ACTA VIA SERICA
Vol. 5, No. 1, June 2020: 153–186
doi: 10.22679/avs.2020.5.1.006

Family Matters: The Making and Remaking of Family during Conflict Periods in Central Asia

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The family as a social institution has survived most diverse political periods and appears resilient or at least able to reconstitute itself even in the aftermath of destructive events such as wars. Age at first marriage is one possibility to systematize the strategies that families follow in times of internal conflicts (e.g., civil wars), external interventions or peaceful times. The authors found that age at first marriage correlates with socio-political events whereas perceptions of insecurity lead to a decline in marital age. This paper is based on three case studies that the authors have conducted through ethnographic methods among Tajiks in the cities Kulob, Khujand, and Mazar-e Sharif in Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Combining Grounded Theory with the genealogical methods from social anthropology in order to generate demographic data, the authors introduce the method of grounded demography as a way to generate demographic data through ethnographic methods. Grounded demography offers a way to produce statistical data grounded in ethnographic research.

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Key words: family, marriage, grounded demography, Tajiks in Central Asia, civil war, Soviet Union

Introduction

Families[1] are a nucleus of society that link individuals through socially defined notions of belonging.[2] While these relationships can also rest on biological claims, social construction of family defines what factors are relevant. While the notion of family is universal, what various individuals, societies and languages actually mean by family is subject to empirical analysis. Over the last hundred years, the importance of family among Tajiks that are the core of this study has not diminished, yet its meaning for individuals, nation states and societies has varied. Still, family as a social institution has survived most diverse political periods and appears resilient or at least able to reconstitute itself even in the aftermath of destructive events such as wars.

In the case of Tajikistan and Afghanistan, the long-lasting legacies of wars and transfers of power call into scrutiny their impact on more foundational social units and institutions such as the family. Based on ethnographic methods and demographic approaches combined through a method we shall call "grounded demography" we explore strategies of family "repairing" or "recovering" after conflict periods. We depart from two assumptions: first, radical political changes such as the establishment of the Soviet Union and wars could affect families and their strategies to reproduce and; second, these changes must be measurable on a local level through a case-sensitive socio-demographic method.

The notion of family employed in this study refers, first, to a set of individuals who claim a relationship on the basis of connectedness through substances acquired through birth (blood, genetic, other links), second, to individuals who are raised or marry into a group of people that follow rules of mutual obligation and, third, to individuals who call those they consider family members by notions that explain a social link, that is, kinship terms. Conceptually, this study follows Morgan's suggestion of "making family" rather than having family or forming a household as used in demography.[3] Here, the concept of "making family" emphasizes the processual aspect of family over a structural one. In other words, we consider family to be a social unit in which its members actively invest

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[1] We thank the anonymous reviewers for their suggestions and comments that helped developing the paper.

[2] See J. Carsten, *After Kinship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); R. Parkin and L. Stone, *Kinship and Family. An Anthropological Reader* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004); D.M. Schneider, *American Kinship: A Cultural Account* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968).

[3] See D.H. Morgan, *Rethinking Family Practices* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

time, care and resources to meet the family members' needs. Just as family can expand by integrating more people into the category, it can shrink by unmaking family bonds and retreating from responsibilities. Jack Goody has called this growing and shrinking the developmental cycle of households.[4] We will operate with the notion of family that uncovers flexibility and adaptability as well as security and long-term stability.[5]

The localities under research here have experienced wars and political changes such as the collapse of the Soviet Union that impacted family members of all ages or genders. [6] Our data uncovers that most families seem to have the capacity to recover as a functioning social unit after such disruption. We expect that such resilient capacities have an impact on demographic data such as marital behaviour. Wars, political events and disasters cause social wounds that are repaired to a certain degree through social practices and ways of memorizing and forgetting.

If we assume that family has the capacity to overcome losses, threats, split and persecution and recover after disruptive societal events then this must also be measurable in one way or another. In order to explore this hypothesis, we adopt a grounded demographic method in the process of collecting demographic data through individual memory, family narratives, historical analysis, and ethnographic experiences. The data encompasses three different locations in Tajikistan and Afghanistan.

Case Selection

Our comparative research was conducted in three different locations within two different countries with a focus on the same ethnic group. The duration of investigations was between 2013 and 2015. The first site for data collection was Khujand, a city in the Tajik part of Ferghana Valley situated at the heart of Central Asia, known for its high percentage of Turkic speaking people and intermarriage among these groups. The town is primarily organized along socio-economic groups known as *tabaqas*.[7] Despite the promotion of

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[4] See J. Goody, "Domestic Groups," *Addison-Wesley Modular Publications* 28 (1972): 1–32.

[5] See C. Leutloff-Grandits, "Return as a Strategy of Social Security? Generational and Family Based Approaches to Return of Serbian War-Refugees to Croatia," In *Generations, Kinship and Care. Gendered Provisions of Social Security in Central Eastern Europe,* edited by H. Haukanes and F. Pine, 207-29 (University of Bergen. Center for Women's and Gender Research, 2005); S.C. Lubkemann, *Culture in Chaos. Anthropology of the Social Condition in War* (Chicago [London]: University of Chicago Press 2008); S. Randall, "Demographic Consequences of Conflict, Forced Migration and Repatriation: A Case Study of Malian Kel Tamasheq," *European Journal of Population* 21 no. 2-3 (2005): 291-320.

[6] See S. Roche, ed, *The Family in Central Asia: New Research Perspectives* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2017).

[7] See S. Roche, "Tabaqas in Khujand: Maintaining, dissolving and remaking group boundaries through marriage," In *Intermarriage in Eastern Europe and Eurasia: Ethnic Mixing Under Fascism, Communism, and*

ethnic identities as the main reference for belonging during the Soviet period, the *tabaqa* group identifications[8] remain important particularly when it comes to marriage.

Our second field site was Kulob, situated in the south of today's Tajikistan and although as multi-ethnic as the north, those speaking Tajik and referring to themselves as Tajiks have been the core of the ethnographic study. Our third location was Mazar-e Sharif in northern Afghanistan where Tajiks make a considerable part of the multi-ethnic urban population. They refer to themselves as Tajiks in opposition to Uzbeks, Hazaras, Pashtuns, etc. within a context of explicit ethnic categorization.

Khujand was under Russian colonial influence already in the 19th century. Kulob was integrated in the 1920s into the Soviet Union rather late and with resistance from the local population.[9] Mazar-e Sharif was only marginally affected by the British who arrived from the south via India in the 19th century during a historical juncture marked by competition with Russians known as the Great Game. In the late 1970s, a communist regime installed itself in Afghanistan by overthrowing the traditional elite in a violent coup.[10] As a result of the coup and the ensuing widespread popular resistance, the Soviet Union felt compelled to intervene on the side of the communist government. Its military operation, which started in late 1979, was envisioned to be short. Instead, it lasted a full decade in what became known as the Soviet-Afghan war.[11]

Economically, Khujand has long been an urban trading and artisan centre. During the Soviet period, it supplied much of the ruling elite of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic. The nearby city of Chkalovsk was part of the nuclear production project in Central Asia.[12] Uranium for the first Soviet atomic bomb came from the nearby mountains and was processed in nuclear plants in Chkalovsk.

Beyond, edited by A.L. Edgar and B. Frommer (Borderlands and Transcultural Studies Series) (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020).

[8] Tabaqa refers to a caste-like social hierarchy in which the highest group, the tura or khuja are the ritual leaders providing services to their dependents (murids or muruds) and in earlier times extracted taxes from those dependents working on their fields. Khuja avoid marrying their daughters out of their own tabaqa.

[9] See B.I. Iskandarov, *Vostochnaya Bukhara i Pamir vo vtoroi polovine XIX v.* [East Bukhara and the Pamirs in the second half of 19th century], Vol. 1. (Dushanbe, Akademiya Nauk Tadzhikskoy SSR, Institut Istorii im. Ahmada Donisha, 1962).

[10] See G. Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan, 1979 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); M.N. Shahrani, R.L. Canfield eds, *Revolutions and Rebellions in Afghanistan: Anthropological Perspectives* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1984).

