Nikāḥ as precondition for paradise?

Spiritual corporeality and al-Ghazālī's theology of marriage in the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*

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Summary:

With the 11th century text *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ,* the "Book on the Proper Conduct of Marriage", the Islamic thinker al-Ghazālī (1056 –1111/447–504) replies to a contemporaneous debate within Sufi asceticism with a theology of *nikāḥ.* The text is part of his opus magnum, the "Renaissance of the Knowledge of *dīn*", which aims at a renewal of Muslim piety and provides practical guidance to the male audience addressed. Whether to marry or to remain celibate converges to a question, which has been raised in early Sufi apologia: Does marriage distract the believer from God? The assessment of marriage in relation to an ideal of spiritual corporeality, was not only an exigency for al-Ghazālī's contemporaries due to its eschatological relevance, it also carried socio-political connotations. Theological positions, which stipulated a pious ideal in favour of marriage – respectively chastity – protrude into demarcation processes within or between religious communities.

The thesis investigates al-Ghazālī's construction and strategical arrangement of arguments with a focus on Qur'ānic references in the background of its historical context, namely al-Ghazālī as Sunnī scholar at Baghdad´s *Niẓāmīyah* in the Saljūq Empire and as *taṣawwuf* teacher and reformer in Tus. It is argued that the text could address converts from Christianity or members of the Saljūq ruling class, which was marked by its Christian Byzantine influence through intermarriage. In the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ* marriage is defined as command and as part of the *sunnah.* The main purpose for marriage is procreation, which enables the God-willed continuation of humankind and Muslim lineage. He argues that marriage does not cause a distraction from worship per se. Marriage is not only *ʿibādah,* an act of worship, but can help the believer to worshio God and even help him to attain a mystical state of *sakīna.* Against a contemporaneous conflation of Islamic warriors´ ideals with the valorisation of marital relations and sexual intercourse, al-Ghazālī does not favour martial practice but the marital relationship as equivalent to *jihād.* While in the beginning of the argumentation al-Ghazālī excluded celibacy as an option, he changes his argument in the course of the text to the preference of marriage over celibacy by relying on an Aristotelian notion of balance (*qistās*). Thus, his advice is addressing different types of believers. The command to marry is understood as relative, attaining religious knowledge can be reason to refrain from marriage.

Al-Ghazālī's text contains also cosmological arguments, such as the notion of *hirāthah*, tillage and the principle of coupling, which have often been attributed only to Ibn ʿArabī (1165–

1240/543–618). It is argued that the argumentation for marriage in the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ* is not only influential for the Christian author Bar Hebreaus (1226–1286/623–685) as Weitz can show but that a manifestation, modulation and development of al-Ghazālī's arguments for marriage can be observed in e.g. Kāsānī´s (d.1543/949) text *Kitāb asrar al-nikāḥ* over four centuries later.

With the theoretical framework of embodiment, the study provides a new angle on the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*, which highlights the interconnectedness of corporeality and spirituality. To understand al-Ghazālī's theology, the believers´ embodiment is specifically of eschatological relevance. To ensure a proximity to God and to enter paradise in the afterlife, al-Ghazālī instructs his readers in the proper conduct of a plethora of bodily actions, such as prayer, fasting or sex. These instructions allow the believer to develop their spiritual corporeality, that is a complex of bodily practices and actions, which safeguards the spiritual aim. Spiritual corporeality describes a process of spiritual maturation as a way to conduct life. Every day-acts such as marital sexual intercourse need to be integrated into the believers' spiritual corporeality. Like other elements of spiritual corporeality described in the *Iḥyā',* a specific conduct is necessary to transform sex into an act within the spiritual corporeality of the believer. Sexual pleasures are introduced by al-Ghazālī as a potential harbinger of the pleasures of paradise.

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I. Introduction

1. *Nikāḥ* as aid or distraction for spirituality

The Islamic thinker Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad bin Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (1056 –1111/447–504) discusses the subject of marriage by asking: Does marriage distract the believer from God?[1] In the 11th century text, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*, "the book of the proper conduct of marriage"[2], he evaluates the advantages and disadvantages of marriage, which are presented as a continuation of Qurʾānic teachings. He develops a theology of marriage or – in other words – he presents an interpretation of the divine meaning of marriage and how to live according to God´s will.

The Qurʾānic term for marriage is *nikāḥ*.[3] In the Qurʾān, the words which derive from the root *n–k–ḥ* carry three meanings: The first one is marriage, i.e. a theo-social contract connecting a woman to a man and rendering their relation licit.[4] The second meaning follows licit sexual intercourse. It is distinguished from the Qurʾānic term *zinā*, which describes illicit sexual contacts or fornication.[5] And third, a verbal form of the root *n–k–ḥ* is used to describe sexual maturity and marks stages of human life in connection to their ability to procreate.[6] By the contraction of a marriage the connection of a woman to a man becomes licit. Marriage does not only create a two-directional relationship between the spouses, but the marital relationship itself is directed towards God. In the discourse of al-Ghazālī's time, marriage is presented as either a hinderance for believers to fulfil their divine purpose or as duty in the life of a Muslim.

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[1] Al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad bin Muḥammad (1056 –1111): *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ. Kitāb* XII of the *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*. Cited in the English Translation of Farah, Madelain (2012): *Al-Ghazali. Marriage and Sexuality in Islam. Al-Ghazālī, Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ. 12th Book of Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn.* Islamic Book Trust 2012, 59. The Arabic original text is retrieved from https://www.ghazali.org/rrs-ovr/ (last accessed 16.01.2021) in an edition with *ḥadīth* verifications by al-Ḥāfiẓ Zayn al-dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm bin al-Ḥussaīn al-ʿIrāqī (1404/806). Throughout the text al-Ghazālī is cited in the 2012 English translation by Madelain Farah. If a closer translation was necessary, I cite the 1995 translation of Immenkamp (Immenkamp, Beatrix (1995): *Marriage and celibacy in mediaeval Islam: a study of Ghazali's Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Doctoral thesis, Cambridge University, 1995) or use my own translation. This is indicated in the footnotes.

[2] Translation by the author MM. The title will be further discussed in part III.

[3] Concordance analysis and morphological search on *The Qurʾānic Arabic Corpus*; https://corpus.quran.com/; words with the root *n–k–ḥ* are found in: 2:221 (2), 2:230, 2:232, 4:3, 4:6, 4:22 (2), 4:25 (2), 4:127, 24:3 (2), 24:32, 24:33 (2), 24:60 (2), 28:27, 33:49, 33:50, 33:53, 60:10. Fourteen times forms of the verb (form I) *nakaḥa*, three times as verb (form IV) *tunkiḥu*, once verb (form X) *yastankiḥa*, as noun five times *nikāḥ*.

[4] 2:221, 2:230, 2:232, 2:235, 2:237, 24:33, 33:49, 33:53. Qurʾānic verses are cited in M.A.S. Abdel Haleem's 2016 English translation: *The Qurʾān. Translation by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, Oxford World´s Classics.* Oxford University Press, 2016. The Arabic original text is retrieved online from the University of Leed´s open access project *The Quranic Arabic Corpus* (http://corpus.quran.com). Transliterations of the Arabic original are added in square brackets by the author MM to highlight core notions used in al-Ghazālī´s argumentation. The transliteration follows the BGN/PCGN system of romanization.

[5] 17:32, punishments are described in 24:2–5, a further discussion appears in 25:69.

[6] 4:6 and 24:60. In 4:6, *al-nikāha* is used to denote the age of puberty as a marker for the age of discretion for orphans. In 24:60, elderly women after menopause are described as having "no desire for marriage". Thus, the third meaning points to the ability to reproduce, which is used to mark different life phases.

From an anthropological viewpoint, marriage can be described as an essential institution to ensure the continuation of a community and, at the same time, set its limitations.[7] Discussions on the possible opposition of marriage and the required level of spirituality occurred as part of inner-communal and inter-communal demarcation and identity building processes. Christian Sahner argues that celibacy was refuted as a non-Islamic practice, which was polemically viewed as an "imitation" of Christian practices.[8] However since "Muslim ascetics drew on varied influences, both endogenous and exogenous to Islam"[9], it would be misleading to follow those polemic accusations to understand Muslim debates on the nature of asceticism. Al-Ghazālī's summary of the contemporaneous debate shows, that the theological debate addresses the question of abstinence[10] and attempts to define ideals of Muslim asceticism and piety:

> "Be it known that the *ulamā* have disagreed over the virtue of marriage: Some stressed it to the point of claiming that it is preferable to seclusion for the worship of God. Others have admitted its virtue but subordinated it to seclusion for the worship of God, regardless of how much the soul yearns for marriage to a degree that disturbs one´s state (of mind) and causes him to succumb temptation. Others have said: It is preferable to abstain from marriage in this age of ours; ….*[11]*"

The scholars compare the significance of marriage and the seclusion for worship. They assess the possibility to retreat for worship in a married life and ask, if being married is necessary part of the divine purpose of the believer or if it is secondary to the primary spiritual aim of a human being, that is to worship God. The question of marriage or chastity is related to conceptions of theological anthropology, i.e. the relationship between God and human beings.[12] Answers to the dispute vary in relation to the authors' theological viewpoints of the divine purpose of human creation. The question contains an eschatological urgency for believers, since all worldly decisions – also the one for or against marriage – will affect the afterlife. If the believers is distracted from God due to his marriage, it would prevent him to prepare for his afterlife and

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[7] Weitz, Lev E.: *Between Christ and Caliph. Law, Marriage, And Christian Community in Early Islam.* University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018, 19.

[8] Sahner, Christian C.: "«The Monasticism of My Community is *Jihād*»: A Debate on Asceticism, Sex, and Warfare in Early Islam." In: *Arabica*, 64, 2017, 150–155.

[9] Sahner, "Monasticism is Jihād", 152.

[10] A comparison to Jewish discussions on abstinence, e.g. by Maimonides in the Mishneh Torah, esp. book 1.2. *De´ot*, could be fruitful.

[11] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 1.

[12] For an overview on theological anthropology see Farris, Joshua R. & Taliaferro, Charles (eds.): *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology.* Routledge, 2015. For a discussion of Qurʾānic anthropology see, e.g. Farstad, Mona Helen_ "Anthropology of the Qurʾān." In: McAuliffe, Jane Dammen (ed.): *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān.* Georgetown University, 2016. Accessed online: 16.01.2021.

ultimately to reach *jannah*.[13] Therefore, the dispute does not only reflect fundamental theological differences, but it also poses a deep exigency for the believers.

2. Aims and research questions

My primary aim is to understand al-Ghazālī's theological position on the subject of *nikāḥ:* How does he develop his theological position towards marriage in his *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ?* My analysis investigates the text´s arguments and its argumentative structure and strategy with a special interest in al-Ghazālī's use of Qur'ānic verses as divine foundation for his arguments.

As I already stated in the first part of this introduction, the theological discussion on the assessment of marriage in relation to the ideal spirituality of a believer, was not only an exigency for al-Ghazālī's contemporaneous believers, it also carried socio-political connotations. Theological positions, which stipulated a pious ideal in favour of marriage – respectively chastity – were part of the construction of socio-religious group identities. The socio-political and biographical circumstances surrounding the text´s composition are analysed as a background al-Ghazālī's theology of marriage emerges from. Here I lay a focus on Christian-Muslim relations in the Saljūq Empire due to al-Ghazālī's contradictory discussion of the prophetic example of ʿĪsā /Jesus in the argumentation. Unfortunately, I had to refrain from a further contextualisation with Jewish debates on marriage and abstinence due to space limitations. Comparisons with Jewish material could provide new angles to the text and my theoretical concept. This will be shortly discussed in the conclusion.

The secondary aim of this thesis is to study the interconnectedness of corporeality and spirituality.[14] To develop my theory of spiritual corporeality, I relied on contemporary embodiment theories as my theoretical framework. The theory, which originates from the field of cognitive sciences, has recently been applied to the field of religious studies.[15] It is argued that to better describe the effects of religious practices the believers have to be understood as an embodied being, who experiences and understands by means of their own body.[16] The theory also allows

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[13] Paradise or garden, used in the Qur'ān in opposition to *Jahannam* or *nār*, hell. See e.g. Dustmalchian, Amir: "Islam". In: Nagasawa, Yujin & Matheson, Benjamin (eds.): *The Palgrave Handbook of the Afterlife.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, 153–176.

[14] The concept will be explicated in II, 3.

[15] See e.g. McGuire, Meredith B.: "Religion and the Body: Rematerializing the Human Body in Social Sciences of Religion." In: *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 1990, 283–296.

[16] McGuire: "Religion and the Body", 283–284.

to understand bodies as situated in not only their specific physical form, but also their environment, time and culture.[17] Thus, the theory can be applied for research in the field of history of religion and highlight the interconnectedness of the bodily and spirituality. With my concept spiritual corporeality I describe the ascetic ideal of spirituality propagated by al-Ghazālī and its relation to eschatology.

3. Structure of the thesis

Following the description of my methodology and theoretical approach, the thesis can be divided in two main parts: the first one presents an overview on the historical and intertextual background of al-Ghazālī's *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*, the second one discusses the results of my analysis of al-Ghazālī's text.

In the first part, I present an overview on the historical and intertextual background al-Ghazālī's text emerges from. I highlight al-Ghazālī's embeddedness in both Sunnī orthodox and *taṣawwuf* discourse, as a scholar in the Saljūq Empire, and briefly discuss the genre of the text. In the second part of the thesis, I present the results of my analysis. In ten subchapters I discuss al-Ghazālī's arguments for or against *nikāḥ*. I discuss how al-Ghazālī presents marriage as command, as an act of worship, a necessary part of *sunnah* or in connection to other theological concepts such as oneness or *sakīna*. My interest lays in al-Ghazālī's reference to Quranic verses and concepts and his argumentative strategy. Further, the analysis looks at how *nikāḥ* is part of what I call spiritual corporeality. The concept looks at how corporeality and spirituality are intertwined in al-Ghazālī´s theology of *nikāḥ*.[18]

Furthermore, I inquire the relation of Christian influence in the Saljūq Empire and al-Ghazālī's possible audience and introduce Weitz´ research on the adaptation of the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ* by the Syrian Orthodox priest and writer Bar Hebraeus (1226–1286/623–685), as an example of the impact of al-Ghazālī's theology across religious communities. Further, a comparison of the argumentation in the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ* with the text *Kitāb asrar al-nikāḥ*, "The mysteries of marriage", by the Sufi writer Kāsānī (d.1543/949) shows the remaining influence of al-Ghazālī's work on later authors and illustrates the manifestation of arguments in the discourse, as well as their further development.

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[17] Nikkel, David: "A Theory of the Embodied Nature of Religion." In: The Journal of Religion 99(2), 1990, 147.
[18] The concept will be explained in II, 2.

4. Introduction to al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, "The Renaissance of the Knowledge of *Dīn*"

The *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* consists of forty books, discussing a plethora of subjects important for a life lived in submission to God. The *Iḥyāʾ* is a work of both *fiqh*, Islamic jurisprudence,[19] and *kalām,* "dialectical theology"[20] and is structured into "four quarters (*rubʾ*): The Acts of Worship (*ʿibadāt*), The Norms of Daily Life (*ʿādāt),* The Ways to Perdition (*muhlikāt*), The Ways to Salvation (*munjyāt).* Each quarter in turn consists of ten "books" (*kitāb*)"[21] As Rumee Ahmed has pointed out, a writing such as the *Iḥyāʾ* is also a work of al-Ghazālī's "devotion".[22]

The title of al-Ghazālī's opus magnum is translated by Farah as "*The Revival of the Religious Sciences".*[23] I decided for a translation which translates *ʿulūm,* plural of *ʿilm,* not as science but as knowledge, to distance it from Western models of science as purely rationalistic endeavour. I also decided to translate *iḥyāʾ* as renaissance, since it reflects al-Ghazālī's self-understanding as re-newer of Islamic *dīn* better. Futher, I leave *dīn* untranslated. While *dīn* in Western scholarship is usually translated as "religion", it can be translated as either obligation, law or faith.[24]

The literal meaning of al-Ghazālī´s name, the one who spins, could be used as metaphor for the complexity of al-Ghazālī´s teachings of *dīn* found in the *Iḥyāʾ*. With Mitha: "Al-Ghazālī´s extant texts constitute an integrated fabric, replete with cross-references to each other."[25] Since the *Iḥyā* encompasses central aspects of a religious life and discusses subjects such as marriage, "the proper conduct while traveling", eating or prayer in detail, [26] the *Iḥyā* has been viewed as a practical guidebook, which aims to help the reader to live closer to God´s will and is used by believers for guidance up to the present day. According to Aoyagi, al-Ghazālī's argumentation for marriage found in the *Iḥyāʾ* can be considered as an example of a "popularization of

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[19] Immenkamp explicates: "The task of the jurist was to interpret the often-ambiguous religious sources in order to provide the individual believer with guidelines for the right moral and social conduct in every aspect of his or her life." Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, v.

[20] Ahmed, Rumee: *Narratives of Islamic Legal Theory.* Oxford University Press, 2012, 150.

[21] Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy,* 13.

[22] Ahmed argues that *fiqh* texts are "primarily products of religious devotion, not of policy-making". Ahmed, *Islamic Legal Theory*, 152.

[23] See Farah´s Translation. Farah, *Al-Ghazali.*

[24] *Dīn* means belief, or obligation. See e.g. *Anis Ahmad (2009):* "Dīn". In: Esposito, John L. (ed.): *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Islamic World.* Oxford University Press, 2009. In the Qur'ān, *dīn* notably appears numerous times in connection to the word *yaum*, day, as *yaum al-dīn*, the "Day of Judgement". Thus, al-Ghazālī´s use of the term *dīn* in his title is a Qur'ānic notion, which might even allude to the aim of the believer addressed in the text to prepare for God´s judgements of one´s actions and thoughts after death.

[25] Mitha, *Al-Ghazali and the Ismāʿīlis*, 3.

[26] Watt, "Al-Ghazali".

Sufism."[27] To differentiate further: al-Ghazālī attempted to incorporate the teachings of *taṣaw-wuf* into the doctrine of the Sunnī Saljūq Empire after the end of the civil war. In this way, al-Ghazālī's adoption of Sufi doctrines can also be read as a theological response to times of insecurity and political crisis appearing under the Saljūq Empire. To retreat into an inward-oriented theology could be viewed as a reaction to his socio-political circumstances. The publication of the *Iḥyā* as practical guidebook follows his self-understanding as re-newer of Islam with the aim is to provide instructions, which help to reform and re-establish the correct conduct. Michel De Certeau observed that mystics "understand themselves as part of a special social community, which practices a new theology of inwardness." [28] The adoption of an inward-oriented theology is read by De Certeau as a phenomenon of crisis, which is related to a "nostalgia." [29] In his opus magnum, al-Ghazālī alludes to a nostalgia of an original, uncorrupted, and truthful *dīn*. Interesting would be to analyse whether part of al-Ghazālī's argumentation in the *Iḥyāʾ* can be read as an attempt to covertly consolidate the Sunnī state-doctrine with Shi'i doctrines over the *taṣawwuf* perspective. The adapted inward perspective would then not only aim at reestablishing a former conduct, but might have interest in pacifying a post-civil war society.

Al-Ghazālī dedicated one full book of the *Iḥyāʾ* to the subject of marriage. The *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ* is structured into an abbreviating introduction and three parts: 1. "Inducement and Non-Inducement for Marriage"[30] (*al-taġrib al-nikāḥ wa al-taġrib ʾanhu*) 2. "The Marriage contract, and conditions and qualities of the wife"[31] and 3. "Proper conduct of Married Life."[32] While the first part presents the divine purpose and meaning of marriage and discusses whether marriage could distract the believer from God by assessing both "inducements" to and "impediments" of marriage, parts two and three discuss the questions how to marry and how to be married. Part two elaborates on the choice and preferred character of a future-wife. Part three explains an ideal marital life. It also includes a section on sexual intercourse,[33] a discussion on the permissibility of preventions of pregnancies, an overview on recommended conduct after the birth of a child, rules for divorce and the rights of the husband.

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[27] Aoyagi, "Al-Ghazali and Marriage", 135.
[28] Finkelnde, Dominik: „Michel De Certeaus Metatheorie der Mystik." In: Percic, Janez & Herzgsell, Johannes (eds.): *Große Denker des Jesuitenordens*, Ferdinand Schöningh, 2016, 133. De Certeau analysed Christian mystical writings of the early modern times.
[29] Finkelnde, „Michel De Certeaus Metatheorie der Mystik.", 133.
[30] Al-Ghazālī: *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 1–64. Translation by MM.
[31] Al-Ghazālī: *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 65–92. Translation Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, 29.
[32] Al-Ghazālī: *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 93–169. Translation Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, 28.
[33] Al-Ghazālī: *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 123–138.

5. Categorizing al-Ghazālī's thought: a research overview

One of the earliest modern European scholars of al-Ghazālī was Catholic priest and scholar Miguel Asín Palacios (1871–1944). He published a commentary of four volumes on al-Ghazālī´s opus magnum the *Iḥyāʼ ʻulūm al-dīn*, "The Renaissance of the Knowledge of *Dīn"* in 1901 and was one of the first modern European scholars who highlighted the intertextual influence of Islamic theologies on several medieval Christian authors, such as Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) or Ramon Lull (1223–1316).[34] However, as student of the Arabist Julián Ribera (1858–1934) his research interest was rooted in both an orientalist and Spanish nationalist interest.[35] Pablo Bornstein´s investigation into the historiography of the Spanish so-called "Arabist school" shows how the "new interpretations of the Muslim legacy to Spain"[36] conducted by these scholars, occurred after "a moment of international decline of Spain."[37] As a result, their interest in the intertextuality of Christian and Muslim writings did not follow historical, but "«presentist» concerns."[38] Their aim was the "«Hispanicization» of the Semitic past, instrumentalized as a means to vindicate the cultural greatness of the nation and made at a time of widespread sense of national decline."[39] Special interest was placed on al-Ghazālī as an author since he – even though not of Andalusian origin – was believed to reconcile "faith and reason".[40] Following an orientalist thinking al-Ghazālī was viewed as an exception of a Muslim scholar.[41] Even though some of their inquiries into intertextual relations between medieval Christian and Muslim authors – especially those considered under the category mysticism – brought to light previously neglected fields of research, their perspective was problematic. [42] Their "theoretical framework explained the whole of medieval Muslim philosophy as stemming

[34] Asín Palacios, Miguel: *La Escatologia musulmana en la "Divina Comedia",* Real Academia Española, 1919; Asín Palacios: *Algazel: Dogmática, moral, ascética. Prólogo de Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo,* Comas Hnos., 1901. See Bornstein, Pablo: "An Orientalist Contribution to «Catholic Science»: The Historiography of Andalusi Mysticism and Philosophy in Julián Ribera and Miguel Asín." In: *Religions,* 2019, 10, 568, 6.

