as consanguineous. Such unions are also termed "kin" or "cousin marriages". "Rates of consanguinity", of "endogamy" or of "in-marriage" are often presented in binary terms: aggregates of unions, are, or are not, recorded as consanguineous. Such classifications can leave to one side marriages with more distant relatives or members of a

common agnatic descent group, which actors may also think of and describe as "proximate". Frequencies and typologies presented must hence be read contextually, in accord with semantic variations, prevailing modes of descent, generational sequences, ethnic specificities, or regional particularities.

Binary computation can easily obfuscate the rich complexity of what in Arabic is generally termed *al-zawāj al-aqārib*, literally "marriage among persons who are close", an expression well rendered by the French *"mariage entre proches"* (see Bonte 1994). In discussing this phenomenon, it is important to dissipate certain sources of ambiguity. The biological connotation of the English term consanguinity, marked by its etymology, which metaphorically refers to "shared blood" (*com* + *sanguineus*), departs markedly from the commonest Arabic renderings of the notion of "kinship", namely *qarāba*, literally signifying "proximity" in all its acceptations, or *nasab*, i.e., here, genealogical closeness, particularly in the agnatic line (see Ibn Manẓūr n.d.: s.v. QRB and NSB). Scripture neither recommends nor prohibits cousin marriage (see Quran 4:22), consenting to it in accordance with the legal precept that what is not forbidden *(ḥarām)* is allowed *(mubāḥ)*.

The most frequently practised form of cousin marriage in societies where the *nasab* complex prevails is that between the children of full brothers *(ibnā' al-'amm)*. The notions of *'amm* (paternal uncle) and *ibn/bint 'amm* (father's brother's son/daughter) are, however, highly versatile and may be applied by extension as terms of respect or affection to designate any "uncle" or "cousin", respectively. In an agnatically inflected system of classification, no two children can be closer, or more "equal", than those of two male siblings: the *bint 'amm* is the "most equal" peer of the *ibn 'amm*, the son of the father's brother. In Maghrebian Berber contexts, however, matrilateral ties also find favour. Beyond descriptive designations of genealogical positions, what is fundamentally at issue is the quality of statutory parity between marriageable persons, of homogamy. This meaning is encapsulated in the term *kafā'a*, the precondition of any "sound" marriage, which transcends, while encompassing, genealogical closeness in the scope of *nasab*.

National specificities

Media sources often announce the demise of kin marriage in "modern" Morocco,[62] yet at second glance this verdict seems somewhat hasty. The overall estimated prevalence of cousin marriage for women did indeed decrease from

33.0 per cent in 1987 to 29.3 per cent in 1995.[63] By 2010, the purported frequency reached 20.6 percent for men and 22 per cent for women.[64] By contrast, the 2018 survey, no doubt considering a broader range of cousins, estimates the overall rate of kin marriages at 29 per cent in 2011 and 23.4 per cent in 2018.[65] However the enquiry is framed, though, a longer-term decline is observable. Still, such levels of kin marriage continue to represent a sizeable proportion of unions and remain an integral facet of the dynamics of marriage alliance.

As in many North African contexts, kin marriage in Morocco is more frequent among poorer than richer women (26.4 vs. 18.7 per cent), and rural than urban dwellers (26.5 vs. 21.4 per cent); and women with secondary or higher education are less likely to take a cousin spouse than those with no school certificate (14.0 vs. 26.2 per cent). Contrary to what one might expect in a socio-jural system predicated on agnatic filiation, matrilateral cousin unions are now more numerous than patrilateral marriages among the youngest wives, aged 15 to 19 (8.8 vs. 7.7 per cent of all marriages), than among 35-39 year-olds (4.5 vs. 7.3 per cent);[66] this suggests a novel interplay of "Arab" and "Berber" traditions that could indicate a gender-balancing in the enactment of filiation. Yet, press reports (e.g. Al Jaï 2021) arguing that the increasing prevalence of nuclear domestic units denotes a "decline" of the "traditional family" may underestimate the intensity of intermeshed bonds of relatedness through marriage, descent or elective kinship[67] that stubbornly transcends the reconfiguration of complex or extended families in conditions of urban habitat and rural exodus.

In Algeria, the 1986 prevalence of kin marriage reached 41 per cent, up from 30 per cent in 1970 due to frequent rural-urban as well as urban-rural movements of related partners (Kouaouci 1996: 439). By 2012, this proportion had descended again to 32.8 per cent (Oussedik 2014). The 2019 data offered by the UNICEF MICS study signals,[68] however, a sharp fall in kin marriage among women of the 15 to 49 age group, with an overall prevalence of only 20.3 per cent. The suddenness of this broad decline coincides, as noted in Morocco, with a significant shift in the balance between unions with paternal and maternal cousins.[69] In 1999, cousin unions represented 30.5 per cent of all marriages, divided between 16.5 per cent patrilateral and 13.4 per cent matrilateral. The two categories were balanced during the 2009-2013 period (9.1 vs. 8.5 per cent), whereas from 2014 on, matrilateral unions became more numerous (6.6 vs. 5.9 per cent), even as the overall prevalence of cousin marriage decreased. This implies a redefinition of the status and scope of kin marriage among

younger generations, where, argue Ouadah-Bedidi and Saadi, spouses may, but no longer must, be chosen in a wider familial circle. Yet cousin marriage can well result from personal choice or, sometimes, represent an option of last resort (Ouadah-Bedidi and Saadi 2014: 19).

Addressing the case of Tunisia, Ben Halim et al. emphasise "the persistence of a relatively high level of parental consanguinity […] at a rate which has remained almost unchanged over the last four decades despite the profound societal changes that have occurred" (2013: Conclusion). In the years 1991 to 2001, official sources estimate that 21 per cent of all extant marriages concluded between "close" relatives, in addition to 19 per cent of "unknown consanguineous unions" (ibid.: Introduction). The situation depicted by the 2014 Tunisia Labour Market Panel Survey is, however, of a very different order: "84 per cent of marriages taking place in the ten years prior to the survey involved nuclear family residence arrangements, and [only] 14 per cent of marriages were kin marriages" (Assaad et al. 2018: 181). Inverse correlations appear between consanguinity, on the one hand, and, on the other, nuclear/neolocal family residence, economic status and educational level. Those "currently living in poorer households are less likely to have had nuclear living arrangements at marriage (72 per cent of those in the poorest quintile) and are more likely to marry their kin (24 percent) than those … in the richest quintile of households, 95 per cent [of whom] lived in a nuclear family household at marriage, and just 4 percent married kin" (Assaad et al. 2018: 181). Female access to education emerges as a key determinant of the transformation of kin marriage: "Overall, nearly one-third of Tunisian women are now more educated than their spouses and a further 39 per cent have the same level of education as their spouse. These developments are likely to continue shaping women's relative empowerment within marriage" (Assaad et al. 2018: 179.) This would hardly have been possible without the 1957 abolition of marital guardianship, the development of female-initiated divorce and, uniquely, of full adoption. Combined, these developments promote spousal isogamy, if not male hypergamy, as finely argued by Anaris (2018) for Algeria.

Once again, Libyans strike a divergent note. The consanguineous marriage ratio for all those currently married is assessed at 41.5 per cent. Are prominently concerned 39.5 per cent of women aged 20 to 24 in 2014.[70] This strong prevalence is very likely correlated with an increase in the number of young women marrying much older men, an effect not fully apparent in the spousal age gap estimates quoted above: "the proportion of women aged 15-19 years,

i.e. the newest generation, who are married to men who are older than them by more than 10 years is 56.2 per cent of the total number of girls married in this age group, while this proportion was only 24.2 per cent for married women in the 30-34 age group).[71] Interpreting these observations would require more recent data and analysis to determine if recurrent political violence led young women to seek "security" in older partners, or whether, alternatively or conjointly, pressures exercised by agnates still very attached to tribal solidarities *('aṣabiyyāt)* continue to wield stronger influence on "their" women's partner choices than in other North African contexts. Local observers highlight both a "marriage crisis" reflected in the exceptionally steep increase in ages of marriage (see above) and a deleterious effect of pronounced "endogamy" on "nation building".[72]

According to the Egyptian Demographic and Health Survey of 2005, "even in urban areas […] around one-quarter of women marry a blood relative. […] the highest rate of consanguineous marriages is found in rural Upper Egypt, where around half of marriages are between relatives. The rate of consanguineous marriage is lowest in urban Lower Egypt (20 per cent) and the Urban Governorates (23 per cent)".[73] Here appear strong cross-correlations between area of residence, female access to education, and economic standing: "A woman's chance of marrying a relative decreases from 41 per cent among women with no education to 24 percent among women with a secondary education or higher. […] It decreases by wealth quintile, from a level of 43 per cent among women in the lowest wealth quintile to 20 per cent of women in the highest quintile".[74]

Table 2: Cousin marriage in Egypt (%)

	Patrilateral 1st cousin %	Patrilateral 1st cousin %	Patrilateral 1st cousin %	Patrilateral 1st cousin %	Patrilateral 1st cousin %	Patrilateral 1st cousin %	Patrilateral 1st cousin %	Patrilateral 1st cousin %	Patrilateral 1st cousin %
2005	11.0	6.5	17.5	4.4	2.9	7.9	24.8	7.4	32.2
2014	11.6	6.4	17.5	4.2	2.7	6.9	24.4	7.1	31.5

Source: DHS 2014 (2015)[75]

