

What is driving marriage trends in Asia?

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OUTLINE

- **Introduction**
- **Convergence theories of marriage change**
- **Trends in singlehood in Asia**
- **Links between industrialization and modernization and changing marriage patterns**
- **Ideational change or just role conflict?**
- **Why is the marriage pattern in China so different from other countries that might have been expected to resemble it?**
- **Looking ahead**

INTRODUCTION

- Marriage trends important in understanding family change, with social policy implications
- Marriage trends a major part of the explanation of the trend to ultra-low fertility in East Asia
- Many interesting trends requiring further analysis, for example:
 - Earlier marriage, but lower fertility, in Bangladesh than in Pakistan
 - Chinese patterns differ sharply from ethnic Chinese elsewhere in Asia

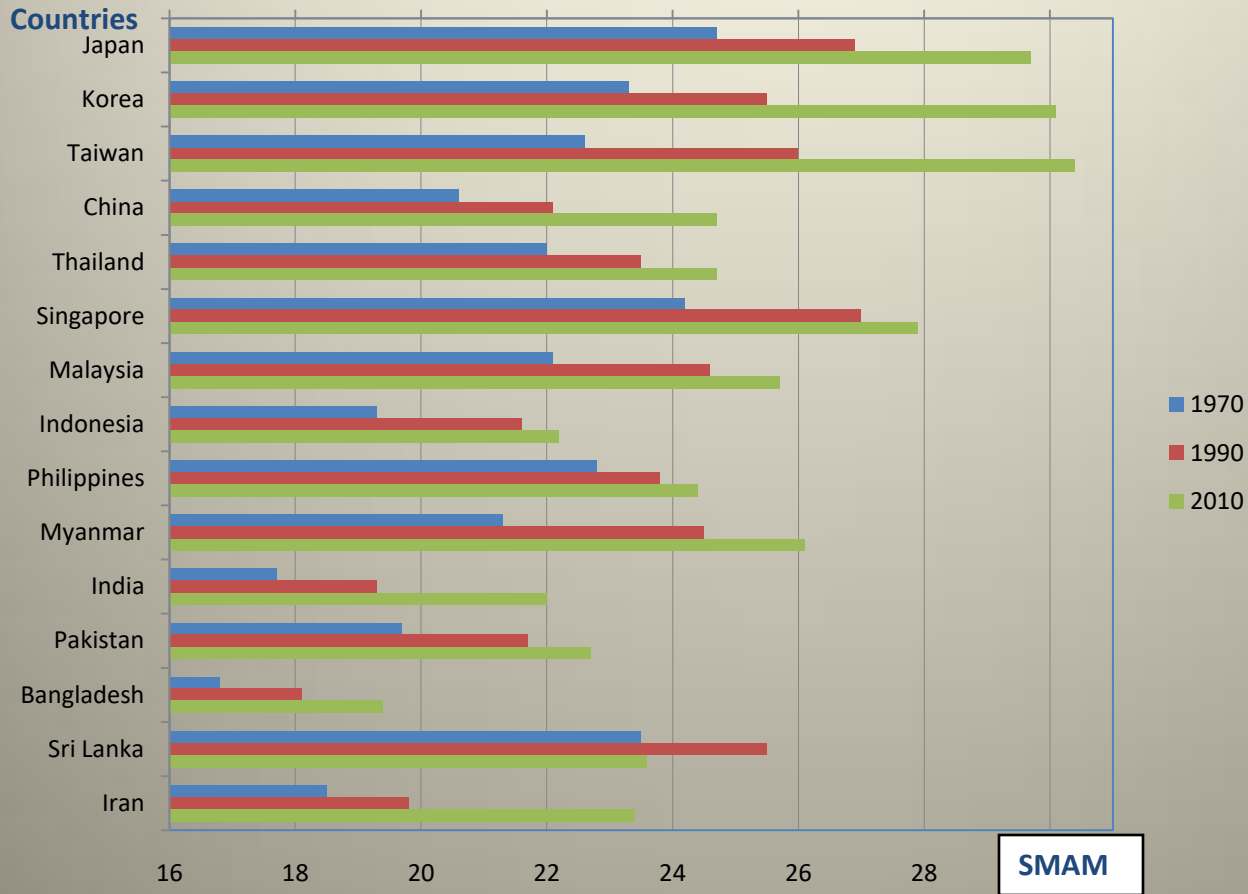
CONVERGENCE THEORIES OF MARRIAGE CHANGE

- William Goode and convergence of family systems.
- Problems with convergence argument - McDonald (1992) and Cherlin (2012)
