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## Afrasian Instability Zone and Its Historical Background\*

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### ABSTRACT

*The evolution of the Afroeurasian world-system which in the 'long 16<sup>th</sup> century' was transformed into the global World System comprised both economic and political components, some of which are discussed in the present article. Earlier research has identified four major zones of instability which can be designated as the Central Asian (including Afghanistan and Pakistan), the Middle East, North Africa, and the Sahel region. We suggest considering these four zones as a single Afrasian macrozone of instability. We show that this zone correlates rather closely with the zone of traditional prevalence of the parallel cousin marriage, as well as with the zone of very low female labor force participation rate, and the territory of the Umayyad Caliphate. The article demonstrates that this correlation is not coincidental and also discusses the factors and mechanisms that have produced it.*

### INTRODUCTION

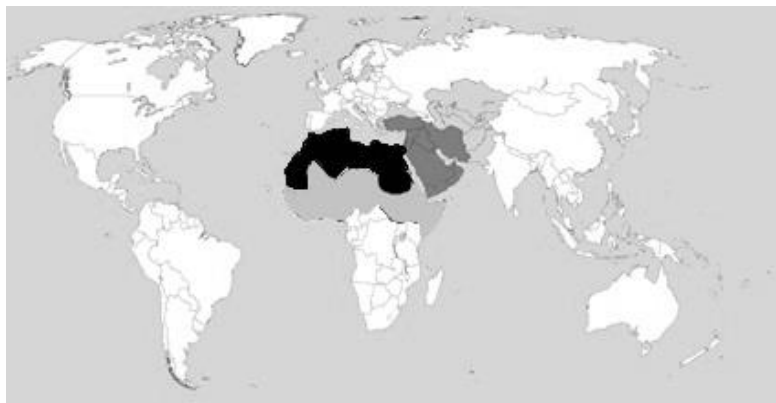
The evolution of the Afroeurasian world-system that in the 'long 16<sup>th</sup> century' transformed into the global World System (see, e.g., Grinin and Korotayev 2014) had not only economic but also political components some of which will be discussed in the present article.

In his article 'Regional Instability Zones' Konstantin Truev-tsev (2014) has identified five major zones of instability that can be

designated as the Central Asian (including Afghanistan and Pakistan), the Middle East, North Africa, the Sahel region and the Pacific. The latter stands out from the general list, extending only along the borders of China, and its emergence is the result of the priorities and ambitions of China's foreign policy (Truevtsev 2014). Other regions in the aggregate represent a single continuous Afrasian macro-zone of instability.

Note that in addition to the presence of now traditional hotbeds of instability in the Afrasian macro-zone (due to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, chaos in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Mali, *etc.*), the situation has deteriorated markedly after the Arab Spring when the vacuum that emerged after the fall of a few political regimes began to be filled by various radical movements, which led to the emergence of new long-running conflicts in Syria, Libya, and Yemen, accompanied as well by the emergence of the phenomenon of the 'Islamic State' in Syria and Iraq exacerbated by notable weakness of the key regional players, on which depends the security of the region.

One can easily notice that all the four areas described above form a single continuous macro-zone of instability that can be called 'Afrasian Instability Macrozone' (Fig. 1). It is obvious that this macrozone currently is the major area of concentration of the internal social and political tensions. The world outside Afro-Asian zone looks now much calmer.<sup>1</sup>