In a 2010 cross-sectional survey involving 10,000 couples, Shawki et al. broadly confirm these findings. They calculate the national prevalence of consanguinity at 35.3 per cent, with important regional variations and levels ranging from 21.7 pet cent in Assiut to 36.1 per cent in Great Cairo and 42.2

per cent in Sohag; prevalence reached 59.9 per cent in rural areas, 23.5 per cent in semi-rural settings and 16.7 per cent in urban zones. Further, they stress that kin marriage is "associated with decreased age of marriage, low educational level and unemployment in the couples which means that the socio-economic determinants are still working in maintaining this high rate of consanguinity" (Shawki et al. 2011: 157). The 2014 Demographic and Health Survey indicates that "a woman's chance of marrying a blood relative varies from a high of 37 per cent among women with no education to 26 per cent among women with secondary or higher education. […] The proportion of women marrying blood relatives decreases with the wealth quintile, from a level of 43 per cent among women in the lowest wealth quintile to 18 per cent of women in the highest quintile".[76]

Unfortunately, no new national data has been made available since 2014. Still, Ahmed argues "that the overall frequency of consanguinity among youth in Egypt is still high (27.4 per cent)" (2017: 17). Regional variations suggest, however, that the youth kin marriage rate remains at 43.6 per cent in rural Upper Egypt, yet has decreased to 13.2 per cent in urban Lower Egypt, and thus in Cairo. He further shows that "consanguineous marriage is significantly associated with a higher number of brothers and sisters and higher birth order" (Ahmed 2017: 87), a pattern fully consonant with the observed regional variations. There is no doubt that arranged cousin marriage is viewed as increasingly incompatible with the desire for greater individual agency in partner choice, as reflected in press coverage and on the screen.[77] Yet, tolerance toward chosen cousin marriage perdures even as obedience to parents remains a significant constraint in partner selection.[78] Shawki et al. also observe that in the current context of prolonged "waithood", or "marriage crisis", "many girls prefer to marry a relative instead of waiting for another unrelated husband to decrease the expenses of marriage" (2011: 161). As shown for other North African countries, the prevalence of kin marriage is globally on the decline at the national level but remains a systemic phenomenon reflecting the foundational role of the sibling bond that strongly singularises marriage dynamics on a regional and class basis.

Kin marriage, "progress", and "modernisation"

Consanguinity can operate as a contributing factor to higher fertility due to the lower average age at marriage among cousin spouses, a lower average level

of female education and access to paid employment after marriage. Correspondingly, kin spouses often present a smaller age difference and are less prone to form a nuclear household (Assaad and Krafft 2015: 547). Classically reproduced from one generation to the next in the context of broader strategies of proximity *(qarāba)* (e.g. Ferchiou 1992; Conte 2011), cousin marriages tend to reinforce primarily agnatic solidarities, continuity of lineage *(nasab)*, and concentration of wealth in the male line. Still, it would be hasty to assume that cousin unions are necessarily forced marriages. Indeed, the great proximity of siblings' children during their upbringing can generate special affinities that make marriage at adolescence appear "natural". So too, it may appear more desirable to young people than a long period of waithood in search of a hypothetical unrelated spouse (Ouaddah-Bedidi and Saadi 2014: 19). Such patterns of alliance are consonant with the spirit of *nasab* and reinforce its transgenerational character.

An argument often advanced to explain the persistence of cousin marriage is the purportedly lesser cost of dower *(mahr)* it entails. This is often attributed to the higher degree of trust obtaining between related in-laws, which, it is hoped, may increase the material security and social standing of the wife while decreasing the likelihood of repudiation. Interestingly, however, Asaad and Krafft demonstrate with relation to Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt, countries otherwise quite distinct as regards marriage patterns, that, "after accounting for other characteristics, consanguineous marriages do not cost less in general, but do allow for earlier marriages and are associated with a higher likelihood of extended household arrangements upon marriage" (2015: 534). The desire to unite peers in homogamous marriage arguably constitutes a stronger incentive than cost alone.

Kin marriage is often dubbed "traditional", i.e. pre-modern, thus implying that portraying it as an integral facet of the social order today, and a keystone of the prevailing gender regime, betrays a certain essentialism (see, by contrast, Inhorn 2012, ch. 4). As observed by Hussein (2002: 49), certain authors (e.g. Haj 1988; 1995) argue that the prevalence of kin marriage, and indeed the relevance of (extended) kinship at large, decrease in proportion to an assumedly predestined advance of "modernisation" Yet, in contrast, it can be argued with reference to the societies of North Africa that one should avoid viewing the dynamics of marriage alliance, of which consanguinity remains a notable aspect, through the reductionist prism of binary oppositions contrasting "tradition" and "modernity" or "forced" and "free" marriage; for this approach is ultimately predicated on a teleological vision of progress and the primacy of the individual vis-à-vis the collective.

The node of ambiguation here manifest stems from a Eurocentric understanding of relatedness through marriage alliance which could easily lead one to overlook the symbiotic relationship of all modalities of marriage, consanguineal or not, in North African contexts. The danger is that a formal statistical/demographical classification of marriage based on the aggregation of singular traits and occurrences might obviate the gendered process of kinship, marriage, and residence of which rates of prevalence are but markers. The goal of building a marriage alliance for actors is clearly not to fit into a preferred genealogical category or, less, exemplify an abstract model of "Arab marriage"; it is, rather, while avoiding female hypergamy, to generate parity *(kafā'a)* between spouses and to ensure the couple's insertion into a broader collective.

The many shades of "celibacy"

The "marriage crisis" is often seen as an immanent force which impedes actors' capacity to generate and recreate proximity through marriage alliance. "Celibacy" is its hallmark. Corresponding perceptions often rest on a conflation of delayed marriage and definitive celibacy. Confusion may thus obtain between marrying at an age higher than that at which "one [particularly] a woman should" and never marrying, which in the demographic acceptance generally means remaining celibate until age 50. This is hardly surprising in societies long accustomed and deeply attached to early, universal marriage and parenthood which have come to know ever higher ages of marriage during demographic transition. Deferred nuptiality can be experienced as compromising access to full adulthood for individuals, and a factor weakening the relational "density", and hence relevance, of the kin-focused networks and collectives to which all persons are affiliated. Protracted celibacy is deemed "undignified", especially for women (Labidi 2017). The syndrome of celibacy challenges the agnatically biased gender regime, contested though it is by many, as well as hitherto accepted patterns of precedence and dependency between the generations and within sibling sets.

National specificities

In Morocco, a near doubling of the proportion of women unmarried at 49 occurred between 2004 and 2014, clearly exceeding the increase of final celibacy among men. Even at age 55, the overall rate of final celibacy rose from 3 per cent in 2004 to 5.9 per cent in 2014, attaining 6.7 per cent for women and 5.1

per cent for men. The increase is more pronounced among city-dwellers (6.7 per cent) than rurals (3.8 per cent).[79] A certain Moroccan paradox has, however, emerged: as the proportion of celibate women at 49 increased, so did the proportion of all married persons over age 15. This ratio passed from 52.8 in 2004 to 57.8 per cent in 2020 for women and from 52.7 to 57.9 per cent for men.[80]

Table 3: Morocco: Celibacy for age group 45-49 (%)

Year	2004	2010	2014			
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
All	4.9	5.3	5.8	6.7	7.4	9,6
Urban	5.9	6.8	6.6	8.0	8.6	10.6
Rural	3.2	3.1	4.0	4.8	5.0	7.0

Source: HCP 2021, p. 14, Table 4 and p. 15, Table 5.[81]

Clearly, the "marriage crisis", largely amplified by the press and social media,[82] in no way reflects a refusal of marriage as an institution, rather the increasing difficulties experienced in achieving marital status or a decreasing tolerance of associated constraints, as will be discussed below.

In Algeria, the one-time quasi-universality of marriage has given ground to a significant prevalence of final celibacy (See Table 4). Belarbi argues that this trend set in as those born after independence and during the demographic boom of the 1970s, having experienced the "black decade", reached age 50 (2017: 281-283, 289).

Table 4: Algeria: Unmarried men and women at 20-24 and never-married at 45-49 (%)

Year	1992	2006	2013
Unmarried men aged 20-24	95.7	98.4	97.3
Unmarried women aged 20-24	70.4	83.4	74.2
Never-married men aged 45-49	2.2	3.4	5.3
Never-married women aged 45-49	1.9	3.0	8.1

Source: Belarbi 2017: 282-283.

Concomitantly, Delenda shows, the gap between the proportions of the married and the single all but disappears after age 50 (2018: 19). This observation

sustains Ouadah-Bedidi and Saadi's contention that despite the hurdles to be overcome in constituting their dowry *(jihāz),* only 15 per cent of women experience difficulty in finding a partner, as opposed to 69 per cent of men, faced with the major challenge of providing a home and adequate family revenue (2010: 18; see too Belarbi 2017: 283). All considered, Belarbi concludes that in Algeria, just as in Morocco, there is no rejection of marriage in principle, only a significant deferral mainly attributable to economic constraints and protracted access to education. He notes, yet, that new, non-conventional types of unions remain to be studied (2017: 289), which, as responses to unwanted celibacy, might, in the longer run, reduce acceptance of the "matrimonial imperative" still so solidly rooted in religion, law, and social normativity. This nexus of systemic tensions sustains the discourse of conservative circles, notably amongst clerics, in the Arab world. And the fear of those who, engaging in, euphemistically put, non-conventional unions risk incurring penal sanctions.

In 1975, years after Habib Bourghiba's promulgation of revolutionary personal status legislation, marriage in Tunisia was still quasi universal, with 98.5 per cent of women and 97.0 per cent of men from 15 to 49 married. By 2004, however, 5.6 per cent of women and 4.3 per cent of men were never married by age 49. While aware of this change, the government did not develop an active policy to promote or facilitate marriage, comparable, for example, to the Libyan marriage fund. The islamist association *al-Afef* (Purity), by contrast, organised widely publicised collective marriages after 2011 with the benediction of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.[83] In 2014, Rāshid al-Ghannūshī, co-founder of the islamist al-Nahda (Renaissance) party (and recently arrested by president Kaïs Saïed), encouraged "older women" to marry, "evoking the case of the Prophet Muḥammad who married Khadīja when she was in her forties" (Labidi 2017: 25).

