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Marriage Patterns in Thailand : A Review of Demographic Evidence*

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List of abbreviations used to designate surveys.

Abbreviation	Full Name
LS1	Longitudinal Study of Social, Economic, and Demographic Change - Round 1, Rural 1969, Urban 1970
LS2	Longitudinal Study of Social, Economic, and Demographic Change - Round 2, Rural 1972, Urban 1973
SPC2	Survey of Population Change, 1974-76
SOFT	Survey of Fertility in Thailand (part of WFS), 1975
NS	National Study of Family Planning Practices, Fertility, and Mortality, 1979
CPS2	Contraceptive Prevalence Survey - Round 2, 1981

The study of marriage in any country is a complex matter and can potentially involve a wide range of demographic, social, economic, and cultural aspects. In the present paper we limit our review of marriage patterns in Thailand primarily to demographic evidence, particularly as related to trends and selected differentials in age at marriage and proportions married. We conclude the paper with a brief discussion of several research issues we judge to be worth pursuing in the future.

LEVELS AND TRENDS

Data on the proportions single as recorded in the censuses from 1947 on (including preliminary results of the one percent sample of the 1980 census) and in several surveys are summarized in Table 1 and Figure 1. Age was determined in a somewhat different manner in the 1947 and 1960 Censuses compared to the later censuses and surveys. The 1947 Census is directly comparable with the 1960 Census as reported but neither is directly comparable with the later sources. Thus in addition to the reported results from the 1960 Census, results are also presented in an adjusted form to increase comparability. A comparison of the 1947 with the unadjusted 1960 Census results indicates a moderate increase took place in the proportion single among women and men in the younger reproductive ages. Since 1960, most, but not all, evidence generally points to a continuation of the trend toward increasing proportions single

Table 1 Proportions Single and Singulate Mean Age at Marriage (SMAM) by Sex and Age Group from Selected Sources : Thailand

Sex and Age Group	Census 1947	Census 1960 Reported Ages	Census 1960 Adjusted Ages	Census 1970	SOFT 1975	SPC2 1975	Census 1980[a]
Females							
15-19	.806	.862	.830	.810	.846	.786	.835
20-24	.300	.387	.352	.379	.415	.359	.428
25-29	.109	.141	.126	.156	.192	.156	.206
30-34	.057	.067	.062	.081	.101	.081	.114
35-39	.040	.042	.040	.053	.064	.048	.079
40-44	.032	.031	.030	.039	.039	.032	.054
45-49	.029	.026	.026	.030	.033	.015	.044
SMAM	21.06	22.10	21.64	21.97	22.46	21.96	22.68
Males							
15-19	.967	.976	.959	.963	.969	.957	.960
20-24	.606	.699	.663	.651	.639	.623	.646
25-29	.242	.270	.242	.249	.259	.257	.266
30-34	.104	.098	.088	.106	.081	.097	.115
35-39	.069	.053	.050	.058	.059	.062	.060
40-44	.050	.037	.036	.038	.028	.040	.042
45-49	.044	.032	.032	.032	.024	.033	.035
SMAM	24.32	25.02	24.52	24.67	24.77	24.42	24.83

Note: Persons of unknown marital status have been proportionately distributed except for male priests who are treated as single.

[a] Based on 1-percent sample.

Source: National Research Council, 1980; United Nations, 1956; and unpublished preliminary tabulations of the 1-percent 1980 census sample.

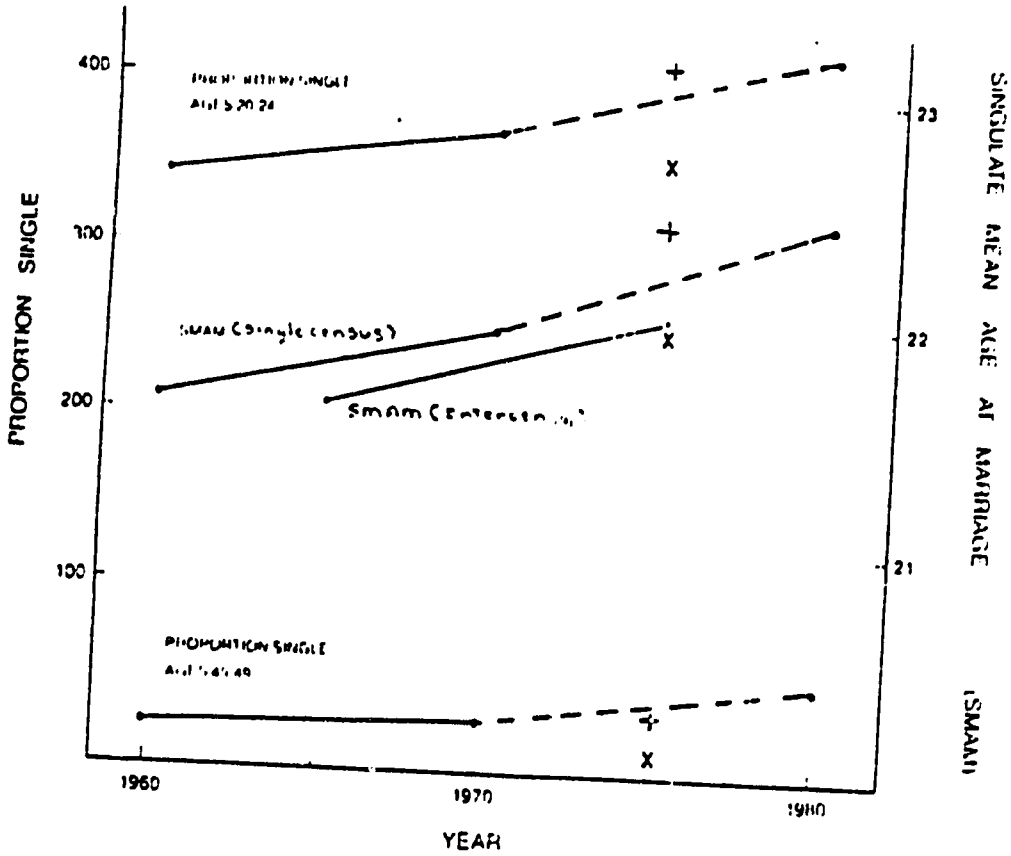


FIGURE 1 Proportions Single in Age Groups 20-24 and 45-49 and Singulate Mean Age at Marriage from Censuses and Two Surveys, 1960-80: Thailand