- Marriage important element of convergence argument. Trends in non-Western countries (especially East and Southeast Asia) lend some support to convergence arguments – rising age at marriage, decrease in parents' choice of spouse, increasing divorce
- Four problems with convergence argument:
 - Converging to what? Western conjugal family itself changing
 - East Asian countries have “overshot” the convergence in terms of late or non-marriage – forthcoming paper in book edited by Poston et al.
 - Rise in age at marriage recently reversed in at least 3 Asian countries
 - Role of parents in choosing marriage partners in South Asia seems relatively immune to supposed effect of rising socio-economic development

TRENDS IN SINGLEHOOD IN ASIA

- Between 1970 and 2010, SMAM for women rose by
 - 7 to 8 years in Korea and Taiwan
 - 3 to 5 years in most countries
 - Less in Philippines and Sri Lanka
- The diversity is amazing – compare India and Bangladesh with Japan, Korea and Taiwan

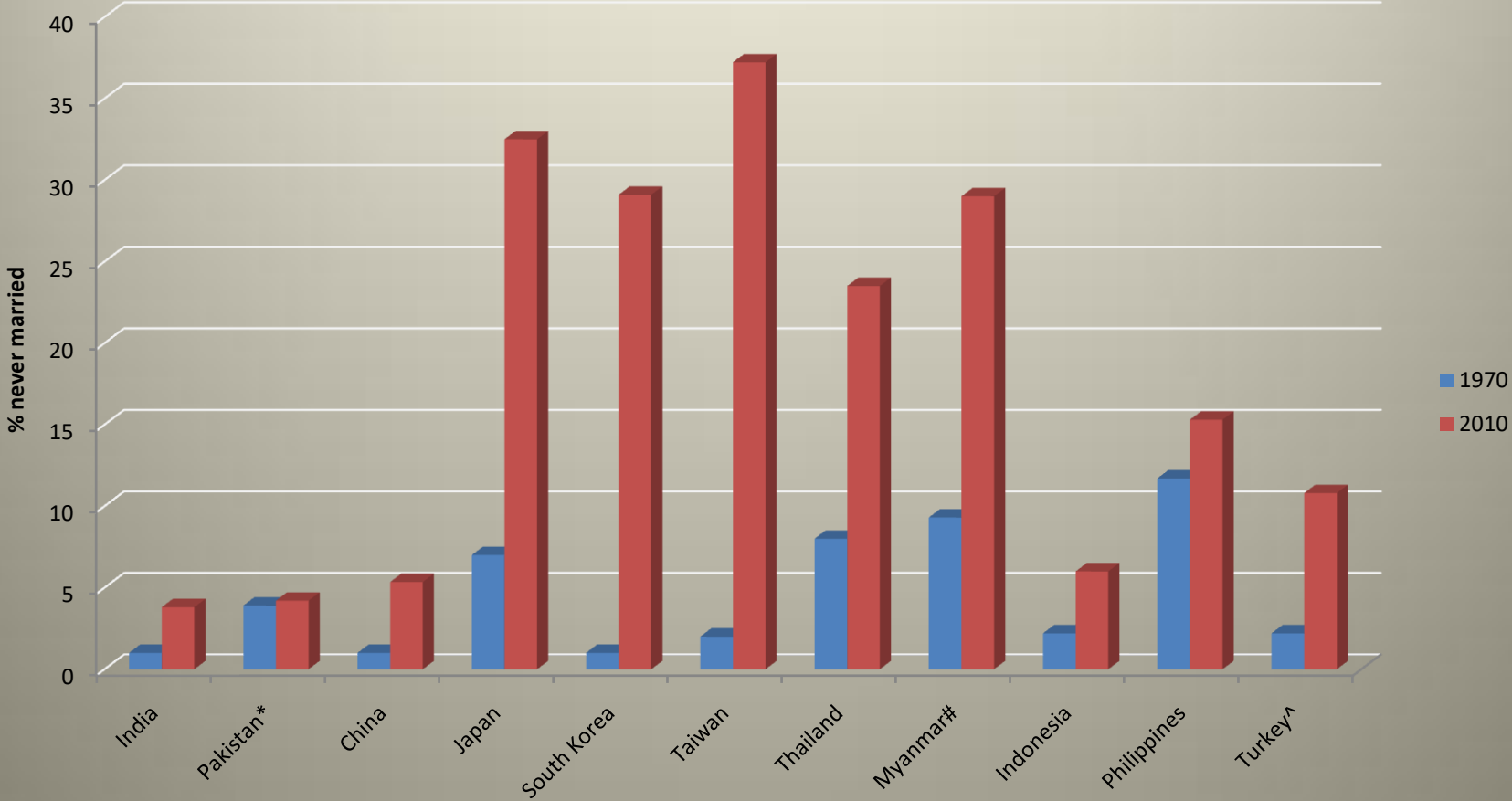
Figure 1. Singulate Mean Age at Marriage (SMAM) for females, in selected Asian Countries, 1970, 1990 & 2010.