[11] See D. Cordovez, S.S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); A.M. Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); S. Alexievich, *Zinky Boys: Soviet Voices from the Afghanistan War* (New York: WW Norton and Company, 1990).

[12] See S. Roche, (forthcoming) "Environmental Relationalities: Contextualizing the Nuclear Production Sites in Khujand/Leninabad," In *Tracing nuclear legacies in Russia, Central Asia and beyond: knowledge, practices, memory*, edited by S. Bauer, T. Penter, L. Sembritzki, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press).

Economically and politically neglected during the Soviet period, the Kulob region fought and won the civil war of the 1990s; its ultimate success is connected to the political triumph of Emomali Rahmon, a native of this region.[13] A former collective-farm director from Danghara, he became president of Tajikistan during the war. Since 1994, Rahmon has ruled Tajikistan with an iron grip, investing heavily in the southern region that includes Kulob. Despite significant economic efforts, Kulob remains impoverished in the backdrop of the constant influx of rural residents and the closure of most factories followed by mass emigration of skilled professionals to either the capital Dushanbe or abroad.[14] Today, migration remains a salient social phenomenon as much for urban centers as for the countryside.[15]

Mazar-e Sharif continues to play an important role in Afghanistan's politics, economics and society. Tajiks in Mazar-e Sharif were part of the firm opposition against the communist regime (1978-1992) and the Taliban rule (1996-2001). They have also been an important part of the post-2001 governments in Afghanistan, allying themselves, albeit unstably, with those at the top echelons of national political power.

Even if today we can refer to the populations in this study as Tajik, we cannot assume cultural homogeneity since Tajiks live in close contact with other ethnic groups such as Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, Arabs, and many other groups. Therefore, we do not treat culture as a form of distinctiveness but as a process that goes along with individual choices and demographic developments. The political context was decisive in distancing Tajiks in Afghanistan from Soviet Tajikistan for many decades followed by renewed solidarity during the Afghan-Soviet war.[16]

Political interruptions have occurred on several occasions such as during the Bolshevik revolution, the Soviet-Afghan war (1979-1989), since the 1990s civil war in Tajikistan (1992-1997) and since 1979 unceasing war(s) in Afghanistan (1978-present). In this study we are particularly interested in the way marriage practices have changed and adapted during and after specific political circumstances. Since the vast majority of

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[13] See P. Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan. National Identity and the Origins of the Republic* (I.B. Tauris, London, 2007); V.I Bushkov, D.V. Mikul'skii, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadzhikistane:Ethno-sotsial'nye protsessy i politicheskaya bor'ba 1992-1995* [The Anatomy of the Civil War in Tajikistan: Ethno-social processes and political struggle 1992-1995], (Moscow, Institut ethnologii i antropologii RAN; Institut Prakticheskogo Vostokovedeniya, 1996); S. Chatterjee, *Society and Politics in Tajikistan in the Aftermath of the Civil War,* (London: Greenwich, 2002); M. Whitlock, *Beyond the Oxus: The Central Asians* (London: John Murray, 2002).

[14] See S.I. Kurbanova, *Peresilenie: Kak eto bylo* [Resellement: How it happened] (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1993); D. Ibanez Tirado, "Temporality and Subjectivity in Kulob, Southern Tajikistan: An Ethnography of Ordinary People and their Everyday Lives," PhD Dissertation (London: University of London, 2013).

[15] See D. Rahmonova-Schwarz, *Family and Transnational Mobility in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Labor Migration from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to Russia* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2012).

[16] See C. Bleuer, S.R. Kazemi, "Between Co-operation and Insulation: Afghanistan's Relations with the Central Asian Republics," *Afghanistan Analysts Network* (AAN) (2014): 25–38.

children are born to married parents we can depart from the assumption that marriage is the key life cycle event indicating the formation of a new family.[17]

Method

Grounded Theory (GT) was developed in the 1960s as a method to make qualitative research operational in sociology. Since the publication of the book *Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss[18] GT has received much attention from behavioural sciences while spreading far beyond its initial use for the study of social and psychological processes. GT has been less interesting for social anthropology given the latter's preference for descriptive methods to develop and present empirical data. Yet, one of the core ideas of the method summarized under "memoing" is comparable to the much older ethnographic observation methods with one crucial difference: the manner in which social anthropology avoids treating individuals as isolated "patients" whose lives can be cut into categories in the process of developing theoretical considerations.[19] Instead, the sub-field sees individuals primarily as social actors that exist in a complex world explored by ethnographers as a whole.

Ethnographers work several months and even years among the population of interest in order to understand the social complexity, relationships, discourses, and practices. Classically an ethnographer would include genealogies that visualize the links among different individuals, residential patterns, and marital strategies.[20] The more the ethnographer has learned about the group and the individuals concerned, the denser the information regarding these genealogies will be. The grounding of the empirical material is hence based on a set of methods that include (participant and non-participant) observation over long periods, systematic recording of genealogies, interviews, and recording of various forms of social interactions.[21] This collection

[17] See D.M. Clifford, "Marriage and Fertility Change in Post-Soviet Tajikistan," Ph.D. dissertation (University of Southampton, 2009); O.N. Shemyakina, "Armed Conflict, Education and the Marriage Market: Evidence from Tajikistan," Ph.D. Dissertation (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 2007); Al. Blum, Al, M. Barbieri, E. Dolgikh, A. Ergashev, "Family and transition in Uzbekistan," *Population Studies* 1 (1996).

[18] See B.G. Glaser, A.L Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory. Strategies for Qualitative Research* (New Brunswick, London: Aldine Transaction, 2006) [first edition 1967].

[19] See Glaser and Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, 101-113.

[20] See W.H.R. Rivers, "A Genealogical Method of Collecting Social and Vital Statistics," *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute* 30 (1900): 74–82.

[21] See P. Heady, "What Can Anthropological Methods Contribute to Demography – and How?" *Demographic Research* 16, no. 18 (2007): 555–58; Kertzer and Fricke eds. *Anthropological Demography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

of empirical material is the basis for providing a systematic, qualitative, quantitative, and inductive analysis, which is the base for theoretical consideration. Grounded demography is hence a further development of ethnography borrowing the systematic individualistic approach (patient-oriented or individual-oriented method) of grounded theory in order to provide a method to socio-demographic anthropology. As a unit of analysis, we chose the family though this is not the only possible demographic unit to be used in grounded demography.

For this study, each of the authors has undertaken ethnographic fieldwork for at least one year in the respective communities becoming familiar with the specificities of the urban contexts and the group under analysis. The demographic data was collected using genealogies that contain basic information including birth, death, year of marriage/divorce/remarriage, number of children, and additional information on migration, employment and religious education for selected individuals of the samples. Each genealogy was noted on a separate sheet of paper and the narrative going along with the genealogy either recorded or noted separately. This was done in a systematic way in order to obtain a micro-census representative for the group under study. Since genealogies include people for whom information on vital events is not available (for instance ancestors or far away relatives) only parts of the genealogical information were later transferred into Excel tables. These were the basis for the statistical analysis shown below. Where possible, complete sets of siblings were transferred into the tables because of the importance of birth order for marriage among Tajiks. Statistical analysis accompanied the evaluation of the qualitative data.

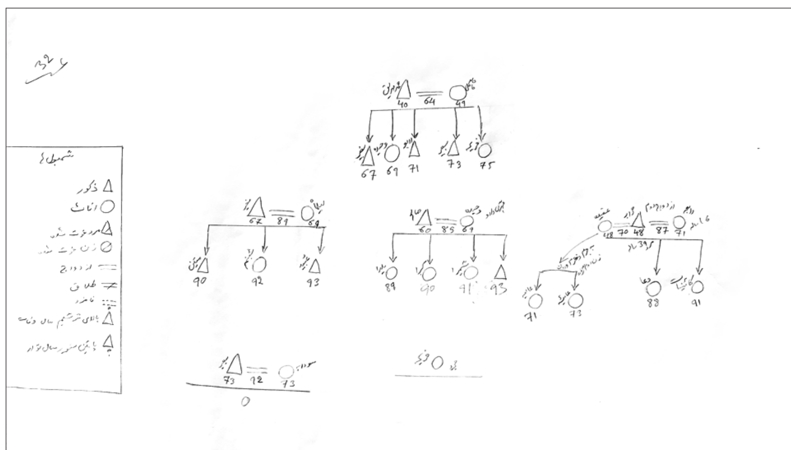

Figure 1: Example of a Genealogy Taken During Fieldwork, Mazar-e Sharif

The collection of data made it possible to zoom in and out between individuals, statistical outcomes, and ethnographic information. Along with the research group's discussions[22] on the empirical material, theoretical texts and regional studies were read and discussed. The analysis of the demographic outcomes uncovered interesting results that generated the hypothesis that families seem to have strategies in order to recover after disruptive events. While statistics were clear about this, the qualitative answer to this phenomenon had to be inductively derived from the ethnographic material.