Table 5: Tunisia: Unmarried men and women at 20-24 and never-married at 45-49 (%)

Year	1984	1994	2004	2014
Unmarried men aged 20-24	91.4	96.3	97.7	96.9
Unmarried women aged 20-24	59.0	72.3	85.5	81.8
Never-married men aged 45-49	2.7	3.0	4.1	6.7
Never-married women aged 45-49	1.6	2.3	5.4	8.1

Sources: INS 2014,[84] Touhami 2018. http://data.un.org/DocumentData.aspx?id=337 (last accessed on 6 April 2024), Tunisia.

Clinical psychologist Imed Ghrairi observes that many mature, well-qualified women, having achieved, as once wealthy trader Khadija, professional success and financial autonomy, but confronted with solitude, either consent to marry "the first comer to settle down or opt for eternal celibacy to avoid failure".[85] Less well-off women, too, may refuse to marry a man without stable employment so as to avoid a hypergamic union perceived as derogatory to their dignity. For their part, many men can neither cover the conspicuous expenses required to conclude a "proper" marriage, nor ensure the high standard of living demanded by would-be in-laws. In a country guaranteeing women many prerogatives, yet plagued by chronic un(der)employment, the distinction between voluntary and forced celibacy can thus prove difficult to establish.

Anthropologist and psychologist Lilia Labidi analyses, for her part, the newly developed situation of Tunisian women who, excluded from the ritual of marriage and the social consideration it brings, confront celibacy by adopting what she terms a "mystic ascetic" attitude. This implies strict observance of religious codes and prescriptions to forge an irreproachable, publicly recognised "moral personality". In so doing, women seek "new emancipatory gender situations, certainly within an Islamic framework but one where the private and public spheres have become political" (Labidi 2017: 27).

By contrast, Dr. Ghrairi further reports that "sexual relations outside the framework of marriage are more and more frequent. This change of mentality concerns all social categories and regions of the country. Physical frustration no longer exists among celibates, but the counterpart is that religious and traditional values no longer have the same impact on youth".[86] The al-Nahda party was not the last to react to this trend, rather positioned itself in the political forefront so as (somewhat opportunistically) to encourage its younger followers, in particular students, to conclude temporary marriage, known as *zawāj al-misyār* ("traveller's marriage") or *zawāj al-frand* (from the English "boyfriend" or "girlfriend") (Sindawi 2013: 117). Such unions offer a novel adaptation indeed to the "marriage crisis". They are illegal but not religiously invalid if based on a contract, even if unwritten, and concluded in the presence of two witnesses. This option has found rather wide reception (see Guessous 2018; Conte 2022).

The parallel emergence in North Africa of these two antagonistic modes of addressing celibacy, definitive or temporary, suggests that a wedge has now been hewn into the moral and jural edifice of the marriage institution, hitherto intractable for based on the theological imperative to marry and multiply.

Levels of never-marriage in Egypt are well below those observed in other North African countries - except Libya for which adequate data is lacking - and indeed any Arab country (Salem 2016: 231). According to the Egyptian Labor Market Panel Survey of 2006, celibacy concerned only 2.2 per cent of women and 1.5 per cent of men ever married by age 50 (quoted by Salem 2016: 252). In 2014, the celibacy rate for women was only 1.7 per cent, with, unfortunately, no figures available for men.

Table 6: Egypt: Never-married women for age groups 20-24 and 45-49

Year	1988	1995	2005	2014
Women 20-24	40.3	41.9	48.9	38.9
Women 45-49	1.8	1.2	1.7	1.7

Sources: Egyptian Demographic and Health Surveys from 1988 to 2014 (https://dhsprogram.com); Al Zalak and Goujon 2017: 1993.

This pattern suggests that marriage has become no less common among the young; it also supports Salem's assessment, according to whom "contrary to the public discourse on celibacy and spinsterhood, never-marriage has never been, nor is […] currently, prevalent among women in Egypt. […] In this realm, the crisis is more myth than reality" (2016: 235). Equally, Salem adds, "these findings will be welcomed by those in government who regard delayed marriage among men as a potential source of political radicalism and social disruption" (2015: 8).

Other factors must, however, also be considered. In Egypt, there obtains an inverse relationship between low final celibacy and the frequency of girl marriage, which, as mentioned above, surpasses levels observed in the other North African countries (see above).[87] The control of female sexuality through early arranged or forced marriage is also starkly manifest in the near universality of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). This practice is clearly associated with child marriage, which has only been illegal in Egypt since 2008. UNICEF estimates that "91 per cent of girls and women aged 15 to 49 in Egypt have undergone FGM/C".[88] The nexus of child marriage after genital mutilation requires further, interdisciplinary study. Yet it can plausibly be advanced that this complex presents "a major risk factor for marital dissolution", which has, in parallel, starkly risen of late: "research suggests that 40 per cent of marriages end within the first five years. As of 2017, divorce rates in Egypt

were reported to be between 39.3 and 60.7 per cent, depending on rural and urban locations" (Mendoza, Tolba and Saleh 2020).[89] In sum, high marriage prevalence at all ages and a rise in divorce rates are concurrent, even as child marriage remains sadly commonplace. Investigating this specific conjunction of factors might contribute to elucidating the "Egyptian puzzle".

Celibacy versus marriage deferral

This cursory comparison of the different shades and degrees of non- and never-marriage in the countries of North Africa shows that despite significant local variations in age-related levels of prevalence, marriage remains for the vast majority of people a desirable goal and a socio-religious responsibility. The notion of a "marriage crisis" expresses the widespread perception that contingent factors related to changes in the economy of marriage, largely shaped by the chronically problematic state of the national economies, makes achieving marriage increasingly challenging, and sometimes impossible. This condition is aggravated by the fact the domestic unit is ever less a self-sustaining locus of economic production, whence "marriage strategies" may be autonomously deployed in conjunction with analogous units, whether or not related through preexistent bonds of kinship *(qarāba).* The question thereby arises as to whether the "nuclearisation" of "the (new) Arab family" will, with time, qualitatively transform the agnatic order of normativity associated with the primacy of *nasab*, and thereby open the way to a structurally distinct gender regime. One indicator to be considered in this regard is the issue of son preference in birth planning.

Son Preference

In societies where agnatic bias is particularly pronounced, parents desire, indeed require, the birth of a son to ensure the transmission of name and lineage and to avoid the dispersion of assets beyond the close circle of male agnates. As aggregate fertility tends towards replacement level, however, the "risk" rises for couples of not engendering a male (Barakat and Basten 2014: 285-6). Thus, Casterline observes, "the lack of firm and widespread commitment to a two-child norm may reflect a recognition that stopping at two children can leave one without either a son or a daughter".[90]

With demographic transition, the question of sex preference has been set in new terms. Stricter birth planning and the recourse to preimplantation genetic

screening have become more relevant options for parents as the average family size decreased. In the Egyptian case, strong son preference is documented from the 1970s to the 1990s (Yount, Langsten and Hill 2000; see too El Gilany and Shady 2007; Inhorn 2022), yet this trait is in no way exclusionary, as seen in China or India, where selection against girls has significantly modified sex ratios. The Egyptian situation is portrayed by El-Zeini as follows: "In settings with a clearly gendered division of roles, sons and daughters serve categorically different functions. In such settings, couples aspire to guarantee that they have at least one son and one daughter, a goal that, when aggregated, places upward pressure on fertility levels" (2008: 164).

Is this finding relevant to other parts of North Africa? In a 1996 study, Obermeyer noted only a "weak preference for more sons in both Morocco and Tunisia" (1966: 67, 70). A decade later, D'Addato confirmed this assessment, showing that there is "no significant or clear evidence of sex preference among Moroccan mothers in the progression to the third child" (2006: 517). This observation contrasts with the widespread, in-principle acceptance of the two-child goal in a broad context of nuclearisation and urbanisation, where often cramped living space can hinder the development of the domestic unit. While the will to have at least one son remains firm, the impact of son preference on fertility levels was shown, on aggregate, to be limited (Obermeyer 1996: 70). Yet complex relations obtain between the widespread conviction that begetting a male heir is vital, just as showing balanced affection towards boy and girl children is "natural". Two related issues bring to light this structural tension opposing potentially antagonistic parental sentiments and thereby signal the emergence of a fundamental ambivalence in reproductive behaviour.

Firstly, embryo selection is increasingly accessible to parents seeking to compensate discrepancies between actual and desired birth outcomes (Inhorn 2022). Although Sunni Muslim orthodoxy proscribes sex selection on Quranic grounds (Bokek-Cohen and Tarabeih 2020), the practice has gained in acceptability for couples who, after the birth of one or more girls, remain in want of a son. Indeed, in 2017, the Fatwa Global Centre of Cairo's authoritative al-Azhar University opined that "this practice is tolerated so long as it remains within […] moderate limits and has no evil effects on social balance",[91] i.e. on the sex ratio within kindreds and the wider population. In a surge of, as it were, "revolutionary conservatism", this *fatwa* gives clear acquiescence to parental recourse to embryo selection technology, thereby confirming, however, the precedence accorded to preserving lines of paternal descent *(nasab).*

Secondly, looking at son preference through the prism of desired birth outcomes, demographic findings suggest that enactments of *nasab* in the wake of stark fertility transition are not monolithic. El-Zeini notes that "son preference, vis-à-vis preference for a balanced sex composition seems to be increasing in Egypt while declining in Morocco" (2009: 8). Imen argues that in contexts of low fertility, such as found in Morocco, "one quarter of modern Arab couples accepts […] that their succession proceed through girls. Thus, reduced fertility can upset the best anchored customs" (2023). As regards Algeria, where the fertility level is currently somewhat higher, she further shows that more women in both kin and non-kin marriages would prefer to have two daughters than two sons (*ibidem*). Although *abû banât* ("father of daughters") remains an insult not lightly spoken to a man, couples' actual sex preferences are increasingly gauged in terms of gender balance rather than gender hierarchy or disparity (see Inhorn 2022: 151). This important shift in attitudes advances in tandem with increasing literacy and access to education. El Gilany and Shady claim based on their Egyptian survey that "mothers with illiterate husbands were nearly 10 times more likely to prefer [to bear] a son than those married to highly educated husbands" (2007: 119). Once couples achieve the desired sex balance among their progeny, though, births become more spaced, and contraception is privileged (2007: 119).

