

Fertility changes, forms of union and cohabitation in two West African cities, Bamako and Lomé

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In most African countries, fertility has started to decrease but the pace and the intensity of the decline vary greatly. In particular, countries of West Africa like Mali show a recent and slow decrease of fertility. In Togo, the decline of fertility started earlier and has now reached levels that are lower than in Mali. In Togo, the decrease in fertility rates reported by DHS, between 1988 and 1998, was from 4.9 children per woman to 3.3 in urban areas, and very small in rural areas, from 6.9 to 6.5 (Agouké et al. 1989; Anipah et al. 1999). In 1998, the total fertility rate (TFR) was of about 2.9 children per woman in Lomé, the capital city of Togo, about four children less than in rural areas. In urban Mali, the TFR dropped from 6.3 children per woman in 1987 to 5.4 in 1995/96 while it remained stable in rural areas (from 7.4 to 7.3 during the same period) (Traoré et al. 1989, Coulibaly et al. 1996). In Bamako, the capital city, the TFR was one third lower than in rural area in 2001 (Basséri et al. 2002). The use of modern birth control methods is still limited in Mali and Togo. The results of DHS show that in Mali, the prevalence of modern contraception among women in union went from 1.3 percent in 1987 to 4.5 percent in 1995/96 and to 5.7 percent in 2001. In Togo, this indicator was of 3 percent in 1988 and of 8 percent in 1998.

In the present communication, our aim is to study how the status of residence and the formality (and legality) of the union are related to the timing and number of births in the two capital cities of Togo and Mali.

As a determinant of fertility, age at first marriage has played a major role in the research on the fertility decline in Africa. Although DHS data can be criticized, in Bamako the median age at marriage of women who were 25-49 year-old increased from 15.7 years in 1987 to 17.5 years in 1995/96 and 18.4 years in 2001. In Lomé, between 1988 and 1998, the median age at marriage went from 20.4 to 20.7 years. Previous studies often referred to marriage, measured by cohabitation (or coresidence) to explain levels of fertility. However, fertility declines observed in West Africa have occurred

mostly in capital cities. But the forms of unions (informal union, formal marriage with religious, customary and civil ceremony, with coresidence or not of partners) have been less studied. In the proposed communication, the quantitative data of two retrospective surveys allow us to use event history analysis in order to study changes across generations in the timing of fertility and nuptiality events. The analysis of the impact of different forms of union and stages in the marriage process on fertility is made possible. The data contain the dates or the order of occurrence of the various events.

Data come from two event history surveys, both conducted in the year 2000. For Bamako, the data come from a retrospective national survey, EDFEEM-2000 (Survey on Family Dynamics and Education of Children in Mali)¹ that collected biographies of a random sample representative of each stratum (Bamako, other urban and rural) of more than 5,000 men and women. At the date of the survey, women were aged between 30 and 54 years and men were between 35 and 59 years old. For the present communication we will use data for women only who lived in Bamako at the time of the survey.

For Lomé, data come from a retrospective survey, the Survey on Migrations and Urban Integration in Lomé² based on a probability sample in this town. The survey, directed by the researchers from URD³ (Demographic Research Unit), collected 2,536 biographies of three generations of men and women (women were aged 45-59, 35-44 and 25-34 in 2000) on their residential, family (union, child), schooling and professional trajectories.

Although each survey has its own interest, comparisons between the two cities are possible by the use of a common methodology (Antoine and Bocquier 1999) for both the fieldwork (survey design, survey sampling and questionnaires) and the event history analysis method. Our analysis will focus on the modules on migration, marriage and birth histories. As for the methodology, tabulations and Cox regressions (Blossfeld et al. 1989; Allison 1991; Trussel et al. 1992) will be run to test whether women's form of union and coresidence status have an influence on the rate of occurrence of first, second, third and higher order birth. In addition to characteristics of a woman's union, we will include as

¹ Enquête Dynamiques Familiales et Éducation des Enfants au Mali

² Enquête sur les Migrations et l'Insertion urbaine à Lomé

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control variables in the Cox models other factors that could affect the risk of having a next child. These include the woman's education level, employment, birth cohort and social background (woman's ethnic group, religion and parents' social origin).

Results of the present communication will provide elements of answer to the questions: how are the new forms of union related to changes in fertility in the two capital cities, Bamako and Lomé? What are the differences and the similarities between the two capital cities Bamako and Lomé, as for these relations?

Lomé is characterized by a high proportion of non-coresidential and informal unions among the younger generations. In contrast in Bamako, rather than men and women living several years in informal unions, the Muslim religious marriage may be observed several months or years earlier than the start of coresidence of the bride and the groom. Another specificity of Lomé, in contrast to Bamako, is that women have a strong participation into economic activities. Women's greater autonomy in Lomé may be related to new forms of marriage and union arrangements, and could contribute to the explanation of the decline of fertility in Lomé. Women who are self-sufficient are likely to be more involved in fertility decisions.

The originality of these two retrospective surveys should help us better understand the contexts of high levels of fertility as well as the role of cohabitation and marriage on fertility.