AL-GHAZALĪ AND MARRIAGE FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF SUFISM

Kaoru AOYAGI*

This paper analyzes Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d.1111)'s Book on the Manners of Marriage (Kitāb Ādāb al-Nikāh) in his The Revival of the Religious Sciences (Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn), and examines the relation between the ideal married life and the practices of Sufism. In studies until now, the contents of this book have been often examined from the viewpoint of sexuality and the problem of women in Islam; however, not much attention has been paid to al-Ghazālī's evaluation of marriage within Sufism in these studies. Rather, in studies of marriage, women, and sexuality in Sufism, the focus has usually been on the ideas on sexuality of Ibn al-'Arabi (d.1240), while few studies of al-Ghazālī's Sufism analyze his discussion of marriage. Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to examine al-Ghazālī's discussion of marriage from the viewpoint of Sufism and to clarify its originality in the history of Sufi thought, comparing it with that of Abū Ṭālib al-Makki (d.998), a Sufi who influenced al-Ghazālī considerably and discussed marriage in detail.

Al-Ghazālī argues that there are many advantages in living with a wife in marriage, and he demonstrates that a man can devote himself to the worship of God and lead an ideal Sufi life with the help of marriage. On the other hand, al-Makki maintains that celibacy is preferable, at least in his time. Most of his discussion is fragmentary and not as developed as al-Ghazālī's, though he does treat marriage more comprehensively than the Sufis before him. Al-Ghazālī demonstrates that for practicing the remembrance of God which leads to seeing God in the hereafter, marriage is better than celibacy. It is concluded that al-Ghazālī's theoretical discussion of marriage is an effort toward the popularization of Sufism.

Keywords: al-Ghazālī, al-Makki, marriage, women, Sufism

I. Introduction

This paper analyzes Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d.1111)'s Book on the Manners of Marriage (Kitāb Ādāb al-Nikāh),1 and examines the relation between the ideal

* Research Fellow of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science
married life and the practices of Sufism. Based on the Koranic verse on marriage “Settle the unmarried among you in marriage” (Koran 24:32) and the fact that the Prophet Muhammad was married, in Islamic society marriage is recommended, and it is difficult to insist on celibacy. Among early Sufis, however, there were opinions which supported celibacy. For example, al-Ghazâli lists sayings of Bishr ibn al-Ḥārith (d. 840 or 841/2), Ibrâhîm ibn Adhâm (d. 777), and Abû Sulaymân al-Dârânî (d. 820/1 or 830/1) which recommend celibacy (Iḥyâ‘, vol. 2, 38-39). Al-Hujwîrî (d. ca. 1072) also objects to people who claim that marriage must be more excellent than celibacy (Hujwîrî 1979, 475; Nicholson 1911, 364). On the other hand, al-Junâyd (d. 910) recommends marriage, and al-Sarrâj (d.988), although he does not give his own opinion, lists sayings of Sufis on marriage vs. celibacy (Sarrâj 1914, 199-200). On the basis of the views of the early Sufis mentioned above, this paper evaluates al-Ghazâli’s discussion on marriage in the history of Sufi thought.

The Book on the Manners of Marriage is the twelfth book of al-Ghazâli’s masterpiece, The Revival of the Religious Sciences (Iḥyâ‘ Ulûm al-Dîn), which discusses theology, law, Koran exegeses, and studies of traditions (ḥadîth) of the Prophet and his companions from the viewpoint of Sufism. The Book on the Manners of Marriage explains the religious and social manners and customs in al-Ghazâli’s time. In studies until now, the contents of this book have been often examined in part from the viewpoint of sexuality, especially the question of the legitimacy of abortion and the problem of the seclusion and veiling of women in Islam. For example, as for sexuality, G.-H. Bousquet argues that Islamic ethics is positive and affirmative towards sexuality and sexual satisfaction, in contrast to Christianity (Bousquet 1990, 55-56). He quotes the statement of al-Ghazâli that the sexual pleasure is an inducement to Paradise and concludes that al-Ghazâli reconciled sexuality and Islamic doctrine (Bousquet 1990, 60-61). F. Mernissi points out it likewise. She also argues that Islam fears women as fitnah (temptation, chaos), which is destructive to the social order. Then she explains active female sexuality, referring to the manners of sexual intercourse discussed in The Book on the Manners of Marriage (Mernissi 1987, 27-45). M. Farah discusses problems of sexuality i.e. sexual intercourse, coitus interruptus, self-consolation, homosexuality, and menstruation, on the basis of the discussion in this book (Farah 1984, 3-42). However, in these studies not much attention has been paid to the evaluation of marriage within al-Ghazâli’s Sufism.