Outlook

Increasing recourse to new reproductive technologies including in vitro fertilisation and infertility treatment for men, as well as couples' greater flexibility in envisaging sex preference in relation to their desired number of children are characteristic of the "new Arab family" (Hopkins 2001; Inhorn 2022). Son preference is giving way to the desire for gender balance among offspring, but when only girls are born, those who have the means can turn to preimplantation sex selection, even at the risk of infringing a sharia injunction. This attitudinal transformation was borne by households' necessary accommodation to intense urbanisation, living under persistent economic stress for the majority, massive emigration from the Maghreb to Europe, or Egypt to the Gulf, not to mention coping with political insecurity, when not violence, and pervasive social fragmentation. The convergence of disruptive forces fostered extensive nuclearisation and the acceptance of bearing fewer children. Yet, as the *usra* (nuclear family) statistically overtakes the *'â'ila* (extended family), the bonds of *qarāba* that emotionally bind henceforth smaller domestic units under the

mantel of broader kin-focussed collectives are far from dissolved. New enactments of *nasab* adapt flexibly to socio-economic change, yet arguably continue to sustain male precedence, notwithstanding the emergence of "different" or "supportive" masculinities (see Inhorn 2012; Inhorn and Naguib 2018).

How does this transition relate to deep changes affecting the demographic indicators considered? Fertility rates and ages of marriage oscillate, for now, in a narrow band of variation. The levels achieved, broadly speaking, could offer propitious conditions for the consolidation of gender equality were they to be accompanied by further, systemic change in the field of personal status law. In contrast, spousal age gaps remain higher than might have been expected considering the unprecedented increases of women's SMAM. This persistent discrepancy, albeit at higher age levels, further sustains gender asymmetry where economic and jural discrimination against (younger) women persists. Spousal age gap, material disparity between partners and the prevalence of kin unions are closely intermeshed. Consanguineous marriage, as shown, remains a fundamental facet of the dynamics of kinship and alliance, yet is waning. Its relative decline points to a general evolution of the gender regime supported by young couples' increasing decision-making latitude in partner choice, age of marriage and birth planning (cf. Moghadam 1993; 2020). These factors, combined, tend to make consanguineous unions less likely.

In abstract terms, sharp fertility decline imposes constraints on the availability of cousin partners of appropriate sex and age, but only entails an effective decline in kin marriage frequency when fertility settles at replacement level or lower. At this point, the availability of specific types of would-be cousin partners, such as the children of two brothers, is no longer guaranteed for many (Barakat and Basten 2014: 298). This demographic shift explains in part the extension of marriage choices to matrilateral cousins, as noted above concerning Algeria and Morocco, or to genealogically more distant peers. Other factors also explain the relative decline in levels of consanguinity that accompanies the process of nuclearisation. One is the increasing awareness of the potentially deleterious effects of excessive genetic proximity on one's progeny (Tadmouri et al. 2009; El Goundali 2022). Equally important, though, is the "drift from land ownership to other forms of movable capital", which coincided with the externalisation of productive functions away from the domestic unit (Barakat and Basten 2014: 300). Marriage configurations are thus less bound to land transmission and concentration strategies in extended agnatically focused networks. In parallel, there is a dwindling among younger generations of the

genealogical knowledge instrumental to devise such strategies (Adel 2009).

While no doubt contributing to the relative decline of cousin marriage, changes in the nature of inheritable assets have not been followed by an adaptation of their mode of distribution within sibling sets. The division of inheritance among brothers and sisters is, as ever, guided by the Quranic injunction "Allah commands you regarding your children: the share of the male will be twice that of the female" in a similar kinship relation to the deceased (Quran 4:11). This basic principle of sharia is transcribed into codified state law throughout North Africa, including in "progressive" Tunisia.[92] The "new Arab family" will remain staunchly inegalitarian in matters of inheritance for as long as the brother-sister relationship remains a primary locus of gender inequity.[93]

The second fundamental legal disposition blocking the advent of greater gender symmetry is the differential criminalisation of sexual relations outside of marriage. *Zīnā*, or "fornication", is covered by penal rather than civil law, and entails very different penalties when applied to men or women (Conte 2021: 101-2). Whereas pre- or extramarital affairs are frequently treated as peccadillos in the case of men, they inflict a prohibitive stain on the honour of women and, by repercussion, their agnates.

The conjunction of these two biases forms the keystone of gender asymmetry. Brothers thus continue to wield often decisive influence in selecting their sisters' husbands; they commonly arrogate their sisters' legitimate claims to inheritance, including over their quranically allotted shares. Moreover, gains made by women during the decades of demographic transition in the field of personal status law, except regarding inheritance, have not restrained the paralegal entitlement of men to act as guardians of their sexual honour *('irḍ).* Both modes of control hail to a divinely ordained, hence inalterable, normative framework which continues to impair the relative autonomy women have recently forged in setting their age of marriage, choosing their spouse, and determining their reproductive behaviour. Notwithstanding the emergence of a "new Arab family", and indeed a "new Arab man" (Inhorn 2012), laws and "customs" governing sexuality and marriage, when respected, operate to undermine women's prerogatives in even the most harmonious of couples, or, when infringed, condemn the female party alone to heavy atonement, including moral exclusion from the field of *nasab.* It remains for further research to determine whether, and to what extent, these gendered disparities contribute to the widespread deferral or final relinquishment of marriage by a growing

proportion of women. Yet, while it truly can be said that the societies of North Africa have experienced a "reproductive revolution", the perceived "family crisis" is very much a crisis of *nasab* kindled by resilient agnatic preeminence (see Conte 2021).

Édouard Conte, anthropologist, is Chercheur associé at the Institut de recherche sur la Famille (Fribourg) and Directeur de recherche émérite at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), where he is a member of the Laboratoire d'anthropologie sociale (Paris).

Notes

1 - Galopin A. and Le Meneec T., *L'article à lire pour comprendre pourquoi le "grand remplacement" est une idée raciste et complotiste*, « FranceInfo », 14 March 2022, https://www.francetvinfo.fr/elections/presidentielle/l-article-a-lire-pour-comprendre-pourquoi-le-grand-remplacement-est-une-idee-raciste-et-complotiste_4965228.html (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

2 - Brown E.C., *Tunisia's President Embraces the "Great Replacement Theory"*, "New Lines Magazine", 27 February 2023, https://newlinesmag.com/spotlight/tunisias-president-embraces-the-great-replacement-theory/ https://newlinesmag.com/spotlight/tunisias-president-embraces-the-great-replacement-theory/ (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

3 - Blaise L., *Tunisia's President Saied Claims Sub-Saharan Migrants Threaten Country's Identity*, "Le Monde", 23 February 2023, https://www.lemonde.fr/en/le-monde-africa/article/2023/02/23/in-tunisia-president-kais-saied-claims-sub-saharan-migrants-threaten-country-s-identity_6016898_124.html (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

4 - Kholoussy H., *The Fiction (and Non-Fiction) of Egypt's Marriage Crisis*, "Middle East Report Online", 13 December 2010, https://merip.org/2010/12/the-fiction-and-non-fiction-of-egypts-marriage-crisis/ (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

5 - Courbage Y., *Demography, Family and Politics: The Three Stages of Arab Transition*, "Oasis-31", 2021, https://www.onlinescientificresearch.com/articles/the-three-phases-of-the-arab-demographic-transition.html (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

6 - Bertho F., Brodiak C., Chopiton L., De Warren G., Doufour G., Skorzewski G. and Sperry A., *Demographic challenges in the Maghreb countries*, "Trésor-economics n° 211", 2017, https://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/Articles/c38d304b-c968-4aad-b3ce-d012b56c6e37/files/c7d4083f-f41e-4a4a-b634-0e1294b327d7 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

7 - Traboulsi K., *All the Single Ladies: The Arab World's "Spinster Revolution"*, "The New Arab", 8 March 2019, https://www.newarab.com/features/all-single-ladies-arab-worlds-spinster-revolution (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

8 - Bertho F., Brodiak C., Chopiton L., De Warren G., Doufour G., Skorzewski G. and Sperry A., *Demographic challenges in the Maghreb countries*, "Trésor-economics n° 211", 2017, p.3, Chart 1, thttps://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/Articles/c38d304b-c968-4aad-b3ce-

d012b56c6e37/files/c7d4083f-f41e-4a4a-b634-0e1294b327d7 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

9 - The Moroccan High Commission for Planning census data stands at variance with UN Population Division assessments (population.un.org), recording a moderate increase of the TFR from 2.19 in 2010 (v. 2.59) to 2.21 in 2014 (v. 2.55), and 2.38 in 2018 (2.41). In 2014, the rural-urban divide remained significant, with TFRs at 2.55 and 2.01, respectively (HCP 2022, Figure 1).