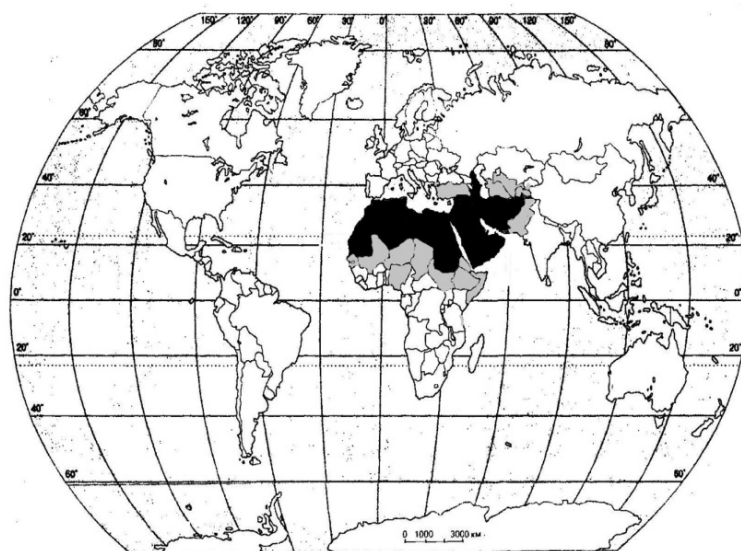
**Fig. 1. Afro-Asian macro zone of instability**

Compare now the Afrasian instability zone with the zone of parallel cousin marriage. One should note, of course, that in general, cousin marriages (marriages between first cousins) are widespread in the world traditional cultures (Ember 1983: 83; Pasternak *et al.* 1997: 133). But in most cases we speak about cross-cousin marriages (marriages to one's mother's brother's daughter [MBD] or father's sister's daughter [FSD]). The fact is that cross-cousins (children of a brother and a sister) belong to different lineages, and therefore the marriage between them is not usually considered incestuous, as it does not violate the principle of lineage exogamy (the ban to take a mate from one's own lineage), while the exogamy was a characteristic of the lineage organization of the overwhelming majority of the peoples in the world (see, *e.g.*, Korotaev and Obolonkov 1989, 1990).

The other main type of this form of marriage, parallel cousin marriage, could be observed much more infrequently. Parallel cousin marriage can be divided into two subtypes: matrilateral (with one's mother's sister's daughter [MSD]) and patrilateral (with one's father's brother's daughter – the so called 'FBD marriage'). The first of these subtypes is extremely rare. Strictly speaking, the only such ethnographic case known is the Tuareg of the Sahara who traditionally preferred this form of marriage (Pershits 1998: 543).

The second subtype is much wider spread; however, it is testified to be preferred only in a few dozen (from several thousand) ethnic groups in the world, and at the same time the spatial distribution of these cultures has been rather limited. Fig. 2 shows a map of the traditional spread of parallel cousin marriage. The countries/regions where this form of marriage was traditionally widespread are marked in black, those countries/areas where it traditionally had a significant, but not very broad presence are marked in grey.

If we compare the area of the traditional prevalence of parallel cousin marriage with Afrasian macro-zone of socio-political instability, one can easily note that the spatial boundaries of both zones coincide almost perfectly.



**Fig. 2. The traditional zone of parallel cousin marriage**

*Sources:* Murdock 1967; Murdock *et al.* 1986, 1990, 1999–2000; Andreev 1949; Korotayev and Obolonkov 1989, 1990; Korotayev 2000c, *etc.*

However, we do not think that there is a causal relationship between these two variables (cross-cousin marriage and socio-political instability), although Kurtz (2007) suggests a hypothesis of the presence of this connection, referring to the work of one of the authors of the present article (Korotayev 2000c). We believe that there is some third, deeper, variable, apparently, of a civilizational order underlies them. This observation is confirmed by the fact that Afrasian macro-zone of instability as well as the area of traditional spread of parallel cousin marriage, almost perfectly (with only a few exceptions) coincides with the zone of ultra-low values of female labor participation rate (see Fig. 3; for more details see also Korotayev, Issaev, and Shishkina 2015). In this figure the countries with ultra-low per cent ( $< 29$ ) of economically active women in the total number of the adult female population ( $\geq 15$  years) are marked in black, and countries with a very low (29–38 per cent) share are marked in grey.