All three samples were gathered in urban contexts between 2013 and 2015 during ethnographic fieldwork. These locations were chosen because of similarities and differences that allow for meaningful comparison. Families were selected according to ethnic self-identification. The sample from the city of Kulob was collected among residents of one apartment block in a *mikro-rayon* (neighbourhood) built in 1972. Following Soviet policy, families were allocated flats depending on the number of years of industrial employment and the size of the family. In Khujand, the sample was collected so as to include people from the main *tabaqas* (social groups) across the town and in Mazar-e Sharif the people for the study lived in several neighbourhoods in the city. As mentioned above, each of the cities has had different political experiences but all have been affected by the Soviet period and wars.

Grounded demography works from individuals to families and produces data that can be used for statistical analysis. The authors have found the following: first, that memory plays a crucial role in securing continuity of the family through disruptive periods; second, that narrative techniques were, and are still, used to remember kin and establish relations laterally (to siblings, agnates and their children) and far into the past (over several generations), and; third, that marriage is a crucial event to overcome disruptive periods.

Below, we present statistical data and reflect on the similarities and differences following the question of how families establish continuity in times of political or violent breaks. The approach of grounded demography suggests studying social dynamics and demographic changes along with the cultural complexity and political history based on the assumption that individuals are the primary actors.

[22] The authors were part of the Junior Research Group "The Demographic Turn at the Junction of Cultures" led by Dr. Sophie Roche and funded by the Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context", the DFG and the Ministry of Education of Germany at the University of Heidelberg. The results of the qualitative study of family were published along with other authors in the book *The Family in Central Asia: New Research Perspectives* (Roche ed. 2017) as well as in the dissertations of Swetlana Torno and Said Reza Kazemi.

Memory, Narratives and Marriage

While some families and populations put great emphasis on memorializing selected family members (e.g., for kinship reasons, heroic activities during lifetime, circumstances of their death), others have systematized memory through written documents. In Central Asia, the practice of *nasab-nāma* (literally meaning 'lineage letter') or *shajara* ('tree') are widespread forms of written or oral lineages. Political events are equally crucial points of reference within written lineage trees (stamped and commented on by institutions who confirm the legitimacy of these documents) as well as in oral accounts. Life-cycle events are remembered best by close relatives but may be inaccurate for kin in previous generations or for distant kin. While Kazemi's ethnographic research in Afghanistan (2018) found that political events shape the memory of people, the findings from Tajikistan identified educational institutions as points of reference for memory. The year of a child's birth, estimated according to the school grade a child attended or would have attended with one's peer group, serves as a reference for estimation. Other references include local or even national events such as Soviet leadership or the Tajik civil war of the 1990s. [23]

All three ethnographic studies found that narrating family events served to create continuity beyond disruptive events.[24] Here, marriage and death seemed to hold a special place in the memory of families.[25]

Wedding ceremonies are experiences that are memorialized, often along with political events, by individuals and families. For Tajikistan, Roche showed that many young men felt that their wedding was "the only thing in life that makes you feel like a king."[26] Nowadays most weddings are videotaped and frequently watched by family members. During the Soviet period and in the decade following the civil war in Tajikistan 'conspicuous consumption' was common during weddings and shaped family, and even village, memories.[27] Others remember their wedding as a sad day because of the partner

[23] See T. Epkenhans, *The Origins of the Civil War in Tajikistan*, (Lanham et al.: Lexington Books, 2016); D. Ibanez Tirado, 'How can I be post-Soviet if I was never Soviet?' Rethinking categories of time and social change – a perspective from Kulob, southern Tajikistan," *Central Asian Survey* 34, no. 2 (2015): 190-203; K. Nourzhanov, C. Bleuer, *Tajikistan: A Political and Social History* (Canberra: ANU E Press, The Australian National University, 2013).

[24] In his dissertation, Kazemi (2018) traces past narratives of an Afghan transnational family, including the marriages within it, and how they have contributed to interlinking various family members scattered around the world.

[25] For reasons of space we will leave the discussion on death for another paper. A summary would not do justice to the multi-level interdependencies between statistical deaths and perceived losses.

[26] See S. Roche, *Domesticating youth. Youth bulges and their socio-political implications in Tajikistan* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn, 2014).

[27] See J. Cleuziou, "Traditionalization, or the making of a reputation: women, weddings and expenditure

they did not choose, circumstances that did not allow for an ostentatious wedding, or disagreements concerning the new family-in-law, etc.[28]

Analysis of the Data

Overview of Population Distribution

The following population pyramids generated from the genealogical data collected for this study represent all people alive in 2014 and 2015. Since the genealogies include sets of siblings, the graphs below include individuals that may live outside the three cities of Mazar-e Sharif, Kulob, and Khujand. As such, these population pyramids representing the absolute number of people are not specific for urban settings but contain an overview of the full sample that the authors have collected.

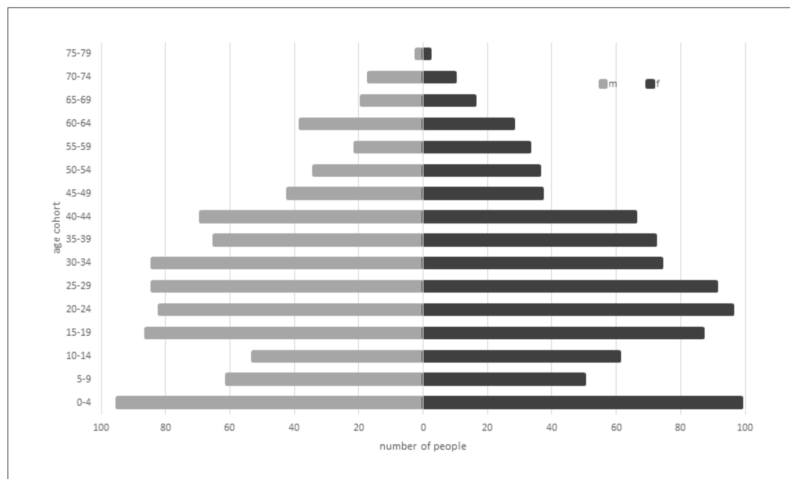

Figure 2: Population Pyramid, Mazar-e Sharif Neighbourhood
(Total number of people alive at the time of genealogical recording, n=1710)
Source: Micro-census, Kazemi, 2014

in Tajikistan," *Central Asian Survey* 38, no. 3 (2019): 346-362; S. Poliakov, *Everyday Islam: Religion and Tradition in Rural Central Asia* (Armonk, NY: Routledge, 1992), 87-90; T. Trevisani, "Modern Weddings in Uzbekistan: Ritual Change from 'above' and from 'Below'," *Central Asian Survey* 35, no. 1 (2016): 61-75.

[28] Ibanez Tirado,'How can I be post-Soviet if I was never Soviet?'