[35] Bornstein, "An Orientalist Contribution", 1–17.

[36] Bornstein, "An Orientalist Contribution", 1.

[37] Bornstein, "An Orientalist Contribution", 1.

[38] Bornstein, "An Orientalist Contribution", 2.

[39] Bornstein, "An Orientalist Contribution", 3.

[40] Bornstein, "An Orientalist Contribution", 4.

[41] Bornstein, "An Orientalist Contribution", 6.

[42] Bornstein, "An Orientalist Contribution", 2. For a comparison and possible cultural transfer of Jewish and Muslim mysticism with a focus on al-Ghazali and Al-Andalus see: Morlok, Elke & Musall, Frederek: "Mystik und Askese: Unterschiedliche Tendenzen in der jüdischen Mystik und deren Korrespondenzen im Sufismus und in der arabischen Philosophie." In: *Das Mittelalter* 15, 2010, 95-110.

from the reception in the East of the intellectual traditions of early Christian thought"[43] and thereby "Christianized" [44] the author al-Ghazālī.

A categorisation of al-Ghazālī's thought as example for "cultural intermediaries between ancient Greek philosophy and medieval Christian scholasticism"[45], followed their political agenda, of a "resurrection"[46] or "restoration of Christian science."[47] From their viewpoint al-Ghazālī "had developed a philosophical system that was to permit the harmonization of faith and reason, the ultimate goal of the contemporary movement for a Catholic science."[48] Asín Palacios categorises al-Ghazālī "as a mystical thinker caught between the rationalist theories of the Muslim peripatetic philosophers and his own scepticism regarding the limitations of scientific thought."[49] As Bornstein argues, another scholar of the so-called "Arabist school", Menéndez Pelayo, claimed that al-Ghazālī "had been an apologist for reason's subservience to divine revelation, a detractor of rationalist philosophers for their subversion of religious life, and an adherent to the practical philosophy of asceticism."[50] For Asín Palacios "classical Greek philosophy" was a key to understand his writings.[51]

The excurse into the historiography on al-Ghazālī in Western European Christian research showed how despite their problematic political agenda, orientalist scholars opened new fields of research, that is "the philosophical exchanges and cultural transfers between Christianity and Islam"[52], which continue to resonate in later research conducted on al-Ghazālī. This historiographical knowledge also calls for a responsible and self-critical conduct of research on an author such as al-Ghazālī from a Western European perspective.

Newer research focuses on the importance of al-Ghazālī's argumentation for other Muslim authors, as well as how he was influenced by early authors of the *taṣawwuf* tradition, most notably

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[43] Bornstein, "An Orientalist Contribution", 2.
[44] Bornstein, "An Orientalist Contribution", 9.
[45] Bornstein, "An Orientalist Contribution", 8.
[46] Asín Palacios, Miguel: "Mohidín." In: *Homenaje a Menéndez Pelayo en al ano Vigésimo de su Profesorado.* Librería general de Victoriano Suárez, 1899, 256 cited by Bornstein, "An Orientalist Contribution",.8.
[47] Rodríguez de Cepeda, Rafael: *Organización del Movimiento Científico Católico Contemporáneo.* Soluciones Católicas, 1897 cited by Bornstein, "An Orientalist Contribution", 4.
[48] Bornstein, "An Orientalist Contribution", 8.
[49] Bornstein, "An Orientalist Contribution", 10.
[50] Bornstein, "An Orientalist Contribution", 10.
[51] Bornstein, "An Orientalist Contribution", 11. Bornstein highlights a possible Neo-Platonic influence. For a newer study on Neoplatonism and Gnosticism in Jewish and Islamic thought see e.g. Wallis, Richard T. & Bregman, Jay (eds.): *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism. Studies in Neoplatonism: Ancient and Modern, 6,* State University of New York Press for International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, 1992.
[52] Bornstein, "An Orientalist Contribution", 6.

the 10th century Sufi writer Ābū Ṭālib al-Makkī (952– 996/341–386).[53] Bornstein highlights that al-Ghazālī's "works played a prominent role in the widespread diffusion of the Sufi school in Al-Andalus."[54] Kaoru Aoyagi reads his text on marriage as an example for a "popularisation of Sufism".[55] Aoyagi examines "al-Ghazālī's discussion of marriage" by contextualising his argumentation with other practices described in literature of the *taṣawwuf* tradition.[56] For her, the text expresses an original Sufi theology.[57] She concludes that his argumentation is more "systematic" than the one of his predecessor al-Makkī and argues that his argumentation could be viewed as a development of al-Makkī marriage theme.[58]

However, the term "Sufism" – often applied as explanatory angle in studies on al-Ghazālī – has an orientalist history: orientalists in the 19th and 20th century disassociated *taṣawwuf* teachings from Islamic orthodox theology, rather an origin from "Christianity, Greek philosophy or Indian mysticism" or "Zororastrianism"[59] was assumed, as well as "[…] its ostensible universality and its supposed lack of connection with Islam".[60] Furthermore, the orientalist conception of Sufism was fascinated with its "irrationality", which was connected to the construction of Western-Christian rationality in a process which Edward Said coined "othering".[61]

Newer historical research is also interested in the encounters and mutual influence between Christian and Islamic thought and practice but follows an anti-essentialist and anti-orientalist paradigm: Lev E. Weitz looks at "transformations in Christian traditions and communal institutions" from late antiquity to the fragmentation of the ʿAbbāsīd Caliphate through the subject of marriage.[62] He studies how Christian legal rulings concerning marriage changed under

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[53] Aoyagi compares al-Ghazali´s argumentation for marriage with al-Makkī's treatment of the subject in his *Qūt al-Qulūb*. See Aoyagi, Kaoru: "Al-Ghazali and Marriage from the Viewpoint of Sufism." In: *Bulletin of the Society for Near Eastern Studies in Japan*, Volume 47, Issue 2, 2004, 135. Noteworthy is also Khalil´s study on al-Makkī: Khalil, Atif: "Abu Talib Al-Makkī & the Nourishment of Hearts (Qūt al-Qulūb) in the Context of Early Sufism." In: *The Muslim World*, Volume 102, Issue 2, 2011, 335–356.
[54] Bornstein,"An Orientalist Contribution", 10.
[55] Aoyagi, "Al-Ghazali and marriage", 135.
[56] Aoyagi, "Al-Ghazali and marriage", 124.
[57] Aoyagi, "Al-Ghazali and marriage", 124.
[58] Aoyagi, "Al-Ghazali and marriage", 134.
[59] Sevencan, Nur: "Sufism, Orientalism and Cultural Representation." On: *Medium*, publish date: 25.07.2015. Accessed online: 15.12.2020, https://medium.com/@nursevencan/sufism-orientalism-and-cultural-representation-d8187d79848b. See also Bornstein, "An Orientalist Contribution", 10-11; Ernst, "Dabistan and Orientalist Views", 33.
[60] Ernst, Carl W.: "The Dabistan and Orientalist Views of Sufism." In: Malik, Jamal & Zarrabi-Zadeh, Saeed (eds.): *Sufism East and West. Mystical Islam and Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Modern World*, Brill, 2019, 33.
[61] See e.g. Said, Edward: *Orientalism*. Penguin, 1979. Said criticises especially the academic Orientalism found in Arabic studies and Islamic studies of the 19th–20th century. The West is constructed as superior and civilised by constructing the so–called Orient as irrational. This process of othering does also include seemingly positive stereotypes on the "Orient".
[62] Weitz, Between Christ and Caliph, xx.

Islamic influence. In chapter nine of this book, as well as in his article "Al-Ghazālī, Bar Hebraeus, and the «Good Wife»", Weitz highlights how the Syriac Christian priest Bar Hebraeus adopted al-Ghazālī's argumentation for marriage and only slightly altered the text for his Christian community.[63] His study underlines the transmission of theological arguments across communities and the impact of al-Ghazālī's argumentation.

Beatrix Immenkamp´s doctoral thesis "Marriage and celibacy in mediaeval Islam: a study of Ghazali's *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*" discusses how al-Ghazālī's text on marriage can be viewed as the results of "a religious debate on the merits of marriage, the particular Muslim attitude to sexuality, and the Islamic legal view of marriage."[64] She reconstructs his intertextual background with Arabic literary sources from different genres, such as "Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Sufi treatises, Arabic belles lettres (*ādāb*) and medical literature."[65] Immenkamp highlights al-Makkī's treatise, the *Qūt al-qulūb*, as direct reference[66], and discusses the influence of Aristotelian concepts on al-Ghazālī's argumentation.[67]

Al-Ghazālī's book on marriage has also been studied from a gender-critical or feminist perspective. Alexandra Love´s study "Uncovering Constructions of Gender and Sexuality in al-Ghazālī's Etiquette of Marriage"[68] analyses the "gendered themes virtue and desire"[69] as well as male and female roles and gender hierarchy in marriage.[70] Love mentions the assignment of the wife to the domestic sphere as a "patriarchal idea [which] is a reproduction of Ghazali's societal context" and criticises al-Ghazālī's conception of sexuality as primarily linked to procreation.[71] Love also shortly looks at Qur'ānic references used in his argumentation.[72]

For al-Ghazālī's theology, the *tasawwuf* notion of *tawḥīd*, Oneness with God is central,[73] or to put it differently, to overcome the distance to God is the spiritual aim of a believer. In Islamic

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[63] Weitz, *Between Christ and Caliph*, 234–41. Weitz, Lev E.: "Al-Ghazālī, Bar Hebraeus, and the «Good Wife»." In: *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 134, No. 2, 2014, 221-223. Weitz studies will be discussed in V to highlight the fluidity of intertextual influence between religious communities and specifically the influence of al-Ghazālī on Syriac Christian teachings.

[64] Immenkamp, Marriage and celibacy, i.

[65] Immenkamp, Marriage and celibacy, i.

[66] Immenkamp, Marriage and celibacy, i.

[67] Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, 14–16.

[68] Love, Alexandra: Uncovering Constructions of Gender and Sexuality in al-Ghazali's Etiquette of Marriage. Thesis, Haverford College, 2015.

[69] Love, Gender and sexuality, 18–32.

[70] Love, Gender and sexuality, 33–39.

[71] Love, Gender and sexuality, 22.

[72] Love, *Gender and sexuality*, 12–17. Love mentions 52:21, 13:38 and 7:189.

[73] See also Schimmel, *Sufismus*, 37.

medieval theology, this meeting or experiencing God through or in the body, has been discussed around this hadith *al-nawafil:*[74]

> "Allah has said: Whoever treats a friend (*walī*) of mine with enmity, I declare war on him. There is nothing by which my servant draws close to me that is dearer to me than that which I have imposed upon him; [….] and when I love him, I become his hearing by which he hears, his sight by which he sees, his hand by which he forcibly seizes, and his leg by which he walks. If he asks me, I give him, and if he seeks my refuge, I grant it to him[...]"[75]

Michael Ebstein argues that this hadith holds a significant and central position "in the formative and classical periods of Islamic mysticism, i.e. from the third/ninth to the seventh/thirteenth centuries."[76] In the hadith, which is likely to have "emerged among pious Sunnī groups in the mid-second/eight century",[77] the *walī*, friend of God, does not only experience God through or in the body, even more so the hadith states that God becomes the senses or body parts of the "dear servant".[78] In other words: "the organs of God's intimate servant become divine".[79] Ebstein argues that, due to its anthropomorphism, this notion is "quite radical from the viewpoint of Islamic orthodoxy."[80] The possibility of divinisation and of an anthropomorphism of God have been highly debated among Muslim scholars. As follower of the Ashʿarite school, al-Ghazālī was opposed to the idea that God could have anthropomorphic attributes. In debates about "the interpretation of cryptical Qur'ānic verses which describe God with anthropomorphic references", Ashʿarites argue that "God is beyond any kind of anthropomorphic attribute" and "utterly transcendent."[81] Thus, al-Ghazālī would also oppose the belief in the divination of the believer and only requests the believer to be "in presence with God", as the analysis will show.

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[74] Translated by Ebstein as "the tradition concerning supererogatory works". These are distinguished from obligatory actions, such as five daily prayers (*ṣalāh*), and aid the "advancement toward God." Ebstein, Michael: "The Organs of God: Hadith al-Nawafil in Classical Islamic Mysticism." In: *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 138.2, 2018, 271. Al-Bukhari 5:2384–85 cited in Ebstein, "The Organs of God", 271, footnote 1.

[75] Al-Bukhari 5:2384–85 cited in Ebstein, "The Organs of God", 271, footnote 1.

[76] Ebstein, "The Organs of God", 272.

[77] Ebstein, "The Organs of God", 273.

[78] See also Kugle's study on specific organs of Sufi saints. Kugle, *Sufis and Saints*.

[79] Ebstein, "The Organs of God", 272.

[80] Ebstein, "The Organs of God", 272.

[81] De Cillis, Maria: Free Will and Predestination in Islamic Thought: Theoretical Compromises in the Works of Avicenna, al-Ghazali and Ibn 'Arabi. Routlegde, 2013, 110. This position can be found in al-Ghazālī's *work Mishkāt al-anwār* (The Niche of Lights). See also Hasan Ahmed: "Al-Ghazali and Ibn Rushd (Averroes) on Creation and the Divine Attributes." In: Diller J. & Kasher A. (eds.): Models of God and Alternative Ultimate Realities. Springer, 2012, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-5219-1_13, published online: 15.11.2012, last accessed: 01.02.2021.

Ebstein argues further that a distinction between the Sunnī and Shi'i tradition can be observed: the Sunnī *nawafil* tradition "presents God, who assumes control of His servant´s organs, as the instrument by which the *walī* operates"[82] and – in comparison to the "Shi'i perspective" – focuses on the individual and her private relationship with God".[83] Further, Ebstein argues that "these teachings […] were to form the doctrinal basis for classical Sufi thought": [84]

> "In one saying attributed to Dhū n-Nūn [al-Misrī, 796–859/179–244], the *nawafil* tradition serves to illustrate the pinnacle of the mystical path, when an individual, relinquishing her own will and resigning herself to the will of her Lord, begins to perceive, speak, and act by means of God; her perception, words and actions are thus divine."[85]

Studies on the subject of marriage in relation to spirituality are more often concerned with later *taṣawwuf* authors such as Ibn ʿArabī (1165–1240/543–618), who more clearly links *nikaḥ* to "mystical experience".[86] However, the analysis will show that initial arguments for this link can already be found in al-Ghazālī's argumentation. The impact of al-Ghazālī's discussion of marriage can also be traced in a text from the 16th century. Kāsānī's text *Kitāb asrar al-nikāḥ* is influenced by arguments of Ibn ʿArabī's mystical cosmology, but still exhibits systematic similarities to al-Ghazālī's *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. The text was retrieved by Sachiko Murata from a collection of the Institute of Islamic Studies in New Delhi and presented in her paper "Mysteries of marriage: "notes on a Sufi Text." Her study shows how the author Kāsānī (d. 1543/949) presents facets of marriage in a structured argumentative discussion – now directly under the term "mystery".[87]

Two authors have used embodiment or a focus on the body to approach the cultural history of Sufi texts or material culture:

Scott Kugle criticises "a tendency towards a disembodied view of Islam as compared to premodern times".[88] In his book, "Sufis and Saints' Bodies: Mysticism, Corporeality, and Sacred Power in Islam"[89], he "[…] highlights landmarks in the development of Sufi teachings and

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[82] Ebstein, "The Organs of God", 274.
[83] Ebstein, "The Organs of God", 274.
[84] Ebstein, "The Organs of God", 274.
[85] Ebstein, "The Organs of God", 274–275.
[86] Murata, Sachiko:" «Mysteries of Marriage:» Notes on a Sufi Text." In: Lewisohn, Leonard (ed.): *The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism*, Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications 1992, 346.
[87] Murata, "Mysteries of Marriage", 346.
[88] Review by Seesemann, Rüdiger: [Book review] "Sufi and Saints´ bodies. Mysticism, Corporeality and Sacred Power in Islam." In: *Journal for the American Academy of Religion* 76(2), 2008, 542.
[89] Kugle, Scott: *Sufis and Saints' Bodies: Mysticism, Corporeality, and Sacred Power in Islam*. The University of North Carolina Press, 2007. Unfortunately, I was not able to obtain the book in time due to the pandemic situation. I developed my theoretical concept of spiritual corporeality prior to knowing about the existence of this book.

practices over a period of 1,000 years, drawing on saints' biographies and Sufi writings, both poetry and prose, from North Africa and South Asia."[90] With the body as "lens", Kugle introduces five saints, "each focusing on one part of the body".[91] In his review of Kugle´s book Noah Salomon argues that through these five "microhistories" the "political history of the epochs" can be observed "as it was inscribed in their lives, and often on the physical bodies of Muslim saints."[92]

Shahzad Bashir´s study investigates Sufi culture from the angle of the body. In his book "Sufi bodies. Religion and society in medieval Islam", he looks at "corporeal themes in literary texts and miniature paintings to present a view of the Persianate social and religious world during the approximate period 1300–1500 CE."[93] His interest lays in the ways "representations of the body´s display, deployment, and performance to understand the social imagination" are used.[94] He understands "the body as an aspect of human imagination that's shifts its parameters through human beings´ phenomenological and social experience during a lifetime. The experiencing body is situated at the base of any notion of the human self, […]"[95] His book contains an introduction to "Sufi ideas and practices", e.g. the notion of *walī*, friend of God, and spiritual hierarchies.[96] Further he discusses depictions of Sufi bodies in relation to different topics, such as desires, love or food.[97]

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[90] Seesemann: "Book Review Sufi and Saint´s bodies, Kugle", 214.

[91] "The bones of *Mawlay Idris*, the founder of the Moroccan city of Fes (d. 828); the belly of *Sayyida Amina*, a female saint who lived in sixteenth-century Fes; the eyes of *Muhammad Ghawth*, a sixteenth-century saint of the *Shattari* Sufi tradition from *Gwaliyor* (Hindustan); the lips of *Shah Husayn*, an antinomian Sufi (*Qalandar*) one generation after *Muhammad Ghawth*, who came from a mixed *Qadiri* and *Shattari* background and lived in Lahore (present-day Pakistan); and *Hajji Imdadullah*, a leading figure within the *Sabiri* branch of the *Chishtiyya* order in nineteenth-century India." Seesemann, ""Book Review Sufi and Saint´s bodies, Kugle", 242.

[92] Salomon, Noah: "[Book review] Scott Kugle. Sufis and Saints' Bodies: Mysticism, Corporeality, and Sacred Power in Islam." In: *The Journal of Religion*, Volume 90, Issue 2, 2010, 272.

[93] Bashir, Shazad: *Sufi Bodies. Religion and Society in Medieval Islam*. Columbia University Press 2011, 8.

[94] Bashir, *Sufi Bodies*, 13–14.

[95] Bashir, *Sufi Bodies*, 14.

[96] Bashir, *Sufi Bodies*, 50–78.

[97] Bashir, *Sufi Bodies*, 105–186.

II. Methodological and theoretical approach

1. Embodiment as theoretical framework

With the application of theories of embodiment in the field of religious studies, the body as a locus of religious experiences has been brought back to attention. Originating from the field of cognitive sciences, contemporary embodiment theories departed from what Haas called the "diastasis of rationality and intuition, thinking and experience"[98] and criticise, as Caroline Bynum puts it, that the body "dissolves into language"[99] as a result of the linguistic turn. Thus, embodiment theories provide a perspective on religion, which has sunk into oblivion in Western research.

David Nikkel argues, that "we are normally aware of our ubiquitous rootedness in and reliance upon our bodies in only a tacit manner."[100] Due to the tacitness of the body, scholars have "separated bodily from linguistic meaning and typically subordinated bodily to socially constructed linguistic meaning."[101] Embodiment theories criticise the "linguistic turn" by claiming "that human rationality and language [are] build upon the base of—radically and tacitly rely upon—our bodily being in the world which is both physical and intersubjective, upon our seeing, hearing, smelling, tactile, motile, emotive, social, sexual bodies."[102] David Nikkel describes "this substantive rootedness of all meaning in our embodiment" as "radical embodiment."[103] He argues that "many scholars of religion, as well as many scholars in the wider academy, often ignore and often hold beliefs or assumptions that contradict the radical nature of our embodiment—even as they may engage the topic of «the body»."[104]

With Alois M. Haas, this neglection of the bodily can be viewed as a historical consequence of the adaptation of an "Aristotelian hierarchical model of rationality" in Christian theology.[105] Theology was no longer understood as science or the knowledge of faith ("Glaubenswissenschaft") with an "existential connection between belief and prayer […]"[106], but as a science to be conducted rationally.[107] Haas describes how a "stronger opposition between rationality and

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[98] Haas, Alois Maria: Mystik als Aussage. Erfahrungs-, Denk- und Redeformen christlicher Mystik. Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2007, 41.

[99] Bynum, Caroline: "Why All the Fuss About the Body? A Medievalist's Perspective." In: *Critical Inquiry,* 22 1995, 6.

[100] Nikkel "Embodied Nature of Religion.", 147.

[101] Nikkel: "Embodied Nature of Religion.", 148.

[102] Nikkel: "Embodied Nature of Religion.", 148.

[103] Nikkel, "Embodied Nature of Religion ", 144.

[104] Nikkel, "Embodied Nature of Religion", 137.

[105] Haas, *Mystik als Aussage,* 9.

[106] Haas, Mystik als Aussage, 39.