The big countries have had the least change

- Figure 2 shows % of women never married at age 30-34
- Dramatic changes in many countries.
- **But** lower proportions and less change in
 - India, Pakistan, Bangladesh (88% of South Asia)
 - China (86% of East Asia)
 - Indonesia (40 % of Southeast Asia)
 - Philippines – higher proportions but little change
- Variable trends over past decade (not shown):
 - Sharp increase Korea, Taiwan, Japan
 - Less sharp increase Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, Pakistan
 - Declines in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam

Figure 2. Percent never married, females aged 30-34, selected Asian countries, 1970 and 2010



**Table 1. Percent of Women Never Married at Ages 35-39,
Various Asian Countries, 1970-2010**

Country	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	Change 2000-2010
East and SE Asia						
Japan	5.8	5.5	7.5	13.8	22.0	+8.2
S. Korea	0.4	1.0	2.4	4.3	12.6	+8.3
Taiwan	1.2	2.1	6.0	11.1	20.9	+9.8
Singapore	5.1	8.5	14.8	15.1	17.1	+2.0
Hong Kong	3.0	4.5	10.2	17.5	20.9	+3.4
China	c.0.3	0.3	0.3	0.5	1.8	+1.3
Thailand	5.2	7.3	9.6	11.6	14.6	+3.0
Philippines	8.0	8.0	8.7	9.5	10.3	+0.8
Indonesia	1.4	1.9	2.7	3.5	3.8	+0.3
Myanmar	7.0	8.9	13.8	18.6	21.4	+2.8
South Asia						
India	0.5	0.6	0.9	1.3	1.5	+0.2
Bangladesh	0.4	0.4	0.6	2.5	0.8	-1.7
Pakistan	2.1	1.7	2.4	1.9	1.9	0.0
Sri Lanka	5.6	8.9	11.1	10.8	6.4	-4.4
Iran	1.1	n.a	2.7	3.3	9.1	+5.8

Source: Jones, forthcoming

LINKS BETWEEN INDUSTRIALIZATION AND MODERNIZATION AND CHANGING MARRIAGE PATTERNS

- East and Southeast Asia – for females, close positive correlation between education and age at marriage
- So in examining change – need to decompose change to check whether it’s “just” compositional
- Jones-Gubhaju study – was the rise in female singlehood 2000-2005 compositional (education?) or across the board?
 - Japan, South Korea and Taiwan - across the board
 - Singapore, Thailand and Chinese Malaysians - compositional
 - Probably same conclusions when updated to 2010

Another approach

- Cross-national comparisons between socio-economic development indicators and age at marriage
- Jones-Yeung study shows high correlation between educational expansion and economic development, on one hand, and age at marriage (see scatterplots).
- But if the highly developed economies are excluded, the relationship less clear-cut.

Figure 2. Relationship of SMAM to GDP per capita, Asian countries, 2010.