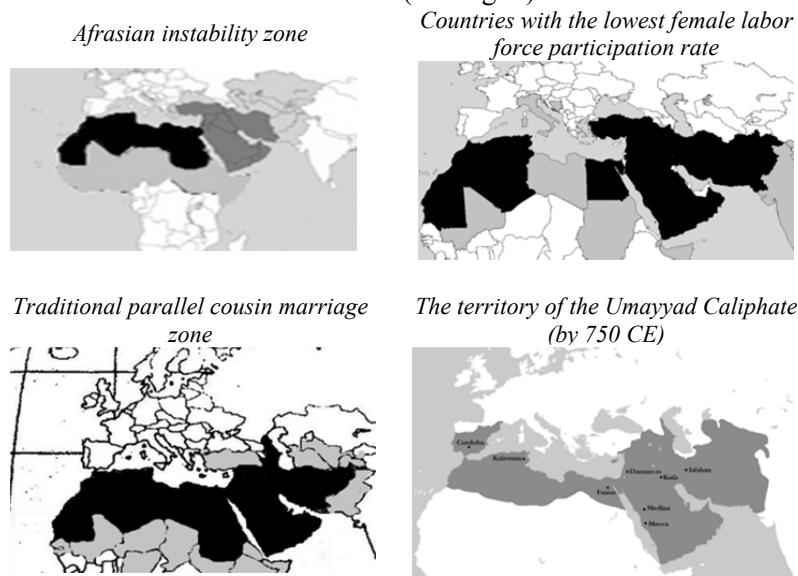
**Fig. 3. Countries with the lowest female labor force participation rates**

*Source:* World Bank 2015.

As can be seen, the zone of very low female labor force participation rate is extremely close to the area of the traditional prevalence of parallel cousin marriage, as well as to the Afrasian macro-zone of sociopolitical instability. In this case, the functional relationship with the socio-political instability is clearer. For example, in Egypt, a strike of weavers in a textile factory in the town of al-Mahalla al-Kubra (that started on April 6, 2008) was a clear harbinger of the revolutionary events of 2011. During that strike, a group of young activists created on Facebook a group called ‘6 April Youth Movement’ (as a group supporting the strikers [Wolman 2008]), which later became one of the main organizers of the January 25 Revolution in Egypt. Almost in any other countries outside the Afrasian instability zone, these would be predominantly women who would work at textile factories, while in the former case these are mostly men. If women, not men, had worked in the textile factory in al-Mahalla al-Kubra, they would have been unlikely ‘to go out into the streets.’ However, it is clear that here we speak about significant, but not the only most important factor generating social and political destabilization.

We should note that our earlier study of the phenomenon of parallel cousin marriage (Korotayev 2000c) demonstrate that the most strong correlation is observed when the presence of the parallel cousin marriage in a certain area is correlated with its inclusion in the Umayyad Caliphate. Indeed, in this case we reveal an espe-

cially strong correlation.<sup>2</sup> On the whole, a very close match of all areas described above is obvious (see Fig. 4).



**Fig. 4. A comparison of traditional parallel cousin marriage zone, territory of the Umayyad Caliphate, area of extremely female labor force participation rate and Afrasian instability macrozone**

What can explain such a close correlation? First, we will make an attempt to answer the question of why the traditional boundaries of the parallel cousin marriage zone are so close to the borders of the Umayyad Caliphate.

On the one hand, there seems to be no serious doubt that there is some functional connection between Islam and parallel cousin FBD marriage. Indeed, this marriage type appears to be highly adaptive within the Islamic context. As is well known, an important feature of Islamic Law (*al-Shari'ah*) is that it insists that a daughter should have her share of inheritance, although half as much as a son's. What is more, she must have her firm share of inheritance in all types of property left by her father. '...The Quranic verses of inheritance (4: 7, 11–12, 176)... granted inheritance rights to... daughters... of the deceased in a patriarchal society where all rights were traditionally vested solely in male heirs. Similar legal rights would not occur in the West until the nine-

teenth century' (Esposito 1998: 95; see also, *e.g.*, Schacht 1964; Esposito 1982, *etc.*). Islamic religious authorities often paid great attention to the observance of this rule, interpreting any attempts to deprive a daughter of her share in any type of property as a clear manifestation of *Tāghūt*, 'Satanic Law' (*e.g.*, Dresch 1989).