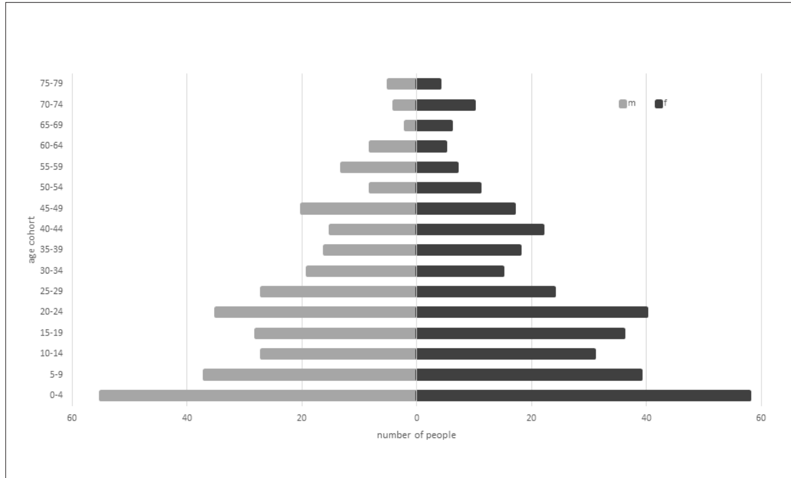

Figure 3: Population Pyramid, Kulob Neighbourhood
(Total number of people alive at the time of genealogical recording, n=662)
Source: Micro-census, Torno, 2014

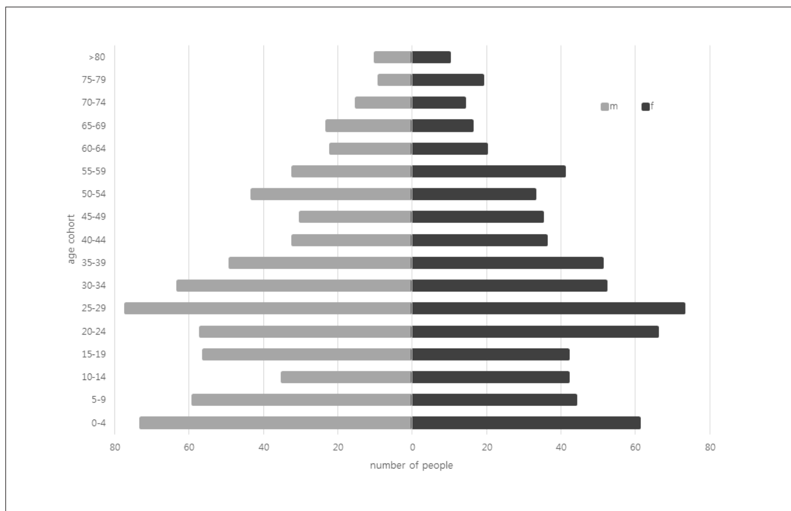

Figure 4: Population Pyramid, Khujand Neighbourhood
(Total number of people alive at the time of genealogical recording, n=1340)
Source: Micro-census, Roche, 2015

The three population pyramids based on the data collected during the ethnographic research between 2013 and 2015 turned out rather different in shape. Whereas the sample from Mazar-e Sharif most explicitly shows a population in transition with a strongly visible youth bulge between the ages 15 and 34, the pyramid from the Kulob region resembles a youthful population pyramid with a high percentage of children. The sample from Khujand, with the exception of the cohort from 25 to 29, shows an aging population.

What is striking in all three samples, are the low numbers for the 10-14 year cohort, particularly boys. The interviews do not provide enough information to understand this population contraction. At a national level, this generation was born about three to seven years after the civil war in Tajikistan (1992-1997) and following the Taliban period (1996-2001) in Afghanistan. Based on the data collected from the Tajikistan Living Standards Survey (TLSS), Clifford et al. have found a similar post-civil war contraction for Tajikistan, generally linking it to food crisis and droughts.[29]

In contrast to this age group, the cohort from 0 to 4 is rather large, especially compared to the previous two cohorts – almost double in size. While this may partly result from collecting empirical data instead of working with state registration documents, it is also true that this generation was born in a situation of relative societal peace and political stability. The qualitative research for Kulob, for instance, demonstrates that parents stopped reproduction after the civil war, waiting several years to have one more child, often the same time as the birth of their first grandchildren. This possibly contributed to the unusual 0-4 cohort bulge and contraction among the 10-14 cohort.

Age at First Marriage

Marriage remains an important event in Central Asia marking the transition of a young person into adulthood.[30] Marriage also secures the continuity of a lineage through the paternal line. Parents put great emphasis on securing male descendants from their sons.

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[29] See D. Clifford, J. Falkingham, & A. Hinde, "Through Civil War, Food Crisis and Drought: Trends in Fertility and Nuptiality in Post-Soviet Tajikistan" *European Journal of Population* 26 (2010): 342-343.

[30] See T. Dragadze ed. *Kinship and Marriage in the Soviet Union: Field Studies* (London: Routledge, 1984); M. Fortes, "Introduction" In *Marriage in Tribal Societies,* edited by M. Fortes, 1-13 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 4; E.A. Hammel, D.S. Friou, "Anthropology and Demography: Marriage, Liaison, or Encounter?" In *Anthropological Demography,* edited by D. Kertzer, 175-200 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); N.A. Kislyakov, *Ocherki po istorii sem'i i braka u narodov sredney asii i kazakhstana* [Essay on the history of the family and marriage among the people of Central Asia and Kazakhstan] (Leningrad: Akademiya Nauk SSSR, 1969); O.N. Shemyakina, "Armed Conflict, Education and the Marriage Market: Evidence from Tajikistan" Ph.D. Dissertation (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 2007); Heady, "What Can Anthropological Methods Contribute to Demography – and How?"

Additionally, sons are perceived as old-age security and a way to ease work, particularly in rural areas. As a young man said, "It is better to marry early so that once your son is 15 you may lay back and rest while he does the work" (Kobil, 31 years, I: July 2006). It is at this point that he becomes a mature adult.[31] Social maturity is gained through the continuation of the lineage and integration into the socio-economic environment.[32] Marriage is seen as the driver of this social maturation.

All three localities in which research was conducted share the idea that a healthy young person should marry if possible. The communities under research follow popular concepts about when in one's life course it is best to marry. While some draw from Islam to set the age for marriage, others draw from biological or physical markers or, more rarely, consider marriage an individual decision. Here, it is worth drawing a distinction between narrating the life course and actual practices. The narratives of optimal life course descriptions were important to ethnographers to derive rules of marriage, even if in practice only a certain percentage actually live according to such rules. Narratives about the optimal life course and time for marriage serve, first, to establish continuity (e.g., "our traditions are…") and, second, to act as reference in the memory of families, (e.g., "during the war we married our children off at a young age and gave them away cheaply"). "My father wanted me to study, but we didn't know whether the world would be peaceful again, he had no choice" a woman explained who was married off during the civil war in Tajikistan although the father (lacking sons) had always encouraged his four daughters to study hard and take up professional work.

Grounded demography offers a method to systematize empirical data while interpreting the statistical results against the background of ethnographic research, which includes modes of narrating demographic vital events. The role of conflicts in this respect has been shown for selected rural communities during the Tajik civil war. Parents were afraid of having girls over 14 years who could be taken and forced into marriage by soldiers.[33] Early marriage resulted from this fear as a strategy to hand over the responsibility for young girls to the generation that could best defend their honour. This strategy was also observed by Agadjanian and Makarova in Uzbekistan when the Soviet Union collapsed leaving insecurity among parents and was tested later by Ismailbekova in Kyrgyzstan after the Osh conflict in 2010.[34] Such short-term reactions

[31] C. Harris, *Control and Subversion. Gender Relations in Tajikistan* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 184 and 35, footnote 29) has made a similar observation, stating that a mature man is a man who has a child of marriageable age.

[32] Roche, *Domesticating Youth*, 137.

[33] Roche, *Domesticating Youth*, 195-98.

[34] See V. Agadjanian, E. Makarova, "Former Soviet Modernization to Post-Soviet Transformation: Understanding Marriage and Fertility Dynamics in Uzbekistan" *Development and Change* 34 no. 3 (2003):

to violent events in marital practice differ from long-term effects of conflicts that in the Tajik case led to an increase in the age of marriage for both women and men.