[107] Haas views Boethius (d. 524) as one of the first advocate of a rationality model, Haas, *Mystik als Aussage*, 39. The Christian monastic tradition upholds a balanced „theological wisdom idea." (Haas, *Mystik als Aussage*, 49)

mysticism, theology and spirituality" develops.[108] And as a result a "diastasis of rationality and intuition, thinking and experience, […] " persists in Middle European Christian theology from the middle of the 13th century on. [109] This also lead to "an exclusion of mystic theology out of the lines of theology" in the Christian tradition.[110] This diastasis influenced how spirituality, religious experience and mysticism were studied. As the short overview on historiography of Western Christian studies on al-Ghazālī showed, Spanish orientalist and colonialist scholars of the early 20th century looked for theological models outside of their tradition in order to reconstruct their ideal of a hegemonic Catholic science that unifies "faith and reason."[111] When applied to the field of religious studies, embodiment theories re-introduce a research perspective which comprehends the body as central place not only for cognition, but also religious experience.

In the article "Religion and the Body: Rematerializing the Human Body in Social Sciences of Religion", Meredith McGuire argues that "research strategies need to take into account that believers (and nonbelievers) are not merely disembodied spirits, but that they experience a material world in and through their bodies."[112] A recent article reinforces McGuire´s argument: with the concept "embodiment" Mitchell views the "body as both locus and conduit of embodied religion; the subject, rather than object, of religious process."[113] Medievalist Bynum argues that despite a "cacophony of discourses"[114] for medieval theologies "knowing, feeling, and experiencing were located in the body."[115] Following the theory of embodiment, a believer experiences God through and with the body.[116] Embodiment theories proclaim the situatedness of the body – not only in biological or gender categories, but in environment, time, and culture.[117] Thus, an embodiment approach allows to describe the distinctiveness of bodies in relation to internal and external circumstances. Further, the theoretical approach allows to grasp individual

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until the 12th century and into the early 13th century. From the 13th century on this balanced view is substituted by a diastase of rationality and intuition (Haas, *Mystik als Aussage*, 52).

[108] Haas, Mystik als Aussage, 41.

[109] Haas, Mystik als Aussage, 52.

[110] Haas, Mystik als Aussage, 52.

[111] Bornstein, "An Orientalist Contribution", 4.

[112] McGuire, "Religion and the Body", 283–296.

[113] Mitchell, Jon P.: "Religion and Embodiment." In: *The International Encyclopaedia of Anthropology*, John Wiley & Sons, 2018. Thus, the embodiment theory can also analyse different bodies and different perceptions. It also allows a more subjective approach to study religion.

[114] Bynum, "All the Fuss About the Body", 7.

[115] Bynum, "All the Fuss About the Body", 13.

[116] Especially so-called mystical experiences often explain these with bodily or sensory perceptions; those perceptions or also body-related metaphors are used to explain, what the mystic is not able to explain with rationalistic terms of description. See e.g. Nikkel, "Embodied Nature of Religion", 150.

[117] Nikkel, "Embodied Nature of Religion", 141–142, 146.

experiences of bodies.[118] With the theoretical notion of embodiment it is possible to describe phenomena of mystic experiences.[119] Embodiment serves as the theoretical framework for my study. Applied to the field of the history of religion, it provides a new angle on historical texts, like the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. I argue that corporeality is central to understand al-Ghazālī's theology, especially regarding *nikāḥ*.

2. Approaching al-Ghazālī with the concept of spiritual corporeality

Nikkel argues that, "For many theories of religion, locating humans in or orienting humans to a meaningful world or cosmos serves as a prime distinctive feature of religion."[120] According to embodiment theories, this location or orientation necessarily takes place with and in the body: "even as religion employs language and rich symbolism, it is continuous with our embodied efforts to make sense of our world, for language and symbolism themselves come embodied in order to have any meaning for us."[121] He adds: "While religious orientation is bodily based and attempts, whether acknowledged or unacknowledged, to advance some bodily values."[122]

Nikkel describes how different religious traditions or branches can be distinguished by their relation to the bodily. "Various forms of Gnosticism explicitly endorse the escaping embodiment", while "extreme forms of asceticism […] represent nonadaptive behaviours."[123] With different "versions of belief in resurrection of the body (prior to encounter with antibodily influences from Greek philosophy)", Jewish, Christian and Muslim "traditions affirm much […] of our premortem embodiment and hope precisely for a post-mortem body and embodiment that eliminates most or all bodily negativities."[124] Not only the described aspect of religion as a locating and orienting of humans in a meaningful cosmos, also the relation to the bodily in both everyday life practice and eschatological beliefs resonates with al-Ghazālī's theology. Al-Ghazālī, who understands himself as a re-newer of Islamic teachings for the 12th

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[118] This aspect has been pointed out e.g. by Mitchell, "Religion and Embodiment". As will be shown, al-Ghazālī's text considers different types of embodied believers, whose bodies require different advice for self-alteration.
[119] See Nikkel, "Embodied Nature of Religion", 150, 156.
[120] Nikkel, "Embodied Nature of Religion", 153.
[121] Nikkel, "Embodied Nature of Religion", 154.
[122] Nikkel, "Embodied Nature of Religion", 155.
[123] Nikkel, "Embodied Nature of Religion", 155.
[124] Nikkel, "Embodied Nature of Religion", 155. Bodily negativities would be e.g. pain or bodily decay.

century,[125] addresses the believers as "embodied" beings, when he instructs them to live their life according to *dīn*, or what could be called "embodied faith". For that reason, al-Ghazālī describes a plethora of subjects in detail, including prayer, eating and marital intercourse. His theology lays a strong focus on the corporeality of the believers and its training or alteration.[126] The theoretical framework of embodiment, as described above, helped me to build my own theoretical concept to describe the theological system behind bodily actions recommended by al-Ghazālī to the believers. Al-Ghazālī's belief in bodily resurrection after death is connected to the ideal corporeality of a believer.[127] When the believers will meet God in the afterlife to be judged for their deeds, it will be in their corporeal state. This underlines the exigency of his instructions in the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ* for a believer. In the *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, al-Ghazālī instructs the believers in an alteration of their body[128] and – what could be called with Akashe-Böhme – "spiritually reasoned body practices".[129]

My concept of spiritual corporeality serves as an analytical tool to analyse al-Ghazālī's theology. Spiritual corporeality has to be understood as a complex of bodily actions, which follow a spiritual aim. Different everyday practices such as the prostration in prayer, "reciting vocal dhikr"[130] or the minor or major ablution, *al-wuḍū,*[131], controlling the two desires[132], and even recitations before marital intercourse[133] are part of a specific Muslim spiritual corporeality. In contrast to the term "ritual", spiritual corporeality grasps a way to conduct life, which exceeds specific or repetitive physical actions, such as acts of worship like prayer. Rituals are repeated sequences of actions with a beginning and an end taking place at specific times. Spiritual

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[125] As will be described in part III,

[126] An example for a spiritual practice would be fasting. Fasting is mentioned in 9:103 and 2:197. Fasting could be understood as a temporary alteration of the body, an exercise of self-control. Al-Ghazālī underlines the use of fasting to control sexual desires, as temporary castration. Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 32. Fasting could also be understood as a practice which is strengthening the connection to God, perhaps by understanding both, the strength and the weakness of the God-given body.

[127] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 129. A lack of spiritual corporeality could affect the believer's ability to reach *jannah*.

[128] See Akashe-Böhme, Farideh: *Sexualität und Körperpraxis im Islam*. Brandes & Apsel, 2006, 41. Aoyagi lists different aspects of al-Ghazālī's instructions for spiritual corporeality, which need to be incorporated into the "daily life", such as *dhikr* or meditation, see Aoyagi, "Al-Ghazali and marriage", 128–130.

[129] Akashe-Böhme argues that this results in "dichotomies of self-cultivation", which have God as addressee. Akashe-Böhme, *Sexualität und Körperpraxis*, 43.

[130] Aoyagi, "Al-Ghazali and marriage", 129. Aoyagi, who "examines the ideal of the married life in relation to Sufi practices" (124), cites from the Ihya, vol.1,521. Aoyagi notes that for al-Ghazali *dhikr* "is the most important exercise among the acts of devotion to God", Aoyagi, "Al-Ghazali and marriage", 129.

[131] With minor or major *wuḍū* the believer regains their ritual purity, a prerequisite to worship God.

[132] Al-Ghazālī distinguishes the appetite for food and carnal appetite, to be discussed in IV, 3.

[133] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 123–124. Also highlighted by Aoyagi, "Al-Ghazali and marriage", 129.

corporeality describes a life-long conduct of the believer, in which every day-acts, such as eating or having intercourse need to be integrated. With this complex of actions, practices, rituals and thoughts a God-given body is altered into the body of a believer. This body inhibits the capability to experience God already in the earthly life[134] and to fulfil its divine purpose. In his argumentation, al-Ghazālī defines this divine purpose with the help of theological anthropology and cosmology. In effect the believers distinguish themselves from a non-believer or someone, who is not following al-Ghazālī´s ideal of conduct. Thus, the concept of spiritual corporeality plays into the construction of identity or subjectivity. Spiritual corporeality denotes not only the required conduct, but it also alters the self-perception and the perception of their environment.

For al-Ghazālī, the body is an attestation that the believer is a divine creation. It is also a manifestation of the earthly existence of the believer, i.e. in the *dunyā*, which stands in opposition to *ākhira,* the afterlife. According to al-Ghazālī, the earthly body has desires, which if they are not controlled, can lead to an imbalance or even in the commitment of a sin.[135] If the desires remain within the borders of what is permitted, they can serve their divine purpose.[136] Consequently, a lack of control could result in the body becoming more worldly. In the worst case the believer becomes too attached to worldliness so that they neglect the preparations for the afterlife, argues al-Ghazālī.[137] At the same time the materiality of the body enables the believer to be present with God already in the earthly life. It allows the believer to experience spiritual states of being "in a presence with God."[138] Al-Ghazālī's spiritual corporeality relies on an ascetic ideal of piety, *zuhd*, as the analysis will show exemplary with the connection of his "theory of the two desires" and *nikāḥ*. Here, *zuhd* denotes the detachment from indulgence and material luxury.[139] Al-Ghazālī uses the notion of balance to describe that a certain detachment from luxury or, in other words, abstaining from excesses is a necessary condition for the

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[134] In al-Ghazālī´s words: "in the presence of God", Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 63-64. Notably is the state of *sakīna,* which will be discussed in relation to marriage in detail in IV,9.
[135] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 36. The notion of balance will be discussed in IV, 9, see also Immenkamp (1995): *Celibacy and marriage*, i-ii, 13–20.
[136] This will be discussed in IV,6.
[137] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 51, 58. See also Aoyagi, who points out the connection of Sufi practices with the afterlife, Aoyagi, "Al-Ghazali and marriage", 134.
[138] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 63–64.
[139] Encyclopaedia Britannica: *Zuhd*. In: Augustyn, Adam et al. (eds): *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, 2007. URL https://www.britannica.com/topic/zuhd, last accessed: 02.02.2021.

development of spiritual corporeality.[140] This conception of asceticism as balance will allow the believer to reach the presence of God in God´s dwelling place, *maqām*.[141]

3. A hermeneutical analysis: description and reflection of the method

I conducted an embedded hermeneutical analysis on the phenomenon of *nikāḥ* in its double meaning of marriage and marital intercourse in the 11th century text *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. I understand hermeneutics as "a reading that moves back and forth between the parts and the whole of a text, between its structure and meaning, between the reader´s horizon and the horizon of the text, and between the text and its context."[142] With the term "embedded" I would like to indicate a distinction from hermeneutics as both "method and philosophy of interpretation" in its historical use, that is the interpretation of Christian scriptures.[143] Further, I would like to restate what Ingvild Sælid Gilhus accentuated for hermeneutical interpretation in general: the results of my analysis are not final, but document a thinking and working process, which depends on my own horizon and the secondary sources considered.[144]

During my readings, I took into consideration three different dimensions, or "horizons"[145]: the historical context, references to the Qur'ān as divine authority and other intertextual links or influences.[146] I began with the second dimension before I conducted inquiries into the wider intertextual and historical context of the source, so that the first rounds of readings were uninformed by historical or intertextual connections and possible projections into the source could be avoided. As I already pointed out, the focus of my analysis is al-Ghazālī's use of the Qur'ān as divine reference.[147] I am interested in the arguments he derives from the Qur'ān and

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[140] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 36.
[141] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 64. See also Encyclopaedia Britannica: *Maqām*. In: Augustyn, Adam et al. (eds): *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, 2007. URL: https://www.britannica.com/topic/maqam-Sufism, last accessed: 02.02.2021.
[142] Sælid Gilhus, Ingvild: "Hermeneutics." In: Stausberg, Michael & Engler, Steven (eds.): The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion, Routledge, 2014, 276.
[143] Sælid Gilhus, "Hermeneutics", 275–276.
[144] She states it is a "never-ending process" and "no interpretation is ever final", Sælid Gilhus, "Hermeneutics", 276.
[145] Sælid Gilhus, "Hermeneutics", 276
[146] Here the debate in *taṣawwuf* apologies was the viewed as point of emergence of the text. While Christian-Muslim relations in the Saljūq Empire were evaluated as historical context, no Jewish debates on similar matters or Jewish material was analysed due to space limitations.
[147] This will be further discussed in IV,1. Al-Ghazālī's use of hadiths to establish his arguments will not be discussed in detail.

the interpretations of Qur'ānic verses his text provides. The first close readings were conducted in translation first and then most relevant, unclear paragraphs were analysed in the original Arabic language. This allowed me to find Qur'ānic references in the text with a minimal modification of meaning due to different translations of Arabic terms. I isolated ten single arguments of al-Ghazālī's argumentation, which elucidate different facets of the text.[148] These selected arguments can be understood as "frames", which make up compartments of al-Ghazālī's theology of marriage.[149] Possible biases of the first rounds of close readings were corrected with the introducing of the two other dimensions, i.e. by historical contextualisation of both author and text and other intertextual influences.

To analyse how al-Ghazālī uses the Qur'ān for the development of his theological position on marriage, I inquired the following set of questions: I analysed how al-Ghazālī builds his arguments with the help of Qur'ānic references. I distinguished between Qur'ānic verses, which were used as direct reference, i.e. by a citation of a verse within the text, and indirect references, i.e. an argument build on a Qur'ānic notion. To clarify with an example backed by secondary literature: the cosmological principle *hirāthah,* tillage, al-Ghazālī uses, is derived from a verb form in 2:223 (*harthakum)*.[150] It is likely that al-Ghazālī's audience might have been able to understand such an indirect reference to a Qur'ānic verse. However, the traceability of indirect references without the help of a systematic, perhaps even software-based methodology[151] depends on a subjective knowledge of Qur'ānic verses. Therefore, indirect references are presented as possibilities in the analysis, or were further investigated with the help of secondary literature. I also analysed if arguments were not verified with citations of Qur'ānic verses. This lead to ask, how al-Ghazālī establishes authority for a claim he makes, other than with references to the Qur'ān as divine authority.[152] It could even be asked, if the arguments present an individual position or remain within the constraints of a theological school.[153] In my analysis,

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[148] The frames will be introduced in IV.

[149] Framing can be understood as construction of meaning (see Benford, Robert D. & Snow, David A.: "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." In: *Annual Reviews Sociology*, (26), 2000, 614–615) or the arrangement of different elements into a pattern (Van Hulst, Merlijn & Yanow, Dvora: "From Policy «Frames» to «Framing»: Theorizing a More Dynamic, Political Approach." In: *The American Review of Public Administration*, Vol.46(1), 2016, 99).

[150] Watt, W. M.: Companion to the Qur'ān: Based on the Arberry Translation. Routledge, 2008, 41 cited by Farah, Al-Ghazali, xvii.

[151] For a new study on possible Pseudo-Ghazali texts applying mathematical methods see: Volkovich, Zeev: "A Short-Patterning of the Texts Attributed to Al-Ghazali: A "Twitter Look" at the Problem." In: *Mathematics, 8,* 2020.

[152] To be discussed in IV, 1, 8.

[153] See Ahmed, Rumee: *Narratives of Islamic Legal Theory.* Oxford University Press, 2012, 9.

I discuss how al-Ghazālī interprets his Qurʾānic references. I investigated the connection between the single arguments and their strategic arrangement by the author.

The historical context of both source and author, as well as the source´s embeddedness in contemporaneous debates on marriage and celibacy contributed two other dimensions to the analysis. To understand the historical context of the source, I investigated both the biographical[154] and socio-political circumstances of al-Ghazālī as scholar in the Saljūq Empire.[155] In an adaption of Eco´s hermeneutical approach to the study of the Qurʾān´s intertextuality, Waleed F. S. Ahmed discusses the dimensions of Eco´s interpretative theory.[156] Eco defines the "intentio auctoris", as "the act of interpretation [which] is concerned with the author in so far as it transpires in the text «as a textual strategy»."[157] My inquiries into the biography of the author and his socio-political context, can in that sense be viewed as background to comprehend the textual strategy. With the "intentio operis", Eco provides also a measure for the validity of an interpretation, which is "textual coherence."[158] According to Eco, "any interpretation given by a certain portion of a text can be accepted if it is confirmed by, and must be rejected if it is challenged by, another portion of the same text."[159]

A contradiction in the text concerning al-Ghazālī's use of the prophetic example of ʿĪsā /Jesus as argumentative figure once against and once in favour of celibacy[160], lead me to include Christian-Muslim relations in the Saljūq Empire into the historical context.[161] As I have already mentioned, the introduction to the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ* recalls opposing positions of scholars on the matter of *nikāḥ*.[162] I therefore researched out of which contemporaneous debate the primary question of the text ("Does marriage distract the believer from God?") emerged from. Further I examined the possible intertextual influence of previous authors, with the example of the Sufi

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[154] See also Friedrich Schleiermacher´s (1768–1834) "theological hermeneutics". Schleiermacher points out the importance of the author for hermeneutical analysis. Critical assessments of proclaimed authorship have led to an increase in author-critical approaches, which favoured an intertextual approach. Sælid Gilhus, "Hermeneutics", 279–280.

[155] See III,1.

[156] Ahmed, Waleed F. S.: The Qurʾānic Narratives Through the Lens of Intertextual Allusions: A Literary Approach. Dissertation, University of Göttingen, 2014.

[157] Ahmed, *Intertextual Allusions,* 79 –80, partially citing Eco, Umberto: "Between Author and Text." In: Collini, Stefan (ed.): *Interpretation and Over Interpretation*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, 69.

[158] Eco, Umberto: "Overinterpreting Texts." In: Collini, Stefan (ed.): *Interpretation and Over Interpretation*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, 64-65 cited by Ahmed, *Intertextual Allusions,* 80.

[159] Ahmed, Intertextual Allusions, 80 –81.

[160] This will be discussed in V,1.

[161] See III, 2.

[162] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 1.

author al-Makkī to stress the situatedness of the text in *taṣawwuf* discourse.[163] Comparisons to Jewish material or similar debates on abstinence were not drawn due to space limitations but will be discussed as a possible continuation of the study in the conclusion.

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[163] See III, 4.

III. Al-Ghazālī and his *opus magnum*, the *Iḥyā' ‘ulūm al-dīn*, "The Renaissance of the Knowledge of Dīn", in their historical and intertextual context

1. Al-Ghazālī as scholar in the Saljūq Empire

Before analysing al-Ghazālī's *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ,* the "Book on the Proper Conduct of Marriage",[164] I will introduce the author and highlight the historical context and conditions al-Ghazālī's writings evolved in. Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad bin Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (1056–1111/447–504) is considered one of the most influential Islamic theologians of the classical period.[165] He is also known as writer of the *taṣawwuf* tradition.[166]Apart from al-Ghazālī's later association with foremost Sufi teachings, he was closely entangled with the Sunnī orthodox politics of the Turko-Persian Saljūq Empire. The Saljūqs took over this part of their empire from "the Shi'i *Būwayhids*". [167] Therefore, their interest laid in "the cultivation of a class of Sunnī *ʿulamāʾ* [scholars]"[168] to display the new hegemony of Sunnī Islam.

While teaching in Bagdad at the renowned *Niẓāmīyah* university, which was established to generate the class of Sunnī scholars for the new empire,[169] al-Ghazālī "composed a number of polemical and dogmatic treatises in which he defended the official Sunnī theology against internal and external ideological threats, particularly the *Isma'ili's* and philosophers."[170] Thereby,

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[164] The Islamic concept of *ādāb*, manners or conduct, is connected to *akhlaq*, morality, and part of an Islamic ethical code, which is outlined in *fiqh*, Islamic jurisprudence. *Ādāb* encompasses advice such as e.g. the recitation of *Alhamdulillah* after sneezing or purity rules. (See Gabrieli, Francesco: "*Ādāb*" In: Bearman, Peri et al. (eds.): *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Brill, 2012. Last accessed online: 16.06. 2020). In addition, *ādāb* is also used as a term to describe the genre of Arabic literature for the educated classes of the Middle Ages. (See Encyclopaedia Britannica: "*Ādāb*" In: Augustyn, Adam et al. (eds): *Encyclopaedia Brittanica Online*, 2020, accessed online: 10.06.2020.) Often *ādāb* is translated as etiquette (e.g. translation by Madelain Farah 2012), which – due to the association with French originating teachings on social etiquette of the 18th and 19th century – could be misleading. Aoyagi uses the term manners instead (Aoyagi, "Al-Ghazali and marriage"). I chose the translation "Book on the Proper Conduct of Marriage". The title could even be translated as "Book on the Refinement by Marriage". This translation would highlight al-Ghazālī's argument that marriage aids the religion, which will be explained below.

[165] Watt critically notes an over-proportionate interest in al-Ghazālī to other Islamic thinkers in Western scholarship. (Watt, William Montgomery: "Al-Ghazali. Muslim Jurist, Theologian and Mystic." In: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020. Accessed online: 10.06.2020.) This might be related to an orientalist fascination with the Sufi tradition, as well as to the history of transmission. Al-Ghazālī's texts were widely circulated during the 12th century, e.g. in the Latin language.

[166] The commonly used term Sufism is criticised for its orientalist origin. Uzdavinya argues that its use fosters an orientalist division of Islam into an imagined branch of strict and doxa-oriented Islam on the one hand and a phantasma of a "universalist" doxa-transgressing Sufism on the other hand. (Uzdavinya, Algis: "Sufism in the Light of Orientalism." In: *Acta Orientalia Vilnensia* 6(2) 2005.Accessed online 05.06.2020.)

[167] Mitha, Farouk: *Al-Ghazālī and the Ismāʿīlis. A Debate on Reason and Authority in Medieval Islam.* I.B. Tauris, 2001, 10.