On the other hand, in studies of marriage, women, and sexuality in Sufism, the focus has been on analyses of Ibn al-‘Arabî (d.1240)’s thought. For example,
V. J. Hoffman argues that according to Ibn al-‘Arabi, all existing things emerged from the marriage of the divine spirit, which is male, with Nature, which is female, and human marriage reflects this cosmic marriage; that sexual union thereby imitates God’s creative act of breathing into the form of man to create him in His own image (Ibn al-‘Arabi n.d., vol. 1, 138); and that the goal of sexual union for the Sufi, however, is to perceive the spirit of God in woman and to become aware of his own oneness with God (Hoffman 1995, 235-238). In these studies, however, analysis of The Book on the Manners of Marriage is restricted to the problem of Sufis’ attitude to marriage, while among studies of al-Ghazālī’s Sufism, such as his discussion of mystical practices, human souls, and cosmology, few studies analyze this book.

Thus, in studies in the past, not enough attention has been paid to the discussion of the contents of The Book on the Manners of Marriage as a whole from the standpoint of Sufism. Therefore, this paper undertakes to examine al-Ghazālī’s discussions of marriage within Sufism by comparing them with those of Abū Ṭalāb al-Makki (d.998), a Sufi before al-Ghazālī. There are two reasons to compare al-Ghazālī with al-Makki. Firstly, it is clear that al-Makki influenced al-Ghazālī considerably, because The Revival of the Religious Sciences quotes much from The Nourishment of the Heart (Qūṭ al-Qulūb), and al-Ghazālī succeeds to al-Makki’s thought. Secondly, al-Makki is exceptional as a Sufi who wrote much about marriage. As mentioned above, there are short sayings of Sufis on marriage, women, and ascetism; however, there are few books which spare one whole chapter to discuss marriage like The Nourishment of the Heart does. By comparing the two, al-Ghazālī’s views on marriage will become clear, and it seems also that a new aspect of Islamic thought, i.e. the discussion of marriage from the viewpoint of Sufism, is clarified.

This paper starts with a general survey of contents of The Book on the Manners of Marriage, and then describes the ideal married life of a Sufi, dividing married life into daily life and sexual life. Next, it discusses al-Makki’s views on marriage, and by comparing al-Ghazālī with al-Makki, clarifies the originality of al-Ghazālī’s discussion of marriage.

II. The Book on the Manners of Marriage

The Book on the Manners of Marriage consists of an introduction and three chapters. The summary of contents is as follows: In the introduction, al-Ghazālī argues that marriage assists the belief (din) and states that the manners and the aims of marriage will be discussed in this book (Iḥyā’, vol. 2, 34). In the first chapter, the advantages and the disadvantages of marriage are discussed, mainly
from the viewpoint of the man. For a man, marriage is an important issue which is connected with the afterlife. Married life with his wife and children is a preparation for the hereafter; therefore he has to deliberate whether to marry or not.

The first advantage of marriage is having children and descendants (*Ihya*’, vol. 2, 40), the second is satisfying the sexual desire (*shahwah*) through lawful sexual intercourse (*Ihya*’, vol. 2, 44), the third is comforting his tired soul by the companionship of his wife, the fourth is having enough time for learning and working because his wife does a lot of housework, and the fifth is that by maintaining his family he will be doing a virtuous deed (*Ihya*’, vol. 2, 49-51).

These are the advantages of marriage. Next, al-Ghazālī explains the disadvantages of marriage, the first of which is the difficulty to seek lawful gains, the second is the failure to uphold wife’s rights, and the third is distraction from God through concern for his wife and children (*Ihya*’, vol. 2, 53-55). After mentioning the advantages and disadvantages of marriage, at the end of the first chapter, al-Ghazālī discussed whether a man should marry or not, examining various cases. Judging these points comprehensively, al-Ghazālī concludes that if a man has sexual desire and is afraid of committing adultery, marriage is preferable for him, even if he cannot acquire lawful gains (*Ihya*’, vol. 2, 56). Thus, al-Ghazālī insists that the most important merit of marriage is lawful sexual intercourse, which is related to getting children and avoiding adultery.