This norm does not appear to have created any serious problems in nonagricultural mercantile Mecca. However, this norm often created serious problems in an intensive agriculturalist patrilineal exogamous patrilocal context.

Imagine, within such a context, an extended family of plow agriculturalists living in a monoclan village and possessing a large consolidated, easily exploitable plot of land. For this family to observe the above mentioned Islamic norm without changing its marriage patterns, would mean the following.

In every generation a significant proportion of the land will be inherited by daughters. However, with exogamous patrilocal marriage the daughters would have to be married to men of other villages. However, the people are plow agriculturalists who, in addition to that are also Muslims who observe (to at least some extent) Islamic woman seclusion. The daughter would be highly unlikely to till the land; it would be rather her husband who would actually plow and control it. Hence, the land would actually fall under the control of a daughter's husband's household.

As a result, within just a few generations what used to be a consolidated tract of land would turn into a patchwork of small plots virtually belonging to different households. The male members of our extended family would also, of course, get control over various small pieces of land through their wives. But a mosaic of small land pieces scattered about the vicinity would be an undesirable compensation for the loss of a large viable mass of land that the family would control.

Within such a context parallel cousin (FBD) marriage could really solve the problem. If your daughter marries your brother's son, the land that she would inherit remains under the control of your family and you have no problems described above (see, *e.g.*, Rosenfeld 1957). Hence, the association of parallel cousin (FBD) marriage and Islam is not at all surprising.

However, one should emphasize several points. Islamic Law does not prohibit patrilineal parallel cousin (FBD) marriage. Nor

does it impose (or even recommend) it (*e.g.*, Schacht 1964; al-Jazīrī 1990/1410: 60–61). But most traditional cultures have a clear perception that marriage between a man and his father's brother's daughter (FBD) is incestuous. This is evident in the fact that in most languages a kinship term for FBD (or your mother's sister's daughter [MSD]) would be identical with a kinship term for one's sister. This normally implies that marriage with a FBD (or MSD) would be perceived as equivalent to marriage with a sister (Korotayev 1999). There appears to be something here that Kronenfeld (2000) called a 'cognitive problem.'<sup>3</sup>

Within such a context the mere permission to marry a FBD is insufficient to overcome the above mentioned cognitive problem, even if such a marriage brought some clear economic advantages for a groom and his family (as actually occurs, *e.g.*, within most Muslim societies of sub-Saharan Africa). Evidently, there should be something else in addition to Islamization to persuade someone to act in this way. That 'something else' was present in the Arab-Islamic Khalifate of the seventh and eighth centuries (at least up to AD 751). What was it?

We have little doubt that the vast majority of known cases of preferred patrilineal parallel cousin marriage is the result of diffusion from a single source. It is rather possible that the above-described 'cognitive problem' had been solved only once (at least to the extent that led to the formation of preferred patrilineal parallel cousin marriage) and this led eventually to the emergence of dozens of cultures characterized by this marriage practice and occupying large, yet compact enough area of the Old World.

In the era of its origin, the preferred patrilineal parallel cousin marriage had nothing to do with Islam. Cognitive problem was apparently solved somewhere in the Syro-Palestinian region long before the birth of Christ (the oldest mentions of this practice were connected with the Jews in the Old Testament [Fox 2011: 145]). Rodionov (1999) draws researchers' attention to the fact that this marriage pattern is widespread in the non-Islamic cultures of this area (*e.g.*, Maronites or Druze) and that it has a considerable functional value there in this non-Islamic context with facilitating the division of property among brothers after their father's death (Rodionov 1999). Indeed, this marriage pattern could hardly be attributed to Islamic or Arab influence here. It seems, rather, that

this marriage pattern in the Islamic world and the non-Islamic Syro-Palestinian cultures stems from the same source.