Sources: • 1960, 1970, 1980 censuses; + 1975 SOFT; x 1975 SPC 2.

especially among women. A moderate continuation of the increase in proportions single among women at most ages, but particularly in the twenties, is indicated by a comparison of the 1960 (adjusted), 1970, and preliminary 1980 Census results. In contrast, evidence from the second Survey of Population Change (SPC2) suggests a relative lack of change. Results from the Survey of Fertility in Thailand (SOFT) for 1975, however, generally show proportions single among women that are consistently higher than the 1970 Census and only slightly below those in the 1980 Census. Proportions single among males show less variation across different sources than for women and appear to have remained relatively constant between 1960 and 1980 with only a slight tendency toward increase evident at ages 25 and above.

The singulate mean age at marriage, an estimate of the age at first marriage derived from the proportions single by age, registers one year increase for women and a three tenths of a year increase for men between the adjusted 1960 Census results and the preliminary 1980 results. Results from SPC2, however, do not fit into this trend and suggest rather that the mean age at marriage may not have risen so much or perhaps not at all. In contrast, the results for women from SOFT indicate an age at marriage almost as high as that implied by the 1980 Census preliminary results. If more weight is given the census results, the evidence points to a modest trend toward increasing proportions single and rising age

at first marriage since 1960, especially for women. The contradictory evidence provided by SPC2 indicating little trend in proportions single cannot be dismissed out of hand, however, given the large sample size on which it is based and the apparent problems associated with the 1980 Census.[2]

In Thailand, the difference in the age at first marriage between men and women is not large. Judging from the singulate mean age at marriage, men are only about two and a half years older than women when they marry for the first time. This is low compared to most other developing countries where the age difference between spouses can be as large as eight years as for example in Bangladesh (Durch, 1980; Smith, 1980).

All sources appear to agree that marriage is close to universal in Thailand with over 95 percent of both men and women having married at least once by the time they reach age 50. It should be noted, however, that with the probable rise in the proportions single at younger ages over the last two decades it is too soon to determine if higher proportions will remain permanently single.

Calculations of the singulate mean age at first marriage, when based on a single cross-section from a census or survey, incorporate an assumption of unchanging marriage patterns over the recent past. Since the evidence seems to point to increases in the age at marriage and in proportions single, particularly at younger ages, over the

last two decades this assumption is not met. As a result, the estimates of the singulate mean age at marriage when based on single cross-sections tend to be biased upwards. Agrawala (1962) has proposed a method of calculating the singulate mean age at marriage which avoids the assumption of unchanging nuptiality provided data are available for two points in time. The resulting calculation reflects the age at marriage implied by the nuptiality experience during the period intervening between the two sets of observations and is no longer biased by changes that may have occurred prior to the first observation. Calculations based on the proportion single among women in the last three censuses (using a half-year adjustment for the 1960 Census) yield a singulate mean age at marriage of 21.60 for the 1960-70 intercensal period and 21.99 for the 1970-80 intercensal period. As expected, these estimates of the singulate mean age at marriage are lower than would be obtained if we simply averaged the estimates derived from each census separately. These results have been added to Figure 1 and suggest a slightly more modest increase in women's age at first marriage than do the single census estimates.

With a singulate mean age at marriage for women in the early twenties and with approximately 40 percent of women aged 20-24 still single, on a worldwide comparison age at marriage is intermediate between considerably earlier pattern characterizing much of the Third World and a later age at marriage characteristic

of much of Europe (Chamratrithirong, 1980) although it should be noted that marriage patterns are in a state of flux in many countries. The relatively low proportion still single by ages 45-49 among women is more typical of less developed countries than of many Western nations. This has led Chamratrithirong (1980) to speculate that Thailand may be in a state of transition in which not only is the age at marriage slowly rising but the eventual proportion who ever marry decreasing. He argues that this latter phenomenon is not yet apparent in the statistics because older cohorts, from which we judge the proportion who ever marry, are characterized by the former pattern of earlier and more universal marriage. If his interpretation is correct, over the next several decades as the younger cohorts reach the end of the age at which almost all first marriages occur, an increase in the proportion never marrying should become evident. In this connection, it is worth noting that in contrast to the 2 or 3 percent of women who were classified as still single at ages 45-49 in all other sources, the preliminary results of the 1980 Census 1 percent sample show 4.4 percent of that age group as single, higher than any previous figures.