10 11 - HCP [Haut-commissariat au Plan], *Note sur le niveau et la tendance de la fécondité au Maroc*, 2022, Figure 3, https://www.hcp.ma/Note-sur-le-niveau-et-la-tendance-de-la-fecondite-au-Maroc_a2301.html (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

11 - HCP [Haut-commissariat au Plan], *Note sur le niveau et la tendance de la fécondité au Maroc*, 2022, Figure 2, https://www.hcp.ma/Note-sur-le-niveau-et-la-tendance-de-la-fecondite-au-Maroc_a2301.html (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

12 - World Bank (n.d. a). *Fertility, total (births per woman) – Algeria*, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN?view=chart&locations=DZ (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

13 - World Bank (n.d. a). *Fertility, total (births per woman) – Algeria*, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN?view=chart&locations=DZ (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

14 - Ouadah-Bedidi Z., *Plus de doute, la fécondité augmente en Algérie*, « Orient XXI, 4 April 2017, https ://orientxxi.info/magazine/plus-de-doute-la-fecondite-augmente-en-algerie,1781 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

15 - ONS [Office nationale des statistiques], *Démographie algérienne 2020*, N° 949, 2022, p.3, https://www.ons.dz/IMG/pdf/Demographie Algerienne2020.pdf (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

World Bank (n.d. a). *Fertility, total (births per woman) – Algeria*, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN?view=chart&locations=DZ (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

16 - UN Population Division, *World Marriage Data 2019*, 2019, https://population.un.org/MarriageData/index.html#/home (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

17 - Tunisie [République de], *Code du Statut Personnel*, 1957, Tunis, https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b5510.html (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

18 - Tunisie [République de], *Loi n° 1958-0027 du 4 mars 1958 relative à la tutelle publique, à la tutelle officieuse et à l'adoption*, 1958, https://www.jurisitetunisie.com/tunisie/codes/csp/L1958-0027.htm (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

19 - Tunisie [République de], *Décret-Loi n° 73-2 du 26 Septembre 1973 portant modification de l'article 214 du code penal*, 1973, https://legislation-securite.tn/law/44573 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

20 - World Bank (n.d. b), *Literacy rate, youth total (% of people ages 15-24) – Tunisia*, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.1524.LT.ZS?locations=TN (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

21 - Sawahel W., *Women Outnumber Men at Universities, Lag in Employment*, "University World News. Africa Edition", 3 December 2020,

https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20201201123459402 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

22 - World Bank (n.d. c), *Fertility rate, total (births per woman – Libya*, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN?locations=LY (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

23 - Macrotrends, *Libya Fertility Rates 1950-2023,* 2023, https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/LBY/libya/fertility-rate (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

24 - *Libya: spotlight*, "Population Today", 12(7-8), 1984, 12, https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12279826/ (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

25 - OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development], *Women's Economic Empowerment in Selected MENA Countries: The Impact of Legal Frameworks in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, Competitiveness and Private Sector Development*, 2017, Paris: OECD Publishing, p.81.

OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development], *SIGI Social Institutions & Gender Index 2019 – Libya*, 2019, https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/LY.pdf (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

26 - Ksibi Y., *Libya: War and the Cousins*, 2020, https://medium.com/@yacine.ksibi/libya-war-and-the-cousins-21745eefa87f (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

27 - World Bank (n.d. d), *Population, Total – Libya*, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=LY (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

28 - UNFPA, *The Libyan Youth Today: Opportunities and Challenges*, 2018, https://youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-04/8. CFR_Libya_UNFPA_0.pdf, Ch.1 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

29 - Statista, *Urbanization Rate in Africa in 2021, By Country*, 2021, https://www.statista.com/statistics/1223543/urbanization-rate-in-africa-by-country/ (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

30 - Statista, *African Countries with the Highest Fertility Rate in 2020*, 2022, https://www.statista.com/statistics/1236677/fertility-rate-in-africa-by-country/ (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

31 - UNFPA, *The Libyan Youth Today: Opportunities and Challenges*, 2018, https://youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-04/8. CFR_Libya_UNFPA_0.pdf, Comments on Table 7 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

32 - UNDP, *Libya. Gender Justice & the Law*, 2018, https://arabstates.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Libya Country Assessment - English_0.pdf, pp.9-16 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

33 - HRW [Human Rights Watch], *Libya: A Threat to Society? Arbitrary Detention of Women and Girls for "Social Rehabilitation"*, 2006, https://www.hrw.org/report/2006/02/27/libya-threat-society/arbitrary-detention-women-and-girls-social-rehabilitation (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

34 - World Bank (n.d. e), *Fertility Rate, Total (Births per Woman) - Egypt, Arab Rep.*, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN?locations=EG (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

35 - El-Zanaty F. and Way A., *Egypt Demographic and Health Survey 2005*. Cairo Ministry of Health and Population, National Population Council, El-Zanaty and Associates, and ORC Macro, 2006, https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR176/FR176.pdf (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

36 - Casterline J.B., *Fertility Prospects in the Arab Region*, UN Population Division. Expert Paper No. 2011/6, 2011, https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/files/documents/2020/Jan/un_2011_expertpaper6.pdf, p.4 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

37 - Kholoussy H., *The Fiction (and Non-Fiction) of Egypt's Marriage Crisis*, "Middle East Report Online", 13 December 2010, https://merip.org/2010/12/the-fiction-and-non-fiction-of-egypts-marriage-crisis/ (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

38 - Casterline J.B., *Fertility Prospects in the Arab Region*, UN Population Division. Expert Paper No. 2011/6, 2011, https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/files/documents/2020/Jan/un_2011_expertpaper6.pdf, p.4 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

39 - Bel-Air F., *Fertility and Marriage in the Middle East: Paradoxical Trends*, "OrientXXI", 6 June 2017, https://orientxxi.info/magazine/fertility-and-marriage-in-the-middle-east-paradoxical-trends,1894 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

40 - Statista, *Stock of Emigrants from Egypt in 2020, by Country of Destination*, 2020, https://www.statista.com/statistics/1237586/stock-of-emigrants-from-egypt-by-country-of-destination/ (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

41 - Bel-Air F., *Fertility and Marriage in the Middle East: Paradoxical Trends*, "OrientXXI", 6 June 2017, https://orientxxi.info/magazine/fertility-and-marriage-in-the-middle-east-paradoxical-trends,1894 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

42 - Bel-Air F., *Fertility and Marriage in the Middle East: Paradoxical Trends*, "OrientXXI", 6 June 2017, https://orientxxi.info/magazine/fertility-and-marriage-in-the-middle-east-paradoxical-trends,1894 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

43 - Casterline J.B., *Fertility Prospects in the Arab Region*, UN Population Division. Expert Paper No. 2011/6, 2011, https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/files/documents/2020/Jan/un_2011_expertpaper6.pdf, p.8 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

44 - UNFPA, *The Libyan Youth Today: Opportunities and Challenges*, 2018, https://youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-04/8. CFR_Libya_UNFPA_0.pdf, p.15 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

45 - World Bank (n.d. f), *Contraceptive Prevalence, any Method (% of Married Women Ages 15-49) – Libya*, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.CONU.ZS?locations=LY (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

UNFPA, Assessment of Sexual and Reproductive Health Services Integration in Selected Arab Countries: Phase II. Regional Report, 2019, https://arabstates.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/srh_integration_report_-_phase_ii.pdf, p.14 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

46 - Bel-Air F., *Fertility and Marriage in the Middle East: Paradoxical Trends*, "OrientXXI", 6 June 2017, https://orientxxi.info/magazine/fertility-and-marriage-in-the-middle-east-paradoxical-trends,1894 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

47 - United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2013). *World Fertility Report 2012*, www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/dataset/fertility/wfr2012/Metadata/Metadata_MAFM-SMAM-EVER-MARRIED.pdf (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

48 - El Bidaoui B., *Femme et écart d'âge entre les époux au Maroc*, «Les Brefs du Plan, n° 19 », 11 octobre 2022. https://www.hcp.ma/Les-Brefs-du-Plan-N-19-Octobre-2022_a3586.html, p.2 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

49 - Ministère de la Santé [Maroc], *Enquête sur la population et la santé familiale (EPSF) 2003-2004*, 2005 https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR155/FR155.pdf (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

Ministère de la Santé [Maroc], Enquête Nationale Démographique à Passages Répétés 2009-2010 Principaux résultats, 2011, https://www.hcp.ma/region-drda/attachment/397087/ (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

Ministère de la Santé [Maroc], Enquête Nationale sur la Population et la Santé Familiale, 2018, https://www.unicef.org/morocco/media/1626/file/Enquête Nationale sur La Population et la Santé Familiale (ENPSF -2018).pdf (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

50 - All non-English quotations or terms were translated by the author.

51 - El Bidaoui B., *Femme et écart d'âge entre les époux au Maroc*, «Les Brefs du Plan, n° 19 », 11 octobre 2022. https://www.hcp.ma/Les-Brefs-du-Plan-N-19-Octobre-2022_a3586.html, p.2 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

52 - UNICEF, *Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa – Morocco Country Brief*, 2017, https://www.unicef.org/morocco/media/181/file/Mariage%20des%20enfants%20au%20Maroc.pdf, p.6 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

53 - A.T., *Maroc: 32% de Marocaines ont été victimes de. mariage précoce*, « *Bladi.net* », 15 October 2021, https ://www.bladi.net/mariage-precoce-32-femmes-victimes,87252.html (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

54 - CNDH-UNFPA [Conseil national des droits de l'Homme-United Nations Population Fund], *Mūjaz diraāsa hawla al-mubarirāt al-qaḍayiyat al-mu'tamadat li-tazwīj al-ṭuflāt*, 2022.