However, in the pre-Islamic period the patrilineal parallel cousin marriage was spread in extremely limited territories. The situation changed a bit in the fourth and fifth centuries CE. In the late fourth century the Himyarite rulers of Yemen converted to Judaism and introduced Judaism as the state religion of their empire. In that period, the Kindites, who controlled Central Arabia, were Himyarite vassals. It is not surprising that the Himyarite vassals soon also began to practice Judaism. As is well known, the Jewish tribes (in reality Judaized Arab tribes) were dominant in Yathrib (modern Medina) in the fifth and sixth centuries; in the oases to the north of Yathrib the Jewish tribes were dominant even at the time of the Hijrah. Thus, in the fifth century, a major part of the Arabian Peninsula experienced the Judaization to varying degrees (see, *e.g.*, Crone 1987; Bolshakov 1989; Korotayev 1996a, 2003; Korotayev, Klimenko, and Proussakov 1999, 2007; Gajda 2009; Bowersock 2013).

Against this background, it is not surprising that almost the only area adjacent to the Syro-Palestinian region where this form of marriage became fairly widespread before Islam period had been the Arabian Peninsula where its spread could be associated with significant Jewish influence well detected in this area in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries CE. A special role was played by the Judaization of Kindah, the most notable Arab clan in the fifth century (*e.g.*, Korotayev, Klimenko, and Proussakov 1999, 2007). The Jewish practices which they employed could in principle be borrowed by other Arab clans, even if they did not convert to Judaism, due to the extremely high prestige of the Kindites.

However that may be, by the seventh century the preferred patrilineal parallel cousin marriage had become fairly widespread among several influential Arab tribal groups (*e.g.*, Negrya 1981; Kudelin 1994). In the seventh and eighth centuries this pattern explosively diffused when the Arab tribes, supported by Islam, spread throughout the whole of the Omayyid Khalifate. Although preferential parallel cousin marriage diffused (together with Islam and Arabs) later beyond the borders of the Umayyad Khalifate, the extent of this diffusion was very limited. Hence the present distribution of the FBD marriage has been essentially created by the Muslim Arab conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries. Hence

the strong correlation between the degree of the Islamization and the presence of the parallel cousin FBD marriages is to a considerable extent a product of network autocorrelation (*e.g.*, de Munck and Korotayev 2000; Korotayev and de Munck 2003) produced by the Arab-Islamic historical context.

It appears appropriate to note here that Russian and Islamic Studies traditionally designated Islamic civilization as 'Arab-Muslim' (which often met strong objections from the Muslim colleagues from former Soviet Central Asia [*e.g.*, Ahmadjonzoda 1988]). However, this designation is helpful in some respects. The fact is that this civilization (especially within the territory of the first Islamic Empire) seems to contain important Arab non-Islamic elements and cannot be perceived without taking them into account.

It is important to mention that the Arabs were the dominant ethnic within the Islamic Empire at least until the Abbasid revolution in the middle of the eighth century CE (*e.g.*, Shaban 1970), and the Arab culture as a whole (including its non-Islamic components, like preferential parallel cousin [FBD] marriage) acquired a high prestige and proliferated within the borders of the Empire.

With the conquests, the Arabs found themselves in charge of a huge non-Arab population. Given that it was non-Muslim, this population could be awarded a status similar to that of clients in Arabia, retaining its own organization under Arab control in return for the payment of taxes... But converts posed a novel problem in that, on the one hand, they had to be incorporated, not merely accommodated, within Arab society; and on the other hand, they had forgotten their genealogies, suffered defeat and frequently also enslavement, so that they did not make acceptable *ḥalīfs*; the only non-Arabs to be affiliated as such were the Ḥamrā' and Asāwira, Persian soldiers who deserted to the Arabs during the wars of conquest in return for privileged status... It was in response to this novel problem that Islamic *walā'* [*i.e.*, the system of integration of non-Arab Muslims into Islamic society as dependent *mawālī* – A. K., L. I., M. R., A. S. and E. I.] was evolved (Crone 1991: 875).