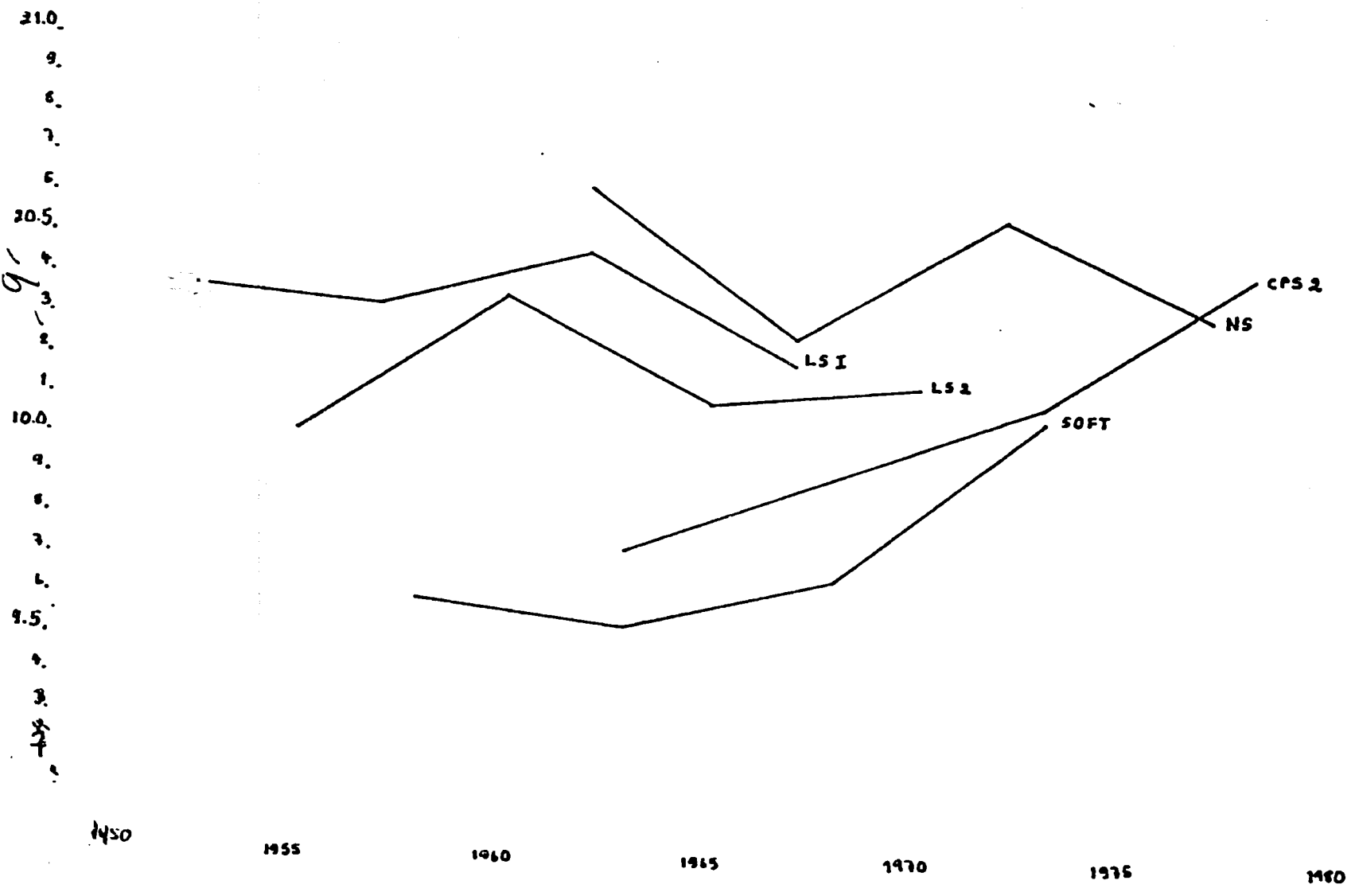
Given the lack of consistency in the evidence examined so far on changing patterns of nuptiality in Thailand, it is useful to examine direct reports on age at first marriage collected in the various sample surveys for evidence on trends. In the present study we only examine evidence for women. One way to estimate trends from such data

is to calculate the mean reported age at first marriage according to the year of occurrence. One problem with this approach is created by the fact that only women up through age 49 are included in some samples. As a result, the distribution of ages at first marriage is progressingly truncated at the upper end the further back in time the mean age at first marriage is estimated. For example if a survey took place in 1981, women married after age 45 in 1977, after age 40 in 1972, after age 35 in 1967 and so on would be excluded from the sample since they would all be over age 49 in 1981, the year of the survey. In order to avoid biasing the trend in age at first marriage, all women marrying for the first time after age 30 are excluded from the calculations and only results for a period covering twenty years prior to each survey are presented. The exclusion of women marrying after age 30 results in only a moderate underestimation of age at first marriage since relatively few women in Thailand marry for the first time after this age.

The results are presented graphically in Figure 2 based on five different surveys : the two rounds of the Longitudinal Study of Social, Economic and Demographic Change (LS1 and LS2), SOFT, the National Study of Family Planning Practices, Fertility and Mortality (NS) and the Second Contraceptives Prevalence Survey (CPS2). There is considerable disagreement among the various surveys. Only CPS2 indicates a consistent rise in the age at first marriage for Thai women during the twenty years prior to the survey although the data from SOFT also indicate a rising age at marriage for the

Figure II

Mean age at first marriage by year of occurence for women marrying by age 30



Data for Figure 2

Mean age at first marriage by year of occurrence for women marrying by age 30

period of occurrence	mid year of period	LS1	LS2	SOFT	NS	CPS2
1950 - 54	1952	20.38				
1953 - 57	1955		20.02			
1955 - 59	1957	20.33				
1956 - 60	1958			19.60		
1958 - 62	1960		20.36			
1960 - 64	1962	20.47			20.63	
1961 - 65	1963			19.54		19.73
1963 - 67	1965		20.10			
1965 - 69	1967	20.20[a]			20.27	
1966 - 70	1968			19.66		19.92
1968 - 72	1970		20.15[b]			
1970 - 74	1972				20.57	
1971 - 75	1973			20.07		20.11
1975 - 79	1977				20.33	
1976 - 81	1978[c]					20.44