Insecurity from political change, according to our qualitative research results, did not necessarily lead to a decision against marriage or to its postponement but on the contrary preponed marriage. On the one hand, this was expected to increase the security of young women whose sexuality within a shame-honour complex play a crucial role, on the other hand, early marriage should make sure a male descendant could help the family survive difficult periods, such as wars.[35] Whereas traditional ways of celebrating weddings had to be abandoned, the continuation of family as a social body remained a strong motivation. Economic aspects are often emphasized when discussing early marriage and this certainly applies to in-law marriages that are regarded as "cheap". However, economic hardship can equally lead to postponed marriage, as can higher education or labour migration as is the case today (Torno, Chapter 3, forthcoming). After the civil war, Roche shows how Tajik rural households in combat-affected areas were thrown back at least 15 years in their material development (e.g. housing), but paradoxically this did not restrain families from performing conspicuous spending during weddings.[36] We stress, in the interest of clarity, that by weddings we do not mean a set of traditional practices that remain the same, independent of political events. Instead, weddings vary tremendously in their performance as shown by ethnographers,[37] but a common denominator is their essential role for reproduction.

In the following section, we test how the social groups for which demographic data was collected have reacted to the Soviet invasion (Afghanistan), the *perestroika* movement (Tajikistan) and wars (Afghanistan and Tajikistan). We use age at first marriage for this.

447–73; A. Ismailbekova "Coping Strategies: Migration, Public Avoidance, and Marriage in the Aftermath of the Osh Conflict, Fergana Valley" *Nationalities Papers* 41, no. 1 (2013): 109-127.

[35] See C. Harris, *Control and Subversion. Gender Relations in Tajikistan* (London: Pluto Press, 2004); C. Harris, *Muslim Youth: Tensions and transitions in Tajikistan* (Oxford: Westview Press, 2006).

[36] See Roche, *Domesticating Youth*.

[37] For literature on marriage in various parts of Central Asia covering almost all aspects of the wedding ritual see S. N. Abashin, *Sovetskii kishlak: mezhdu kolonializmom i modernizatsiei* [Soviet Kishlak: Between Colonialism and Modernization]. (Moscow: NLO, 2015); J. Cleuziou, Mariages, Démariages et Remariages. Rituel, genre et parenté au Tadjikistan contemporain [Marriages, Demarriages and Remarriages. Ritual, Gender and Kinship in contemporary Tajikistan]. Ph.D. Dissertation (Paris: Nanterre University, 2016b); K. Kehl-Bodrogi, *'Religion Is Not So Strong Here': Muslim Religious Life in Khorezm after Socialism* (Berlin: Lit, 2008); J. McBrien, "The Fruit of Devotion. Islam and Modernity in Kyrgyzstan" Ph.D. Dissertation (Halle: Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, 2008); B.M. Petric, *Pouvoir, don et réseaux en Ouzbékistan post-soviétique* (Paris: PUF, 2002); G. Tett, "Ambiguous Alliances: Marriage and Identity in a Muslim Village in Soviet Tajikistan," Ph.D. Dissertation (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1996); Roche, *Domesticating Youth*; S. Roche, *The Faceless Terrorist. A Study of Critical Events in Tajikistan* (Cham: Springer, 2019). Chapter 7, politics of traditions) claims that traditions are used to bridge political ruptures rather than to secure the same set of practices over long periods.

General features of the data on age at first marriage

		N	Min.	Max.	Median	STD
f	Khujand	281	13	37	20,5	3,2
m	Khujand	265	15	37	22,8	3,2
f	Kulob	102	15	35	20,7	3,5
m	Kulob	100	17	33	24,4	3,4
f	Mazar-e Sharif	343	9	41	20,4	4
m	Mazar-e Sharif	316	9	41	23,9	5

Table 1: Ages at First Marriage by Sex and Location (Average, Minimum and Maximum Age) (Only married people of the three micro-censuses)

The basic statistics about age at first marriage show a striking homogeneity of median age at first marriage for all three locations according to gender, with only about one year difference for men whereas minimal and maximal ages range from 9 years to 41 years. This data hints at a larger diversity of age at first marriage in the Afghan Tajik sample compared to the two Tajik samples. Below, we further elaborate on this observation, suggesting that this is due to a more normative notion of the life course among Tajiks from Tajikistan than from Afghanistan.

The Soviet Union introduced a united schooling system that had tremendous impact on the organization of the life course of women and men.[38] Between the 1920s and the 1930s, the average age at first marriage in Uzbekistan rose considerably, eventually stabilizing at approximately 19 years in the 1950s.[39] Official registration of marriage ZAGS(Record of Civil Status Act) did not prevent early marriage but pushed the majority of marriages to follow official rules.[40] Additionally, during the Soviet period a family was prerequisite for obtaining a flat in town thus further underlining the importance of marriage.[41]

All three samples show a large number of women married before the age of twenty.

[38] The political life course made sure that people grew into the communist party (children grew from *oktyabryata* (7–10 years) to *pioneers* (10–14 years) to *Komsomol* (14–28 years) and into a party member). M. Titma, E. Saar, "Regional Differences in Soviet Secondary Education," *European Sociological Review* 11, no. 1 (1995): 37-58.

[39] See Al. Blum, M. Barbieri, E. Dolgikh, A. Ergashev "Family and transition in Uzbekistan," *Population Studies* 1 (1996), 72–74.

[40] See S. Roche, S. Hohmann, "Wedding rituals and the struggle over national identities," *Central Asian Survey* 30, no. 1 (2011): 113-128.

[41] See D.A. Field, *Private Life and Communist Morality in Khrushchev's Russia* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007).

In other words, the majority of the population had adapted to normative expectations (relatively early marriage) and legal requirements (not below 17 years), considering women the yardstick of social and economic processes. By this we mean that success of Soviet politics was often measured by the position of women in their respective society (e.g., in educational attainment, economic participation, age at first marriage and political positions).[42]

Age at first marriage in Mazar-e Sharif

Next, we examine the different locations, starting with Mazar-e Sharif. We divide the sample along political periods: 1356 (1978), 1357–1370 (1979–1991, Soviet period), 1371–1375 (1992–1996, Mujahedin period), 1376–1380 (1997–2001, Taliban period) and 1381–1392 (2002–2014, international intervention). We use this date as a threshold to investigate the relationship between political regimes and demographic responses. Our ethnographic material revealed that marriage is a key to secure family continuation in difficult times and that age at first marriage may be an indicator of how socio-political conditions are perceived by families. Early marriage seems hereby to indicate insecurity and a way to assure women of protection and men reproduction of the lineage. Whether these adaptations are just narrated or in fact practiced is analysed in the following section.

	until 1978	1979-1991	1992-1996	1997-2001	2002-2014
until age 16	8,0%	19,8%	9,4%	4,4%	15%
until age 20	77,3%	71,2%	62,5%	54,4%	45%
until age 30	98,9%	98,2%	100%	98,9%	100%

Table 2: Age at First Marriage by Political Period, Mazar-e Sharif
(Percentage of women married by age 16, 20 and 30)
Source: Micro-Census, Kazemi, 2014

[42] In absence of a proletarian class, the Bolsheviks had at times even considered women the "surrogate proletariat". In the master narrative, women had reached liberty through economic integration during the Soviet period. G.J. Massell, *The Surrogate Proletariat. Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia: 1919–1929* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1974); D. Alimova and N. Azimova, "Women's Position in Uzbekistan Before and After Independence," in *Gender and Identity Construction. Women in Central Asia, the Caucasus and Turkey*, edited by F. Acar and A. Günes-Ayata, 293–304 (Leiden: Brill 1999); S. Keller, "Trapped Between State and Society: Women's Liberation and Islam in Soviet Uzbekistan 1926–1941," *Journal of Women's History* 10, no. 1 (1998): 20-44; A.Sh. Kuniansky, "Fertility and Labor Force in USSR. Theories and Models." Ph.D. Dissertation, (University of Houston, 1981); M. F.Zikrioeva, *Istoriographiia problemy zhenshchin tadzhikistana* [Historiography of the Problems of Women of Tajikistan] (Dushanbe: Irfon, 2001).