55 - Adly, Magda (2013). *Early Marriage in Egypt. Field research.* Cairo: El Nadim Center for Rehabilitation of victims of violence. https://uprdoc.ohchr.org/uprweb/downloadfile.aspx?filename=1236&file=Annexe2, (last accessed on 6 April 2024) ; UNICEF, *Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa – Egypt Country Brief*, 2017, https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/1796/file/MENA-CMReport-EgyptBrief.pdf.pdf (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

56 - Ayyad I., *Child Marriage Raises Controversy once Again in Egypt*, "Al-Monitor", 16 January 2023. https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/12/child-marriage-raises-controversy-once-again-egypt (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

57 - U.S. Department of State, *2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Egypt*, 2022, https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/egypt (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

58 - Ayyad I., *Child Marriage Raises Controversy once Again in Egypt*, "Al-Monitor", 16 January 2023. https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/12/child-marriage-raises-controversy-once-again-egypt (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

59 - UNICEF, *Algeria. Country Profile*, 2017, https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/country_profiles/Algeria/country_profile_dza.pdf 5.3.1 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

60 - Touhami H., *Le célibat en Tunisie: subi ou choisi?*, « Leaders », 12 January 2018. https://www.leaders.com.tn/article/23850-le-celibat-en-tunisie (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

UNICEF, *Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa*, 2022, https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/17696/file/ChildMarriage-Factsheet-Feb22.pdf .pdf (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

61 - UNDP, *Libya. Gender Justice & the Law*, 2018, https://arabstates.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Libya Country Assessment - English_0.pdf (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

62 - Samir A., *Une pratique sociale en voie de disparition*, « Al Bayane », 16 August 2020, https://albayane.press.ma/une-pratique-sociale-en-voie-de-disparition.html (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

63 - Alimi A.L., Résultats de l'enquête nationale démographique à passages répétés 2009-2010, « *Libération »*, 23 November 2011, https://www.libe.ma/Resultats-de-l-enquete-nationale-demographique-a-passages-repetes-2009-2010_a17895.html (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

ENPSF, Enquête Nationale Démographique à Passages Répétés 2009-2010 Principaux résultats, Rabat: Haut-commissariat au Plan, 2011, https://www.hcp.ma/Etude-Nationale-Demographique-a-Passages-Repetes-2009-2010_a749.html (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

64 - ENPSF*, Enquête Nationale Démographique à Passages Répétés 2009-2010 Principaux résultats*, Rabat: Haut-commissariat au Plan, 2011, https://www.hcp.ma/Etude-Nationale-Demographique-a-Passages-Repetes-2009-2010_a749.html, p.20 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

65 - ENPSF, *Enquête Nationale sur la Population et la Santé Familiale*, Rabat, Ministère de la Santé, 2018, https://www.unicef.org/morocco/sites/unicef.org.morocco/files/2020-01/ENPSF-2018 (1)_0.pdf, p.44 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

66 - ENPSF, *Enquête Nationale sur la Population et la Santé Familiale*, Rabat, Ministère de la Santé, 2018, https://www.unicef.org/morocco/sites/unicef.org.morocco/files/2020-01/ENPSF-2018 (1)_0.pdf, pp.44-5 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

67 - Mouline, M.T., *Rapport de l'enquête nationale sur le lien social au Maroc*, 2012, Institut royal des études stratégiques, https://ires.ma/sites/default/files/docs_publications/rapport_de_lenquete_nationale_sur_le_lien_social_0.pdf, pp.29-33 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

68 - UNICEF MICS, *Algérie - Enquête par grappes à indicateurs multiples [MICS] 2019*, 2020.

69 - UNICEF MICS, *Algérie - Enquête par grappes à indicateurs multiples [MICS] 2019*, 2020.

70 - UNFPA, *The Libyan Youth Today: Opportunities and Challenges*, 2018, https://youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-04/8. CFR_Libya_UNFPA_0.pdf, Fig.13 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

71 - UNFPA, *The Libyan Youth Today: Opportunities and Challenges*, 2018, https://youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-04/8. CFR_Libya_UNFPA_0.pdf, Fig.13 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

72 - Ksibi Y., *Libya: War and the Cousins*, 2020, https://medium.com/@yacine.ksibi/libya-war-and-the-cousins-21745eefa87f (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

73 - El-Zanaty F. and Way A., *Egypt Demographic and Health Survey 2005*. Cairo Ministry of Health and Population, National Population Council, El-Zanaty and Associates, and ORC Macro, 2006, https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR176/FR176.pdf, p.93 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

74 - El-Zanaty F. and Way A., *Egypt Demographic and Health Survey 2005*. Cairo Ministry of Health and Population, National Population Council, El-Zanaty and Associates, and ORC Macro, 2006, https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR176/FR176.pdf, p.93 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

75 - DHS 2014, *Egypt Demographic and Health Survey 2014*, 2015 Cairo, Egypt and Rockville, Maryland, USA: Ministry of Health and Population and ICF International.

76 - DHS 2014, *Egypt Demographic and Health Survey 2014*, 2015 Cairo, Egypt and Rockville, Maryland, USA: Ministry of Health and Population and ICF International, p.92.

77 - *I Married My Cousin: Endogamy in Egypt, Between Tradition and Genetic Concerns*, "CairoScene", 13 February 2016, https://cairoscene.com/in-depth/i-married-my-cousin-endogamy-in-egypt-between-tradition-and-genetic-concern (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

78 - Rao M., *In Defense of Cousins Who Fall in Love, on Ramy and IRL*, "New York Vulture", 13 February 2019, https://www.vulture.com/2019/06/ramy-defense-of-cousin-who-fall-in-love.html (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

79 - Kabbaj M., *Ces Marocaines et Marocains qui préfèrent le célibat. On se marie de plus en plus tard au Maroc*, « MarocHebdo », 19 November 2019, https ://www.maroc-hebdo.press.ma/marocaines-marocains-celibat (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

80 - HCP [Haut-commissariat au Plan], *La femme marocaine en chiffres : 20 ans de progrès*, 2021, https://www.hcp.ma/file/231700/ (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

81 - HCP [Haut-commissariat au Plan], *La femme marocaine en chiffres : 20 ans de progrès*, 2021, https://www.hcp.ma/file/231700/ (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

82 - *Pourquoi les Marocaines tardent à se marier*, « Aujourd'hui Le Maroc », 13 February 2009, https ://aujourdhui.ma/culture/pourquoi-les-marocains-tardent-a-se-marier-90225 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

Chraïbi Y., *Les chiffres inquiétants sur le mariage et le célibat au Maroc*, "H24", 28 February 2019, https://www.h24info.ma/les-chiffres-inquietants-sur-le-mariage-et-le-celibat-au-maroc/ (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

Kabbaj M., *Ces Marocaines et Marocains qui préfèrent le célibat. On se marie de plus en plus tard au Maroc*, « MarocHebdo », 19 November 2019, https ://www.maroc-hebdo.press.ma/marocaines-marocains-celibat (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

Le célibat est en train de devenir une norme, « VHmagazine », 23 December 2020, https://www.vh.ma/grand-angle/societe/le-celibat-est-en-train-de-devenir-une-norme/ (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

83 - *Tunisie-Société : Mariage collectif de 20 couples… islamistes*, « Kapitalis », 30 August 2013, https://www.kapitalis.com/archive/53-societe/17903-tunisie-societe-mariage-collectif-de-20-couples-islamistes.html (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

84 - INS [Institut national de la statistique], *Recensement General de la Population et de l'Habitat 2014*, 2014, Tunis, https://www.ins.tn/enquetes/recensement-general-de-la-population-et-de-lhabitat-2014 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

85 - *Tunisie: Les jeunes boudent le mariage : Le chiffres du célibat des 34-35-ans explosent (Enquête)*, « GnetNews », 11 November 2021, https ://news.gnet.tn/tunisie-les-jeunes-boudent-le-mariage-les-chiffres-du-celibat-des-34-45-ans-explosent (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

86 - *Tunisie: Les jeunes boudent le mariage : Le chiffres du célibat des 34-35-ans explosent (Enquête)*, « GnetNews », 11 November 2021, https ://news.gnet.tn/tunisie-les-jeunes-boudent-le-mariage-les-chiffres-du- celibat-des-34-45-ans-explosent (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

87 - UNICEF, *Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa – Egypt Country Brief*, 2017, https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/1796/file/MENA-CMReport-EgyptBrief.pdf.pdf, p.5 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

88 - UNICEF, *Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa – Egypt Country Brief*, 2017, https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/1796/file/MENA-CMReport-EgyptBrief.pdf.pdf, p.8 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

89 - Reda L., *On Marriage in Egypt Today*, "Egypt Today", 28 February 2019, http://www.egypttoday.com/Article/6/66379/On-Marriage-and-Divorce-in-Egypt RGPH 2017 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

90 - Casterline J.B., *Fertility Prospects in the Arab Region*, UN Population Division. Expert Paper No. 2011/6, 2011, https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/files/documents/2020/Jan/un_2011_expertpaper6.pdf, p.8 (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

91 - Al Azhar, *Gender Selection*, « *Al Azhar Fatwa Global Center »*, 15 November 2017. https://www.facebook.com/fatwacenter.en/posts/gender-selectionquestion-what-is-the-sharia-ruling-on-gender-selectionanswer-the/594475760722607/ (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

92 - Charrad M., Maro Y*., Stumbling Block: Inheritance and Women's Rights in Tunisia*, "*Baker Institute Issue Brief"*, 29 June 2021, https://www.bakerinstitute.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/import/bi-brief-062921-cme-tunisia-2.pdf (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

93 - Tanner V., *Strengthening Women's Control Over Land: Inheritance Reform in Tunisia*, "DAI [Development Alternatives Incorporated]", 2020, https://dai-global-developments.com/articles/strengthening-womens-control-over-land-inheritance-reform-in-tunisia/ (last accessed on 6 April 2024).