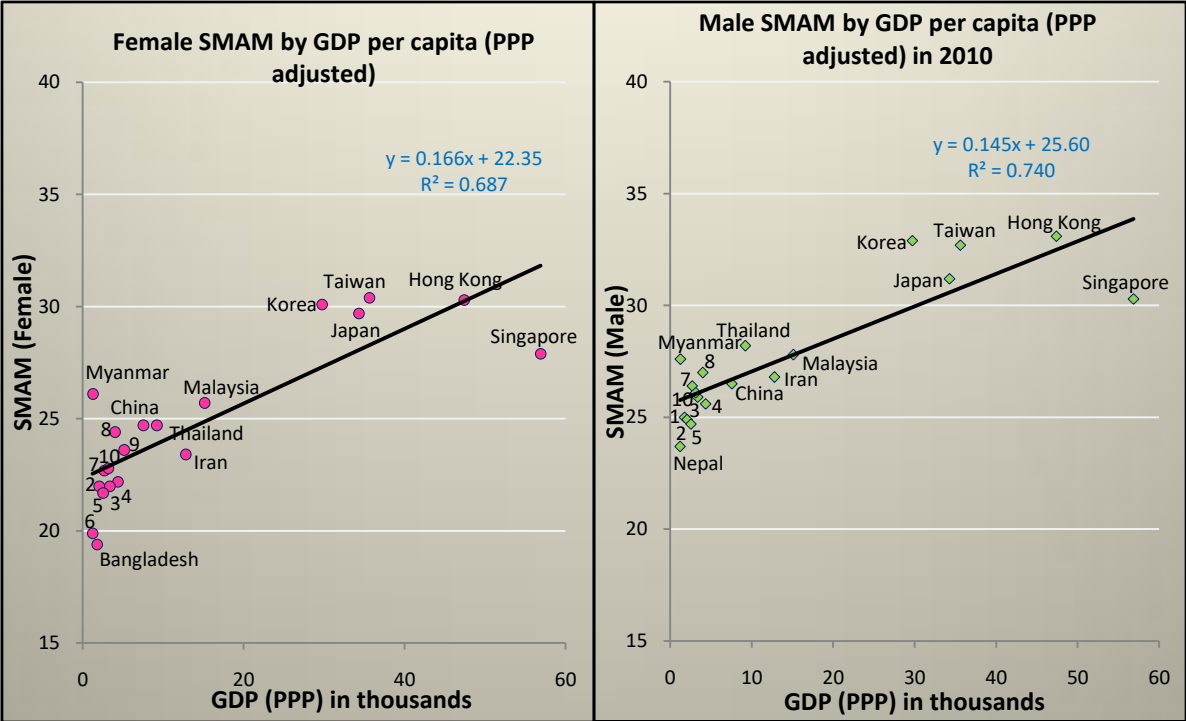
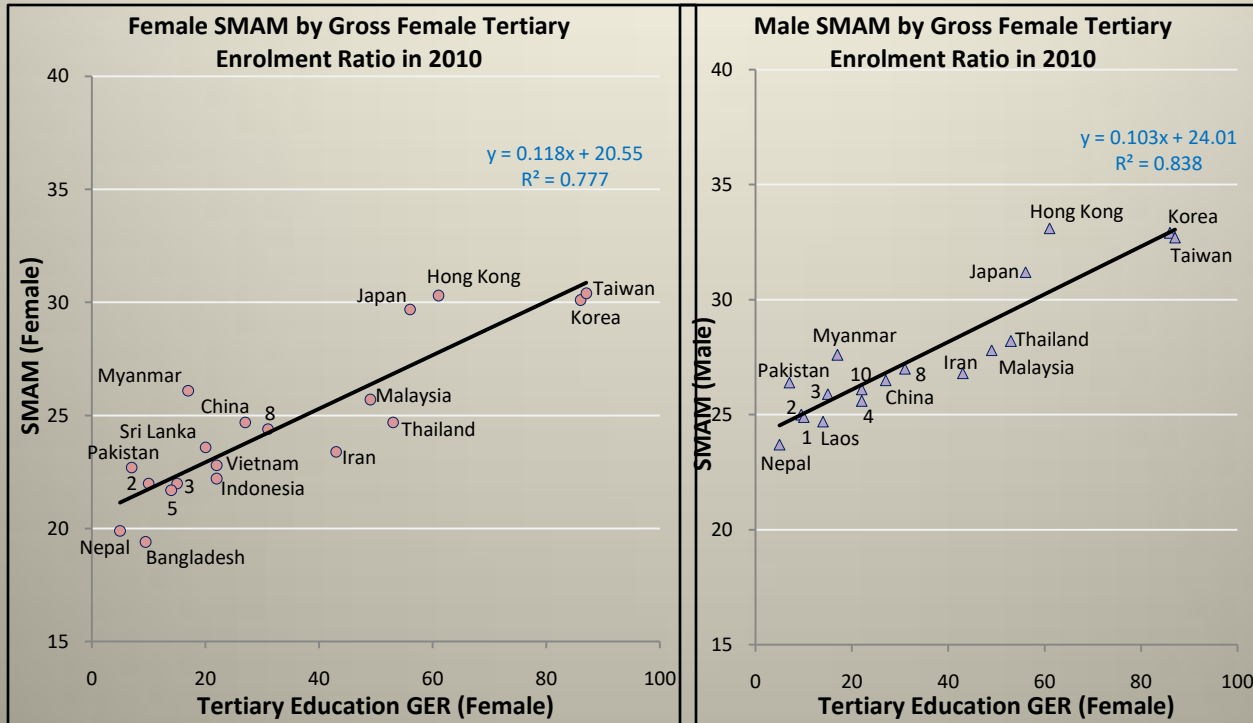