[168] Mitha, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ismāʿīlis*, 10.

[169] Watt, "Al-Ghazali".

[170] Treiger, Alexander: "Al-Ghazālī" In: Crone, Patricia et al. (eds.): *The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Islamic Political Thought.* Princeton University Press, 2013, 191–192. See also: Bearman et al.: "al-Niẓāmiyya , al-Madrasa." In: Bearman et al. (eds.): *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Brill, 2012. Al-Ghazālī had arguments with *Ḥanafī* and *Ismāʿīli* scholars. The *Ismāʿīli* sect was not only an intellectual but also a physical threat to the Saljūq leaders, as the covert murder of al-Ghazālī's patron Nizam al-Mulk in 1092 showed. His assassination is attributed to the *Nizari Ismāʿīli* sect. Most famous before the publication of the later work *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* is al-Ghazālī's criticism of an adaption of Greek philosophy which is incoherent with Qurʾānic logics in his text *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers), which refutes e.g. Avicenna´s philosophical positions.

Al-Ghazālī sustained "the Saljūq sultans´ presentation as champions of Sunnī Islam."[171] Al-Ghazālī was offered this teaching position by one of the two Persian viziers of the Saljūq sultan Malik Shah I, Niẓām al-Mulk[172], who is considered to have been the de facto ruler of the Empire.[173] Niẓām Al-Mulk established the Saljūq educational system of *Niẓāmīyah* universities first in Baghdad and, afterwards, in other locations within the Empire. Choosing Baghdad for the establishment of the first *Niẓāmīyah* of the Saljūq Empire was a symbolic and political choice by Niẓām Al-Mulk since Baghdad had been "a prominent centre of *Imami* Shi'i learning and scholarship."[174] Al-Ghazālī referred to Niẓām Al-Mulk as "trusted intellectual mentor"[175], and as Farouk Mitha notes, his "appointment to the *Niẓāmīyah* in Baghdad coincides with the apogee of Niẓām Al-Mulk´s power".[176]

Al-Ghazālī's elaborations on the subject of marriage can be found in the twelfth book of al-Ghazālī's opus magnum *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, which was written during years of travel and pilgrimage to Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem and Damascus between the years 1095 and 1105.[177] In 1092 al-Ghazālī's powerful patron Niẓām Al-Mulk was killed, and the Empire politically destabilised, leading to the start of a civil war in 1095.[178] This external circumstances could provide another explanation for his decision to leave Baghdad than what he claimed himself. Embracing an inward-oriented Islam and the sudden adoption of an ascetic way of life are presented by al-Ghazālī as the result of a spiritual crisis in his text *Munqidh min al-ḍalāl,* "Deliverance from Error".[179] This explanation seems to have been rarely questioned in Western scholarship, apart from Frank Griffel, who critically mentions several accounts which suggest an earlier adoption of *taṣawwuf* doctrines by al-Ghazālī and argues for a re-evaluation of this narrative.[180]

In 1095, al-Ghazālī disassociated himself from the politics of the Saljūq empire and finally settled in his hometown Tus, where he taught *taṣawwuf* teachings and remained socially secluded.[181] Yet in 1106, after the civil war had ended al-Ghazālī returned to another teaching position in service of the Saljūq Empire in the city of Nishapur, located on the old silk road

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[171] Mitha , *Al-Ghazālī and the Ismāʿīlis*, 7.
[172] Griffel, Frank: *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology.* Oxford University Press, 2009, 53–54.
[173] See e.g. Rosenwein, Barbara H.: *A Short History of the Middle Ages*. University of Toronto Press, 2018, 163.
[174] Mitha, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ismāʿīlis*, 6.
[175] Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 54.
[176] Mitha, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ismāʿīlis,* 13.
[177] Watt, "Al-Ghazali".
[178] Mitha, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ismāʿīlis*, 2.
[179] Griffel, *Al-Ghazali´s Philosophical Theology*, 53.
[180] Griffel, *Al-Ghazali´s Philosophical Theology*, 9.
[181] Watt "Al-Ghazali."

route.[182] In his autobiographical writing "Deliverance from Error", al-Ghazālī "legitimizes his return to the *Niẓāmīyah* school by linking it to the needs of an epoch characterized by religious slackness (*fatra*) and the temptations of false belief." [183] According to popular belief *a mujaddid,* a "«renewer» of the life of Islam was expected at the beginning of each century [...] beginning in September 1106."[184] And it was al-Ghazālī's belief that he fulfils the purpose of a *mujaddid*. As Griffel narrates, al-Ghazālī consulted a group of people "who have pure heart and religious insight (*mushahada*) who advised him to leave his seclusion and emerge [...] to lead the much-needed religious renewal at the beginning of the new century."[185] However, he returned again to Tus and remained teaching *taṣawwuf* unaffiliated with the official schools of the Saljūq Empire until his death at age fifty-six in 1111/504.[186]

2. Christian influence in the Saljūq Empire

To assess the possibility of Christian influence in al-Ghazālī's historical context, I present an overview on Christian-Muslim relations within the Saljūq Empire and attempt to presents al-Ghazālī's milieu while teaching in Baghdad. After the ʿAbbāsīd revolution "a new multicultural society developed in Baghdad."[187] *Dhimmī*, i.e. local Christians and Jews, were working in the administration of the empire. Christians continued to work in libraries, as they had previously under Umayyad rule. [188] Here, their knowledge of other languages, such as Greek was important for the transfer of knowledge in the Islamic Empires.[189] In this milieu, "Public debates between Christian and Muslim intellectuals seem to have continued to be held in Baghdad" under Saljūq rule, which had previously been known to be a centre for Shi'i scholarship.[190] Al-Ghazālī's teacher al-Juwaynī, for example, member of the newly emerged class of Sunnī ʿulamāʾ, refuted Christianity in public.[191] Thus, al-Ghazālī did not write in a purely Muslim setting. Perhaps it

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[182] See also Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology*, 53, 56. Griffel suggests that al-Ghazālī remained teaching in Tus but the institution, where he conducted his teachings is unclear.
[183] Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 53.
[184] Watt, "Al-Ghazālī."
[185] Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 53.
[186] Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 158.
[187] Meri, Josef W.: "Libraries" In: Meri, Josef W. (ed.): *Medieval Islamic Civilization. An Encyclopaedia. Volume 2; L-Z index*. Routledge, 2006, 450.
[188] From the reign of ʿAbd al–Malik (661-705) on, Meri: "Libraries", 450.
[189] In Baghdad under ʿAbbāsīd rule this led "paradoxically" to "the preservation of the classical Greek heritage" since they were "Hellenised". Al-Ghazālī had access to this knowledge. Bar Hebraeus´ adaptation of al-Ghazālī's argumentation will be discussed as an example in part V.
[190] Peacock, A. C. S.: *The Great Seljuk Empire. The Edinburgh History of the Islamic Empires.* Edinburgh University Press, 2015, 256.
[191] Peacock, *The Great Seljuk Empire*, 256.

could even be argued that al-Ghazālī's argumentation keeps possible Christian readers in mind.[192]

Interestingly, a direct entanglement of the Saljūq rulers with Christianity can be observed in their marital relationships. As Rustam Shukurov´s historical evidence shows, Saljūq rulers frequently married Greek Orthodox Christian women. [193] Greek Christian women were part of the Saljūq sultans` harems as concubine.[194] This practice was not only connected to strategic alliances with the neighbouring Christian Byzantine Empire, but with an ideal of Greek women in general. According to Shukurov, "Greek women were valued as the most prestigious marriage partners among all strata of Muslim society."[195] Shukurov´s historical evidence suggests that the Christian wives or concubines of the ruling classes were allowed to practice Christianity[196] and that "Christianity and Byzantine culture (language and customs) existed in the harem not as a relic of the former life of these women, but as a living system which contributed to shaping the future".[197] Shukurov points out that the influence of the Christian wives as mothers of the Saljūq princes does not have to be underestimated:

> "Given that male infants were raised by their mothers in the harem until the age of ten or eleven, we may suggest that in the harem future sultans became familiar with Byzantine culture and customs as well as basic concepts of the Christian faith and rites."[198]

There is even evidence of Christian mothers baptising their sons.[199] Thus, Shukurov concludes that "the cultural boundaries between the Christian Byzantine and Seljuk Muslim elements were blurred and permeable" and that "the Muslim elite, was extremely complex and included Byzantine (Greek and Christian) elements".[200] With Shukurov´s characterisation of al-Ghazālī's

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[192] Another possibility would be that the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ* was designed to serve newly converts for practical guidance as well. Conversions were a frequent matter discussed in several sources from this time. (Peacock, *The Great Seljuk Empire*, 246–285.) As Peacock is able to show in his historical study on the Saljūq Empire, Jews and Christians were part of the ruling class of the Empire, e.g. as state officials.

[193] See Shukurov, Rustam: "Harem Christianity: The Byzantine Identity of Seljuk Princes." In: Peacock, A.C.S. & Yildiz, Sara Nur (eds.): *The Seljuks of Anatolia: Court and Society in the Medieval Middle East*, I. B. Tauris, 2012, 126. Shukurov can prove a custom of intermarriage of Saljūq rulers with Greek Christian wives over many generations. The historical evidence supporting this practice is transmitted better from the end of the 12th century on, than from the period of the 11th to 12th century.

[194] See Shukurov, "Harem Christianity", 126.

[195] Shukurov, "Harem Christianity", 126.

[196] Shukurov, "Harem Christianity", 122–123.

[197] Shukurov, "Harem Christianity", 127.

[198] Shukurov, "Harem Christianity", 127.

[199] Shukurov, "Harem Christianity", 127–128.

[200] Shukurov, "Harem Christianity", 115–116. Furthermore, Shukurov argues that the milieu cannot be characterised as "religious or cultural syncretism", but that a dual identity was present within the ruling classes of the empire, in which one part of a "dual self "is either activated or deferred. Shukurov, "Harem Christianity", 134.

cultural milieu by permeability of Byzantine Christian and Sunnī Muslim culture and customs among parts of the elite of the Saljūq ruling class, it could be possible to imagine a specific group as readers of al-Ghazālī's *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*.

The genre of *ādāb*, as mentioned in al-Ghazālī's title, follows didactical and educational purposes. "The oldest meaning of the word *ādāb* is "a praiseworthy habit or norm derived from one's ancestors".[201] The *ādāb* genre can be classified into a "descriptive type", such as e.g. animal lexica, and a "prescriptive" type.[202] Maaike van Berkel defines the prescriptive type as treatise, which is "ethical in character" and "concerned with giving rules and guidelines for correct and cultured behaviour[…]".[203] Like al-Ghazālī's book on marriage, the prescriptive *ādāb* genre presents "guidelines for the cultured Muslim in general or for specific social or professional groups."[204]

The *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ* is both a theological treatise and a practical guidebook on the subject of marriage. Due to its complex references and philosophical argumentation, it seems as it is suited for readers with a higher education. If young Saljūq princes or other male members of the Saljūq elite grew up with Christian customs and in a possible environment of "Harem Christianity", it could be speculated that al-Ghazālī as a central figure of the ʿulamā, who had close ties to Saljūq leaders, might have written a text suitable for their Islamic re-education. This could explain the explicit references to ʿĪsā /Jesus[205] and the absence of anti-Christian polemics. Possibly, the "cultural permeability"[206] and the Christian influence in the ruling classes might be the reason for al-Ghazālī's knowledge of Christian theology.

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[201] Van Berkel, Maaike: "The Attitude Towards Knowledge in Mamluk Egypt: Organisation and Structure of the Subh al-aʿsha by al-Qalqashandi (1355–1418)." In: Brinkley, Peter (ed.): *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts, Proceedings of the Second Comers Congress, Groningen, 1–4 July 1996*. Brill, 1997, 160. Davaran points out that the *ādāb* genre is a "hybrid" of both pre-Iranian and Islamic culture, Daravan, Fereshteh: *Continuity in Iranian Identity. Resilience of a cultural heritage*. Routledge, 2010, 220.

[202] Van Berkel, "Attitude Towards Knowledge", 161.

[203] Van Berkel, "Attitude Towards Knowledge", 161.

[204] Van Berkel, "Attitude Towards Knowledge", 161. Al-Ghazālī's work has to be distinguished from the sub-genre *qisas*, which aims at lay people. For *qisas*, see Helewa, Sami: *The Models of Leadership in the Adab Narratives of Joseph, David, and Solomon. Lament for the Sacred*. Lexington Books, 2018, 17.

[205] Most noticeably addressing the possible question of a reader as rhetorical device: "Should you ask, «Why then did Jesus abstain from marriage in spite of its virtue?... »", Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 62. As will be shown below, the 16th century author Kāsānī no longer mentions ʿĪsā /Jesus and categorically excludes celibacy.

[206] Shukurov: "Harem Christianity", 115.

3. An intertextual background of the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*, *kitāb* twelve of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*

Immenkamp investigated the intertextuality of al-Ghazālī's writings on marriage and concluded that the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ* responded first and foremost to an early debate on celibacy and marriage within the *taṣawwuf* branch of Islam.[207] Immenkamp suggests that with his text on marriage al-Ghazālī responded directly to al-Makkī's (d. 996/386) *Qūt al-qulūb*, "The Nourishments of the Heart".[208] Al-Makkī's text is one of the earliest examples of "Sufi apologia"[209] and "one of the most widely read attempts in early Islam to explain the rules which should govern the inner life as well as demonstrate the harmony of the science of the inner life with the more outward or "exoteric" formulations of Islam."[210] Khalil argues, that early Sufi apologies consolidated two centuries of mainly orally transmitted Sufi wisdom.[211] *Taṣawwuf* teachings "were perceived as subversive" in the religious establishment and have often been met with antagonism.[212] Manuals like al-Makkī's *Qūt al-qulūb* emerged near the end of the 10th century with the aim to "demonstrate Sufism's compatibility with the teachings of the Prophet and the earliest Muslims, but also to reveal how its adepts were the elect of the community, those who after ascetic and spiritual exertion had realized the highest truths of religion."[213] According to Khalil, "The 9th and especially the 10th century marked a transition in that Sufi teachings were now more systematically explicated through the written medium".[214]

Several parallels between the *Qūt al-qulūb* and al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ* show that al-Makkī's manual was "one of the main sources of inspiration" for al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ*.[215] Khalil characterises the *Iḥyāʾ* as "an exegetical elaboration of al-Makkī's earlier work, infused with Ghazali's personal insights and organized according to his own analytic genius."[216] Khalil highlights the following characteristics of al-Makkī's text as exemplary evidence for al-Ghazālī's inspiration: The *Qūt*

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[207] Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy,* ii–iv. Immenkamp argues that al-Ghazālī copied 57,8% of al-Makkī's argumentation and derived 40% of his reference from al-Makkī. Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, 140.

[208] Khalil translates this as: "The Nourishment of Hearts in Dealing with the Beloved and the Description of the Way of the Seeker to the Station of Divine." Khalil, "Al-Makkī", 19. Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, ii–iv. For a further overview on other *taṣawwuf* texts discussing celibacy and marriage, see Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, iv–v.

[209] Khalil, "Al-Makkī", 8.

[210] Khalil, "Al-Makkī", 1.

[211] Khalil, "Al-Makkī", 8.

[212] Khalil, "Al-Makkī", 2–3.

[213] Khalil, "Al-Makkī", 8.

[214] Khalil, "Al-Makkī", 9.

[215] Khalil, "Al-Makkī", 1; this is also noted by Aoyagi, "Al-Ghazali and marriage", 126.

[216] Khalil, "Al-Makkī", 1

al-qulūb "resembles in some ways the format of juridical texts".[217] At the same time, the text *"is concerned principally with the science of praxis, the *'ulūm al-mu'āmalat*",[218] meaning that "unlike the *fiqh* books"[219], al-Makkī's "discussion of the outward forms […] is thus followed by an investigation into their inner significance."[220] Thus, al-Makkī's text includes "the way one should eat, sleep, dress, earn one's livelihood, and marry, with the end of sanctifying such apparently mundane activities and thereby enabling on to draw closer to God."[221]

In conclusion, argues Khalil, a common view on al-Ghazālī as "the first major figure" or "grand reconciler" of "integrating Sufi thought into the main discourse of the *'ulamā* '", has to be critically reviewed.[222] "The initial effort to provide greater legitimacy to the inner tradition of Islam or what would later be referred to as the "jurisprudence of the heart" (*fiqh al-qālb*)" would then have to be attributed already to al-Makkī."[223] The term "integration" is used by Khalil to stress the open antagonisms against several teachers of *taṣawwuf*, who have been accused and persecuted for heresy, being a *kāfir*, i.e. a unbeliever, or for "sexual indecency".[224] This would make al-Makkī's Sufi apology a successful attempt to gain a position within orthodox discourse. Accordingly, al-Ghazālī continues al-Makkī's penetration of the discourse by presenting a combination of *taṣawwuf* practices with Sunnī orthodoxy, which is presented as correction against corrupted Islamic practices and beliefs. Immenkamp specifies this claim, when she argues that while al-Makkī "was presenting an argument in favour of celibacy disguised as a discussion, Ghazali's discussion of marriage and celibacy is a genuine comparison of two equally valid options."[225]

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[217] Khalil, "Al-Makkī", 18.
[218] Khalil, "Al-Makkī", 19.
[219] Khalil, "Al-Makkī", 18.
[220] Khalil, "Al-Makkī", 18.
[221] Khalil, "Al-Makkī", 18.
[222] Khalil, "Al-Makkī", 2.
[223] Khalil, "Al-Makkī", 2. A reason for crediting al-Ghazālī for the integration of *Fiqh al-Qalb* into Sunnī *fiqh* and *kalām*, might not only be the high-rank al-Ghazālī inhibited within the leading class of an empire, but is perhaps related to the over proportionate interest in al-Ghazālī's teachings in Western Islamic studies as well, as Watt has critically noted. (Watt,"Al-Ghazālī"). Another factor might be the transmission and circulation of al-Ghazālī's writings in the Latin language in the 12th century, in comparison to the history of transmission of Al-Makkī's work in a non-Arabic environment. See, e.g. Watt, "Al-Ghazali."
[224] See Peacock, *The Great Seljuk Empire*, 246–285.
[225] Immenkamp, Marriage and celibacy, ii.

IV. Presentation of results of the hermeneutical analysis of al-Ghazālī's argumentation for marriage in the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*, "The Book on the Proper Conduct of Marriage", *kitāb* twelve of the *Iḥyā' ʿulūm al-dīn*, "The Renaissance of the Knowledge of Dīn"

1. Al-Ghazālī's hermeneutics and argumentative strategy

In the twelfth book of his opus magnum *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn,* "The Renaissance of the Knowledge of *Dīn",* al-Ghazālī presents his theology of marriage. The text itself could be viewed as an "exercise" in "ritual practice."[226] Before he gives time to practical aspects of *nikāḥ*, such as the preferred character of a future wife or cohabitation, advantages and disadvantages of marriage are presented in a systematic theological-philosophical argumentation in view of the spiritual aim of a believer, i.e. to worship God.[227] Al-Ghazālī strategically assembles common arguments derived from the contemporaneous Sunnī and *tasawwuf* discourse with references to the Qur'ān as the divine authority of his arguments to present the divine will regarding marriage to his readers.[228] The argumentation contains also cosmological arguments derived by logical reasoning or reading of God´s signs and possibly concealed Ancient Greek notions. Since the *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* aim is to return the believers to the right conduct of their faith, the text´s intention seems to correspond with Rumee Ahmed´s description of the purpose of legal manuals as:

> "a performative work, [...] an attempt to remedy the failure of the Muslim community to properly apply law. Since the application of law is an extension and manifestation of the divine-human relationship, the legal theory manual endeavours to create a stronger bond between God and man, if not to repair the rupture between the two caused by the improper application of Islamic law."[229]

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[226] Ahmed, *Islamic Legal Theory*, 154.

[227] Aoyagi states that al-Ghazālī's argumentation is "systematic" in comparison to al-Makkī's elaboration on the subject of *nikāḥ*. Aoyagi, "Al-Ghazali and marriage", 134.

[228] See Ahmed´s argumentation on *fiqh* scholars "conceptions of the way in which God intended humans to apply divine law." Ahmed, *Islamic Legal Theory*, 15. Rosalind Ward Gwynne argues that the Qur'ān itself establishes arguments, which follow an inner logic. (Ward Gwynne, *Reasoning in the Qur'ān*, x.) Those are distinct from "… a jurist´s or theologian´s rearrangement of Qur'ānic passages to yield a conclusion not found in the text of the Qur'ān itself." (Ward Gwynne, *Reasoning in the Qur'ān*, x.) She claims that Qur'ānic arguments are established by "the logical key"[228] of the Qur'ān, the Covenant or in Arabic "*Ahd Allah*" (Ward Gwynne, *Reasoning in the Qur'ān*, 1–24.), and via the concept of "divine signs" (Ward Gwynne, *Reasoning in the Qur'ān*, xi.), *āyāt,* and the *sunān* of God (4:26–27, 8:38–39, 17:76–77, 18:54–56, 33:36–38, 35.42–44) (see Ward Gwynne, *Reasoning in the Qur'ān,* 48–53), which are "normative precedents" that form "binding" obligations, or simply "the norm to be followed" by the believers. (Ward Gwynne, *Reasoning in the Qur'ān* , 42.)

[229] Ahmed, *Islamic Legal Theory*, 153.

However, by pointing out the eschatological exigency and the inwardness of his theology, al-Ghazālī dissociates his argumentation from a jurisprudential view and at the same time concedes a disputability of his position:

> "the jurists do not concern themselves with the inner life and the way of the Hereafter. Their job is to formulate the outer rules of religion, with reference to external physical behaviour […] As for what is beneficial to the afterlife, this is beyond the scope of jurisprudence since no consensus can be claimed."[230]

Al-Ghazālī's text on marriage cannot only be viewed as product of his devotion. With the inward orientation, his text seems to contain the view of a mystic text, which according to Ebstein is understood "as the substrate on which and through which God becomes known to mankind."[231] By referring to God´s arguments, i.e. Qur'ānic verses, al-Ghazālī establishes divine authority for an argument and creates one type of – what Weitz calls – "reasoned arguments".[232] For example: "Because of God's desire that mankind should survive, He made feeding (the hungry) a decree, encouraged it, and referred to it by the term "loan" [qaraḍa] when He said, «Who is it that will lend unto Allāh a goodly loan?» (2:245)" Al-Ghazālī's explicit Qur'ānic reference authorises his interpretation of *qarḍa*:

> "Who is it that would loan [*yuq'riḍu*] Allāh a goodly loan [*qarḍan*] so He may multiply it for him many times over? And it is Allāh who withholds and grants abundance, and to Him you will be returned."