It appears a bit amazing that such a highly-qualified specialist in early Islamic history as Crone managed to overlook another (and much more important!) exception; the Yemenis (most of them hardly belonged to the Arab proto-ethnos by the early seventh century CE). The possible explanation here might be that Yemeni ef-

forts<sup>4</sup> aimed at persuading the Arabs that southern Arabians had always been Arabs, were quite as much as Arab as the Arabs themselves, or even more Arab than the Arabs (*al-`arab al-`āribah* as distinct from *al-`arab al-musta`ribah* [e.g., Piotrovskiy 1977: 20, 23, 29; 1985: 67; Shahid 1989: 340–341; Robin 1991b: 64; Korotayev 2006]) turned out to be so successful that they managed to persuade not only themselves and the Arabs, but the Arabists as well.

However, in order to be recognized as Arabs, hence as competent members of early Islamic society, the Yemenis had to adopt many Arab practices, even those that had no direct link to Islam. A good example of this is the borrowing of the Arab genealogical tradition by the Yemenis.

In strong contrast to the North Arabian practice of recording long lists of ancestors (attested also for the pre-Islamic period in the Safaitic inscriptions), E[pigraphic] S[outh] A[rabian] nomenclature consisted simply of given-name plus name of the social grouping (usually the *bayt*), with optional insertion of the father's given-name, but never any mention of an ancestor in any higher degree. One is irresistibly reminded of the remark attributed to the caliph `Umar, 'Learn your genealogies, and be not like the Nabataeans of Mesopotamia who, when asked who they are, say "I am from such-and-such a village" which Ibn Khaldūn quotes with the very significant comment that it is true also of the populations of the fertile tracts of Arabia... [The] *qabīla*... [is] fundamentally kinship-based and totally different in nature from the *sha`b*... In the Qur'ān (49:13) *ja`alnā-kum shu`ūb<sup>an</sup> wa-qabā'il<sup>a</sup>* clearly refers to two different types of social organization, and Ibn Khaldūn when speaking of the settled populations of Arabia is careful to use the word *shu`ūb* and not *qabā'il*, reserving the latter for the nomads' (Beeston 1972a: 257–258; see also Ibn al-Kalbī 1966; Beeston 1972b: 543; Ryckmans 1974: 500; Robin 1982a: v. I; 1982b; 1991a; Piotrovskiy 1985: 53, 69; Korotayev 1995, 1996b, 1998, 2000a, 2000b, 2006; Bondarenko and Korotayev 2000c).

In early Islamic times, under the influence of northern Arabian tribal culture which acquired the highest prestige in the Muslim world, many southern Arabian *sha`bs*, while remaining essentially territorial (Dresch 1989; Serjeant 1989: XI; Korotayev 2006), were transformed into *qabā'il*, tribes structured formally according to genealogical principles. This transformation was also the result of the

southern Arabians' intense effort aimed at development of their own genealogies, as well as their passionate (and quite successful) struggle for the recognition of their genealogies by the Arab elite. In this way they were able to attain quite high positions in the dominant Arab ethnos within the early Islamic state in the period between the seventh and mid-eighth centuries (Piotrovskiy 1977, 1985).

All this suggests that within the Umayyid Caliphate there was a strong informal pressure on the Islamicized non-Arab groups to adopt Arab norms and practices, even if they had no direct connection with Islam (*e.g.*, genealogies and preferential parallel cousin marriage). On the other hand, after these cultural traits were adopted, particularly FBD marriage, their high functional value in the Islamic context would help to reproduce the Arab cultural patterns for generations. In that historical context when the Arabs were the dominant ethnic group, their norms and practices were borrowed by Islamized non-Arab groups striving to achieve a full social status. Thus a systematic transition to FBD marriage took place when Islamization occurred together with Arabization. This was precisely the situation within the Arab Islamic Caliphate in the seventh and eighth centuries. And this might be the major explanation for such a strong correlation between the area of the traditional parallel cousin FBD marriage prevalence and the territory of the Umayyad Caliphate.