Notes: a) urban sample covers 1965-70.
b) urban sample covers 1968-73.
c) 1978-79.

fifteen year period which overlaps with the CPS2 results. A far more erratic pattern is indicated by NS although the results cover much the same period as CPS2. It should be noted that LS1, LS2 and NS are related surveys in which many of respondents are the same women. Thus the generalcorrespondence among these three surveys cannot be taken as independent verification of the trends they show. Moreover because of the larger number of cases involved probably more weight should be given the results from SOFT and CPS2, especially the latter[3]. If so, there is some confirmation then of rising age at first marriage among women since at least the mid 1960's

A somewhat different approach to estimating trends in age at marriage has been taken by Trussell (1980) based on the results of SOFT. By applying the model nuptiality schedules developed by Coale to the reported ages at first marriage of successive age groups of ever-married women as well as to the same data in combination with information on the proportions ever married tabulated from the household record collected in the survey, he is able to estimate the mean age at first marriage and the proportion who will eventually marry for each cohort. His results are reproduced in Table 2. By applying a model schedule he is able to extrapolate the full nuptiality experience of each cohort based on their experience up to the date of the survey and thus avoid the downward bias on the mean age at marriage that would result from direct calculations based

Table 2 Estimates of the Mean Age at Marriage and Proportions Eventually Marrying for Women, Based on Fitting the Coale Model Marriage Schedule to Individual Data on Age at Marriage Alone and Combined with Data on Proportions Ever Married from the Household Schedule of SOFT

Cohort	Estimated Mean Age at First Marriage from		Estimated Proportions Eventually Marrying from Combined Data
	Individual Data	Combined Data	
20 - 24	21.2	21.4	.900
25 - 29	21.1	21.2	.921
30 - 34	20.8	20.8	.929
35 - 39	20.7	20.7	.945
40 - 44	20.2	20.2	.963
45 - 49	20.3	20.3	.967

Source: Trussell, 1980.

only on experience to date.

Two slightly different series of mean ages at first marriage were calculated depending on whether the model was applied only to the reported ages at first marriage or the combination of these data with the proportions ever married derived from the household schedule. Both series suggest that a modest increase in the age at first marriage has been underway over recent decades. In addition, Trussell's estimates of the proportion that will eventually marry suggest that a movement away from virutally universal marriage is also taking place. These results, of course, are only estimates and depend both on how well the model nuptiality schedule fits actual Thai experience and the accuracy of the data used in the calculations. A decrease in the proportion eventually marrying to only 90 percent as indicated by Trussell's estimates implies a rather radical change in this aspect of the Thai nuptiality pattern and probably should be taken only as suggestive of the direction in which the change is occurring rather than an indication of the actual magnitude to be expected.

It is worth noting that Trussell's estimates of the mean age at first marriage even for the more recent cohorts are lower than even the intercensal singulate mean ages at first marriage for women calculated from the proportions single in the various censuses and surveys included in Table 1. This suggests some deviation between the marital experience as recorded in the actual data and the

model nuptiality schedules.

Regardless of which set of estimates are accepted as the most representative for Thailand, the age at marriage, especially for women, is somewhat older than in many other less developed countries. The probable recent rise in the age at marriage most likely reflects the same modernizing forces that apparently are changing nuptiality in other Asian countries (Smith, 1980). A cross-sectional analysis of 1970 census data by Chamratrithirong (1980) supports the suggestion that socioeconomic change affected nuptiality in Thailand during the previous decade. In a cross-provincial analysis, both age at marriage and percentage single were positively related to socioeconomic characteristics, especially for men.

Even before the recent changes in nuptiality patterns, female age at marriage in Thailand appeared traditionally to have been moderately late by Third World standards. Lauro (1979) suggests that the prevalence of bride-price payments and the custom of male entrance into monkhood prior to marriage have acted as important factors contributing to delayed marriage. These factors would appear to be more relevant for explaining the male rather than the female age at marriage. If there is also a norm in favor of a narrow age gap between spouses, however, women's age at marriage would also be affected. Lauro also notes that residents of the

village he studied frequently expressed a feeling that couples should not marry until they were old enough to shoulder the responsibilities of raising a family. Although temporary residence with the bride's parents is fairly common following marriage, and may ease the financial burden faced by a newly married couple (Yoddumnern, 1981), this typically lasts only for a short period after which neo-local residence is established (Henderson et.al., 1971:Limanonda 1979). Support of the newly-wed couple's children generally falls on the couple themselves rather than being absorbed by a composite household economy, as may be common in countries where age at marriage is quite early (Davis, 1955). This relative economic and even social independence of newly formed families may well be a crucial factor in accounting for the lack of an earlier age at marriage, as it is hypothesized to have been historically in Western Europe, although to an even more extreme extent.