The data shows the percentage of women that were married by the age of 16, 20, and 30 under different political regimes. The Soviet invasion (1979-1991) correlates with an increase in early marriages. In contrast, the subsequent Mujahedin and Taliban periods did not bring an increase in early marriage but a postponement of early marriage. A rise in early marriage only occurred after the defeat of the Taliban regime, yet with fewer women married off by age 20. The reason, as the data on men shows below, was combat between the Northern Alliance in which Tajiks were heavily involved and the Taliban. The results of age at first marriage under age 16 suggest a link between early marriage and external invasions such as by the Soviet regime and the so-called liberation by American troops. Rather than suggesting that early marriage is a "traditional practice" these findings indicate that families reacted to perceived sources of external insecurity by marrying off their daughters earlier. Internal insecurity, in contrast, led to an increase in age at first marriage. It seems that marriage choices were influenced, not by the moral claims of military forces or by political promises, but by perceptions of security (particularly for girls) and by the involvement of men in combat.

The over 30% decrease in marriages under age 20 since the 1970s over a 35 year period, draws yet another picture of women over a longer period: i.e. the pluralization of life course through migration and education has considerably affected early marriage.

	until 1978	1978-1991	1992-1996	1997-2001	2002-2014
until age 16	1,4%	7,6%	5,7%	0,0%	10,5%
until age 20	23,0%	31,4%	28,6%	19,5%	26,3%
until age 30	83,8%	92,4%	94,3%	93,9%	78,9%

Table 3: Age at First Marriage by Political Period, Mazar-e Sharif
(Percentage of men married by age 16, 20 and 30)
Source: Micro-census, Kazemi, 2014

The data for men is different with only very few marriages under 16 years old before Soviet arrival followed by an increase during the Soviet period and then another significant increase since 2002. Why would men marry earlier under the Soviet regime and particularly since 2002? According to qualitative research, many families deliberately sent their mature sons (both unmarried and married) abroad when the Afghan-Soviet war started to prevent them from being forcibly conscripted by the various warring sides, particularly by the communist government. Men during the Soviet period (1978-1991, along with women, experienced a similar decrease in age at first marriage, although only to under the age of 20 since men were expected to be a few years older than their wives.

Under the Taliban (1997-2001), the age at first marriage appears to have increased; around ten percent fewer men had married by the end of their twenties. While the Taliban ruled the southern part with an iron grip, Tajiks in the north rallied around Ahmad Shah Massud to resist the Taliban regime. Heavy combat and systematic killing, particularly of men, had an impact on families in Mazar-e Sharif and the north of the country more generally.

For the sample from Mazar-e Sharif, we can conclude that the various conflicts in Afghanistan affected marital behaviour. Security concerns and involvement in combat seems to have had a direct impact on age at first marriage. Political periods differently impacted the populations of men and women under analysis. These findings are crucial as they uncover the gendering effects of wars and inter-war periods. It has been previously stated that post-war states implement conservative models of society,[43] hence the result of 15 percent of girls marrying under the age of 17 during the period from 2002 to 2014 can be understood, on the one hand, as a result of societal perceptions of gender influenced by the Taliban and, from 2007 onwards, as a reaction to increasing combats. This is also true for Tajikistan where an increase in early marriages for girls has been observed in some areas even if not captured by statistics.[44] Such a development accompanies the pluralization of women's marital choices with a considerable percentage postponing marriage until beyond the age of 20.

Age at first marriage in Khujand and Kulob

The political periods for the two samples taken from Kulob and Khujand are 1) the Soviet period (until 1991), 2) the civil war years (1992-1998)[45] and 3) post-civil war period until 2014. Ethnographic research in Tajikistan identified a decrease in age at first marriage in rural areas during the civil war.[46] In urban settings "hasty marriages", as they were commonly termed, were less likely especially in Khujand, an area relatively little

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[43] M.R. Higonnet, J. Jenson, S. Michel and M.C. Weitz, eds, *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); S.R. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (Chapel Hill, London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999); M. Martine, "Is war gendered? Issues in Representing Women and the Second World War," in *The Practice of War. Production, Reproduction and Communication of Armed Violence,* edited by A. Rao, M. Bollig and M. Back, 161-74 (New York: Berghahn, 2007).

[44] Z. Bakhtibekova, "Early Girls' Marriage in Tajikistan: Causes and Continuity," Ph.D Dissertation. (Exeter: University of Exeter, 2014).

[45] The civil war is politically often limited to the years 1992-1997. However, political events may say little about the actual fights and general perception of insecurity. Unrests began in 1991 and lasted at least until 1998.

[46] See Roche, *Domesticating Youth.*

affected by combat in the south. Soviet politics, in contrast, had an impact on perceptions of maturity and the registration of vital events. Already by 1917, the Bolsheviks had promulgated a decree regulating marriage, setting the age of first marriage at 16 for girls and 18 for boys. Their efforts were supported by a group of local religious reformers, the *Jadid*, who complained that the large age gap in marriage age between men and women (which was common during the Emirate of Bukhara) was "unhealthy" for men. Marriage, the *Jadid* Behbudi's reasoned, would domesticate younger men and keep them away from criminal activity.[47]

We consider Soviet rule as a colonial period in the sense that its politics aimed to gain control over people's course of life, including schooling, employment, age at first marriage and more generally over the bodies of women through the medical system.[48] Hohmann's scholarship is one of few to date comparing the region's demographic politics with other post-colonial areas. Our material collected through micro-censuses is clear: the Soviet Union produced a normative society, which pressured women (and to a lesser degree men) to adapt their life course to a social optimum.[49]

	before 1991	1991-1998	1999-2014
until age 16	4,7%	7,1%	1,5%
until age 20	64,2%	69,0%	59,8%
until age 30	98,1%	97,6%	98,5%

Table 4: Age at First Marriage by Political Period, Khujand
(Percentage of women married by age 16, 20 and 30)
Source: Micro-census, Roche, 2015

[47] See M. Kamp, The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity and Unveiling under Communism (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 47, footnote 57)

[48] A. Blum, M. Barbieri, E. Dolgikh, A. Ergashev, "Family and transition in Uzbekistan," *Population Studies* 1 (1996); A. Blum, *Naître, vivre et mourir en URSS* (Paris: Petite bibliothèque) Payot, 2004); S. Hohmann, *Santé et pouvoir en Ouzbékistan. De la colonisation russe aux transformations post-soviétique* (Paris: Petra, 2014); S. Torno, (forthcoming) *Lebensläufe und Care/Sorge: Kontingenzen zwischen Aufwachsen und Altwerden in Tadschikistan* [Life Courses and Care: Contingencies between Growing-up and Getting Old in Tajikistan] Ph.D. Dissertation (Heidelberg: Heidelberg University).

[49] See S. Roche, S. Hohmann, "Wedding rituals and the struggle over national identities," *Central Asian Survey* 30, no. 1 (2011): 113-128.

	before 1991	1991-1998	1999-2014
until age 16	4,5%	15,8%	1,6%
until age 20	86,4%	63,2%	49,2%
until age 30	100%	100%	96,7%

Table 5: Age at First Marriage by Political Period, Kulob
(Percentage of women married by age 16, 20 and 30)
Source: Micro-census, Torno, 2014

Marriage in Tajikistan remains a point of conflict between generations, in which Tajik youth find themselves caught between the controlling system of the state and parental demands to conform to community norms. Hence, when the civil war broke out in the 1990s, many young men took a girl "for free," ignoring the birth order of siblings and community norms. This strategy could be identified in the rural areas in the east of the country[50] and was prevalent among men in Kulob (Table 7). The Kulob sample also shows the impact of the civil war in the slightly higher probability of women getting married under the age of 17. Once this trend had abated, many young men turned toward a different strategy, namely postponing or avoiding marriage.

As a parental duty, the marriage of sons continues the lineage, likely bringing a new daughter-in-law into the household and becoming a point of contention between generations. Tens of thousands of young Tajik male migrants married (often without official registration) simply to provide their mothers with a housemaid. The migrant's success in Russia drove up the cost of marriage until the state introduced legal restrictions in 2007.[51] Age at first marriage continues to increase however for both men and women, with women increasingly providing for themselves and their children, remaining without a husband or marrying later as a second wife.[52] Such arrangements have transformed the marriage market, impacting the statistical samples from Kulob and Khujand.