In the second chapter, juristic matters are developed. After explanation of the marriage contract, the legal restrictions on a woman’s marriage are clarified. Al-Ghazālī enumerates nineteen restrictions on marriage, such as that the woman is married to another, that she is in a legally prescribed waiting period (*`iddah*), that she is an unbeliever, or that she is a near relation (*Ihya*’, vol. 2, 58-60). Next, al-Ghazālī discusses the qualities (*khiṣāl*) which a woman should have, that is, the image of the ideal wife. Al-Ghazālī enumerates eight qualities, such as religiousness and piety, good character, beauty, and so on. A man should investigate whether she has these qualities. However, in reality, there are few women who have all these qualities, so a man will sometimes be troubled with how to treat his wife.

In the third chapter, there are discussions of the manners of cohabitation and the obligations of husband and wife concerning various problems such as sexual intercourse, producing children, and separation through divorce. A husband should endure and forgive his wife when she behaves badly; on the other hand, he has to control her strictly, and if he does not, he is obeying Satan and will be cast by God into the Fire (*Ihya*’, vol. 2, 71).
These are the contents of this book. Al-Ghazālī pays much attention to the problem of sexuality; however, he does not consider a woman as a mere sex object. He has a comprehensive point of view and regards daily life as important as the sexual relationship. Therefore, he observes the relation between husband and wife in both daily and sexual matters.

Next, the ideal married life which al-Ghazālī advocates will be investigated both in daily and sexual life from the Sufi point of view.

III. Daily Life

In the ideal daily life, the husband works and earns an honest living, and the wife does housework at home. When he returns home, they spend time together. The husband has the obligation to support his family by legal means. All his acts for maintaining his family are great benefits, and supporting his wife and children is equivalent to endeavor (jihād) for the sake of God (Iḥyāʾ, vol. 2, 50). On the other hand, the wife should do housework as much as she can (Iḥyāʾ, vol. 2, 95).22 It is desirable that a woman stay in her house; however, if she has important business, she may go out with her husband’s permission.23 According to al-Ghazālī, a Muslim woman should remain in her house and be interested in her own affairs, housekeeping, ritual prayer, and fasting. Furthermore, she should not be interested in people around her; she should consider only her family and herself and obey her husband (Iḥyāʾ, vol. 2, 93). Thus we can see that in the ideal marriage, a woman spends most of her time in her house, and she has to do lots of housework. Thanks to her, a husband has no worry about cooking, cleaning, and kitchen work. If he were occupied with all the domestic chores, he would waste most of his time and have very little of it left for learning and working. Therefore, a virtuous and righteous (ṣāliḥah) woman who takes care of the housework assists his religion and belief (Iḥyāʾ, vol. 2, 50).24

When al-Ghazālī says that a wife assists belief, he means that a husband is not bothered by housework and he can devote himself to the worship of God (ʿibādaḥ Allāh). Al-Ghazālī quotes the tradition of the Prophet which states “Let each of you have a tongue invoking dhikr (utterance of names of God), a grateful heart, and a wife who assists him toward the afterlife” [Ibn Mājah n.d., vol. 1, 596 (no. 1856)], and he argues that a wife, dhikr25 and thankfulness (shukr)26 are connected with each other (Iḥyāʾ, vol. 2, 50). Because she manages housework, he can have time for practicing dhikr and thankfulness. Al-Ghazālī divides dhikr into dhikr of the heart and dhikr of the tongue, i.e. mental dhikr and vocal dhikr. He argues that dhikr of the tongue which is not accompanied with dhikr of the heart is meaningless [Iḥyāʾ, vol. 1, 467 (Kitāb Tartīb al-
At first, mental dhikr is practiced by the remembrance of one concept repeatedly in one’s heart and by establishing this concept in the heart firmly so it will not disappear [Ihya', vol. 5, 7 (Kitab al-Tafakkur)]. With the help of the names and attributes of God, a man can practice the remembrance of God repeatedly in his heart. However, as it is not easy to turn one’s mind and thought to a single object and keep on remembering it, it is suggested to repeat utterance of names of God or a sacred formula (Nakamura 2001, 68-69). This is vocal dhikr, and it is, in a sense, a methodical support for mental dhikr (Nakamura 2001, 73). Vocal dhikr has to be repeated, because when a man loves something, he repeatedly mentions it, and when he repeatedly mentions a thing, he loves it (Ihya’, vol. 1, 467). Al-Ghazali considers that four practices (al-wazâ’if al-arba ’ah) important to a Sufi are vocal dhikr, fikr (discursive meditation), du’â’ (supplication), and Koran-recitation (Ihya’, vol. 1, 521; Nakamura 2001, 66), and he recommends the practice of dhikr and other exercises. Fikr, another kind of mental or meditative exercise, means to combine two known ideas and to produce a new idea or knowledge (Nakamura 2001, 65), and du’â’ is a supplication, a private prayer, which makes one’s heart to turn towards God. By repeating a sacred formula and names of God and practicing other exercises, a man can concentrate his heart on God. By making the effort to do all these practices in turn, Sufi novices can avoid the boredom which comes from repeated practice of the same act, while keeping the remembrance of God (Nakamura 2001, 69).