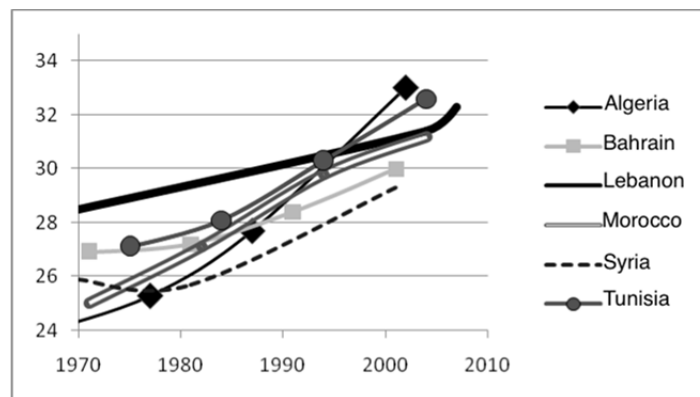
Thus, the parallel cousin marriage serves, in fact, quite a good marker of belonging to the Arab-Islamic civilization. There are reasons to believe that some characteristics of this civilization in modern conditions contributed to the growth of sociopolitical destabilization in condition of accelerating modernization of respective societies. In this paper we will focus only on some of them.

Apparently, one of these characteristics could be the combination of strict prohibitions on extramarital sexual relations together with a number of marriage and family customs, which in conditions of modernization have led to a sharp increase in the age of marriage, especially for men (see, *e.g.*, Rashad, Osman, and Roudi-Fahimi 2005: 6; Marks 2011a: 5, 25; 2011b; Puschmann and Matthijs 2012: 15, 19).

One should note that in the Arab countries the practice of early marriage, in particular for women, was traditionally very widespread (which, incidentally, was typical of the vast majority of traditional societies [Schlegel and Barry 1991]). Often the bride's family hid a girl's true age to give her in marriage as soon as possi-

ble. At his time, Kamel Nahas (1954) singled out the following reasons of early marriage in the Arab countries. Firstly, from a religious point of view, marriage is a sacred duty, the Qur'an encourages the creation of family and marriage. Second, the early appearance of sexual desire necessitates the marriage to avoid sin. Third, in the Arab countries a strict gender division is adopted. Fourth, the spread of the desire to have children, both among men and women, is important. Fifth, a girl should have no sexual relations with a man before marriage, because otherwise it would jeopardize the honor of her family (so the girl's family seeks early marriage to save their honor) (Nahas 1954).

However, due to the inclusion of all the Arab countries in the modernization processes we can observe a distinct change in all spheres of society, including the sphere of marriage and family relations. In recent decades modernization has led to the widespread increase in the marriageable age, but in the Arab world such a phenomenon is especially pronounced among males (see Fig. 5).



**Fig. 5. Dynamics of the average age of first marriage (in years) for men in some Arab countries in recent decades**

Source: UN Population Division 2015.

One of the main reasons for the widespread increase in the average age of the first marriage is that young people are with increasing frequency unable to make the engagement due to financial difficulties. Over recent decades, the wedding in Islamic countries has become particularly expensive for both groom and bride, as well as for their families. The groom must pay the *mahr*<sup>5</sup> and to accept

obligations of the full financial support of his wife and children (note that this correlates rather closely with the very low female labor force participation rates that are so typical for the Afrasian Instability Zone); at the same time the size of the official *mahr* and informal bride price (fee paid by the groom for the bride to her parents) in recent decades has grown enormously.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, a wedding needs an immense amount of money, and a male, who is responsible for the payment of the major part of this amount, has to work hard to earn it. Many young people after the agreement of engagement leave for a few years to work in one of the oil-producing Arab countries in order to save money. On average, up to 30 years an ordinary Arab Muslim can hardly afford to get married, because first he has to find a job with a salary sufficient to purchase a car, to build a house or buy an apartment, furniture, and finally, have to pay *mahr* for the bride and buy an expensive wedding gift for her (*e.g.*, Shmeleva 2003: 67–71).