Furthermore, the "divine origin of the mystic´s knowledge"[233] provides the author with the necessary authority for another type of reasoned arguments, which are cosmological arguments, deduced from both Scripture and the observation of nature.

Ahmed points out that in works of Islamic jurisprudence "novel arguments", which follow a "creative logic", have to be concealed.[234] The purpose for concealing novel arguments is legitimizing them on the one hand and helping the writer to secure himself against allegations of heresy on the other: "There is no doubt that the jurists writing these manuals intended to keep their bolder assertions covert, so as to give novel ideas an air of historical legitimacy and avoid

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[230] Al-Ghazali: Inner Dimensions of Islamic Worship. Translated from the Ihya by Muhtar Holland. The Islamic Foundation, 2019, 37. With inner life al-Ghazali refers to Sufi theology, which distinguishes between outer and inner life.
[231] Ebstein, "The Organs of God", 276.
[232] Weitz, "Good Wife", 204.
[233] Ebstein, "The Organs of God", 278.
[234] Ahmed, *Islamic Legal Theory*, 149.

stigmatization within one's own legal school."[235] This can also be observed in al-Ghazālī's text: he uses hadiths, cited from writings of previous *ʿulamāʾ*, to support his own arguments: "Qatadah said, in interpreting the words of the Almighty, «Impose not on us that which we have not the strength to bear», that is lust." [236] When al-Ghazālī´s corroborates his arguments with direct references to Qur'ān, he distinguishes between Qur'ānic verses as God´s arguments and their mere interpretation. By presenting an argument from another scholar as a rare interpretation, he can establish his own arguments as credible especially if the argument is more daring for him. For example: "One of the rare interpretations rendered by Ibn Abbas of the verse "From the evil of the darkness when it is intense" (113:3) is to the male erection, which is an overpowering catastrophe should it rage […]."[237] His argumentation can be presented as balanced and truthful when it includes even more daring propositions or interpretations found in the writings of previous scholars. Thus, the distinction between divine truth and interpretation might play into al-Ghazālī's self-presentation as re-newer and corrector of a perceived corruption of Islamic customs and conduct. It might also protect him from possible antagonisms towards his promotion of *taṣawwuf* theology within the Saljūq Sunnī orthodox discourse.

2. Introduction to al-Ghazālī's argumentation

Al-Ghazālī presents a *khuṭba',[238]* a summary of his argumentation, as an introduction for the reader. The first part of this summary provides a comprehensive background for the selected frames, which I present in chronological order to underline the development within al-Ghazālī's argumentation: Following blessings for God and prophet Muhammad, his argumentation establishes a link between the divine creation of human beings and marriage. Blessings are – as al-Ghazālī points out, to be received "whether or not they (creatures) wish to receive them."[239] Hence, the creation of human beings, as well as their organisation through marriage and lineage, and the implanted desire to procreate are the divine blessings of God. God created humankind

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[235] Ahmed, *Islamic Legal Theory*, 9.

[236] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 32.

[237] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 31.

[238] A *khuṭba'* is an essential feature of the *ādāb* genre. See Van Berkel, Maaike: "The Attitude Towards Knowledge in Mamluk Egypt: Organisation and Structure of the Subh al-a´sha by al-Qalqashandi (1355–1418)." In: Brinkley, Peter (ed.): *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts, Proceedings of the Second Comers Congress*, Groningen, 1–4 July 1996. Brill, 1997, 160. meaning also sermon. It can also mean "sermon" in the communal Friday prayer.

[239] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, xvii.

to be preserved and desire is logically part of God's principles, since it ensures the preservation of humankind.[240]

Al-Ghazālī references one Qur'ānic verse explicitly (21:30), in which the creation of the cosmos and the general creation of living beings out of water as a sign, *āya*, of God:

> "Have those who disbelieved not considered that the heavens and the earth were a joined entity, and We separated them and made from water every living thing? Then will they not believe?"

However, a closer resemblance of al-Ghazālī's argument can be found in *sūra* 25, verse 54: "And it is He who created from water a human being, then has He established relationship of lineage and marriage. Your Lord is Omnipotent."[241] In this verse, the creation of human beings from water is narrated, followed by the establishment of two types of relation, i.e. blood and marital relations. Al-Ghazālī's direct reference to 21:30 instead of 25:54 seems to highlight divine cosmological principles as a foundation for his argumentation for marriage. Perhaps the separation of the heavens and the earths from a joined entity serves as a metaphor for the microcosmos of the divine creation of the female and male.

3. Marriage as command

In the second part of his introductory summary, al-Ghazālī describes marriage as "an aid in (the fulfilment of) religion (*dīn*)", *sunnah*, and a protection against evil[242] and lists advantages for marriage, which are discussed in the first chapter called *al-tağrib al-nikāḥ wa al-tağrib ʾanhu*, "the inducements to or advantages of marriage and the disadvantages." Here, al-Ghazālī commences his discussion of advantages and disadvantages of marriage by presenting different viewpoints concerning marriage in the contemporaneous debate: It is argued that marriage "is preferable to seclusion for the worship of God" [*al-takalli li ʿibādat Allāh*] or that marriage is

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[240] See also Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 15: "The aim [of marriage] is to sustain lineage so that the world would not want for humankind." or, 18: "Because of God´s desire that mankind should survive, [...]"

[241] In the Qur'ān, the creation of human beings appears also in 30:20, where the Qur'ān states humans were created from dust, in 23:12 and 32:7 humans are created from clay or a quintessence of clay. Whereas, in 25:54, 21:30 and 24:45 the Qur'ān states that all creatures/living beings have been created from water.

[242] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāh'*. Transl. Farah 2012, xviii.

"virtue but subordinated […] to seclusion for the worship of God." [243] Further, a perceived corruption is given as reason "[…]to abstain from marriage in this age of ours."[244]

Al-Ghazālī proceeds with a reference to the beginning of *sūra* 24, verse 32: "Among the Qur'ānic verses, God has said, «And marry such of you» (24:32); this is a command."[245] He refers only to the beginning of verse 24:32 directly, which contains the imperative form: "Marry off [*wa-ānikhū'ā*] the single among you…" and thereby is valued as command. Al-Ghazālī dismisses all before-mentioned arguments, which suggest to abstain from marriage and instead underlines the non-negotiability of marriage.[246] With hadiths references, al-Ghazālī's argumentation continues to exclude the possibility of celibacy from *dīn*.

Rosalind Ward Gwynne argues that a command is "God´s primordial mode of speech in the Abrahamic faiths"[247] and that decoding "divine commands in Scripture" is a central aspect in *fiqh* and *kalām* writings, which also discuss the question who this command addresses.[248] Even though the original verse continues with further qualifications, which the believers, who are to be married, must fulfil, such as being "fit" for marriage or "righteous" (24:32), the argument "*nikāḥ* is a command" is not further explicated in the beginning of the argumentation. Even though, the consequent verse 24:33 gives further instructions for the ones not fulfilling the qualifications: "Those who are unable to marry should keep chaste until God gives them enough of His bounty. […]" Since al-Ghazālī quotes only the very beginning of verse 24:32, the command is presented as valid for all believers at this point of the argumentation.

4. Marriage as part of *sunnah*

Al-Ghazālī uses strategically assembled hadiths to argue that remaining celibate is a deviation from the "norm to be followed". [249] Marriage is essential part of the *sunnah*. The concept of *sunnah* as "binding precedent" originates from pre-Islamic tribal codes of conduct.[250] Ward Gwynne defines *sunnah* as "an example which was meant to be imitated and which was set

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[243] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 1.
[244] Al-Ghazālī reports the difficulty to earn a licit livelihood and the "bad character" of women as arguments against marriage in his time. Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 1.
[245] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 2.
[246] For a discussion of command in the Qur'ān, see Ward Gwynne, *Reasoning in the Qur'ān*, 67-82.
[247] Ward Gwynne, *Reasoning in the Qur'ān*, 68.
[248] Ward Gwynne, *Reasoning in the Qur'ān*, 77.
[249] Ward Gwynne, *Reasoning in the Qur'ān*, 42.
[250] Ward Gwynne, *Reasoning in the Qur'ān*, 41.

intentionally for that purpose by one who had the authority to do so."[251] Since *nikāḥ* is presented as a crucial part of the *sunnah* of the prophet, to refrain from marriage could even exclude a believer from his community, as these two hadiths al-Ghazālī quotes explicate: "Whoever refrains from my *Sunnah*, he is not of me, and marriage is part of my *Sunnah*; whoever loves me, let him follow my *Sunnah*." [252] And: "Whoever refrains from getting married for fear of having a family, is not of us."[253]

Al-Ghazālī's argumentation includes not only Prophet Muhammad and his companions, but dates marriage as *sunnah* back to preceding prophets appearing in the Qur'ān. [254] With a reference to 13:38, al-Ghazālī states: "marrying follows the example of the messengers."[255] Consequently, marriage is a model for the righteous believer. Al-Ghazālī reinforces the argument "marriage is *sunnah*" by dispelling a possible counterargument, that arises from ʿĪsā/Jesus as an unmarried prophet.[256] According to Ward Gwynne, a deviation from the *sunnah* of a prophet would not only be a non-observation of the Qur'ān, but of God's will.[257] Thus, the *sunnah* of the prophets can be understood as an example of *"sunnat Allāh"*, which occurs in the Qur'ān.[258] Interestingly, one of these verses (4:26–27) is connected to *nikāḥ* and ultimately precedes verses "which concern the prohibited degrees in marriage.": [259]

 "God wishes to make clear to you and guide you [by or to] the *sunan* of those before you (*wa-yahdiyakum sunana alladhīna min qalbikum*); and to turn to you [in mercy], and God is all-knowing, all-wise. God wishes to turn to you, while those who follow their desires wish you to turn far away [from Him]."[260]

Ward Gwynne gives a short overview on the history of interpretation of this verse.[261] Al-Zamakhsharī (d. 1144/538) is the first interpreter, who "expands the meaning of the phrase" since he does not read the verse in its immediate Qur'ānic contexts as his predecessors did, but he

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[251] Ward Gwynne, *Reasoning in the Qur'ān*, 42.
[252] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 3: ʿAbd al-Baqi, 3:100.
[253] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 4**;** this hadith stems from Abu Najih.
[254] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 11: "marriage is an ancient Sunnah and one of the traits of the prophets."
[255] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāh'.* Transl. Farah 2012, 2,11,17.
[256] Whether this argument is informed by Christian theology or could even be viewed as anti-Christian polemics will be discussed in V,1.
[257] Ward Gwynne, *Reasoning in the Qur'ān*, 42.
[258] Ward Gwynne, *Reasoning in the Qur'ān*, 44: "Sunnah is annexed grammatically to the word Allāh eight times, four times to "the ancients (*al-awwalīn*)", once to "those before you", and once to "the prophets We have sent before you." One refers to "Our sunnah"[…]"
[259] Ward Gwynne, *Reasoning in the Qur'ān*, 46–47.
[260] Ward Gwynne, *Reasoning in the Qur'ān,* 46–47.
[261] Ward Gwynne, *Reasoning in the Qur'ān,* 47.

applies the phrase only to the prohibitions in marriage.[262] As a result, he presents a wider meaning of the *sunnah* of the prophets.[263] This interpretation can already be found in al-Ghazālī's argumentation in the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. The sentence "Thus marriage is an ancient *Sunnah* and one of the traits of the prophets" could implicitly refer to verse 26 to 27 in *sūra* 4.[264] Thus, already al-Ghazālī's argumentation entails a wider meaning of *sunnah* than the association of the term with the tradition of the last Prophet would suggest: he argues with the broader theological concept *sunan Allāh*, which Ward Gwynne has highlighted as an overlooked Qur'ānic concept:

> "An examination of *sunnah* as it occurs in the Qur'ān can serve as a needed check upon the too-easy tendency to identify *sunnah* only with Prophetic Tradition or with the practice of the Medinan community."[265]

However, at the end of the first chapter, al-Ghazālī deviates from his clear stance against celibate practices he has argued so far. In a fictive dialogue he gives practical advice on the question to marry or to remain celibate. Al-Ghazālī's argumentation now includes the possibility of celibacy, but no reference is given to 24:32–33. The matter of deciding whether or not to marry is left to the believer himself, depending on if the discussed advantages overweigh the presented disadvantages. [266] Here different cases are presented regarding the question if marriage would pose a distraction from God: "If the disadvantages are non-existent in his case and the benefits are all present […], marriage would not distract him from God."[267] However: "If the advantages are refuted and the disadvantages are brought together, being celibate is preferable for him,"[268] and if "the two are equal […] it is necessary to weigh on just scales the extent to which the advantages contribute to the promotion of his religion [*dīn*] and the extent to which the disadvantages detract from it."[269] He argues that marriage does not exclude the possibility to retreat for worship: "marriage is a contract and does not preclude seclusion for the worship of God."[270]Thus, marriage cannot be a distraction from worship per se. In this later paragraph, al-

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[262] Ward Gwynne, *Reasoning in the Qur'ān*, 47.
[263] Al-Zamakhsharī: "God wants… to guide you to the ways *(manāhij)* of the prophets and the virtuous people who came before you and the paths *(turuq)* which they followed in their religion, so that you may imitate them", cited by Ward Gwynne, *Reasoning in the Qur'ān*, 47.
[264] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 11.
[265] Ward Gwynne, *Reasoning in the Qur'ān*, 43.
[266] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 59.
[267] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 58.
[268] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 59.
[269] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 59.
[270] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 61–62.

Ghazālī resolves the contradiction of marriage and seclusion for worship, which was synoptically presented as problem in the texts of other *ʿulamāʾ* in the beginning of the argumentation.

According to al-Ghazālī different types of embodied believers exist, as is reflected in the examples of the prophets.[271] Following his argumentation, marriage can be integral for the establishment of a believer´s spiritual corporeality, or it can be omitted from their spiritual corporeality without endangering their spiritual aim. His advice considers their situatedness, i.e. their outer circumstances and also general characteristics of their time.[272] Al-Ghazālī's typologized advice could either be related to their individual development stages, i.e. the development stage of their spiritual corporeality, or to general differences in their nature.

5. Gendered embodiment and al-Ghazālī's audience

Al-Ghazālī´s theological anthropology constructs the human being not only as an embodied being, but also introduces a binary "gendered embodiment".[273] The dualist conception of gender is central for al-Ghazālī's cosmology and constructed with direct references to the Qur'ān.[274] In his argumentation, the dualistic, or binary gendered creation is presented as a cosmological principle. This raises the question whether his instructions are valid for both, females and males believers.[275]

Throughout the argumentation the female believer is omitted from the instructions for male believers.[276] As Love notes, it speaks to an exclusively male audience.[277] Even the character of a good husband is discussed only from the perspective of males in the role of guardians or other relative relations.[278] Al-Ghazālī advises his male readers on the choice, the preferred character, and the treatment of a future wife. Teaching, discipling, or addressing the wife falls under the

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[271] Al-Ghazālī contradictory valuation of the celibacy of prophet ʿĪsā /Jesus will be discussed in V 1.

[272] This is mentioned by al-Ghazālī in the very beginning of his argumentation, see al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 1.

[273] *"Gregg Allison: Four Theses Concerning Human Embodiment."* [Online Video], Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 25.09.2019, URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9uzJSbG3Hg, Accessed online: 24.12.2020.

[274] This will be further explicated in IV,7.

[275] The validity of al-Ghazālī's spiritual corporeality has also to be question from another societal hierarchy, that is the contemporaneous distinction between free man or women and slaves. See e.g.Ali, *Marriage and slavery.*

[276] How this omission is also connected to apocalyptic beliefs, can be read in Saleh, Waled (1999): "The Woman as Locus of Apocalyptic Anxiety in Sunni Islam." In: Neuwirth, Annika et al.: *Myths, Historical Archetypes and Symbolic Figures in Arabic Literature. Towards an Hermeneutical Approach*, Franz Steiner, 1999, 123-145.

[277] Love, Gender and Sexuality, 28.

[278] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 91–92.

duties of the future husband as new "guardian" of the wife. [279] The wife is clearly assigned to the domestic sphere.[280] Through the absence of the female perspective, al-Ghazālī's argumentation describes an ideal of a wife, which carters only to male needs. Her household work allows the husband to "devote himself to the worship of God."[281] Hence, al-Ghazālī can present another argument against the contradiction of worship and marriage. Not only does marriage not hinder the man to worship God, even more so having a wife can increase the available amount of time for worship for the male believer. With the societal and legal position of the husband as new guardian over the wife, the responsibility to instruct her is duty of the husband. This could be a reason, that al-Ghazālī does not present more detailed instructions for females. Not discussed is the question whether marriage will prevent the female from worshipping God and if remaining celibate is an option for female believers as well. However, it is unlikely that this would be an individual decision of a female believer. According to al-Ghazālī, the wife will enter paradise, if the husband is satisfied with her.[282] Thus, it could be argued that al-Ghazālī´s ideal of marriage not only follows an androcentric conception, but that for al-Ghazālī *nikāḥ* reflects the divine-human relation on a micro-level: the wife is depending on her husband – also for her afterlife.[283]

The androcentricity of al-Ghazālī's argumentation is not the focus of my research but makes up a part of al-Ghazālī's argumentative fundament. Al-Ghazālī follows his contemporaries in a traditional patriarchal assignment of the sphere of the house to females. Their function within the couple is explained as not distracting the husband from worship, ordering the household and, of course, bearing children. Basis for al-Ghazālī's argumentative fundament is the conception of male and female as distinct sexes, with distinct divine purposes. As a result, the attainment of virtue is distinct for both sexes. In contrast to the man, "A woman is nearest to the face of God when she is in the inner sanctum of her house."[284] The duties of the wife in the domestic sphere already point at different requirements to develop a spiritual corporeality for a female believer. Thus, al-Ghazālī's suggested spiritual corporeality is not the same for female

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[279] Love, *Gender and Sexuality*, 31. For critical historical research see Ali, Kecia: Marriage and slavery in Early Islam. Harvard University Press, 2010. A wife needs the permission of her husband for certain actions, such as the participation at a communal *dhikr*. Al-Ghazālī, Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ. Transl. Farah 2012, 158.
[280] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 159.
[281] Aoyagi, "Al-Ghazali and marriage", 128.
[282] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 155. For a critical discussion on gender and paradisical bodies, see: Geissinger, Aisha: "'Are men the majority in Paradise, or women?': Constructing gender and communal boundaries in Muslim b. al-Hajjaj's (d. 261/875) Kitab al-Janna". In: Günther, Sebastian et al. (eds.): *Roads to Paradise: Eschatology and concepts of the hereafter in Islam*. Brill, 2017, 311-40.
[283]
[284] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 159.

believers. Since the instruction of the wife is viewed as task of the husband, it is unclear what such a female spiritual corporeality contains. It could even be discussed, if she has an individual spiritual corporeality as a male. A comparison between al-Ghazālī's and Ibn ʿArabī's episte-mology and cosmological believes in relation to their conceptions of gender relations could provide additional information on female spiritual corporeality. [285]

Female believers are first explicitly addressed by the Sunnī scholar ʿAbd al-Raḥmān bin ʿAlī bin Muḥammad Abu al-Farash Ibn al-Jawzī (1116–1201/509–597) in his *Kitāb aḥkām an-nisāʾ*, "The book of instructions or guidance for women". Several passages could elucidate what an ideal of female spiritual corporeality contains. The author Ibn al-Jawzī addresses a plethora of subjects, which he deems relevant for the religious everyday life of a 12th century woman, such as the duty to acquire religious knowledge, instructions for ritual purity, rules for leaving the domestic sphere, the prohibition to use perfume, how to teach children the prayer until the age of ten, fasting, the relation to the parents and the primacy of the mother, as well as warnings against magic and astrology and the prohibition for women to adopt manly behaviour and ap-pearance.[286]

While elements such as prayer and purity are essential for both male and female spiritual cor-poreality, several chapters of Ibn al-Jawzī´s book can expose specific elements of female spir-itual corporeality, especially regarding eschatological beliefs. Ibn al-Jawzī´s argumentation commences with the statement that women have legal capacity and therefore should seek to obtain knowledge of their religious duties.[287] Further it is argued that obedience to the hus-band,[288] silence and sincerity during sexual intercourse,[289] and the education of young children and her daughters[290] will be rewarded in the afterlife. It is believed that the woman will be reunited with her last husband.[291] Death at childbirth is considered like a death of a martyr[292] and thus the equivalent to an element of male spiritual corporeality, as household work is the equivalent to *jihād*.[293] However, women are also believed be the majority of the inhabitants of

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[285] Bornstein, "An Orientalist Contribution", 14. Bornstein also noted that a comparison between Ibn ʿArabī and al-Ghazāli was already a research interest of Asín Palacios.

[286] Ibn al-Jawzī: *Kitāb aḥkām an-nisāʾ*. German Translation: Koloska, Hannelies: *Ibn al-Djauzī: Das Buch der Weisungen für Frauen. Kitāb aḥkām an-nisāʾ*. Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2009,12–16.

[287] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb aḥkām an-nisāʾ*. Transl. Koloska 2009, 18.

[288] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb aḥkām an-nisāʾ*. Transl. Koloska 2009, 114–115.

[289] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb aḥkām an-nisāʾ*. Transl. Koloska 2009, 330.

[290] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb aḥkām an-nisāʾ*. Transl. Koloska 2009, 133–136.

[291] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb aḥkām an-nisāʾ*. Transl. Koloska 2009, 164–165.

[292] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb aḥkām an-nisāʾ*. Transl. Koloska 2009, 132.