Thus, dhikr is the most important exercise among the acts of devotion to God, and a wife who does housework assists her husband religiously, by letting him have enough time to do dhikr and to give thanks to God. A man can practice the remembrance of God whenever he is not working, however, it is difficult to concentrate his heart continuously, because of spiritual tiredness. Therefore, he has to comfort his soul by a time of dallying with his wife.

(An advantage of marriage :) relaxation (tarwîh) and intimacy (înâs) of the soul (nafs) through companionship of his wife. Seeing and dallying comfort the heart and strengthen it for worship, because the soul is weary and has the tendency to avoid its obligation, for it is contrary to its nature. If it is compelled to adhere to what disagrees with its nature, it becomes refractory and defiant. If it relaxes by pleasure periodically, it becomes stronger and more active. The companionship of women provides relaxation which removes anxiety and soothes the heart. It is necessary for
the soul of the pious (muttaqiyyin) to acquire such comfort by lawful means (Ihya', vol. 2, 49).\textsuperscript{31}

Al-Ghazālī says that “This (comfort of the soul) is a benefit that cannot be denied by one who has experienced the weariness of meditations and remembrances (Ihya', vol. 2, 50).” By comforting the soul, a man can practice dhikr, fikr, du'a, and Koran-recitation. Thus, through spending his time with his wife, the soul, which has been tired by dhikr and fikr, is healed, and it becomes easy to practice the remembrance of God.\textsuperscript{32} To comfort the soul is an inducement to the worship of God. On the other hand, al-Ghazālī states that a wife has no right to go to a dhikr assembly without her husband’s permission (Ihya’, vol. 2, 76), so it seems that in principle al-Ghazālī allows women to take part in Sufi activities. However, basically he insists that a woman should devote herself to ritual prayer and fasting in her house (Ihya’, vol. 2, 93).\textsuperscript{33}

IV. Sexual Life

As mentioned above, according to al-Ghazālī, the most important merit of marriage is lawful sexual intercourse, by which it is possible to have children and avoid adultery. As for a husband, he has supreme rights over his wife, and the right to request his wife to have sexual intercourse is included among the husband’s rights (Yanagihashi 2001, 256).\textsuperscript{34} On the other hand, a wife has to be pious when her husband is absent, and when he is present she has to please him as if she were a ḥūr\textsuperscript{35} (virgin in Heaven). Al-Ghazālī insists that a wife has to strive for virtuous deeds when her husband is absent, and she has to return to pleasure and dallying when he is present, quoting the word of al-ʾAṣma’ī (d.828), a linguist, that he saw a woman who was dressed in red clothes for her husband, and at the same time was holding prayer beads (subḥah) piously (Ihya’, vol. 2, 131-132).\textsuperscript{36}

Sexual intercourse in married life is lawful. On the occasion of sexual intercourse, it is necessary to acknowledge one’s dependence on God by supplications and to practice the remembrance of God. It is desirable that sexual intercourse should commence in the name of God and with the recitations, “He is God, One” (Koran 112:1), “God is great,” “There is no god but God,” and “In the name of God, the most high, the most great. O God, give my wife a good child if you decree to bring out this from my loins........... (Ihya’, vol. 2, 79).”\textsuperscript{37}

Thus, sexual intercourse is useful for leaving descendants in this world; however, it is important not only in this world, but also with respect to the afterlife. Al-Ghazālī states:
AL-GHAZĂLĪ AND MARRIAGE FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF SUFISM

In addition to the motive of making children, in the sexual desire there is another wisdom (ḥikmah), and that is pleasure (lādhdah), which cannot be compared in satisfying the desire with the pleasure (of this world), were it to last. It points towards the pleasures promised in Paradise. For to encourage pleasure which one cannot taste is nonsense. One of the merits of the world’s pleasures is that people wish for these pleasures to continue in Paradise, and so they become an inducement (bā‘ith) to the worship of God (ḥiyā‘, vol. 2, 45). 38