References

Abdel Aal G. (2010), *I Want to Get Married!* (trans. Nora Eltahawy), Austin, TX, University of Texas Press

'Abdullah 'A.'U. (2005), *Al-'unūsa. Asbābuha, athāruha, ilājuha*, Al-Qāhira, Dār al-afāq al-'arabiyya

Adedini S.A., Hassan O. and Luqman A.B. (2021), *Divergence in Fertility Levels and Patterns of Muslim-Majority Countries of Maghreb and Middle/West Africa*, in "Cogent Medicine", vol. 8, n. 1, https://doi.org/10.1080/2331205X.2021.1964184

Adel F. (2009), *La crise du mariage en Algérie*, « Insaniyat » 4*:* 59-77, https://www.asjp.cerist.dz/en/downArticle/14/2/1/41841

Ahmed, S.M. (2017), 'Consanguineous Marriage among Egyptian Youth: Secondary Analysis of Young People in Egypt, 2014', *The Egyptian Journal of Community Medicine*, vol. 35, n. 2, pp. 85-94 https://ejcm.journals.ekb.eg/article_3571.html

Al Jaï, Hafid (2021), 'Familles marocaines : les grandes mutations', *lebrief.ma*, 15 January 2021. https://www.lebrief.ma/10877-familles-marocaines-les-grandes-mutations/

Al Zalak Z. and Goujon A. (2017), *Exploring the fertility trend in Egypt*, in "Demographic Research"*,* vol. 37, pp. 995-1030. http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol37/32/ DOI: 10.4054/DemRes.2017.37.32

Ambrosetti E., Angeli A. and Novelli M. (2019), *Ideal Family Size and Fertility in Egypt: An Overview of Recent Trends*, "Statistica", vol. 79, n.2, pp. 223-244

Anaris M. (2018), *Modernisation et reconfigurations du champ matrimonial dans la région d'Azeffoun*, in « Insaniyat », vol. 79, pp. 107-125

Assaad R. and Krafft C. (2015), *An Empirical Analysis of the Economics of Marriage in Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia*, in C. Monga and J.Y. Lin (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Africa and Economics: Policies and Practices* (Vol. 2), Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press

Assaad R., Ghazouani S. and Krafft C. (2017), *Marriage, Fertility and Women's Agency in Tunisia*, Economic Research Forum, Working Papers 1157. https://erf.org.eg/app/uploads/2017/11/11571.pdf

Assaad R., Hendy R., Lassassi M. and Yassin S. (2018), *Explaining the MENA Paradox: Rising Educational Attainment, Yet Stagnant Female Labor Force Participation*, IZA Discussion Paper No. 11385, Institute of Labour Economics (IZA), Bonn. https://www.iza.org/publications/dp/11385/explaining-the-mena-paradox-rising-educational-attainment-yet-stagnant-female-labor-force-participation

Barakat B. and Basten S. (2014), *Modelling the Constraints on Consanguineous Marriage when Fertility Declines*, in "Demographic Research", vol. 30, n. 9, pp. 277-314. https://www.demographic-research.org/articles/volume/30/9

Belarbi Z. (2018), *Caractéristiques du célibat en Algérie à travers les recensements et enquêtes nationales de 1987 à 2012*, « Revue des sciences sociales *»,* Université Amar Teliji Laghouat 2017, vol. 11, n. 5, pp. 280-289. https://www.asjp.cerist.dz/en/downArticle/305/11/5/30660

Ben Halim N, Ben Alaya Bouafif N, Romdhane L, Kefi Ben Atig R, Chouchane I, Bouyacoub Y, Arfa I, Cherif W, Nouira S, Talmoudi F, Lasram K, Hsouna S, Ghazouani W, Azaiez H, El Matri L, Abid A, Tebib N, Ben Dridi MF, Kachboura S, Amouri A, Mokni M, Ben Arab S, Dellagi K, Abdelhak S. (2012), *Consanguinity, endogamy, and genetic disorders in Tunisia*. In "J Community Genet.", 2013 Apr; 4(2): 273–284.

Bokek-Cohen Y. and Tarabeih M. (2020), *Forbidden Medically Assisted Sex Selection in Sunni Muslims: a Qualitative Study*, in "Reproductive BioMedicine Online", vol. 41, n. 3, pp. 534-542

Bonci A. and Cavatorta F. (2021), *The Maghreb Region: Waithood, the Myth of Youth Bulges and the Reality of Frustrated Aspirations*, in A. Goerres and P. Vanhuysse (eds.), *Global Political Demography. The Politics of Population Change*, Palgrave Macmillan Open Access, pp. 247-275

Bonte P. (1994), Épouser au plus proche. Inceste, *prohobitions et stratégies matrimoniales autour de la Méditerranée*, Paris, Éditions de l'ÉHESS.

Bouasria L. (2020), *Des grilles d'analyse socio-anthropologiques dans l'air du temps: Vers une nouvelle ère de famille?,* in "Hespéris-Tamuda", *vol.* 3, pp. 325-349. https://www.hesperis-tamuda.com/Downloads/2020/fascicule-3/16.pdf

Bozrayda S.A.M., Shoeib T.M.A. and El-Shakmak F. (2019), *Consanguinity and Problems of Hearing and Speech among Libyan Population in Benghazi*, In "International Journal of Biological and Medical Research", vol. 10, n. 2, pp. 6690-3

Camus R. (2011), *Le grand remplacement,* Chez l'auteur

Charpentier I. (2015), *De la difficulté (sexuelle) d'être une femme célibataire au Maghreb : Une étude de témoignages et d'œuvres d'écrivaines algériennes et marocaines*, in « Modern and Contemporary France", vol. 23, n. 4, pp. 435-455

Conte É. (2011), *Elles seront des s*œurs *pour nous. Le mariage par permutation au Proche-Orient*, in « Études rurales », vol. 187, pp. 157-200

Conte É. (2020), *Citoyens ou agnats?* Légitimité, genre et processus identitaires au Proche-Orient et en Afrique du Nord, in Y. Ben Hounet, A.-M. Brisebarre, A.W. Ould Cheikh and B. Casciarri (eds.), *L'Anthropologie en Partage. Autour de l'œuvre de Pierre Bonte*, Paris, Karthala, pp. 153-175

Conte É. (2021), *Azmat nasab ou la filiation mise à mal*, in « Droits. Revue française de théorie, de philosophie et de cultures juridiques », vol. 73, pp. 61-104

Conte É. (2022), *Misyār, misfār, miṣyāf... Les avatars récents du mariage "islamique" non conventionnel*, in « Droits. Revue française de théorie, de philosophie et de cultures juridiques », vol. 76, pp. 109-144

Conte É. and Walentowitz S. (2009), *Kinship Matters. Tribals, Cousins, and Citizens in Southwest Asia and Beyond*, in "Études rurales", vol. 184, pp. 217-48. https://doi.org/10.4000/etudesrurales.10578

D'Addato A.V. (2006), *Progression to third birth in Morocco in the context of fertility transition*, in "Demographic Research", vol. 15/19, pp. 517-536, http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol15/19/ DOI: 10.4054/DemRes.2006.15.19

Dimashqī 'I. (2002), *Nikāḥ al-misyār wa-aḥkām al-ankiḥa al-muḥarrama*, Bayrūt, Al-maktaba al-'asriyya

El Gilany A.H. and Shady E. (2007), *Determinants and Causes of Son Preference among Women Delivering in Mansoura, Egypt*, in "Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal", vol. 13, n. 1, pp. 119-28. https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/117233

El Goundali K. (2022), *The Determinants of Consanguineous Marriages among the Arab Population: A Systematic Review*, in "Iranian Journal of Public Health", vol. 51, n. 2, pp. 253-65

El Harras M. (2006), *Les mutations de la famille au Maroc*, in *Maroc, 50 ans de développement humain, Perspectives 2025*, Rabat, UNESCO, pp. 105-29

Eltigani E.E. (2000), *Changes in Family-Building Patterns in Egypt and Morocco: A Comparative Analysis*, in "International Family Planning Perspectives", vol. 26, n. 2, pp. 73-8

El-Zeini L.O. (2008), *The Path to Replacement Fertility in Egypt: Acceptance, Preference, and Achievement*, in "Studies in Family Planning", vol. 39, pp. 161-76

El-Zeini L.O. (2009), *The Status of Fertility Transition in Egypt and Morocco: Explaining the Differences*, Conference Paper - 26th IUSSP International Population Conference, Marrakech, Morocco, 27 September to 3 October 2009, Session 458: "High Fertility Societies" http://www.abhatoo.net.ma/index.php/fre/content/download/13591/232429/file/Laila O. El-Zeini.pdf

Engelhardt H. and Schulz F. (2017), *Demographic Developments in the Middle East and North Africa*, University of Bamberg. https://fis.uni-bamberg.de/entities/publication/04cde7d0-a09a-426b-88e6-a3b0a8181e23/details

Feather G. (2020), *Proactive versus Reactive Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights: A Comparative Case Study Analysis of Morocco and Tunisia*, in "Femina Politica", vol. 21, pp. 76-89

Ferchiou S. (ed.) (1992), *Hasab wa nasab : parenté, alliance et patrimoine en Tunisie*, Paris, Éditions du CNRS

Frini O. and Muller C. (2023), *Revisiting Fertility Regulation and Family Ties in Tunisia*, in "BMC Pregnancy Childbirth", vol. 23, n. 88. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-023-05408-9

Grami A. (2008), *Gender Equality in Tunisia*, in "British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies", vol. 35, n. 3, pp. 349-361

Guessous C. (2018), *Mariage et concubinage dans les pays arabes*, Paris, L'Esprit du temps

Hafez S. (2012), *No Longer a Bargain: Women, masculinity, and the Egyptian uprising*, in "American Anthropologist", vol. 39, n. 1, pp. 37-42

Haj M. (1988), *The Changing Arab Kinship Structure: The Effect of Modernization in an Urban Community*, in "Economic Development and Cultural Change", vol. 36, n. 2, pp. 237-258

Haj M. (1995), *Kinship and Modernization in Developing Societies: The Emergency of Instrumentalized Kinship*, in "Journal of Comparative Family Studies », vol. XXVI, n. 3, pp. 311-328

Hammouda N.-E. (2009), Âge moyen au premier mariage et écart d'âge entre époux. Q*uelles méthodes d'estimation adopter dans le cas algérien?*, Alger, CREAD

Hasso F.S. (2011), *Consuming Desires: Family Crisis and the State in the Middle East,* Stanford, Stanford University Press