[293] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb aḥkām an-nisāʾ*. Transl. Koloska 2009, 139–140.

hell,[294] as also al-Ghazālī's previously cited mention of a contemporaneous argument against marriage indicated, in which women are viewed as corrupted. It could be argued that this misogynistic belief is not only a warning, which underlines the obedience of women to their assigned role, but also allows the continuous construction of a male–female hierarchy. It could also be argued that already al-Ghazālī's cosmology follows a problematic distinction between categories of "natural" – or God willed – and "against nature" or opposing God´s will. Similarly, the use of binary models of masculine/feminine form the argumentative basis for past and present-day gender hierarchies. I believe that a distinction between male and female does not necessarily have to result in the construction of "natural" gender hierarchies and that cosmological conceptions of such categories are not the same as modern day category of gender.[295]

Historians such as Elizabeth Clark have underlined the necessity to conduct research, which counternarrates the androcentricity of most transmitted historical written sources.[296] Source material on the subject of *nikaḥ* from the eleventh century written or narrated by a female "author" or writing from a female perspective seems to be rare. This makes female corporeal spiritualities hard to investigate. One exception for a text on marriage is the pre-Islamic Arabic text attributed to *Umāmah bint al-Harith*. The text contains "ten pieces of advice to her daughter upon her marriage".[297] However this text shares yet again "normative conceptions of gender roles" of the Medieval Mediterranean region.[298]

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[294] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb aḥkām an-nisā ʾ*. Transl. Koloska 2009, 94–97.

[295] See argumentations of differentialist feminist theories or feminist exegesis of the Qurʾān, e.g. Ahmed, Leila (1992): Women and Gender in Islam. *Historical Roots of a Modern Debate.* Yale University Press, 1992. Ahmed distinguishes between two traditions within Islam one gender equal and one gender hierarchical. At the same time, I see a risk in contemporary gender-critical research to "overstretch" historical authors regarding their progressiveness and to dis-embedding the text from its historical context.

[296] See e.g. Clark, Elizabeth A. & Richardson, H.: *Women and Religion: The Original Sourcebook of Women in Christian Thought*, Harper San Francisco, 1996.

[297] Zinger, Oded & Torollo, David: "From an Arab Queen to a Yiddische Mama: The Travels of Marital Advice around the Medieval Mediterranean." In: *Medieval Encounters. Jewish, Christian and Muslim Culture in Confluence and Dialogue* 2016 (2), Brill, 2016, 471.

[298] Zinger & Torollo, "Arab Queen", 512. In the study "From Arabic Queen to Yiddishe mame" the authors trace the texts` "travels of her marriage advice across geographic, linguistic, and religious borders throughout the medieval Mediterranean." Zinger & Torollo, "Arab Queen", 472. The earliest version in Arabic is from around 865. The text was translated into Hebrew, Judeo-Arabic, Yiddish and Italian.

6. Sexual desire as God-given trait

Al-Ghazālī states that procreation is the "prime cause, and on its account, marriage was instituted."[299] Further, he argues that the aim of marriage is to ensure the continuation of humankind.[300] Al-Ghazālī deduces that "sexual desire [*shawatun al-farj*] was created as an ingrained urge" and that sexual desire is a natural trait of humans.[301] Sexual desire is then further described with the following analogy: "It is like lurking the bird by spreading about the seed which it likes to lead it to the net."[302] The seed could be interpreted as either the female or to eat the seed could be viewed as a metaphor for coitus. Al-Ghazālī's analogy is composed with an archaic conception of the male as active part (the bird), and the female (the seed) as passive in terms of desire. However, the female is also attributed creative abilities, such as "growing the seed", i.e. pregnancy and childbirth.[303] Al-Ghazālī distinguishes sexual desire from a mere satisfaction of needs and as in the previous analogy, he compares desire to eating:

> "Sexual desire and children are foreordained and between them exists a tie. It is not appropriate to say that the aim is pleasure and the child is a necessary result, just as elimination of hunger is a necessary result of eating, not an aim in itself. Rather, the child is the aim by instinct and decree, and sexual desire is merely an inducement thereto. I cannot conceive of any purpose for sexual desire except procreation."[304]

Immenkamp calls attention to the fact that al-Ghazālī discusses licit intercourse twice in the *Iḥyā'*. Apart from the discussion of sexual desire and marriage in the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*, the text is only "devoted to sex within its social context".[305] A "second parallel discussion of food and sex occurs in the third quarter of the *Iḥyā'*, entitled "The Ways to Perdition" (*Rubʾ al-muhlikāt)*, in the "Book on the Controlling of the Two Desires" (*Kitāb kasr al-shahwatain*)."[306] Even though both desires are understood by al-Ghazālī as "an entirely natural and primarily desirable part of the human constitution [*fiṭrah*]"[307], and are not considered "inherently evil"

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[299] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 15. This argument is also central for conceptions of chaste sexuality in the Christian theology, see Weitz, *Christ and Caliph*, 22.
[300] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 15.
[301] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 15.
[302] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 15.
[303] Male and female are further developed into divine cosmological principles by Ibn ʿArabī, see e.g. Hakim, Souad: "Ibn ʿArabī's Twofold Perception of Woman. Woman as Human Being and Cosmic Principle." Translation from Arabic by Nermine Hanno, Ibn ʿArabī Society, 2006, accessed online: 21.06.2020.
[304] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 28.
[305] Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, 13.
[306] Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, 13.
[307] Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, 13.

but "essential for human survival" since they are created by God and "therefore inherently good",[308] "the appetite for food [*shahwat al-baṭn*] and the appetite for sex [*shahwat al-farj*] were the principal sources for human selfishness and disobedience" for al-Ghazālī.[309] His theory of the two desires is rooted in *taṣawwuf* doctrines and practices of asceticism, which are oriented toward emptying the heart to archive "the presence of the heart with God."[310] To prevent corruption, controlling desires is necessary for emptying the heart so that the believer is not distracted from God.[311]

Yet the theological root for al-Ghazālī's theory on the two desires is found in his interpretation of the Fall. Immenkamp argues that al-Ghazālī's position deviates from positions found in Christian thought, which argue "that the key for human suffering was to be found in sexuality."[312] Instead al-Ghazālī "allocated this role to the desire for food", *shahwat al-baṭn*.[313] As Immenkamp´s citation from the *Iḥyā'* shows, al-Ghazālī derived this position out of an interpretation of 2:35–37:

> "Because desire for food (*shahwat al-baṭn*) that Adam and Eve were expelled from Paradise to the world of humiliation and want. They had been forbidden to eat from the tree, but their desire overcame them, so that they ate from the tree and their nakedness became apparent to them.[314]

Immenkamp concludes that "The two discussions of food and sex in the *Kitāb kasr al-shahwatain* are in many ways identical in content and structure"[315], but al-Ghazālī's practical advice against an excess of the two desires differs. While al-Ghazālī suggests fasting for healing an excess of *shahwat al-baṭn,*[316] his suggestion for an excess of *shahwat al-farj* is not abstinence, but marriage.[317] Thus, his theory of the two desires does not turn into "an argument in favour of celibacy."[318]

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[308] Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, 15.
[309] Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, 15. Arabic transliterations added by MM.
[310] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 63 & 61: "Emptying the heart for the sake of worship is desirable."
[311] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 59: "There is no advantage in whatever distracts one from God […]" See also Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, 17.
[312] Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, 16.
[313] Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, 16.
[314] Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, 16.
[315] Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, 26.
[316] Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, 19–22.
[317] Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, 27.
[318] Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, 27.

The theory is referred to in the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ,* when he identifies sexual desire and over-indulgence as corrupting factors for men: "For the corrupting factor in a man's religion lies for the most part both in his sexual organs [*farj*] and stomach; he can satisfy one of them by marriage."[319] Sexual desire can be stilled with marriage and in order to prevent a transgression of the borders of what is permissible and the corruption of the believer through sin, fasting (*wija*) is reported in al-Ghazālī's argumentation as a temporary method to ensure sexual impotence during the fast.[320] The passage underlines the interconnectedness of the bodily with spirituality as it is conceptualised with spiritual corporeality. Al-Ghazālī views specific parts of the embodied believer as locus or origin of a spiritual imbalance. The sexual organs and the stomach can be controlled with an ascetic method of fasting, which allows to re-stablish a balanced embodiment.

It is not until the conclusion of chapter one that al-Ghazālī moves away from a strict position against celibacy. He asks the believer to use their reason to individually assess the raised question on marriage or celibacy. He argues that the believer has to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of marriage individually. To be celibate is considered a possible, but an exceptional option.[321] . In contrast to the individual assessment suggested here, his previous argumentation was clearly against celibacy. This anti-celibate viewpoint was presented with an analogy in which refraining from procreation is condemned as neglection of the divine "seed" and disobedience to the divine-human covenant.[322] Since the previous argumentation presented inversions to circulating *taṣawwuf* arguments against marriage, it is difficult to determine whether the inclusion of celibacy as a possible choice, is a contradiction in the argumentation, or if it follows an argumentative strategy. It could be argued that al-Ghazālī first establishes a distance to anti-marital asceticism before he reintroduces celibacy as an exceptional option. Al-Ghazālī now presents marriage as qualified command, as it could be argued with verses 23:32–33, which al-Ghazālī previously quoted only partially to argue that marriage is a general command.

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[319] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 5.
[320] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 5. A similar argument is reported also on Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 4.
[321] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 58–64.
[322] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 16: "if the master should give seed and cultivating tools to his slave, and prepare for him the soil to cultivate; if the servant is able to cultivate; if he (the master) should appoint someone to supervise him (the servant); and if he (the servant), nevertheless, is lazy or does not use the ploughing instruments and neglects the seed until it rots, and he rids himself of the supervisor through some trickery, then he (the servant) would deserve contempt and reprimand from his lord."

7. Al-Ghazālī on the divine function of sexual pleasure

Al-Ghazālī lists "«satisfaction of sexual desire» as one of the advantages of marriage."[323] This argument in favour of marriage follows a clear condemnation of an extramarital fulfilment of desire.[324] Al-Ghazālī connects his interpretation of sexual pleasure to Islamic eschatology. Sexual pleasure can announce the pleasures of *jannah:*[325] "the pleasure which accompanies it – pleasure which would be unrivalled were it to last – is a harbinger of the promised pleasures in paradise."[326] To this argument al-Ghazālī adds the surmise: "For to encourage pleasure which one cannot enjoy is pointless."[327]Thus, the ability to experience sexual pleasure in the worldly life was created by God to remind the believers of the pleasures waiting for them in *jannah*: "One virtue of the world's pleasures is that people wish to see them continue in paradise; thus they are an inducement to the worship of God."[328]

The preparation for the afterlife is one main objective of the *Iḥyā'*. There are greater rewards in the afterlife than pleasures in the earthly life. For al-Ghazālī the momentarily, but repeated practice of marital intercourse, fulfils a divine and spiritual purpose.With the propaedeutic argument "the worldly experience of sexual pleasure encourages the believer to live their life according to *dīn*", al-Ghazālī inverts objections of sexual pleasure as a worldly pleasure and a distraction from God. A reprise to this argument is found in the conclusion of chapter one. Here, al-Ghazālī emphasises the ability of Prophet Muhammad to be with God: "The Messenger of God, because of his elevated status, was not deterred by the dictates of this world from the presence of the heart with God."[329] And al-Ghazālī adds a reasoned argument: "He used to receive revelation while he was in his wife´s bed."[330]

The marital intercourse is further explained in the third chapter. Here, a connection of intercourse to spiritual corporeality becomes apparent. Al-Ghazālī presents marital intercourse as a worldly matter with a divine function. From a worldly perspective marital intercourse satisfies the natural human desire. Human sexual desire is designed for its divine purpose to create

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[323] Love, *Gender and Sexuality*, 27.
[324] The Qur'ān makes a distinction between licit, marital (*nikāḥ*) and ilicit (*zinā*) intercourse. Thus, fornication could also lead to sin (53:31–32).
[325] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 29.
[326] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 29.
[327] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 29.
[328] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 29.
[329] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 63–64.
[330] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 64.

offspring, and sexual pleasure is viewed as "harbinger of the pleasures in *Jannah*".[331] Certain practices are introduced by al-Ghazālī which ensure that the executable act occurs while remembering God. Like other actions described in the *Iḥyā'*, a specific conduct is necessary to disconnect these actions from worldliness. *Nikāḥ*, a seemingly worldly act, is transformed into an act which takes place within the spiritual corporeality of the believer. Thus, *nikāḥ* can no longer endanger the prime focus of the believer: to remember and worship God.

Al-Ghazālī's detailed instruction for *nikāḥ´s* second meaning, intercourse, include the preferred time for intercourse in the daily schedule of the believer, and – following further mystical cosmological assumptions[332] – within the month. Al-Ghazālī's explications for conducting intercourse are connected to states of purity and impurity. Al-Ghazālī explicates that: "Sexual intercourse is frowned upon at the beginning of the night for he should not sleep in an impure state."[333] This instruction can be explained with al-Ghazālī's belief in bodily resurrection after death: "for all parts of his body would be restored to him in the hereafter, and he would thus return to a state of major ritual impurity."[334] Al-Ghazālī encourages the husband to ensure that his wife "always observe[s] the rules of *ṭahāra*" so that she can "be ready at all times for him to enjoy her whenever he wishes."[335] Here, al-Ghazālī puts forward one part of verse 2:223 "[…] so go into your fields whichever way you like".[336] Al-Ghazālī interprets this phrase explicitly as "any time you please". [337] Thus, al-Ghazālī does not consider a sexual agency of the wife who is – in this viewpoint – totally submitted to the wishes of her "guardian".[338]

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[331] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 29.

[332] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 126: "Intimate relations are undesirable during three nights of the month: the first, the last, and the middle. It is said that the devil is present during copulation on theses nights, and it is also said that the devils copulate during these nights."

[333] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 128.

[334] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 129.

[335] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 165. Farah translates *ṭahāra* as personal hygiene and thereby strips the sentence of its religious meaning.

[336] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 127.

[337] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 127.

[338] Kecia Ali argues that the regulation of sexual relations in early Islam can just be understood in a society where slavery is common and the female not free. With marriage the property rights of the father are transferred to the husband. Ali, *Marriage and Slavery*, 14. The system of marriage coexisted with a system of concubinage. As a result, Islamic jurisprudence distinguishes between two categories *milk al-nikah* and *milk al-yamin*. The scholarly assumption that *milk al-yamin*, appearing in Sure 23, āya 6, "… "ownership by the right hand," automatically granted free male owners licit sexual access to enslaved females whom they owned", is questioned by Ali. Ali´s research has wider implications for the historical analysis of slaves and sexual relations in early Islam, as well as for contemporary jurisprudence. See Ali, Kecia: "Concubinage and Consent." In: *International Journal for Middle East Studies,* 49, 2017, 148–152.

For the husband, al-Ghazālī advises specific times to be more suitable for intercourse: "Certain *ʿulamāʾ* recommended intimate relations on Friday and the night before it […]."[339] Further, *nikāḥ* should be commenced with a prayer remembering the presence of God: "It is desirable that it should commence in the name of God and with the recitation: "Say, *lā ʾilāha ʾillā -llāh* (112:1)."[340] A short prayer, the first part of the *shahādah*, the confession of faith, connects the act to its divine purpose: "*Bismillāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīmˈ Ya Allāh*, cause it to be a good progeny if you cause it to issue forth from my loins."[341] It is likely that al-Ghazālī here re-states what al-Makkī presented in the *Qūt al-qulūb*, where he states the believer should be "speaking the names of God on the occasion of sexual intercourse", as Aoyagi points out.[342]

With the instructed actions to be performed, intercourse becomes part of the corporeal spirituality of the believer and is no longer disconnected from the believer as a worldly act. Since *nikāḥ,* in its meaning of marital sexual intercourse, is conducted following specific instructions, such as the recitation of 112:1 prior to intercourse, it is integrated it into the spiritual corporeality of the believer.[343] The same is valid for the possible moment of procreation: here al-Ghazālī requests the recitation of a modulation of 25:54.[344] Further, marital intercourse as momentary, but repeated connection between two bodies makes a specific embodiment experience. It holds the possibility of bodily dissolution.[345]

This aspect of *nikāḥ* could explain why al-Ghazālī carefully states: "The pleasure which accompanies it – pleasure which would be unrivalled were it to last – is a harbinger of the promised pleasures in paradise."[346] And he adds: "One virtue of the world´s pleasures is that people wish to see them [pleasures] continue in paradise; thus they are inducement to the worship of God."[347] Thus, the spiritual corporeal experience of *nikāḥ* is both an incentive for the believer

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[339] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 126. Similar recommendations can be found in Jewish practices until today: intercourse is encouraged at the beginning of shabbat, i.e. Friday evening. See e.g. contemporary orthodox advisory books, such as Boteach, Shmuel: Kosher Sex: A Recipe for Passion and Intimacy. Harmony, 2000.

[340] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 123.

[341] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 123–124; compare also to 7:172 as Qurʾānic reference. The prayer translates to "In the name of *Allāh*, the most merciful, the most compassionate." *rahim* means not only "mercy", but also "womb". This is the *Basmala*, it is an introduction to all *sūras* in the Qurʾān except for the 9th. It also introduces all the daily prayers.

[342] Al-Makkī (n.d.): Qūt al-qulūb ,n.p., 243 paraphrased by Aoyagi, Aoyagi, "Al-Ghazālī and marriage", 133.

[343] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 123.

[344] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 124.

[345] Intercourse contains the possibility for both, an intense experience of the own body, and a perceived dissolution of the two bodies into one. For an application of theories of embodiment on sex see Tolman, Deborah et al.: "Sexuality and embodiment." In: *APA Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology*, 1, 2014, 759–804.

[346] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 29.

[347] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 29.

and constitute a preliminary corporeal state to corporeal experiences expected in paradise. Through these statements, *nikāḥ* is allocated an extraordinary position in connection to eschatological beliefs.

8. Al-Ghazālī's dualist cosmology and the principle of coupling

The analogy of the bird and the analogy of the master providing his slave with tools to cultivate the land lead back to al-Ghazālī's term *hirāthah*, which already appears in the *khuṭba′* to the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ. Hirāthah* evokes a Qur'ānic passage on the relation between husband to wife in *sūra* 2, verse 223, containing two verb forms originating from the same Arabic root (*h–r–th*)[348]:

> "Your wives are [like] your fields [*harthun*], so go into your fields [*harthakum*] whichever way you like and send [something good] ahead of yourselves. Be mindful of God: remember that you will meet Him. […]"

Farah´s translation comments – quoting Watt´s commentary of the Qur'ān – that *hirāthah* is a frequently used al-Ghazālīan term. It refers to a "primitive metaphor which compares sexual intercourse with the sowing of seed and speaks of the children as the fruit of the womb."[349] It is translated as "place of sowing"[350], "tilth", "tillage"[351] or as planting place or place of cultivation. The meaning of this Qur'ānic passage can be elucidated with another Qur'ānic passage mentioned in the close context of al-Ghazālī´s term *hirāthah*. Here, al-Ghazālī´s argumentation paraphrases Qur'ānic verses on the creation of the pair and their sexual organs in relation to procreation, e.g. 35:11.*[352]*

Thus, the term *hirāthah* is connected to al-Ghazālī´s Qur'ān-derived argument of the creation in pairs. Like the Qur'ānic metaphor for intercourse, i.e. the tillage of fields, the pair or couple

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[348] 2:223:2: *harthun* (a field) 2:223:5: *harthakum* (your field); according to the morphological search on *The Qur'ānic Arabic Corpus* online, this is the only passage containing words of this root in the Qur'ān.

[349] Watt, W. M.: *Companion to the Qur'ān: Based on the Arberry Translation*. Routledge, 2008, 41 cited by Farah, *Al-Ghazali*, xvii.

[350] Sahih International translation.

[351] A.J. Arberry translation.

[352] See also 35:11: "It was God who created you from dust and later from a drop of fluid; then He made you into two sexes.[…]" The creation of the baby in the womb is described in 23:12–14.

also originates from an archaic, agricultural metaphor. The root *z–w–j* can be traced back to a homonymic root found in Aramaic and Hebrew.[353] Thus, the Qur'ānic word *zawj* originates from Hebrew *zawga*. *Zawga* does not only mean "pair", but also "yoke". A yoke is connecting two cattle into a pair and it enables them to plough land. This connects the Qur'ānic word *zawj* literary to al-Ghazālī´s term *hirāthah*, tillage.[354] Further, al-Ghazālī paraphrases Qur'ānic verses of the creation in pairs, the creation of sexual organs and their function against an abstinence from marriage (51:49, 36:36).

In the Qur'ān, words with the root *z–w–j* appear in eighty-one instances.[355] The root is used to simply denote "kind", i.e. kinds of beings. Animals, fruit and even springs appear in their grammatical dual form as signs of God's creation.[356] In 53:45 the dual *zawjayni*, i.e. "two kinds" describes the two human sexes.[357] The creation in pairs, an *āya* of God, is the second use found in verses 51:49 and 13:3: "and We created pairs [*zawjaīni*] of all things so that you might take note." (51:49)

> "It is He who spread out the earth, placed firm mountains and rivers on it, and made two of every kind [*zawjaīni*] of fruit; He draws the veil of night over the day. There truly are signs in this for people who reflect." (13:3)[358]

This applies also to the creation of human beings:[359] "He made mates [*āzwajā´*] for you from among yourselves – and for animals too – so that you may multiply. There is nothing like Him: He is the All Hearing, the All Seeing" (42:11). In 52:20 and 44:5 verb forms of the root *z–w–j* mean "to pair" or "to marry". In other instances, the forms derived from the root *z–w–j* signify "spouses", "mate", as well as "husband" and "wife".[360] For example, Adam´s woman is referred to as *zawjuka*, your wife in 7:19 and 2:35. Further, the Qur'ān contains five passages relating

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[353] In Arabic *zawj*: mate or spouse, in Aramaic and Hebrew *zawga*
[354] It reappears in Farah 15: "The eternal powers of the Almighty were not incapable of creating beings from the beginning without tilling (*hirāthah*) or coupling." And Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 17: "everyone who refrains from marriage neglects tilling, wastes away the seed, does not use the prepared instruments which God has created, and is a violator of the aim of nature as well as the wisdom implied in the evidences of creation foreordained upon these organs by divine writ, unexpressed in letters or voices-writ which can be read by every person who has divine insight to understand the intricacies of everlasting wisdom." Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 18: „The one who marries is seeking to complete what God has desired, and the one who abstains, wastes away what God detests to have wasted. "
[355] Result of the morphological search on *The Qur'ānic Arabic Corpus*, online via https://corpus.quran.com/.
[356] 55:50, 55:52, 43:12, 56:7, 20:53.
[357] "Was he not just a drop of spilt-out sperm, which became a clinging form, which God shared in due proportion, fashioning from it the two sexes [kinds], male and female?" (75:37)
[358] It is also mentioned in two passages on Noah 23:27 and 11:40, ensuring the survival of God´s creation.
[359] 78:8: "Did We not create you in pairs [*āazwajā´*]?"
[360] Furthermore, forms of the root *z–w–j* are used in verses of eschatological content, e.g. 43:70, 40:8, 3:15, 13:23, 4:57, 2:25, 25:74–75, in relation to paradise, either "pure spouses" or on the subject to enter paradise with family members) or hell (38:58, 37:22).

the creation of humans to a couple with instances of words originating from the root *z–w–j* (16:72, 39:6, 7:189, 4:1, 30:21).[361]

The argument is presented by al-Ghazālī not only as logically derived from Qur'ānic arguments, but also as wisdom, *ḥikmah*, and as logical argument. According to al-Ghazālī, the sexual organs "bear eloquent testimony to the design of their creator and declare their purpose unto those imbued with wisdom. This would be the case (even) if the Creator had not revealed the design through his Prophet."[362] As conclusion, al-Ghazālī declares:

> "Everyone who refrains from marriage neglects tilling, wastes away the seed, does not use the prepared instruments which God has created, and is a violator of the aim of nature as well as the wisdom implied in the evidences of creation foreordained upon these organs by divine writ, unexpressed in letters or voices-writ which can be read by every (person) who has divine insight to understand the intricacies of everlasting wisdom."[363]

With this statement al-Ghazālī reiterates his contention with celibacy and presents elements of a Qur'ānic cosmology. He re-states what is already explicated in the Qur'ān that through observation of creation and God´s signs, logical conclusions, and divine insight the believer can acquire wisdom.