By knowing the pleasure of satisfying the sexual desire (shahwah), a man is able to draw an analogy which suggests to him what the delight of the hereafter must be like. 40 As mentioned above, it is clear that through legal sexual intercourse in married life three merits will arise, namely, (1) preventing adultery, (2) having children, and (3) having sexual pleasure. Among these merits, sexual pleasure is an inducement to the worship of God as well as a comfort to the tired soul. According to al-Ghazālī, there are two kinds of worship of God, namely, (1) through the bodily acts, such as ritual prayer, the pilgrimage to Mecca, and in the case of marriage, seeking lawful gains for his family and striving to have children, and (2) through knowledge, meditation, and the inner way (ḥiyā‘, vol. 2, 57). Therefore the worship of God means both bodily devotion, i.e. saying one’s prayers and seeking lawful gains, and also mental devotion, i.e. practicing the remembrance of God by dhikr, fikr, and du‘ā’, and so on.

The discussion of al-Ghazālī seems to analyze matters from the viewpoint of distribution of time. A husband’s time is divided into three parts as below.

1. Time for saying one’s prayers and working to seek lawful gains to support his wife
2. Time for dallying with his wife and having the sexual pleasure
3. Time for practicing the remembrance of God

These three uses of time are closely connected, and through use 2, a man can console his soul, imagine the pleasure in Heaven, and head for the worship of God, namely, uses 1 and 3. Thanks to a wife who stays at home, does housework, and consoles her husband’s tiredness, her husband can devote himself to the worship of God. The Sufi acts of devotion are related especially to use 3, because in order to see God in the afterlife, a man has to prepare for it in this world by practicing the remembrance of God.

There are many descriptions of Paradise in Koran, for example, “And carpets raised. Verily We have produced them specially, and made them virgins,
loving and of equal age” (Koran 56:34-37), “Wherein they recline, calling therein for fruits of many kinds and drink” (Koran 38:51), and so on. For al-Ghazâlî, however, the utmost goal of human existence is not experiencing the sensuous pleasures described in the Koran, but seeing the face of God (naʻzâr ilâ wajh Allâh), the Beatific Vision (ruʿyah Allâh).41 Al-Ghazâlî states that people who do not know God in this world will not see God in the hereafter, and people who do not find the pleasure of knowing God in this world will not find the pleasure of seeing God in the hereafter [Ihyâ’], vol. 4, 480 (Kitâb al-Maḥabbah)]. Also he argues that the benefit of life in Heaven will be in proportion to the degree of the love for God, and that the love for God is in proportion to the degree of the knowledge of God [Ihyâ’], vol. 4, 480). According to his Book on the Order of Wird, love (maḥabbah) and intimacy (uns) occur only with continuous dhikr of the object of love, namely God, and mystical knowledge (maʿrifah) occurs only with continuous fikr of attributes and acts of God. Therefore, a man has to devote himself to the exercises of dhikr and fikr day and night continuously [Ihyâ’], vol. 1, 510).42 Thus, al-Ghazâlî argues that with the help of married life, a man can always practice the remembrance of God. Based on above-mentioned discussion of The Book on the Manners of Marriage, al-Ghazâlî demonstrates that a man can lead an ideal Sufi life with the help of marriage.

V. Al-Makki’s Views on Marriage

Next, the discussion of al-Makkî will be analyzed, referring to chapter 45, “Which is Preferable Marriage or Celibacy? and The Summary of Manners of Women in Married Life” of The Nourishment of the Heart. The Revival of the Religious Sciences refers to The Nourishment of the Heart. Both books treat similar themes, and many common traditions of the Prophet and his companions are quoted. The Revival of the Religious Sciences, however, is more logical and systematical than The Nourishment of the Heart, which mostly consists of quotations of traditions.

After first quoting the verse Koran 24:32, al-Makkî states that marriage is a duty (farâd) and custom (sunnah). Following that, however, he states that it is preferable for a Sufi novice (murîd) of his time not to marry (Makkî n.d., vol. 2, 238). If a man has been made secure against the temptation (fitnah) of women by asceticism, ideas of women will not occur in his heart. Al-Makkî, moreover, quotes traditions which recommend celibacy such as, “If a man marries, he might acquire the food for his family by unlawful ways,” “Many women are impious and ignorant,” “There are few good women,” “Many family members
make him poor,” and so on. However, if a man is afraid of committing adultery, it is preferable for him to marry a female slave. Next, al-Makki quotes traditions which recommend marriage such as “The Prophet recommended his servant to marry,” “Children who die young will intercede for their parents to go to Heaven,” “The prayer of a married person is better than that of a celibate,” and so on (Makki n.d., vol. 2, 238-243).