50 See Roche, *Domesticating Youth*.

51 Jumhuri Todjikiston [The Republic of Tajikistan] (2007). *Sanadhoi me'jorii huquqi oid ba tanzimi an'ana va jashnu marosimho* [Standard document of law about custom and celebration and ceremonies]. Dushanbe: 'Sharqi Ozodi' Dastgohi ijroiyai Presidenti Jumhurii Tojikiston

52 See J. Cleuziou, "'A Second Wife Is Not Really a Wife': Polygyny, Gender Relations and Economic Realities in Tajikistan," *Central Asian Survey* 35 no. 1 (2016a): 76–90.

	before 1991	1991-1998	1999-2014
until age 16	0%	2,6%	0,8%
until age 20	17,0%	38,5%	21,4%
until age 30	98,0%	97,4%	94,4%

Table 6: Age at First Marriage by Political Period, Khujand
(Percentage of men married age 16, 20 and 30)
Source: Micro-census, Roche, 2015

	before 1991	1991-1998	1999-2014
until age 16	0%	0%	0%
until age 20	11,1%	17,6%	6,9%
until age 30	100%	100%	84,5%

Table 7: Age at First Marriage by Political Period, Kulob
(Percentage of men married by age 16, 20 and 30)
Source: Micro-census, Torno, 2014

The increase in the number of married men in Khujand under the age of 20 is striking. While the civil war effect is reflected in our data, Khujand was spared the war causalities suffered in the mountainous areas and in Kulob. Rather, young people explained that the collapse of the Soviet economy had opened up unregulated spaces for individuals to appropriate resources and engage in lines of business. The resulting financial success led to an increase in married young men under the age of 20.

After the civil war, the age at first marriage considerably increased among men from Kulob. Hit by economic decline and high migration, Kulob reflects the economic difficulties faced by men in many parts of Tajikistan along with the relative independence from parental control found by migrants to Russia.

Summarizing the data on age at first marriage as a marker of repairing family after disruptive events, we first find that in times of perceived security crises – external intervention in the case of the Afghan sample from Mazar-e Sharif and civil war in the Tajik sample – that the age at first marriage dropped for women and men. Second, the results show that the custom of marriage before the age of 30 remains unchanged. While the age of first marriage shifted according to regime type, the cultural perception of marriage as the duty of parents to continue the lineage has remained.

Qualitative analysis reveals early marriage as a parental reaction to insecurity to secure future descendants for their sons and an honourable life for their daughters under the protection of suitable men.

Sibling Position as a Means to Secure Continuity

Siblings can be conceptualized as competitors or as those with the closest bonds within the family. These two disparate views are extensively discussed in the literature.[53] According to Girard, siblings in myth-making more often appear as merciless competitors than as co-operators. This is not universal, however.[54] The best-known example is of Temuchin's mother emphasizing the need for siblings to cooperate in the "Secret History of the Mongols."[55] This emphasis on cooperation can also be found among Tajik families who commonly educate siblings to consider themselves as interdependent and "different as the five fingers of the hand," rather than in competition. Among Tajiks, the eldest son inherits the titles of the father whereas the youngest takes the responsibility of caring for elderly parents. Even while violent conflict and migration have altered these traditions, birth order remains important for the timing of marriage. Ethnographic research in Khujand reveals that even today younger sisters ask their elder sisters for permission if they happen to first find a suitable marriage partner. The marriage of younger sisters can harm the reputations of their unmarried older sisters.

Although siblings may fight to carve out their position within the family, solidarity and responsibility are generally established by the time children marry or move out of the parental home. Dependencies are formed by one brother financing another sibling's marriage, supplying a brother in town with food and gifts from the farm (who in turn will host his rural sibling's children when they conduct their studies), securing help for sisters who fall ill or divorce, promoting the careers of sibling's children, or marrying

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[53] See E. Alber, C. Coe, T. Thelen, eds, *The Anthropology of Sibling Relations: Shared Parentage, Experience and Exchange* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Bathaïe A. Boro jolo! (Va en avant!) Ethnologie des migrations afghans en Iran et en Europe, Ph.D Dissertation (Paris: University of Paris-Nanterre, 2012); H. El-Shamy,"The Brother-sister Syndrome in Arab Family Life: Sociocultural Factors in Arab Psychiatry: A Critical Review," *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* 2 (1981): 313–23; R. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979); S. Joseph, "Brother/Sister Relationships: Connectivity, Love and Power in the Reproduction of Patriarchy in Lebanon," *American Ethnologist* 21, no. 1 (1994): 50–73; M. Meeker, "Meaning and Society in the Near East: Examples from the Black Sea Turks and the Levantine Arabs" *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 7, no. 3 (1976): 383-422.

[54] An extended discussion on siblingship in Central Asia has been provided by Roche 2014.

[55] E. Haenisch, *Die Geheime Geschichte der Mongolen* (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1948)

children to one another.[56] In her forthcoming dissertation, Torno shows that these dependencies among family members are based on mutual care that shifts throughout the life course. These dependencies bind siblings together into one of the region's most important social units. Consequently, families with many siblings are considered wealthy, whereas single children are perceived as lacking the benefits of mutual support. The sibling system is particularly important for sisters who may not be taken care of by their husbands if they fall ill, or never become part of their husband's lineage and thus remain dependent on their own families. This is possibly a reason why Tajiks consider the mother's brother as a substitute father, a crucial difference from the tribal Middle Eastern and Turkic kinship systems in the region.

If parents manage their children as being different and yet united, does this impact marriage choices, age at first marriage, and the subsequent number of offspring? Can family make up for ruptures and insecurity through a different investment in sons and daughters? In her study Roche[57] has shown that educational and even economic diversification of brothers increases the security of the whole family.[58] Following a grounded demographic method, we identified the relevance of siblingship in age at first marriage presented in the figures below.

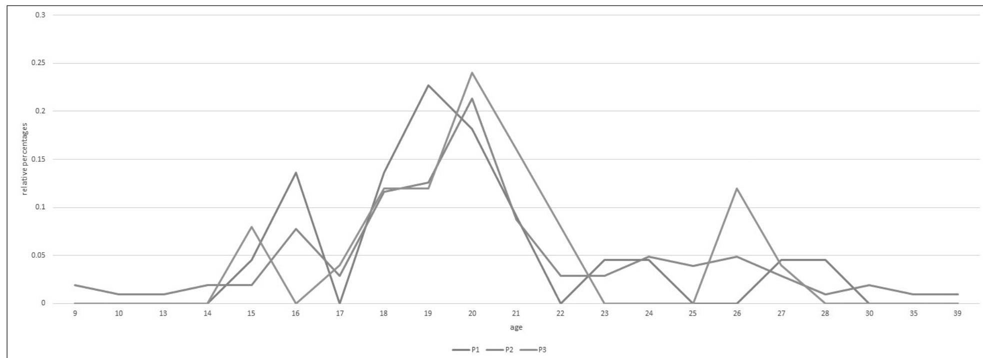

Figure 5: Age at first marriage by birth order, women from Mazar-e Sharif
(Relative percentages in each cohort P1, P2, P3)
Source: Micro-census, Kazemi, 2014
Oldest sibling P1, Middle sibling P2, Youngest sibling P3

[56] Tett, "Ambiguous Alliances."

[57] Roche, *Domesticating Youth.*

[58] See also Tett, "Ambiguous Alliances" and T. Dragadze, ed, *Kinship and Marriage in the Soviet Union: Field Studies* (London: Routledge, 1984).