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[361] "And it is God who has given you spouses from amongst yourselves and through them He has given you children and grandchildren and provided you with good things." (16:72), "He created you all from a single being [*nafs wahidat*], from which He made its mate [*zawjahā*]; He gave you four kinds of livestock in pairs, He created you in your mothers´ wombs, in one stage after another, in threefold depths of darkness.[…]" (39:6), "it is He who created you all from one soul [*nafs wahidat*], and from it made its mate [*zawjahā*] so that he might find comfort in her: when one lies with his wife and she conceives a light burden, going about freely, then grows heavy, they both pray to God […]" (7:189), "People, be mindful of your Lord, who created you from a single soul [*nafs wahidat*], and from it created its mate [*zawjahā*], and from the pair of them spread countless men and women far and wide; be mindful of God in whose name you make request of one another. Beware of severing the ties of kinship: God is always watching over you." (4:1), "Another of His signs is that He created spouses *[āzwajā´]* from among yourselves for you to live with in tranquility. He ordained love and kindness between you. There truly are sings in this for those who reflects." (30:21)
[362] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 17.
[363] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 17.

9. The preference (*faḍal*) of marriage and al-Ghazālī's notion of *qistās*

So far, al-Ghazālī's argumentation contained the following arguments: *nikāḥ* is a command, *nikāḥ* is *sunnah*[364], sexual desire is part of the human natural predisposition. Thus, coupling and *hirāthah*, tillage, are divine will. Procreation is the main divine purpose for marriage, ensuring the God-willed continuation of humankind.

Immenkamp argued that the argumentation on sexual desire is connected to the theory of the two desires, explicated in the third part of the *Iḥyā'*.[365] The foundation for the theory of the two desires is a notion of balance, *al-qistās*. The core idea of balance is laid out in al-Ghazālī's *Al-Qistās al-mustaqim*, "The Just Balance", "in which he extracted from the Qur'ān five "scales" that would enable the believer infallibly to distinguish divine truth from falsehood."[366] From two Qur'ānic verses 17:35[367] and 26:182[368] al-Ghazālī develops a notion of balance, which, as Immenkamp argues, "appropriated the Greek philosophical notion of the mean [*mesotes*] and adapted it to the search for the mean in the religious context by equating it with the straight path", mentioned in the Qur'ān.[369]

The Aristotelian term *mesotes*, i.e. "balance" or "mean" is found in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (1106a-b).[370] Figuratively speaking, *mesotes* denotes "the golden middle" between two points of excess. Aristotle´s argumentation is stressing the principle of rational choice with the aim of an individual achievement of a state of *mesotes* by the believers: "Virtue is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle by which a man of practical wisdom would determine it. "[371]

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[364] As al-Ghazālī discussion of examples of other prophets, or the belief in Adam as first prophet can show.

[365] Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, 13–27.

[366] Ward Gwynne, *Reasoning in the Qur'ān*, ix.

[367] Whittingham, Martin: *Al-Ghazali and the Qur'ān. One book, many meanings*. Routledge, 2007, 90. Al-Ghazālī states further that he does not use *qiyās*, analogy, and *ra'y*, personal opinion, as methods of knowledge.

[368] Another Qur'ānic term for balance is *mizān*, which appears five times in the scripture (42:17; 55:7-9; 57:25). Its literal meaning is "scale". *Mizān* is name-giving for al-Ghazālī's *mizān al-āmal*, "The Balance of Actions", a discussion of virtues and argumentation for ethics of reciprocity, and part of al-Ghazālī's Qur'ān-derived vocabulary. See e.g. Black, Anthony: *The History of Islamic Political Thought: From the Prophet to the Present.* Edinburgh University Press, 2001, 106.

[369] Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, 15.

[370] Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, 15.

[371] Immenkamp quoting Aristotle in the translation of McKeon, Richard (1941): The Nicomachean Ethics. In: The Basic Works of Aristotle, 959, Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, 15.

According to Ward Gwynne al-Ghazālī's understanding of the five scales, or "five logical syllogisms" derived from Qur'ānic reasoning, highlights "the *intelligibility* that the Qur'ān presents as characteristic of God's creation."[372] Ward Gwynne concludes that "the very fact that so much of the Qur'ān is in the form of arguments show to what extent human beings are perceived as needing reasons for their actions and as being capable of altering their conduct by rational choice […]."[373]

According to Immenkamp, al-Ghazālī's understanding of the mean follows Aristotle's notion of *mesotes* closely.[374] A difference lies in al-Ghazālī's establishment of the divine origin and purpose of the equilibrium, in comparison to the connection of *mesotes* to *eudaimonia*. Immenkamp ascertains that the al-Ghazālīan notion of equilibrium follows a theological impetus, in other words, a state of *al-qistās* enables the believer to submit himself to God without hindrances: "A person who observes moderation in all areas of human conduct establishes in himself an emotional and physical equilibrium which allows his full concentration on the divine."[375]

Abdoldjavad Falaturi specifies that the assumption of an accordance of Islamic philosophy with Greek philosophy is inadequate. In fact, argues Falaturi, it is ruled by deviations.[376] These can be explained – logically and philosophically[377] – by the prevailing difference of a "structure of thought" to that of the adjoined Ancient Greek thought.[378] Thus, it can either be argued that al-Ghazālī concatenates the Aristotelian notion *mesotes* to his Qur'ānic frame of reference, or that with his concept of *qistās* al-Ghazālī simply follows the Qur'ānic notion of balance, on which he basis his argumentation on, which is simply paralleled in Aristotle's *mesotes*.[379] According to Whittingham, al-Ghazālī's interest in highlighting Qur'ānic intelligibility was "to strengthen the case for logic as an instrument for theological study" and "to weaken the perception of logic as a foreign [i.e. Greek and pagan[380]] discipline."[381] Thus, from al-Ghazālī's viewpoint a use of syllogisms is not an indication of the adoption of Greek knowledge and culture, but can be

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[372] Ward Gwynne, *Reasoning in the Qur'ān*, ix.

[373] Ward Gwynne, *Reasoning in the Qur'ān*, ix.

[374] Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, 15.

[375] Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, 14

[376] Falaturi, Abdoldjavad: *Die Umdeutung der griechischen Philosophie durch das islamische Denken*. Edited by Esfahani/Yousefi/Falaturi, Königshausen & Neumann, 2018, 28.

[377] Falaturi, *Umdeutung der griechischen Philosophie*, 29.

[378] Falaturi, *Umdeutung der griechischen Philosophie*, 171. Tranl.by the author MM.

[379] Gutas argues that al-Ghazālī avoided to use the Greek term *mantiq*, logic, in "The Gauge of Knowledge" to indicate that logic is not only Greek. Gutas, Dimitri: *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition. Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works.* Brill, 2014, 321.

[380] Clarifying annotation by the author MM.

[381] Whittingham, *Al-Ghazali and the Qur'ān*, 87

inherently Qur'ānic and Islamic. His detachment of balance from Aristotelian philosophy could also be classified as a covert argument. Applying this notion to the subject of *nikāḥ*, marriage would accordingly balance two points of excess, fornication and celibacy. Both, illicit sexual contact [*zinā*], and the neglect of the God-given possibility of marital procreation, would corrupt the believer and endanger him to reach *jannah*.

Following the example of Prophet Muhammad, "the virtue of worship and that of marriage" are to be combined.[382] Nevertheless, celibacy is not entirely precluded – contrarily to what the beginning of al-Ghazālī's argumentation on the matter would have suggested. Rather, al-Ghazālī presents nuanced advice for or against *nikāḥ*, based on an individual assessment of inducements for marriage or possible distractions from it:

> "To judge that a person is absolutely better off being married or single falls short of taking into consideration all these matters. Rather, such advantages and disadvantages can be considered a precept and a criterion against which the novice should measure himself."[383]

Thus, al-Ghazālī resolves the contradiction he raised as status-quo of the discussion in beginning of the argumentation by presenting a new argument: marriage is preferred over celibacy. Throughout the first chapter al-Ghazālī uses the term *fadal*.[384] *Fadal* – by Farah translated in Aristotelian manner as "virtue" – denotes a preference over something. His use of the term goes beyond the notion of balance where marriage would be the virtuous middle between fornication and remaining celibate. It is tied to al-Ghazālī 's previous elaborations on gaining wisdom through observation of divine order and creation[385] and connects to cosmological principles as became evident with the notion *hirāthah*.

Al-Ghazālī 's argument of preference recalls verse 24:32 which was cited previously to state that marriage is a command. In the further development of the argumentation, it becomes evident that al-Ghazālī does not view *nikāḥ* as a general command, but as a command addressing

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[382] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 63. Whittingham points out that the use of the notion *qistās* serves al-Ghazālī as an "aid" for comprehension as well (Whittingham, *Al-Ghazali and the Qur'ān*, 87.). Even though the first chapter of the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ* can be read as a refutation of early Ṣufi writings which favour celibacy, al-Ghazālī's second aim is the practical guidance of his readers. So, the embrace of logic arguments as Qur'ānic heritage is useful for both of al-Ghazālī's aims, theological refutation and individual guidance. Perhaps al-Ghazālī's design of argumentation is appealing to different groups of readers.

[383] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 58.

[384] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 7*:* „indicates that they [quoting two of the Prophets companions] considered marriage a virtue rather than a defence against the excessiveness of desire." Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 9: "This repetition indicates a virtue in marriage itself."

[385] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 17.

specific types of believers. The distinction made in 24:32 between believers, who are suitable for marriage and those who are not, could constitute a background for al-Ghazālī's argument. The verse distinguishes the two possible options to marry or to remain chaste, if unable to marry and includes a preference of marriage over remaining chaste.

Al-Ghazālī presents "the need for unlawful gain[386] and distraction from God" as the two main deterrents from marriage.[387] Thus, Al-Ghazālī 's interpretation extends the monetary aspect discussed in verses 24:32–33 with another, non-inducing factor for marriage:[388] "There is no advantage in whatever distracts one from God or in earning unlawful gain." Further, al-Ghazālī argues that "To preserve his own life and to guard it from destruction is more important than seeking to produce offspring."[389] Again al-Ghazālī presents his viewpoint as "transmitted from the righteous forefathers, namely encouragement of marriage in certain situations and in others discouragement therefrom inasmuch as this is dependent upon circumstances."[390]

Even though, al-Ghazālī's argumentation does not exclude either possibilities, his argumentation is based on a concept of hierarchy of acts of worship, as this passage shows:

> "As for the man whose character is well formed either through inherent traits or through a previous effort, if he wants to succeed in obtaining an inner life and an intellectual and spiritual activity in the domain of religious and mystical sciences, then he should not marry for that reason because he has no need for exercise. As for worship in the form of providing for dependents, seeking knowledge is better than that because it, too, is a form of work, but its benefits are more numerous and more encompassing than the benefit of providing for dependents."[391]

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[386] Which would result in the believer acting unrighteous.
[387] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 59.
[388] Verses 24:32–33 in full text: "Marry the single among you, and those of your male and female slaves who are fit (for marriage). If they are poor, God will provide for them from His bounty: God´s bounty is infinite, and He is all knowing. Those who are unable to marry should keep chaste until God gives them enough out of his bounty. If any of your slaves wish to pay for their freedom, male a contract with them accordingly, if you know they have good in them, and give them some of the wealth God has given you. Do not force your slave-girls into prostitution, when they themselves wish to remain honourable, in your quest for the short-term gains of this world, although, if they are forced, God will be forgiving and merciful to them.".
[389] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 60.
[390] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 61.
[391] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 51.

10. Marriage and the state of *sakīna*

Having a wife to order the household, allows the male believer to focus on more important spiritual practices. As already noted, the main part of the day of a pious believer is occupied with different forms of worship. Similar to al-Ghazālī's argument of sexual pleasure being a harbinger of *jannah,* al-Ghazālī finds a functional connection of a state of *sakīna* to the worship of God: "To comfort the soul is an inducement to the worship of God."[392]

As Aoyagi points out, marriage takes place in a system of worship practices.[393] They are conducted to bring the believer closer to God and to hopefully prepare him to reach *jannah*. The wife depends on an ideal development of her husband´s spiritual corporeality for the afterlife, as I showed in IV, 5. Apparently, being married furthermore eases reaching a state of *sakīna* for the believer, i.e. helps to achieve closeness to God. [394]

Apart from the five daily prayers, and the required purity practices (*wuḍūʾ* and *ghusl*), these practices encompass the daily prayers, the recitation of the Qur'ān, *duʿāʾ*, and the Sufi practices, remembrance of God (*dhikr*) and *fikr*, discursive meditation.[395] These practices are the most important occupation of the male believer during the day. In al-Ghazālī's argumentation a distinction between time for focused worship and occupied time is made. Al-Ghazālī argues that the time for worship can be spend in seclusion.[396] Al-Ghazālī argues further "persistence in worship without relaxation is not feasible."[397] Since marriage provides relaxation of the soul through companionship.[398] This results in an increased ability for focused worship of God.[399] Al-Ghazālī adds: "seeing and dallying with the wife comforts the heart and strengthens it for the performance of the obligatory rituals."[400]

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[392] Aoyagi, "Al-Ghazali and marriage", 130.

[393] Aoyagi, "Al-Ghazali and marriage", 131. See also Akashe-Böhme´s sociological concept of "Körperpraktik", body practice. Akashe-Böhme, *Sexualität und Körperpraxis*, 8.

[394] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 45.

[395] Al-Ghazālī distinguishes "mental and vocal *dhikr"*, Aoyagi, "Al-Ghazali and marriage", 129. The Qur'ān refers to Muhammad as embodiment of *dhikr* (65:10–11). In *taṣawwuf* practices there are also communal ritualized *dhikr* or *samā* ceremonies *Murāqabah* is a form of meditation. See Schimmel, Annemarie: Sufismus. *Eine Einführung in die islamische Mystik*. C.H. Beck, 2014, 116, 119.

[396] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 62.

[397] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 62.

[398] Aoyagi, "Al-Ghazali and marriage", 129.

[399] Al-Ghazali lists this as the third advantage for marriage, see Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 39.

[400] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 39.

The Qur'ānic notion of *sakīna* is the basis for al-Ghazālī's development of the argument that marriage aids the *dīn* of the husband, as stated already in the introduction to the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. The Qur'ān mentions *sakīna* in relation to the creation of the spouses, in 30:21:

> "Another of His signs is that He created spouses [*āzwajāˈ*] from among yourselves for you to live with in tranquility [*litaskunū*]; He ordained love [*mawaddatan*] and kindness [*waraḥmatan*] between you. There truly are signs in this for those who reflect."

Here, the verb form *litaskunū* describes the divine purpose of the creation of spouses: "to live with in tranquility. "Another verse (7:189) describes the divine purpose of the wife for the male perspective with the same term: "It is He who created you all from one soul, and from it made its mate [*zawjahā*] so that he might find comfort in her [*liaskuna*]…" The verb form *litaskunū* and *liaskuna*, "to live with in tranquility" or "to find comfort in", stem from the root *s–k–n*.[401] Several times *sakīna* is associated with a state of Prophet Muhammad. The use of *sakīna* in 2:248 in connection to the ark of the covenant points to the Hebrew origin of the term. In Hebrew *shekina* with the root *sh–k–n* appears in Ex.25,8–9. Its literal meaning is connected to living[402], but it describes the presence of God among the Israelites.[403] *Sakīna* can be described as the presence of God and a state of the soul exhibiting bliss and peacefulness.[404]

11. Marriage as act of worship, as tool for self-development and as *jihād*

The counterargument to "marriage aids the *dīn*" is that the duties of the husband to his wife or wives – or even the wife herself – distracts the husband from his religious duties or even his ability to worship God. With al-Ghazālī: "thus night and day would pass, and the person would not have time to think about the hereafter or prepare for it."[405] Al-Ghazālī presents another

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[401] Results of the morphological search via *The Qur'ānic Arabic Corpus* online: 2:248*: sakinatu*, 9:26 and 9:40: *sakinatahu*, 48:4: *l-sakinata*, 48:26: *sakinatahu*.

[402] A possible connection to living or home, as in Hebrew, from Islamic perspective could be derived from 16:80 and 48:26.

[403] Later it becomes important in Jewish mysticism, such as the *Sefer ha-Bahir*. In Kabbala *Shekina* is viewed as female part of the divine, see e.g. Idel, Moshe: *The Privileged Divine Feminine in Kabbalah. Perspectives on Jewish Texts and Contexts*, Volume 10. De Gruyter, 2018.

[404] See e.g. Fahd, Toufic: "Sakīna" In: Bearman, Peri et a. (eds.): Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, , accessed online 01.01.202, published online: 2012.

[405] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 58.

inversion of this existing early *taṣawwuf* argument for celibacy. He suggests that what in a pro-celibate *taṣawwuf* text would be presented as negative aspects of a married life can be viewed as *ʿibādaʾ*, i.e. an act, which is serving God:

"For earning lawful gain, supporting a family, seeking to obtain offspring, and tolerating the manners of women constitute forms of worship [*ʿibādat*] whose merits do not fall short of supererogatory acts of worship […]."[406]

Furthermore, *nikāḥ* is presented as an instrument for discipline and self-development. Al-Ghazālī's argument is based on a *taṣawwuf* ideal of individual spiritual development, a central theme of the *Iḥyāʾ*. According to al-Ghazālī, marriageʾs "fifth advantage: [is] disciplining the self and training it to be mindful, faithful, loyal [..]."[407] Thus, for al-Ghazālī, marriage as a durative condition, which comes with responsibilities for the husband, and as al-Ghazālī argues, can aid the believer's development, is a tool for self-conduct.[408] Marriage is presented as human connection, which can help the believer to mature his spiritual corporeality. Or to explain it with the contemporary terminology of embodiment theories: marriage alters the "conduit" of the believersʾ body and his or her "embodied religion".[409]

Al-Ghazālī increases the inversion of the argument of a possible distraction from worship through *nikāḥ* – or even women in general[410]–, by stating that marriage is not only *ʿibādaʾ*, a form of worship, but even *jihād*: "Bearing the burden of wives and of offspring is equivalent to *jihād* for the sake of God."[411] Thereby, al-Ghazālī's understanding of *jihād* goes against the prevalent notion at that time of *jihād*. Sahner shows that "distinctive fusion of asceticism and militancy" can be found in the "*muṭṭawwiʿa* phenomenon of the second/eighth and third/ninth

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[406] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 62.
[407] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 45.
[408] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 39–40.
[409] Mitchell, "Religion and Embodiment", n.p.
[410] Already in Early Islamic apocalyptic literature a perceived lack of "chastity and integrity" in women was viewed as sign of the Last Hour. Saleh (1999): "Woman as Locus of Apocalyptic Anxiety.", 129; 135. Al-Ghazālī's argumentation exposes that similar views appeared in al-Ghazālī's context (e.g. Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 1: "It is preferable to abstain from marriage in this age of ours."). The anxious attitude towards women as possible locus of corruption can be found throughout Al-Ghazālī's argumentation (e.g." should a friend of her husband knock at the door when h is not present, she should not ask questions or engage in conversation […]" Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 163.)
[411] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 50.

centuries".[412] Here, voluntary soldiers promoted an ideal of the Islamic warrior combining *jihād* and asceticism, which – despite their forms of extreme piousness – included marital relations.[413]

In contrast to other branches of *zuhd* [414] the *muṭṭawwiʿa* writings do not place a "contradiction between asceticism and the desire for sexual experience."[415] On the contrary, *nikāḥ* is defined as an essential part of the ideal of the martial Islamic warrior. One reason is to distinguish their ascetism not only from the surrounding Christian practices, but also from celibate forms of *zuhd*, which were viewed as imitation of Christian practices.[416] Sahner points out that this ideal of the *muṭṭawwi* [417] "was ultimately bound up in the valorisation of warfare."[418] This is reflected in the use of militant language, which is found in early Islamic texts by the *muṭṭawwi* Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/ 797).[419] In one of his texts, Ibn al-Mubārak′s "provided his readers with de-tailed descriptions of the sexual pleasures that awaited warriors like him on the battlefield as well as in heaven."[420] An argument resembles al-Ghazālī′s description of sexual pleasure as a harbinger of *jannah*.[421] However, al-Ghazālī presents a distinct *taṣawwuf* understanding of *ji-hād* in the *Iḥyā'*, which highlights only the inner spiritual development of the believer. Thereby he provides an alternative viewpoint to the martial interpretation of *jihād* found in *mutaṭawwiʿa* writings, while using a similar vocabulary.