DIFFERENTIALS

Substantial differences in nuptiality patterns exist between rural and urban residents in Thailand. As indicated in Table 3, the percentage single as recorded in the 1970 Census, is higher at every age among urban residents than among their rural counterparts. This holds equally for men and women. The singulate mean age at marriage is approximately three years higher for both men and women living in urban areas compared to rural residents of the same sex. The largest absolute rural-urban differences are in the age groups in the twenties and thus for ages at which fertility is potentially highest. Some difference still persists even at the

Table 3 Percentage Single by Age, Sex, and Residence; and Singulate Mean Age at Marriage (SMAM) by Sex and Residence, Thailand, 1970

	Percentage Single			
	Urban Areas		Rural Areas	
Age Group	Male	Female	Male	Female
10 - 14	100.0	99.7	100.0	99.5
15 - 19	98.1	89.2	95.3	79.5
20 - 24	80.8	59.2	60.4	33.7
25 - 29	43.8	30.8	20.4	12.8
30 - 34	20.2	16.3	8.1	6.7
35 - 39	10.3	10.1	4.4	4.5
40 - 44	6.1	7.1	2.7	3.4
45 - 49	4.8	5.5	2.0	2.7
50 - 54	3.9	4.2	1.6	2.3
Total standardized by age	58.0	51.9	50.2	42.8
SMAM	27.2	24.7	24.2	21.4

Source: Chamratrithirong, 1980.

end of the reproductive ages although the percentage remaining single is low enough to suggest nearly universal marriage even in urban areas. Analysis based on the first round of the Longitudinal Study as well as the 1970 Census, suggests that among urban residents differences exist between those living in Bangkok and those living in provincial urban areas with the proportion single at any given age and the age at marriage higher among Bangkok residents (Prachuabmoh et al., 1972; Chamratrithirong, 1980). Similar differences in the marriage patterns of the rural, provincial urban, and Bangkok population are also evident from the special 1 percent sample tabulations of the 1960 Census (Goldstein et.al., 1973).

Based on results from CPS2, the mean age of marriage has been rising both for rural and urban women over the last two decades. Estimates of the average age at marriage by year of occurence and place of residence for women marring by age 30 are shown in table 4 based on CPS2, the most recent and largest survey providing this type of information. The increase appears to be greater for rural women according to these results.

Regional differences in the singulate mean age at marriage are indicated in Table 5 based on the 1960, 1970 and 1980 census. To facilitate comparisons, the 1960 census results have been adjusted to allow for an average one - half year overstatement of age. For both sexs and for all three censuses, age at marriage

Table 4 Mean age at first marriage by year of occurrence and place of residence at time of interview for women marrying by age 30

	Residence at time of interview	
Year of occurrence	Rural	Urban
1961 - 65	19.43	21.49
1966 - 70	19.58	21.52
1971 - 75	19.72	21.70
1976 - 81	20.07	21.77
Increase:		
1961-65 to 1976-81	0.64	0.28

Source: unpublished tabulations from CPS2.

Table 5 Singulate mean age at first marriage by region

	Women			Men		
	1960[a]	1970	1980[b]	1960[a]	1970	1980[b]
Bangkok Metropolis	23.4	25.0	25.5	26.7	27.5	27.6
Central excluding Bangkok	22.2	22.7	23.4	24.9	25.5	25.1
Northeast	21.5	21.2	21.6	23.9	23.7	24.0
North	21.0	21.2	22.1	23.9	24.2	24.3
South	21.0	21.3	22.2	24.5	24.7	24.5
Whole Kingdom	21.6	21.9	22.7	24.5	24.7	24.8

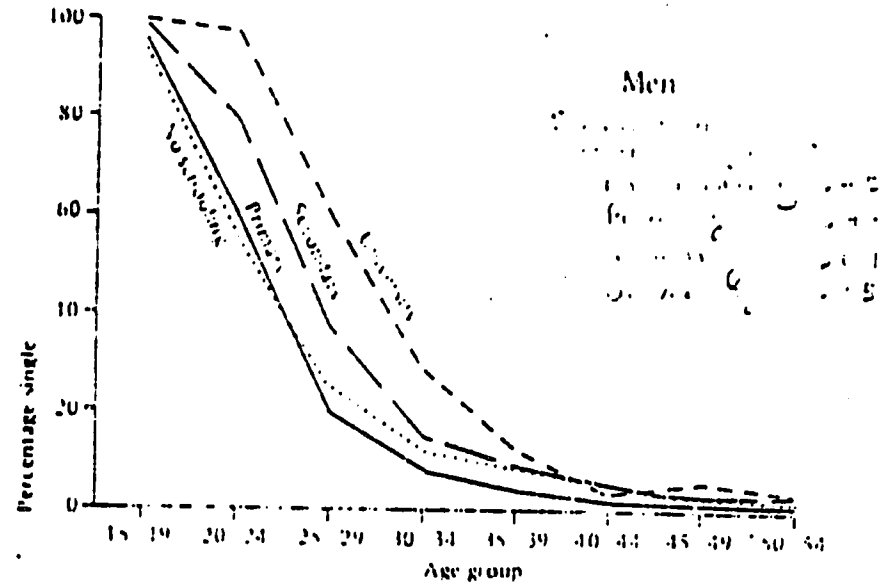
Source: Chamratrithirong, 1980 and Pejaranonda, 1983.