Among these traditions, al-Makki explains the merits of marriage in his own words. According to this, there are three meanings in the verse “Come them to your cultivated land as ye wish” (Koran 2:223). Firstly, by dallying with his wife, good deeds will arise from a husband; secondly, he can have children; thirdly, he speaks the names of God on the occasion of sexual intercourse (Makki n.d., vol. 2, 243). Al-Makki does not mention the merit, which al-Ghazālī points out, that a husband has time to spare by virtue of his wife’s doing housework. Also unlike al-Ghazālī, there are few examinations of sexual matters in his discussion, and he does not say that sexual pleasure is an inducement to Heaven. Next, al-Makki deals with topics such as qualities of the ideal woman suitable for marriage, the amount of dowry (mahr) to be given her, what kind of man should or should not marry, by listing sayings. Next, al-Makki discusses obligations of a woman, such as that she should stay in her house, that it is preferable for men and women not to see each other, and so on. Further, he discusses the type of woman whom one should avoid marrying, problems concerning coitus interruptus, and the manners of divorce, by quoting traditions (Makki n.d., vol. 2, 243-258).

At the end, the problem of whether a man should marry or not is treated. Al-Makki quotes the verse Koran 24:32 and “Marry such of the women as seem good to you, double or treble or fourfold” (Koran 4:3), and he argues that with the help of marriage, a man can turn his eyes from women and protect his genitals. According to al-Makki, however, God does not require (mā iftaraqa) of a man either marriage or celibacy. What God does require is peace of heart (ṣalāḥ al-qalb), soundness of belief (ṣalāmah al-dīn), and quietness of soul (ṣukūn al-nafs). Therefore, if his heart would be peaceful with marriage, he had better marry. On the contrary, if it would be easier for him to make his heart empty for the next world by keeping himself from women, he should be celibate. Thus, it depends on individual’s condition whether he should marry or not. However, al-Makki claims that in his time it is preferable to acquire the soundness of heart through celibacy (Makki n.d., vol. 2, 259). After that he says that if a man is afraid of committing adultery, it is preferable for him to marry. Al-Makki’s discussion of marriage ends with a poem of Sufyān al-Thawri (716-
which praises celibacy.

As stated above, as to the problem of whether a man should marry or not, al-Makki enumerates both traditions which give the merits and those which give the demerits of marriage; his conclusion is that God does not require of a man either marriage or celibacy. Therefore a man should choose marriage or celibacy, whichever will let him acquire peace of heart. Al-Makki’s own opinion is, however, that the soundness of faith through celibacy is preferable in his time, although he does not describe the ideal life of celibacy in detail. Al-Makki’s discussion is fragmentary both in marriage and celibacy, and he does not discuss the merits of marriage or celibacy for behavior which leads to the vision of God in the afterlife.

VI. Conclusion

We now need to compare al-Ghazālī with al-Makki. Although they treat the same problems, such as whether a man should marry or not and what the obligations and qualities of a woman are and al-Ghazālī quotes many traditions which al-Makki has enumerated, their discussions are different in two points. Firstly, al-Ghazālī considers that a man can live an ideal Sufi life with the help of marriage, on the other hand, al-Makki considers that a Sufi novice should be celibate. Secondly, the discussion of al-Ghazālī is systematic, while al-Makki’s is fragmentary and not ordered.

In al-Ghazālī, married life is connected with the remembrance of God by dhikr and fikr, namely, practices of Sufism. Living with a wife in marriage is not an obstacle to the worship of God, rather, it is an inducement to it. Al-Ghazālī discusses the matter from the perspective of how a man can devote himself to the worship of God with the help of married life. According to him, for one who aims to see God in the hereafter, married life assists him to devote himself to the remembrance of God and practices of dhikr.

On the other hand, although al-Makki claims that if one’s heart is safe and sound it does not matter whether one marries or not, he maintains that in his time celibacy is preferable. Although he discusses the merits of marriage and argues that many good deeds will arise from a husband by dallying with his wife, most of his discussion is fragmentary and not as developed as al-Ghazālī’s. However, among the Sufis before al-Makki, there were few comprehensive descriptions of marriage, although some of their words concerning marriage vs. celibacy were passed down. It seems that marriage was treated as an important theme by al-Makki and developed by al-Ghazālī. Al-Ghazālī demonstrated that a man could practice the remembrance of God with the help of marriage better
than with celibacy. It is concluded that al-Ghazālī’s discussion of marriage is an effort toward the popularization of Sufism in the history of Sufi thought.