Hopkins N.S. (ed.) (2001), *The New Arab Family*, Cairo, American University in Cairo Press

Hussein S. (2002), *An Exploration of Nuptiality Patterns in Egypt and the Maghreb Countries,* PhD dissertation*,* University of London

Hussein S. and Manthorpe J. (2007), *Women from the Middle East and North Africa in Europe: Understanding their Marriage and Family Dynamics*, in "European Journal of Social Work", vol. 10, n. 4, pp. 465-480

Ibn Manẓūr M. [1232-1311 A.D.] (n.d.). *Lisān al-ʿArab*, Al-Qāhira, Dār al-Maʿārif, 6 vols

Imen M. (2023), *Du système matrimonial en Alg*érie*: Structure et logiques de l'endogamie familiale*, in « Aleph. Langues, médias & sociétés », vol. 10, n.1, pp. 545-562. https://aleph.edinum.org/6741

Inhorn M.C. (2012), *The New Arab Man. Emergent Masculinities, Technologies, and Islam in the Middle East*, Princeton, Princeton University Press

Inhorn, M.C. (2018), *The Arab World's "Quiet" Reproductive Revolution*, in "The Brown Journal of World Affairs", vol. 24, n. 2, pp. 147-159

Inhorn M.C. (2022), *Fertility Decline, Small Families, and Son Selection in the Arab World: The Controversial Convergence of Contraceptive and Repro-genetic Technologies*, in "The Muslim World", vol. 112, pp. 324-338

Inhorn, M.C. and Nefissa N. (eds.) (2018), *Reconceiving Muslim Men. Love and Marriage, Family and Care in Precarious Times*, New York, Oxford, Berghahn

Kateb K. (2011), *Scolarisation féminine massive, système matrimonial et rapports de genre au Maghreb*, in « Genre, sexualité & société », vol. Automne 2011, n. 6

Khalifa M., Abdelaziz W., Metwally S. and Sakr E., (2020), *The Recent Increase in Contraceptive Discontinuation in Egypt*, in "Journal of Biosocial Science", vol. 52, n.1, pp. 154-157

Kouaouci A. (1996), *Migration par mariage et endogamie en Algé*rie', in Ménages, familles, parentèles et solidarités dans les populations *méditerannéennes (Actes du colloque de Aranjuez, 1994)*, Association Internationale des Démographes de Langue Française, pp. 433-443

Kouaouci A. and Rabah S. (2013), *La reconstruction des dynamiques démographiques locales en Algérie (1987-2008) par des techniques d'estimation indirecte*, In « Cahiers québécois de démographie », vol. 42, n.1, pp. 101-132

Labidi L. (2017), *Celibate Women, the Construction of Identity, Karama (Dignity), and the "Arab Spring"*, in "Gender - Zeitschrift für Geschlecht, Kultur und Gesellschaft", vol. 9, n.1, pp. 11-29

Malik A. and Awadallah B. (2013), *The Economics of the Arab Spring*, In "World Development"*,* vol. 45*,* pp. 296–313

Mendoza J.E., Tolba M. and Saleh Y. (2020), *Strengthening Marriages in Egypt: Impact of Divorce on Women*, In "Behavioral Sciences", vol. 10, n. 1, p. 14. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7016733/

Moghadam V.M. (1993), *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East*, Boulder, CO, Lynne Rienner Publishers

Moghadam V.M. (2020), *Gender Regimes in the Middle East and North Africa: The Power of Feminist Movements*, in "Social Politics", vol 27, n. 3, pp. 467-485

Muṭlaq, ʻA. 1423 AH [2002], *Zawāj al-misyār. Dirāsa fiqhiyya wa ijtimaʻiyya naqdiyya,* Riyāḍ, Dār Ibn Laʻbūn

Obermeyer C.M. (1992), *Islam, Women and Politics: the Demography of Arab Countries*, in "Population and Development Review", vol. 18, n. 1, pp. 33-66

Obermeyer C.M. (1996), *Fertility Norms and Son Preference in Morocco and Tunisia: Does Women's Status Matter?*, in "Journal of Biosocial Science", vol. 28, n. 1, pp. 57-72

Ouadah-Bedidi Z. and Vallin J. (2000), *Maghreb : la chute irrésistible de la fécondité*, in « Population et société », vol. 359, pp. 1-4. https://www.ined.fr/fr/publications/editions/population-et-societes/maghreb-la-chute-irresistible-de-la-fecondite/

Ouadah-Bedidi Z. and Saadi N. (2014), *Algérie : femmes et familles entre droit et réalités*, INED, Document de travail n° 214, Novembre 2014.

Ouadah-Bedidi Z., Vallin J. and Bouchoucha I. (2012), *Unexpected Developments in Maghrebian Fertility*, in "Population & Societies", vol. 486. https://shs.hal.science/halshs-01499754/

Ouadah-Bedidi Z., Vallin J. and Bouchoucha I. (2017), *A Complete History of Male and Female Age at Marriage in Tunisia Since 1950*, Extended summary of paper presented at the PAA, Chicago, 2017

Oussedik F. (ed.) (2014), *Mutations familiales en milieu urbain. Algérie 2012*, PNR 31, Population et société, Alger, DGRSDT/CRASC

Rashad H. (2015), *The Tempo and Intensity of Marriage in the Arab Region: Key Challenges and their Implications*, DIFI Family Research and Proceedings, 2. https://www.academia.edu/52784649/The_tempo_and_intensity_of_marriage_in_the_Arab_region_Key_challenges_and_their_implications

Rashad H. and Hassan Z. (2012), *The Determinants of Fertility Plateau in Egypt and their Policy Implications*, Cairo, The American University in Cairo Social Research Center. https://documents.aucegypt.edu/Docs/src/Phase1 Final Report.pdf

Salem R. (2015), *Changes in the Institution of Marriage in Egypt from 1998 to 2012*, Dokki, Economic Research Forum, Working Paper no. 911. https://erf.org.eg/publications/changes-in-the-institution-of-marriage-in-egypt-from-1998-to-2012/

Salem R. (2016), *Imagined Crises: Assessing Evidence of Delayed Marriage and Never-Marriage in Contemporary Egypt*, in K. Celello and H. Kholoussy (eds.), *Domestic Tensions, National Anxieties: Global Perspectives on Marriage, Crisis, and Nation,* New York, Oxford Academic, online edition

Sayed H.A.A. (2019), *Trends of Fertility Levels in Egypt in Recent Years*, Cairo, Ministry of Planning/UNFPA

Shawki R.M., El-Awadi M.Y., Elsayed S.M., Hamadan G.E., (2011), *Consanguineous Matings among Egyptian Population*, in "The Egyptian Journal of Medical Human Genetics", vol. 12, pp. 157–163. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1110863011000449

Sindawi K. (2013), *Temporary Marriage in Sunni and Shiite Islam: a comparative study*, Germany, Harrassowitz

Singerman D. (2007), *The Economic Imperatives of Marriage: Emerging Practices and Identities Among Youth in the Middle East*, Middle East Youth Initiative, Working Paper No. 6, September, The Brookings Institution, Wolfensohn Center for Development, Washington, D.C.

Singerman D. (2021), Youth, Economics, and the Politics of Waithood: The Struggle for Dignity in the Middle East and North Africa, in M.C. Inhorn and N.J. Smith-Hefner (eds.), *Gender, Education, and Global Delays in Marriage and Childbearing*, New York-Oxford, Berghahn, pp. 31-59

Smith S. (2018), *La Ruée vers l'Europe. La jeune Afrique en route pour le Vieux Continent,* Paris, Grasset

Smith-Hefner N.J. (2020), *Too Educated to Marry? Muslim Women and Extended Singlehood in Indonesia*, in M.C. Inhorn and N.J. Smith-Hefner (eds.), *Gender, Education, and Global Delays in Marriage and Childbearing*, New York-Oxford: Berghahn, pp. 200-223

Tabutin D. (1993), Évolution comparée de la mortalité en Afrique du Nord de 1960 à nos jours, in « Social Science and Medicine », vol. 36, n. 10, pp. 1257-1265

Tabutin D. and Schoumaker B. (2005), *The Demography of the Arab World and the Middle East from the 1950s to the 2000s: A Survey of Changes and a Statistical Sssessment*, in "Population-E (Paris)", vol. 60, n. 5-6, pp. 505-616. https://www.cairn-int.info/journal-population-2005-5-page-505.htm

Tadmouri G.O., Nair P., Obeid T., Al Ali M.T., Al Khaja N. and Hamami H.A., (2009), *Consanguinity and reproductive health among Arabs*, In "Reproductive Health", vol. 6, n.17, https://reproductive-health-journal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1742-4755-6-17

Tribalat M. (2021), *Fécondité en Algérie*, https://www.micheletribalat.fr/448290491

Yacoubi I. (2016), *Sovereignty from Below: State Feminism and Politics of Women against Women in Tunisia*, in "The Arab Studies Journal", vol. 24, n. 1, pp. 254-74

Yamani M. (2008), *Polygamy and Law in Contemporary Saudi Arabia,* London, Ithaca

Yavuz-Altınta M. (2022), *Fātiḥa Marriage in Morocco Between Legislation and Judicial Practice*, in "Journal of Women of the Middle East and the Islamic World", vol. 20, pp.10–33

Ye'or B. (2005), *Eurabia: The Arab-Euro Axis,* Madison, Fairleigh Dickinson University

Yount K.M., Langsten R. and Hill K. (2000), *The Effect of Gender Preference on Contraceptive Use and Fertility in Rural Egypt*, in "Studies in Family Planning", vol. 31, n. 4, pp. 290-300

Zagaglia B. (2019), *Characteristics of Fertility Transitions in Mediterranean African Countries*, in "Rivista Italiana di Economia Demografia e Statistica", vol. LXXIII, n. 3, pp. 41-52