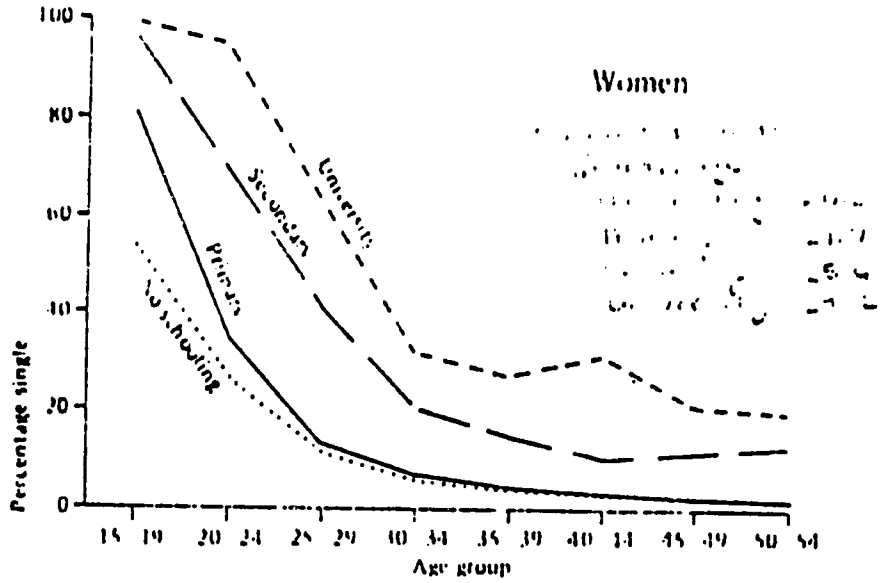
Notes: Results in this table are based on censuses.
a) adjusted for a half year average age-mistatement.
b) except for the South, based in preliminary results from the 1% sample; results for the South are based on the full census population.

is distinctly latter in the Bangkok Metropolis than elsewhere. Even after excluding Bangkok, the central region is characterized by the oldest age at first marriage of the four major regions for both women and men. There is little difference in age at marriage, however, among the remaining three regions. The latter age at marriage of the central region undoubtly reflects the substantively higher level of development there than in the rest of Thailand.

In most populations, higher educational attainment is associated with later ages at marriage, and Thailand is no exception in this respect (see, e.g., Durch, 1980). For both men and women, the differences in the singulate mean age at marriage are small between those with no schooling and those with primary schooling, but higher levels of education are associated with considerably later ages at marriage. The impact is greater for women than for men. Permanent nonmarriage as measured by the percent single at ages 40-44 or 45-49 for example show little association with education for men but show a marked increase with greater education for women for levels past primary schooling. As Figure 3 shows, educational differentials in the percent single at all ages are more pronounced for women than for men, and a considerable proportion of women with secondary and particularly with university education never marry.

FIGURE 3 Percentage of men and women single by age, for four educational levels, Thailand, 1970





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There is of course no guarantee that these sharp educational differentials will persist, particularly as the educational composition of the Thai population changes but it is worth noting that the changes in educational composition of women in reproductive ages could have had only limited impact on the overall nuptiality pattern since only modest increases have occurred in any absolute sense in the percentage of women going beyond primary school, the point at which the impact on marriage seems to make a substantial difference.

There also appear to be distinct differentials in age at first marriage in Thailand between Thai Buddhists and Thai Moslems. Buddhists by far make up the vast majority of the population, over 90 percent, and marry considerably later than Moslems, the second largest religious group, constituting about 5 percent of the total population. According to an analyses of the 2 percent sample of the 1970 census, the singulate mean age at marriage nationally for women was 22.6 for Buddhists and 19.6 for Moslems while for men it was 24.7 for Buddhists compared to 23.3 for Moslems. Results for the 1980 census on religious differences in age at marriage are available only for the southern region, but since 80 percent of Thai Moslems live in the South the results are of considerable interest. They indicate a singulate mean age at marriage for women of 22.9 for Buddhists and 19.6 for Moslems; results for men are not available (Pejaranonda, 1983).

Results from the 1970 and 1980 census studies also indicate that for both Buddhists and Moslems, the age at first marriage is directly associated with education. Since Moslems are characterized by lower educational attainment levels than Buddhists, this accounts for part of the difference in the age at first marriage of the two groups. Nevertheless, generally within educational categories, Moslems marry younger than Buddhists and thus the religious differential cannot be explained only in term of educational differences.

Data on trends in age at first marriage for women by religion from several sample surveys have been recently analyzed and are presented in table 6 by year of occurrence. Only the SOFT results refer to the national level but are based on a small number of women for Moslems. The other two surveys are based on larger number but refer to more restricted areas. For reasons explained above, results are limited to women who marry before age 30. The results confirm the earlier age at marriage for Moslem women but generally indicate a narrowing of the gap since the age at first marriage of Moslem women appears to be increasing over time while for Buddhists the age at marriage either shows a slower increase or no apparent trend. It is interesting to note that a substantive trend towards an increase in the age at first marriage over the last several decades has been noted in neighboring Malaysia and that while this has characterized all three major ethnic groups, the increase has been above average for the predominantly Muslim

Table 6 Mean age at first marriage by year of occurrence and religion for women marrying by age 30

	CPS2 Rural South		SOFT Whole Kingdom		Jana District Survey Songkhla Province	
	Buddhists	Moslems	Buddhists	Moslems	Buddhists	Moslems
1956-60	-	-	19.6	17.7	-	-
1961-65	19.7	16.1	19.6	16.5	19.3	16.0
1966-70	20.8	15.9	19.7	17.4	18.8	16.3
1971-75	20.4	17.1	20.1	17.9	19.3	17.3
1976-80	20.5[a]	18.2[a]	-	-	19.2	17.6

Notes: a) 1976-81, b) less than 20 cases

Sources: Kamnuansilpa et al., 1983; Institute of Population Studies, 1983; Porapakkham et al., 1983.

Malays (DaVanzo and Haaga, 1981).