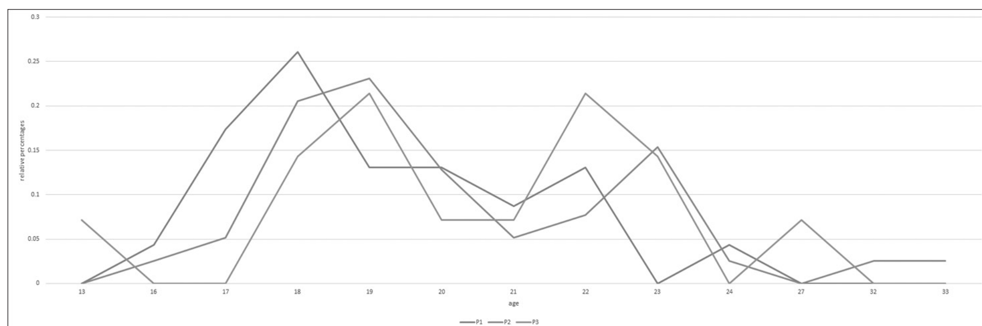

Figure 6: Age at first marriage by birth order, women from Khujand
(Relative percentage in each cohort P1, P2, P3)
Source: Micro-census, Roche, 2015

The samples show different results and hence warn against generalising the findings. Since the genealogical data from Kulob could not be used for this exercise, it will not be included in the statistical analysis of this section. In Mazar-e Sharif, age at first marriage differs among the siblings but is statistically less significant than in the Khujand sample. The first-born women (P1) in the Khujand sample were wed about one and a half, and two years earlier than the second (P2) and last-born sisters (P3), respectively.

The statistics regarding brothers turn out to be of little significance as the ages at first marriage are spread over more than ten years, without any difference due to birth position. However, significant differences can be observed by comparing the number of men and women married by the ages of 22 and 20, respectively, as shown in the following tables:

Birth order (men)	Mazar-e Sharif	Khujand	Kulob
P1 (22 years)	56,25%	72,72%	9,68%
P2 (22 years)	50,57%	62,50%	32,26%
P3 (22 years)	40%	56,25%	--

Table 6: Age at first marriage by birth order, Men from Mazar-e Sharif, Khujand and Kulob
(Cumulative percentages of men married by age 22 according to birth order P1, P2, P3)
Source: Micro-censuses, Kazemi 2014, Roche 2015, Torno 2014

Birth order (women)	Mazar-e Sharif	Khujand	Kulob
P1 (20 years)	72,72%	73,91%	57,14%
P2 (20 years)	64,08%	64,1%	53,84%
P3 (20 years)	60%	50%	75%

Table 7: Age at first marriage by birth order, Women from Mazar-e Sharif, Khujand and Kulob (Cumulative percentages of women married by age 20 according to birth order P1, P2, P3)
Source: Micro-censuses, Kazemi 2014, Roche 2015, Torno 2014

Whereas in Khujand both first-born brothers and sisters seem to have been married off at an earlier age (almost 75% of the first-born siblings are married by the ages of 22 and 20, respectively), in Mazar-e Sharif only first-born sisters seem to have been married off at a younger age than their sisters.

More supportive of a general argument is the finding that the higher the birth order the later the age at first marriage. The pressure to marry is greatest on the first-born child as they transform the nuclear family into an extended family. This social perception of the family transformed through the marriage of its members forms a strong strategic response to disruptive events. Marriage continues and even increases during conflicts, allowing families in the aftermath to resettle and reorganize, adapting to changing circumstances. The management of siblings as an interdependent unit allows families in conflicts and economic difficulties to react to destabilizing external influences. Families, by adapting marriage strategies, in essence act as a key institution providing continuity.

In this census, migration data was not recorded systematically; yet, ethnographic observations in all three samples demonstrate strategic management of siblings to increase social security for all family members. Not all children migrate at once. Families try to keep one son with the parents and send other sons when the whole family's survival appears most likely. This strategy allows families to continue to function while taking on high risks by sending members on long and dangerous journeys to Europe, for instance. In Tajikistan, many families with sons born in the early 2000 directed one towards a state career (university education, followed by apprenticeship, and state-paid position), sent another abroad as a migrant and made sure that another became a religious specialist. The success of diversification, however, considerably depends on the capacity of the family to support individual members (economically, socially and strategically).

This initial strategy has helped families to increase security of all family members in times of high insecurity. When some sons are sent abroad for migration, their success motivates and reduces the costs for other siblings to pursue public employment. Our

research has shown that families learn through siblings and react to politics through family management.[59] In Tajikistan, the concentration of resources in the hands of a few ruling families has driven up the costs of a state career and a position does not guarantee access to a political network. Consequently migration became the better option over the past decade. For decades, the migration of sons has been a preferred strategy in Afghanistan to escape from volatile political conditions. The sibling diversification strategy augments the family's continuation through marriage. Indeed, migration is in many cases motivated by the task of gathering money for a marriage of any of the siblings. Crises, wars, and disasters can lead to a family reorganisation with marriage acting as a way to preserve the family .

Conclusion

We began the paper with the claim that family is an institution that "repairs" social wounds after political disruptions, particularly wars and regime changes. The study found that in times of insecurity, early marriage secures the honour of girls and the continuation of the lineage for men who may die during a conflict such as a civil war. Hence, early marriage in times of insecurity is a conscious strategy of families to secure continuation despite disruption.

However, there is a difference in sibling birth order. Siblings are not treated equally when it comes to marriage. Instead, parents place greatest importance on the marriage of the eldest son, who will inherit titles and act as the head of the family following the parents' death. This serves to free other siblings from the pressure to marry early in difficult circumstances and enables migration to ease economic crises.

Early marriage and strategic management of sets of siblings enable the family to recover from disruption and increase the likelihood of family member success. This has been substantiated by ethnographic material particularly from Tajikistan and evidence focused on migration from Afghanistan.

Post-war societies tend to overemphasize gender as a way to re-install order. [60] This is true for Tajikistan and Afghanistan where society has taken recourse in religious values while the regime adopted nationalist discourses in order to establish clear-cut gender roles. Empirically this can be observed with brothers imposing their idea of

[59] Roche, *Domesticating Youth*; Roche,*The Family in Central Asia.*

[60] See S. Ashwin, ed. *Gender, State and Society in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia* (New York: Routledge, 2000); K. Kaser, E. Katschnig-Fasch, eds. *Gender and Nation in South Eastern Europe* (Vienna: LIT, 2005); A. Woollacott, *Gender and Empire* (Houndmills, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); N. Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997).

religious femaleness onto their sisters, or the regime celebrating clear-cut gender roles within the nation.[61] This contradicts the experience of young couples who have been married hastily or in "a cheap marriage" perceived as less stable but necessary to address a context of external insecurity.

Our study employed the method of grounded demography, developed from grounded theory and socio-anthropological demography. The demographic data was collected among Tajiks from three different locations and analysed against extensive ethnographic fieldwork conducted by the authors. The method has uncovered modes of memorializing family over long periods with direct impact on how to organize family today. Whereas in some areas of Tajikistan families remembered the past solely through male ancestors (particularly former elite families such as *tura* or *khuja*), this has not been true for the past hundred years. Women feature centrally in the memory of families, particularly if demographic data is recorded by women. In general, Tajik women seem to more actively memorialize and remember a higher number of relatives from the husband's as well as from their own side of the family. The reason is that women tend to adapt their behaviour and language to the position of the other within the extended family whereas men seem somehow less dependent on kinship positioning. Also women spend more time with and depend on approval from their kin, and this influences their husband's behaviour. Thus, much of memory-creation is linked to family making and the conscious engagement of family members.

Family memory functions along with societal memory, carrying stories over time. Wedding events form an important part of memorializing family. Wedding narratives reflect and react to political events and periods and serve as a way to compare historical periods. The selection of those who enter the sample in grounded demography are hence influenced by modes of memorialization, the values accorded to individual family members, and the age and gender of the interviewees. As such, grounded demography derives from a social anthropological view of social groups.

Ultimately, the family is fragile and constantly being remade, reacting to external interferences as well as to internal changes and conflicts. With grounded demography, we sought to demonstrate the relevance of basic statistics extrapolated from genealogies for the study of ethnographic questions. While this discussion may not be unprecedented, we offer room and data to extend the debate. By focusing on parts of Central Asia, we have provided new insights into under-researched groups caught between fissures and fusions emanating from global politics.

[61] See Harris, *Muslim Youth*; S. Torno, "Tajik in Content—Soviet in Form? Reading Tajik Political Discourse on and for Women," In *The Family in Central Asia: New Research Perspectives*, edited by S. Roche, 141-160 (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2017).

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