* This article is supported by Grant-in-Aid for JSPS Fellows for the year 2002-2004.

Notes


2. For Koranic verses and traditions of the Prophet which recommend marriage, see *Iḥyā’*, vol. 2, 35-38. Quotations from the Koran are taken from Bell 1960.

3. Christian monasticism (*raḥbāniyāh*), which involves celibacy, is criticized in the Koran 57:27. Based on this verse and traditions of the Prophet which warn against celibacy, the Žāhirite law school and a part of Ḥanbalite law school, which take a strict traditional position, make marriage an obligation. According to the accepted theory of the four authentic Sunnite law schools, however, marriage is obligation in a case where one who is able to marry might commit adultery if he does not marry. Thus, marriage is usually recommended, but supererogatory performances (*nawāfīl*), i.e. prayer and fasting beyond the obligation, are occasionally recommended. When thinking of this problem, the individual should consider the religious profit of marriage in Islamic society and his own necessity and ability. If one devotes himself to supererogatory performance and remains celibate, this can usually lead to sin or detestable acts. In this context, however, it is mainly Christian monks that are criticized by scholars (*ʿulamā’*), and there is little criticism against Sufis. See Sarakhsi n.d., vol. 4, 193-194; Ibn al-Ḥumām n.d., vol. 3, 187-189; Muzani n.d., vol. 9, 163; Ibn Qudāmah 1984, vol. 7, 3-5; Ibn Hubayrah 2002, vol. 2, 120-122. I thank Dr. Satoe Horii, Visiting Lecturer at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, who advised me in the above discussions of Islamic law.

4. According to al-Ghazālī, there are no sayings which unconditionally recommend celibacy and see only the disadvantages of marriage.

5. For the saying of al-Junayd, see *Iḥyā’*, vol. 2, 47.


7. Also in his twenty-third book, *The Book on the Breaking of the Two Desires (Kitāb Kasr al-Shahwatayn)*, the second part of which deals with carnal lust, al-Ghazālī had the courage to expound on this delicate subject. For a translation of this book, see Winter 1995.


9. For example, Saadawi 1980; Markus 1995, and so on.


11. For other studies, see Schimmel 1979; Schimmel 2003; Elias 1988; and so on.

12. For recent studies, see Gianotti 2001; Nakamura 2001; Abrahmov 2003; and so on.

13. For al-Makki, see Massignon 1960.


J. A. Bellamy states that these two works, i.e. *The Nourishment of the Heart* and *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*, present what is probably the best compendium of Muslim sexual ethics to be found; he does not compare the works in detail. See Bellamy 1979, 27.

For example, al-Sarraj and al-Hujwiri enumerate Sufis' sayings concerning marriage vs. celibacy. See Sarraj 1914; Hujwiri 1979; Nicholson 1911. I checked the books of al-Junayd and al-Qushayri; there is no comprehensive description of marriage. See Junayd 1962; Qushayri 1988.

I intend to make it my next project to investigate a new aspect of sexuality from the viewpoint of Sufism. For example, I would like to compare al-Ghazali with Ibn al-'Arabi on sexuality from the standpoint of mystical cosmology.

The Book on the Manners of Marriage is written from the viewpoint of a man or a husband; there are few comments directed towards a woman, a child, or a celibate.

In the present article, mainly the relation between husband and wife is taken up; the relation between parents and children is not discussed. For children, see Gil'adi 1992.

AI-Ghazali enumerates other qualities, such as requiring only a small dowry to be paid to the wife, the ability to bear children, virginity, a good lineage, and not being a close relative.

A husband has no right to make his wife do housework (Yanagihashi 2001, 257). Al-Ghazali’s interpretation of law seems to be unique.

According to al-Ghazali, the seclusion of women in the house is for preventing the husband’s jealousy (ghayrah), and the wife cannot go out without his permission. When she goes out, she has to wear a veil, because her face is a temptation for men and so it is a faultiness ('awrah) that must be hidden (Ihyā', vol. 2, 74-75). That is, he insists on the veiling and seclusion of women, because exposing the women to men's eyes not only causes men’s jealousy, but also tempts men.

N. El Saadawi criticizes this opinion thus: “What about the wife? How can she in turn devote herself to her religious life and the search for knowledge? It is clear that no one has ever thought of the problem from this angle, as if it were a foregone conclusion that women have nothing to do with either religion or knowledge.” See Saadawi 1980, 141.