MARITAL DISSOLUTION AND REMARRIAGE

Anthropologists typically have noted that divorce and remarriage are common in Thailand (Henderson, 1971:70). Marital dissolution is usually the product of an informal process whereby one of the partners simply moves out rather than the result of an official, legal termination. Information on marital histories has been collected in a number of demographic sample surveys. Such data may under estimate the extent of marital dissolution and remarriage, however, because of the sensitivity of this area of inquiry. Nevertheless, as shown in Table 7, a substantial proportion of ever-married women report being married more than once when questioned about their marital histories. In each of the four surveys for which such data are available, the percentage married more than once is higher among rural women than among urban women. Indeed, perhaps as many as one in five among rural women remarry at least once by the end of the reproductive age span. Data from the first round of the Longitudinal Study indicate that among urban women, remarriage is indicated more commonly by those living in provincial urban centers than by those in the capital, although the extent of the difference is less marked than between rural and urban categories overall (Prachuabmoh et al., 1972).

Table 7 Percent Married More than Once by Age and Residence, Ever-Married Women

Current Age	Rural				Urban				Total		
	LS1 1969	LS2 1972	SOFT 1975	NS 1979	LS1 1970	LS2 1973	SOFT 1975	NS 1979	LS1 1969/70	LS2 1972/73	SOFT 1975
15-24	4.8	3.1	5.4	2.9	2.1	1.7	5.6	0	4.4	2.9	5.5
25-34	10.1	9.0	10.2	5.1	4.8	4.3	4.6	2.4	7.6	8.2	9.4
35-44	12.3	11.8	19.2	10.9	7.6	5.6	5.5	3.6	11.5	10.8	17.3
45+[a]	20.0	22.3	17.4	13.4	9.2	6.8	8.2	6.8	18.2	20.2	16.0

Notes: a) Limited almost entirely to women 45-49 for SOFT.

David Smith (1981) applied life table techniques to data from SOFT in order to estimate probabilities of marriage dissolution and remarriage. Because he found a much higher probability of divorce and separation among women who marry at particularly young ages and because such a high proportion of married women under age 25 at the time of interview were concentrated among women who marry at early ages, much of his analysis is limited to women aged 25-49. Table 8, which summarizes his results on marriage dissolutions, indicates that almost one out of five Thai women can expect dissolution within the first 15 years of marriage and close to one out of four within the first 20 years. During the early years of marriage, divorce and separation are far more important sources of marital disruption than widowhood, and even by the end of 20 years they together account for over 60 percent of total dissolution.

Analysis of data from SOFT also points to a clear inverse relationship between marital dissolution and education. Based on life table analysis, the probability of first marriages being dissolved within 10 years based on the experience of women aged 25-49 is 21 percent for those with no education, 13 percent for women with primary education, and 10 percent for those with middle education (Smith, 1981). Widowhood is included as one source of dissolution, so the results could reflect in part differential mortality risks by education.

Table 8 Cumulative Proportions of First Marriages Dissolved as Estimated by Life Table Analysis, by Source of Dissolution and Duration of Union, Ever-Married Women, Aged 25-49, 1975

Duration of Union	Total Proportion Dissolved	Source of Dissolution: Widowhood	Source of Dissolution: Separation or Divorce
2.5 years	.035	.002	.033
5 years	.094	.014	.081
10 years	.145	.037	.113
15 years	.190	.064	.135
20 years	.233	.090	.143

Source: Smith, 1981, Tables 3 and 4 (based on SOFT).

Table 9 Cumulative Proportions of Women Remarrying Following Dissolution of First Marriage as Estimated by Life Table Analysis, by Age at Dissolution and Duration since Dissolution, Ever-Married Women Aged 25-49, 1975

Duration since Dissolution	Total	Age at Dissolution		
		Under 25	25-34	35+
1 year	.247	.327	.191	.085
2.5 years	.453	.587	.344	.186
5 years	.647	.796	.511	--a

Notes: Not given in source because sample size was under 50 cases.

Source: Smith, 1981, Table 8 (based on SOFT).

While marital disruption is frequent in Thailand, so is remarriage, particularly for women who are at the younger reproductive ages at the time of dissolution. As is evident in Table 9, which summarizes Smith's life table analysis of the probability of remarriage, almost two thirds of women in the reproductive ages remarry within five years of marital disruption. Among women under age 25 at the time their first marriage ends, almost one third remarry within a year, well over half have remarried by two and one-half years, and almost four fifths by five years. Even among women aged 25-34 at the time of dissolution, half have remarried within five years. Only older women are likely to remain unmarried in large proportions. Hence high remarriage rates appear to counteract much of the potential loss of time spent in a marital union that could result from the substantial rates of marital dissolution.

Based on his analysis of data from SOFT, Smith (1981:25) estimates that separation and divorce (holding widowhood constant) are responsible for a loss of only four and one-half months of marriage per capita during the 15 years between the prime fertility ages of 20 and 35. This amounts to only 3 percent of the time currently spent in marriage and thus is unlikely to have more than a marginal influence on fertility.

TEMPORARY SEPARATION OF SPOUSES

In addition to the permanent dissolution of a marriage, temporary separation of spouses occurs especially in connection with seasonal migration. While available evidence for Thailand does not permit a definitive judgment on the extent to which temporary separation of spouses exists, there are several indications that temporary separations are not infrequent. Special tabulations based on the 1-percent sample of the 1960 census and analyzed by Goldstein et al. (1973) subdivide the currently married population into those with spouse present and those with spouse absent. As Goldstein et al. point out, the category "married with spouse absent" undoubtedly includes a variety of situations. In some cases, permanent separation may have occurred but appropriate legal recognition is lacking or one of the spouses is reluctant to admit to the actual situation. Most of this category, however, may be attributable to more genuine situations of temporary separation created by the movement of one partner while the other has remained behind, either waiting for the absent spouse to return or to join the absent spouse at a later date. In addition, there may be other situations in which the spouses are living apart because their employment demands it, particularly in Bangkok, where the wife may be employed as a domestic servant. Finally, some women in this category may be minor wives who share their husband with other wives at different residences. The fact that approximately 50 percent more women reported themselves as

married with spouse absent compared to men might be attributable to the institution of minor wives, since otherwise these numbers should be equal (Goldstein et al., 1973).