The joyous traditions surrounding an Arab marriage have combined with the region's increasing modernization and consumerism to make marriage ceremonies and related requirements in Arab countries extremely expensive. Arab young men in their 20s commonly say that they are saving now in order to be able to marry some years in the future [Rashad, Osman, and Roudi-Fahimi 2005: 6].

The rising costs of marriage are the important reason for its postponement. By the end of the 1990s, an average marriage in Egypt cost approximately US\$ 6,000, while the annual national income per capita was only US\$ 1,490. This explains why young men and their families for years had to save money in order to finally get married (Puschmann and Matthijs 2012: 19).

In this regard, in 2005, Mensch, Singh, and Casterline noted:

It seems reasonable that postponement of marriage, beyond certain point, may not be considered universally positive, even if the delay is caused by heightened expectations rather than declining economic circumstances. Indeed, late age at marriage, if it arises from limited resources, may not be viewed as desirable by young men – it may be a source of frustration, particularly where premarital sex is not condoned (Mensch, Singh, and Casterline 2005: 26).<sup>7</sup>

In this regard, it seems relevant that unmarried men are much more prone to radicalism and extremist political actions (including direct terrorism) than married men of the same age, that has been shown with the use of direct empirical data on Egypt (Marks 2011a: 9–17). Thus, a significant increase in the average age of marriage among men observed in the last decades in most Arab countries can be considered as a significant factor of socio-political instability in this part of the globe. This appears to be a rather significant channel (but, of course, in no way the only one) through which certain peculiarities of the Arab-Islamic civilization contributed to the formation of the Afrasian instability zone.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Yet, the processes of socio-political destabilization are also observed outside this area. For example, in the period between 2013 and 2014 quite strong socio-political upheavals were observed in Thailand, the Ukraine, Venezuela and Bosnia.

<sup>2</sup> That has been shown via formal statistical procedures as well (Korotayev 2000c).

<sup>3</sup> The comment was made by D. Kronenfeld during the 29th Annual Meeting of the Society for Cross-Cultural Research in New Orleans, LA, on February 24, 2000 during the discussion of Andrey Korotayev's paper on the parallel cousin marriage correlates.

<sup>4</sup> And these efforts were by no means senseless, as some Arabs for some time refused to recognize the Arab identity of the Yemenis (*e.g.*, Piotrovskiy 1985: 67).

<sup>5</sup> The term *mahr* in the Muslim family law is used to designate the property allocated by the husband to his wife at the conclusion of equal marriage (*zawāj*). The payment of *mahr* is the main condition of the marriage and is regarded as a fee for the marriage to one's wife. In this context, the *mahr* can be absolutely anything that has any value and to that the right of property can be extended (see Spies 1913–1936; Bogolyubov 1991: 164).

<sup>6</sup> Thus, for example, in Libya in the first half of the 1970s (during the oil boom), the average size of payments for the bride jumped from US\$ 3,500 to US\$ 35,000 just in a few years (Toros 1975: 3).

<sup>7</sup> This could be applied to the countries of the Arab-Muslim civilization in the highest degree. Here, the honour of a young girl is the highest virtue, a source of pride of her family and a prerequisite for the marriage (confirmation of a bride's virginity is the confirmation of family honour) [Dialmy and Uhlmann 2005: 19]. The ritual of the confirmation of bride's chastity is particularly important for the groom since it determines his male viability and status in the society.

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