Figure 3. Relationship of SMAM to Gross Female Tertiary Enrolment Ratio, Asian countries, 2010



R-squared for SMAM , % single at ages 30-34 by GDP per capita and educational indicator

	GDP per capita (PPP)	Gross female tertiary enrolment ratio
SMAM (Male)	0.74	0.84
SMAM (Female)	0.69	0.78
% male single, ages 30-34	0.67	0.83
% female single, ages 30-34	0.57	0.68

Ideational change

- Lesthaeghe – second demographic transition – another aspect of “inevitable” convergence?
- Japan – and other East Asian countries – some evidence in support
- But – not clear how much is ideational change and how much is women’s problems in resolving role conflict issues: the “marriage package”

INDONESIAN TRENDS

- **WHY DID AGE AT MARRIAGE FALL 2005-2010?**
- **1970-2005**
 - Urbanization – 17% to 42%
 - School attendance, girls aged 15-19 – 17% to 40%
 - SMAM for females – 19.3 years to 23.4 years
 - Strong differences as expected according to urban-rural residence and level of education
- **2005-2010**
 - Urbanization - 42% to 50%
 - Secondary school enrolment ratio – 60% to 75%
 - SMAM for females – 23.4 to 22.2
 - Only one province – Papua – went against national trend towards earlier marriage

SO: IN 2005-2010 PERIOD, SMAM FELL, AND % FEMALES EVER MARRIED AT AGES 15-19 ROSE FROM 9.2% TO 14.4%

HARD TO EXPLAIN, AND RISE IN AGE AT MARRIAGE WILL PROBABLY RESUME

Explaining marriage patterns in China

- Vastly different from other East Asian countries; concentration of marriage ages in the 20s; 4% never married at ages 30-34, compared with over 30% in Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong
- Very strong social and family pressures to marry
- Strange media focus on “leftover women” – need for focus on “leftover men” – surplus males will reach 30 to 50 million in next 2 or 3 decades.
- But true that age and status hypergamy are challenges in the marriage market faced by older college educated women
- Also likely that women’s reluctance to marry (already evident to some extent in major coastal cities) will increase for similar reasons to those in other East Asian countries
- Compared to other East Asian countries, China’s position in the scatter plots already shown is more or less as expected. So – further socio-economic development can be expected to bring delays in marriage

Resilience of South Asian family system

- Economic development has not undermined the prevailing marriage system, unlike in East Asia
 - Because economic development has not proceeded as far as in East Asia?
 - Because of the resilience of the South Asian family system?
- Reminiscent of debate over Japanese-Western differences in living arrangements of elderly

Future prospects

Some recent references

- Andrew Cherlin, 2012, “Goode’s *World Revolution and Family Patterns*: a reconsideration at fifty years”, *Population and Development Review*, 38(4): 577-607.
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