Based on tabulations of the special 1-percent sample of the 1960 census, it is possible to calculate the percent of currently married women who report their husbands absent. For the total sample, approximately 3 percent of currently married women under age 50 indicated their husband was absent, but this figure masks substantial rural-urban differences. As many as one in five women in Bangkok (after age-standardization) reported an absent husband, reflecting perhaps a greater prevalence of minor wives and higher urban rates of employment of married women as domestics, as suggested above.

Probably the single most important source of absences among rural spouses is circular migration, typically associated with temporary employment in some other location, often in an urban area. One recent study of circular migration in six villages in northeast Thailand by Fuller et al. (1983) provides information relevant to assessing the extent of temporary separation of spouses. Their study indicates that there is an important although not overwhelming seasonal component to circular migration, with the highest rates of absence occurring after the rice harvest and prior to the following planting season, although they point out that the temporal pattern of the migration is quite complex and not strictly

related to the farming calendar.

While much temporary migration is among single persons and thus not relevant to the separation of spouses, data presented by Fuller et al. permit calculation of the percentage of married residents who were absent at least once during the three-year period under study. By comparing the results for men and women, some idea of the extent to which spouses were separated can be gained. One out of four married men was absent during the three-year period compared to less than one in ten married women, suggesting at least some period of temporary separation.

RESEARCH ISSUES

Given the wide array of connections between marriage on the one hand and familial and societal relations on the other, there is almost no limit to the research issues that could be suggested as relevant to the study of marriage patterns. In the present paper, however, we have focused far more narrowly on a review of demographic evidence concerning marriage patterns and thus we will limit our suggestions regarding research issues to this more limited context.

1) Perhaps the first order of business for researchers concerned with demographic analysis of marriage patterns in Thailand is to determine more clearly just what the recent trends in age at marriage and proportions single are. While the weight of the

evidence examined in this paper seems to point to an increase in the age at first marriage for women (and to a considerably lesser extent for men), it must be noted that there is sufficient contradictory evidence to prevent a firm conclusion on the matter. Moreover the problems associated with comparison of the last three censuses (i.e. incomparability of age reporting between the 1960 and subsequent censuses and uncertainty about the quality of the 1980 census), the major sources of evidence pointing to a rise in age at marriage and increase in proportion single, add to the lack of certainty about recent trends. Clarifications of the extent to which intercensal comparisons can be validly made would be useful.

2) A closely related issue to the above is the need to determine the accuracy of information on which demographic analysis of marriage patterns in Thailand are based. This includes exploring the accuracy of the reporting of marital status, previous marriages, age at marriage and date of marriage. For example, it is important to know the extent to which respondents who do remember their age at marriage, report in terms of completed years or ages at next birthday. Even more important is to determine the extent to which respondents distinctly remember their age at marriage at all. The area of inquiry might require determining the ways in which marriages take place and, in particular, the frequency with which marriage is accompanied by a ceremony or celebration and/or by official registration presumably marking it more clearly

as a recallable event in time and the frequency it is the result of simply moving in together, perhaps initially on a de facto trial basis. Likewise, an assessment of the accuracy of reports on previous marriages, marital dissolution and remarriage will inevitably require a firmer understanding of the sensitivity of these matters. Attention also needs to be given to the extent to which accuracy of demographic data on marriage patterns varies overtime as well as with differences in data collection instruments and methodologics.

3) Recent research on migration is increasingly revealing the widespread extent of temporary migration from rural to urban areas or even to overseas, particularly the Middle East. Yet as the present review has indicated our knowledge of the extent that temporary separation of spouses takes place is quite deficient. This is an area meriting more attention because of the potential social, economic and demographic implications for the families involved.

4) The most challenging task ahead is undoubtedly the exploration of determinants of marriage patterns. This would involve above all an assessment of the forces behind overall levels and trends. Research on trends would be in part dependent on a firmer determination of what actual changes have occurred in terms of age at marriage and proportions single. Given the major changes

taking place in marriage patterns not only within the region but worldwide as well, there is a need to determine the extent to which the processes molding Thai marriage patterns are country specific and the extent to which they are part of a broader cross national phenomenon. The determinants of macrolevel variation in nuptiality experience also deserves attention. As with an assessment of factors underlying the macrolevel patterns, such research would be useful to clarify to what extent nuptiality experience in Thailand is determined by culturally specific factors and to what extent it confirms to a more general model of marriage behaviour.

Footnotes

1 While age reporting is relatively good in Thailand and most people know their age and year or date of birth, many respondents state their age at next birthday rather than age at last birthday in response to a direct question about age. Although the precise extent to which this practice occurs has not yet been determined, at any given single age, it involves a substantial proportion of respondents (Chamratrithirong et al., 1978). In the 1960 census, age was tabulated on the basis of a direct question on age while in the 1970 census and other sources age at last birthday was calculated from the reported date of birth. Thus the average age at last birthday for any single year age group will be younger as reported in 1960 than would be the case if age at last birthday had actually been reported. For this reason we adjust the age distribution upwards by half a year for 1960.

2 Chamratrithirong (1980, p.12) has speculated that the SPC2 data underestimate the true proportions single and that the results from SOFT are more accurate because of the way temporarily absent members of the household and temporary visitors were treated.

3 The urban samples of LS1 and LS2 were larger but because of weighting do not influence the national estimates which are based on the combined rural and urban components.

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