The term dhikr in the Koran seems to be used variously; it is possible to classify all its usages into two major groups: one is associated with man's mental activity, and the other with his vocal activity. Dhikr as mental activity is used to mean “to recall or remember,” “to come to know or realize,” and furthermore, “to keep in mind.” On the other hand, dhikr as vocal activity is more specific in the sense that it is mostly associated with the worship of God. Its basic meaning is “to mention,” and when it refers to God, it takes on the connotation of “to praise,” or “to glorify” (Nakamura 2001, 99, n. 1). For dhikr, see Nakamura 2001, 63-73; Schimmel 1975, 167-178; Gardet 1965a.

Thankfulness is a Sufic term. In *The Book on Patience and Thankfulness* (*Kitāb al-Ṣabr wa-al-Shukr*), al-Ghazali divides thankfulness into three: (1) knowledge, (2) spiritual state, and (3) activity (Ihyā', vol. 4, 128-133). For thankfulness, see Giese 1997.

Fikr means to increase knowledge and produce an idea which did not exist (Ihyā’, vol. 5, 7). For fikr, see Gardet 1965c. Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī (d. 1209) compares dhikr with fikr in his commentary on the divine names. See Rāzī 1984, 52-53.

For translation by the present author, see Farah 1984, 65; Bercher and Bousquet 1989, 32.
However, al-Ghazali warns that there is the risk that he might devote himself too completely to dallying with his wife and have no time to consider the hereafter and prepare for it (Ihya‘, vol. 2, 55).

Al-Ghazali refers to Rabi‘ah bint Isma‘il of Syria, a woman Sufi, who married Ahmad ibn Abi al-Hawari (d.851). However, al-Ghazali hardly mentions how a wife should practice mysticism.

If a husband comes to his wife, she cannot reject him (Ihya‘, vol. 2, 91). For a woman, marriage is a kind of slavery (riqa‘), and she cannot answer back to her husband and has to obey his order (Ihya‘, vol. 2, 66).

A hûr is a maiden as a reward given by God in Heaven. See “Wide-eyed, restrained in the tents” (Koran 55:72), “Loving and of equal age” (Koran 56:37), and so on.

A wife has to devote herself to ritual prayer, make herself beautiful, and prepare for her husband when he is not present (Ihya‘, vol. 2, 93).

The messenger of God said “If He has ordained a child for them, Satan will never be able to do any harm to him.” See Muslim 1993, vol. 2-B, 370-371 (no. 1434).

Because this pleasure is the strongest pleasure (aqwa ‘adhdhat) of the body, just as the pain of a burn is the greatest agony of the body (Ihya‘, vol. 3, 159 (Kitab Kasr al-Shahwatayn); Winter 1995, 165). Al-Ghazali argues that there are two ways for a small boy to know the pleasure of sexual intercourse. One of them is to imagine this pleasure from the sweetness of sugar, the other is to wait until he himself engages in intercourse. See al-Maqaṣad, 51.

In al-Ghazali’s cosmology, the phenomenal world (‘alam al-nûl wa-al-shahâdah) and the invisible world (‘alam al-ghayb wa-al-malakût) are different and opposite; however, there are certain correspondence and relationship between them. As a result, people can analogize the afterlife from this world. On the other hand, in al-Makki’s cosmology, the world is divided into three levels, adding the world of jabarît, which is the highest world. However, his cosmology was not as developed as al-Ghazali’s. For al-Ghazali’s cosmology, see Nakamura 1994.

Al-Ghazali argues that God has said, “For those who have done well is the good reward and more” (Koran 10:26), and this ‘more’ is the vision of the divine countenance, which is the greatest of all delights and which shall cause one to be quite oblivious of the pleasures of the people of Heaven. See Ihya‘, vol. 5, 185 (Kitâb Dhiyâr al-Mawt); Winter 1989, 250.

For this purpose, al-Ghazali suggests the practice of wîrd. Dividing the whole day into twelve parts (wîrds), to each of these he assigns specific exercises for the remembrance of God. For wîrd, see Ihya‘, vol. 1, 509-558; Nakamura 2001, 110-137.

Al-Makki discusses the major ritual ablution (ghusl) after sexual intercourse. See Makki n.d., vol. 2, 258.

He was an ascetic born at Kufa who established the Thawri law school and transmitted many traditions. See Raddatz 1997, 778; Winter 1989, 310.

### Bibliography

#### Primary Sources

Al-Ghazali’s Works


Other Works


---

Vol. XL 2005 137


Muslim 1993: *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4 vols. in 8, Beirut.


**Secondary Works and Translations**


138 ORIENT
AL-GHAZÅLÎ AND MARRIAGE FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF SUFISM