Cook shows that al-Ghazālī bases his argumentation on "a creative reinterpretation" of the Qur'ānic verse 4:95, which allows him to redefine *jihād* as "exercising the soul".[422] "Through-out the *Iḥyā'*, he uses military, especially *jihād* imagery" to describe this Sufi argument.[423] For example, "al-Ghazālī presents the lusts and passions of the soul as an invading army trying to conquer the body and to keep it from following the path of mysticism."[424] Yet, according to Cook, al-Ghazālī's introduction of this inward notion of *jihād* is not to be equated with an entire

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[412] Sahner, "Monasticism is *Jihād*", 177.

[413] Sahner, "Monasticism is *Jihād*", 154. ʿAbd Allāh bin al-Mubārak was a voluntary soldier and scholar, who published works on *jihād* and asceticism *(Kitāb al-zuhd, kitāb al-jihād),* Sahner, "Monasticism is *Jihād*", 154–155.

[414] *Zuhd* translates as detachment and describes ascetic branches of Islam. See Augustyn, Adam et al. (eds): "*zuhd*" In: Augustyn, Adam et al. (eds): *Encyclopaedia Brittanica Online*, 2020, published online 2007, accessed online: 07.07.2020.

[415] Sahner, "Monasticism is *Jihād*", 178.

[416] Sahner, "Monasticism is *Jihād*", 153.

[417] i.e. a voluntary soldier fighting for the promotion of Islam, from *ṭawwaʿa*, "to subjugate", see Sahner, "Mo-nasticism is *Jihād*", 153.

[418] Sahner, "Monasticism is *Jihād*", 153.

[419] Sahner, "Monasticism is *Jihād*", 153–155.

[420] Sahner, "Monasticism is *Jihād*", 177.

[421] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 29.

[422] Cook, David: *Understanding Jihad.* University of Northern California Press, 2015, 37.

[423] Cook, *Jihād*, 37

[424] Cook, *Jihād*, 37.

rejection of the prominent contemporary notion of *jihād* as it is found in the *muṭṭawwiʿa* tradition for example: al-Ghazālī does not "entirely abandon militant interpretations of *jihād*, but rather sidelines them to a greater extent than had the predecessor ascetics and Ṣufīs."[425] Still, it is noticeable, argues Cook, that al-Ghazālī does not explicitly discuss militant *jihād* in the *Iḥyāʾ*.[426]In the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*, al-Ghazālī's argumentation that "bearing the burden of wives and of offspring is equivalent to *jihād* for the sake of God"[427], thus counters arguments of an a-corporeal, celibate Sufi ascetism, using popular *jihād* imagery. Al-Ghazālī promotes a new interpretation of the term *jihād*, but he does not explicitly reject the militant ideal of the married *muǧāhid*.[428] As a result of the argument "*nikāḥ* is equivalent to *jihād*", al-Ghazālī concludes what he has already stated in the *khuṭbaʹ*: "marriage is an aid in the fulfilment of religion."[429]

Exempted from marriage are those, who are seeking knowledge, i.e. scholars or mystics. They have already shaped and trained their character and attained a higher state, so that "he has no need for exercise" through marriage.[430] Al-Ghazālī places "seeking knowledge" over "worship in the form of providing for dependents", i.e. marriage.[431] According to al-Ghazālī "seeking knowledge" is "a form of work" as well, "but its benefits are more numerous and more encompassing".[432] Thus, the argumentation includes a hierarchy of forms of worship.

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[425] Cook, *Jihād*, 38. One example thereof can be found in the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*: al-Ghazālī quotes a hadith comparing the preferred status of a married man to that of a *mujahid* over a non-mujahid. See Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 11–12.
[426] Cook, *Jihād*, 38.
[427] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 46.
[428] A renunciation from the militant tradition of *jihād* is developed only later by Ibn ʿArabī, who reinvents the *mujahid* as a non-militant figure. See Cook, *Jihād*, 38.
[429] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, xviii.
[430] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 51.
[431] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 51.
[432] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 51.

V. A discussion of al-Ghazālī's *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ* as possible anti-Christian argumentation and the influence of al-Ghazālī's text on Christian and Muslim authors

1. The *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ* as anti-Christian argumentation?

In this chapter I would like to discuss if al-Ghazālī's argumentation in the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ* contains anti-Christian polemics. With Sahner, it could be argued that in Muslim debates on the permissibility of celibacy, the practice of celibacy was polemically addressed as an "imitation" of Christian practices.[433] As I have already problematised forms of asceticism, Arabic *zuhd*, which refrained from marriage, appeared already in early Islam[434] and do not necessarily reflect an actual imitation of Christian practices. It could be argued that *zuhd* developed as a counter-movement against a perceived corruption of Islamic values by worldliness in the late Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsīd period.[435] The increased practice of concubinage and perceived sexual licentiousness of the ruling classes during the 10th century were negatively perceived as worldliness from the viewpoint of contemporaneous Islamic ascetic scholars.[436] According to Sahner, the Christian-Muslim relations in the early ʿAbbāsīd time are characterised not only by cohabitation, collaboration, and intermarriage, but also "[…] by polemic and fierce competition for converts."[437] Thus, it could be asked if al-Ghazālī's argumentation contains evidence for a differentiation of Islamic *dīn* from Christian or perceived "Christian" practices of celibacy. The analysis showed, that al-Ghazālī's text cannot verify Sahner´s claims of an accusation of imitation. "Imitation" is not used as argument against celibacy, but in comparison to later Sufi authors,[438] his argumentation contains two discussion of ʿĪsā/Jesus as example of a celibate prophet, once in the very beginning of the argumentation and once at the end of the first part. In these two paragraphs al-Ghazālī uses the example of prophet ʿĪsā/Jesus to verify two dopposing arguments. I will discuss, if the two passages reveal a contradiction in his argumentation or if they follow an argumentative strategy. Further, I will propose a historical explanation for the double reference to prophet ʿĪsā/Jesus in al-Ghazālī's text, which also provides a different viewpoint on Christian-Muslim relations than Sahner suggested. To start with the second reference to ʿĪsā/Jesus as prophetic example: al-Ghazālī presents a dialogue as a didactical device, where an imagined reader raises a question conjuring ʿĪsā´s/Jesus´ celibacy: "Why then did

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[433] Sahner, "Monasticism is *Jihād*", 151.
[434] E.g. the famous female mystic Rabia al-Adawiyy al-Qaisiyya (718–801). See Shaikh, Sa'diyya: *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy: Ibn ʿArabī, Gender, and Sexuality.* The University of North Carolina Press, 2012, 48.
[435] Shaikh, *Sufi Narratives*, 41–42.
[436] Shaikh, *Sufi Narratives*, 57–59.
[437] Sahner, "Monasticism is *Jihād*", 150.
[438] E.g. Kāsānī , see the V, 3.

Jesus abstain from marriage in spite of its virtue? And if it is preferable to free oneself for the worship of God, why then did our Prophet take on numerous wives?"[439] Al-Ghazālī restates the argument, he proposed before, namely that a reconciliation of worshiping God and a married life are possible. For that purpose, he refers to the example of prophet Muhammad: "In spite of his nine women, he still dedicated himself to God."[440]

This statement contradicts his previous statement: "As for ʿĪsā, he will marry should he come down to earth and will have children."[441] Previously al-Ghazālī refuted the possibility that a life-long chastity can be according to God´s will. Here his statement on ʿĪsā/Jesus is not only refuting the possibility to mention this prophet as possible counterexample to al-Ghazālī's argument that marriage follows the ancient *sunnah* of the prophets.[442] As became apparent in the analysis the argumentation first promotes marriage and refutes a life-long celibacy as a practice, which is not according to God´s will. In the course of the argumentation this argument is changed to a preference of marriage over celibacy.[443] It is even argued that the decision for or against marriage is an individual choice. Again, al-Ghazālī uses the prophetic example of ʿĪsā/Jesus to describe how remaining a celibate in order "to devote himself to worship" was his preference:

> "As for Jesus, he armed himself with resolutions and not strength; he took precautions, for perhaps his state was such that preoccupation with a family could have affected it, or made it difficult to seek lawful gain, or made marriage and seclusion for worship irreconcilable. Thus, he preferred to devote himself to worship. For they (the prophets) are more aware (than others) of the secrets of their states, of the precepts of their times regarding virtuous gain, of the manners of women, of the calamities of marriage upon the marrier, and of the benefits he (the marrier) has therein."[444]

This second discussion of the example of a unmarried prophet considers not only the specificity of the states of the prophet, as people closer to God, but also, the specificity of "their times". This aspect can also elucidate the first discussion of ʿĪsā/Jesus, in which al-Ghazālī refers to his Second Coming. It is due to the perceived specificity of "his time" that al-Ghazālī argues ʿĪsā/Jesus would be married.

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[439] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 62.
[440] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 63.
[441] The statement refers to the Islamic belief in ʿĪsā´s/Jesus´ second coming.
[442] This argument is build on 13:38.
[443] IV,8.
[444] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 64.

An earlier work attributed to al-Ghazālī, *Al-radd al-jamīl li-ilāhiyyat ʿĪsā bi-sarīh al-injīl*, "A fitting refutation of the divinity of ʿĪsā/Jesus from the evidence of the Gospel", shows that he had detailed knowledge about Christian scripture, which he used to "support a proper Islamic perception", as Beaumont argues.[445] Since the argumentation discusses the example of ʿĪsā/Jesus thoroughly, it could be assumed that his argumentation is not only designed to address Muslim believers. The statement that the celibate prophet would be married in al-Ghazālī's times, can be read also as an argument against ʿĪsáʾs/Jesus divinity. Peacock shows that conversions occurred frequently in the Saljūq Empire at that time[446] and that the empire was characterized by its "cultural permeability" to the Christian Byzantine culture.[447] According to Shukurov intermarriage of Saljūq ruling class with Greek Christian wives was custom.[448] Therefore it could be argued that the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ* as practical guidebook on everyday religious practices, was suited to provide guidance either for recent converts to Islam, or male members of the Saljūq ruling class, who, as Shukurov has shown, haven often been raised with Christian practices.[449] This could be a reason for al-Ghazālī to explicitly discuss celibacy with the example of ʿĪsā/Jesus. Thereby, al-Ghazālī's discussion reflects the permeability more than anti-Christian polemics or the felt necessity to "to fend off what it regarded as the most blatant forms of Christian influence, in particular, celibacy", as Sahner has argued.[450]

2. Bar Hebraeusˊ *Ethicon*: adaptation and modification of al-Ghazālī's *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ* for the Syriac Christian community

Evidence for the permeability of al-Ghazālī's milieu is the existence of a Christianized version of al-Ghazālī's argumentation for marriage. Weitzˊ analysis of Syriac and Arabic sources from the 7th to the 10th century shows that marriage was one of the subjects through which the

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[445] See e.g. Beaumont, Mark: "Appropriating Christian scriptures in a Muslim refutation of Christianity: the case of *Al-radd al-jamīl* attributed to al-Ghazālī." In: *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations,* Volume 2, Issue 1, 2011, 69–84. "A fitting refutation demonstrates both a broader and a deeper use of Christian scripture to support a proper Islamic perception than any other work of anti-Christian polemic in the ʿAbbāsīd period." Beaumont, "Appropriating Christian scriptures", 69.
[446] Peacock, The Great Seljuk Empire, 246–285.
[447] Shukurov, "Harem Christianity", 115.
[448] Shukurov, "Harem Christianity", 126.
[449] Shukurov, "Harem Christianity", 127.
[450] Sahner, "Monasticism is *Jihād*", 152.

cohabiting religious communities delimited, distinguished, and demarked their particularities.[451] At the same time, this need for ongoing demarcation processes documents the transference of thought and alternating influence between Syriac Christians and Muslims. Unsurprisingly, al-Ghazālī's writings were a direct influence for a writer from the Christian wisdom tradition. Weitz views Bar Hebraeus´ 13th century book *Ethicon* as "the most striking example of the accommodation of Syriac Christian family law to Islamic thought."[452] Bar Hebraeus used al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'* "as a blueprint for his *Ethicon*, a Syriac treatise for a Christian audience on the practices of the pious life."[453] Weitz examines "the textual strategies by which Bar Hebraeus appropriates" al-Ghazālī's elaborations on marriage and the ideal wife in his *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*.[454] He shows how the Syriac Orthodox Christian author Bar Hebraeus (1226–1286/623–685) incorporates this text, which is "formulated in an Islamic idiom", "it into his own Christian tradition." [455]

Weitz argues that al-Ghazālī's "reasoned arguments […] positioned al-Ghazālī's text as a useful model for emulation for other religious traditions." [456] According to Weitz, al-Ghazālī's argumentation for marriage is built on a "Muslim jurisprudential one [i.e. textual profile] framed with reference to the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad".[457] Al-Ghazālī "added reasoned arguments" to this textual profile by "tying the desirable wifely qualities to spiritual and social benefit."[458] Bar Hebraeus then "appropriates" and "incorporates" al-Ghazālī's "reasoned arguments" "[…] with proof texts drawn from biblical wisdom literature."[459] Analog to al-Ghazālī's incorporation of the notion *qistās*, Bar Hebraeus does integrate arguments into a Christian frame of reference by making the influence of an author of the Islamic wisdom tradition indiscernible. Weitz, concludes that both texts "propagate a broader, gendered category of male piety resonant in the general confessional milieu of the medieval Middle East."[460] The adaptability for a Christian audience is also built on this gendered and hierarchical fundament.

Not only al-Ghazālī's reasoned arguments but also the central notion of balance throughout al-Ghazālī's argumentation allows the appropriation of al-Ghazālī's arguments and their incorporation into the Christian wisdom tradition. Precisely, al-Ghazālī's notion of balance allows him

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[451] See Weitz, *Christ and Caliph*, 223–252.
[452] Weitz, *Christ and Caliph*, 223.
[453] Weitz, "Good Wife", 203.
[454] Weitz, "Good Wife", 204.
[455] Weitz, "Good Wife", 204.
[456] Weitz, "Good Wife", 204.
[457] Weitz, "Good Wife", 204.
[458] Weitz, "Good Wife", 204.
[459] Weitz, "Good Wife", 204.
[460] Weitz, "Good Wife", 204.

to not categorically exclude celibacy, by leaving the matter of marriage to an individual decision. This of course eases the Christianization of al-Ghazālī's argumentation by Bar Hebraeus. Furthermore, al-Ghazālī's chosen genre *ādāb*, in which he connects logically reasoned argumentation for an Islamic theology of marriage to practical advice on its proper conduct, seems to have added to the admission of al-Ghazālī's s thought into another wisdom tradition. The author Bar Hebraeus saw a necessity for similar scholarly advice to a Christian educated class.

3. A comparison of Kāsānī´s *Kitāb asrar al-nikāḥ* to al-Ghazālī's *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*

The impact of al-Ghazālī's argumentation on later Sufi writings can be observed in Shaykh Ahmad Ibn Jalal al-Dīn Khwajagi Kāsānī´s (d.1543/949) text *Asrar al-nikāḥ*, "Mysteries of Marriage." Not only exhibits the text striking similarities in structure and style, but a comparison of the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ* to Kāsānī´s argumentation also allows to observe how al-Ghazālī's arguments became manifest, are developed, rendered or modulated to the contemporaneous discourse over four centuries later. In his *taṣawwuf* apology, Kāsānī discusses the reasons for marriage. Like al-Ghazālī, Kāsānī presents the reasons for marriage in a philosophical manner and strategically arranges reasoned arguments for his practical theology of marriage. Another accordance with al-Ghazālī's argumentation is that for Kāsānī knowledge, *'ilm*, is necessarily connected to *āmal*, practice.[461] As al-Ghazālī, Kāsānī commences his argumentation with divine creation and its purpose,[462] defines marriage as command,[463] and mentions lineage as an important reason for marriage.[464]

However, he further develops several arguments found in al-Ghazālī's argumentation and as a result deviates from his theological position. In contrast to the argumentation of the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ,* he does not adopt al-Ghazālī's notion of balance, so that the possibility to remain

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[461] Murata, "Mysteries of Marriage", 349.
[462] "God's goal in creating the world: to populate it." Therefore "God loves marriage". Murata, "Mysteries of Marriage", 346.
[463] Murata, "Mysteries of Marriage", 348. See also Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 3. Referencing 4:3, Kāsānī states: "The reason for marrying women may simply be the desire to obey the command of God." Murata, "Mysteries of Marriage", 347.
[464] For Kāsānī marriage prevents "the breaking of the genealogical chain of Adam´s children." Murata, "Mysteries of Marriage", 350. Al-Ghazālī argued with verse 13:38.

celibate is no longer accepted.[465] Moreover, al-Ghazālī's theory of the two desires is developed in the text. Kāsānī distinguishes "two kinds of *shawa*, appetite, praiseworthy and blameworthy".[466] Blameworthy is *shawa*, which does not remain within the "framework of the Sharia", as would fornication for example.[467] A novelty is that Kāsānī distinguishes two kinds of praiseworthy appetite: one found in ordinary people and the other one in the exalted people, i.e. prophets and the friends of God.[468] This distinction between ordinary believers and exalted Sufis is underlying the whole argumentation.[469] Their amount of worship and their "polished heart" reveals the exaltedness, and as a consequence their appetite increases.[470] Interestingly, Kāsānī also elaborates on two ways the *shawa* for food will be transformed. Here, Kāsānī follows Rumi by stating that the exalted *shawa* for food transforms into the pious believer being "in the light of God".[471] This also affects the sperm and thus the creation of pious offspring.[472]

Further, al-Ghazālī's Qur'ān-derived principle of *hirāthah* is mentioned explicitly.[473] The argument resembles al-Ghazālī's analogy of the master providing the slave with the possibilities of cultivating seed.[474] Kāsānī endeavours once again the Qur'ān-derived analogy for intercourse found in al-Ghazālī's text: "any farmer chooses the best land and does not waste his effort on other land".[475] However, Kāsānī alters al-Ghazālī's notion and gives it a more obvious eschatological undertone by quoting the saying: "This world is a field under cultivation for the sake of the next world (*al-dunyā mazraʾat al-akhirā*)."[476]

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[465] The possible counterargument, the example of unmarried prophets is explained by their "specific situations and functions" (Murata, "Mysteries of Marriage", 349).
[466] Murata, "Mysteries of Marriage", 350.
[467] Murata, "Mysteries of Marriage", 350.
[468] Murata, "Mysteries of Marriage", 350.
[469] The idea of a spiritual hierarchy can be found already in al-Ghazālī, e.g. Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*, Transl. Farah 2012, 63. Perhaps this distinction is used strategically against accusation of Ṣufis to not act according to orthodox conduct. Such accusations can still be read in the subtone of Kāsānī′s argument for the several wives or appetite for food. Kāsānī′s position deviates from those early Sufi practices which highlighted seclusion, fasting and even celibacy for the worship of God.
[470] Murata, "Mysteries of Marriage", 350: "It arises from much worship and invocation and is caused by their advances in the infinite steps on the path of nearness to God. The more they polish their heart through invoking God, the more this kind of appetite increases within them."
[471] Murata, "Mysteries of Marriage", 351.
[472] Murata, "Mysteries of Marriage", 350–351.
[473] Yet, Kāsānī does not give a direct reference of al-Ghazālī. "God appointed human beings as the farmers (dighan) of this world and taught them every kind of farming. As for animals, God appointed an appropriate female animal for each male animal as the field for cultivation." Murata, "Mysteries of Marriage", 349. Kāsānī argues that cultivation is God's will, and that marriage is the best of possible cultivations. "The best of all these cultivations is the cultivation of the human being through the marriage act, since this gives rise to the existence of human beings, who are God's goal in creation." Murata, "Mysteries of Marriage", 349.
[474] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 16–17.
[475] Murata, "Mysteries of Marriage", 349.
[476] Murata, "Mysteries of Marriage", 349.

Kāsānī also develops the Qur'ānic notion *zawj*, which – as has been pointed out in the analysis – is directly connected to the Qur'ānic principle of tillage, into the notion *izdiwāj*, pairing: "The ultimate goal in all the paring within the world is the existence of human beings"[477] Kāsānī then adds a new argument: "the whole is attracted to its parts".[478] Thereby he highlights the mystical dimension of the couple, that al-Ghazālī does not explicitly mention. Murata points out that this argument is "reminiscent of Ibn ʿArabī".[479]

Moreover, Kāsānī expands al-Ghazālī argument that marriage is an *ʿibādah*, an act of worship:[480] marriage is a "complete, all-comprehensive act of worship [,,,] just like the ritual prayer *(ṣalāt).*"[481] In addition, Kāsānī expands al-Ghazālī's suggestion that sexual pleasure can be understood as "harbinger of *Jannah*"[482] to: "Every act of worship has an enjoyment (*ladhdha*), and the greatness of the act deepens upon the greatness of enjoyment. Each enjoyment is a sample (*numūna*) of the enjoyment of paradise."[483] The ability to experience enjoyment is coupled to the believer's degree of closeness to God.[484] While al-Ghazālī's argumentation does not introduce the possibility that *nikāḥ* in its second meaning "intercourse" is a form of worship[485], Kāsānī explicitly states that intercourse is the best form of worship: "The goal of all acts of obedience and worship is proximity to God, and no act brings this about better than intercourse, which results in annihilation, immersion *(istighrāq)*, and dissolution *(iḍmiḥlāl)* in the beloved."[486] Here, Kāsānī goes clearly further than al-Ghazālī when he states that through intercourse a state of immersion can be achieved. According to Murata, Kāsānī's argument can be traced back to Ibn ʿArabī's idea of "mysteries of divine union that become manifest in sexual union."[487] In comparison to al-Ghazālī, having several wives is an expression of the exaltedness of the Sufi for Kāsānī: "The Ṣufis may marry women for the sake of much worship (*kathrat-i*

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[477] Murata. "Mysteries of Marriage", 349.
[478] Murata. "Mysteries of Marriage", 347.
[479] Murata. "Mysteries of Marriage", 347.
[480] This argument appears also in contemporary Muslim believes, see e.g. the contemporary Muslim guidebook Fisabilillah Organization: *Nikah-A Form of Ibadah.*
[481] "That is why most of the pillars (arkan) of the ritual prayer are also found in nikāḥ, such as standing, recitation of the Koran, bowing, prostrating oneself, and sitting. Each of these movements in the marriage act takes the forms of movements in ritual prayer." Murata, "Mysteries of Marriage", 346.
[482] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 29.
[483] Murata, "Mysteries of Marriage", 349.
[484] Murata. "Mysteries of Marriage", 349.
[485] Al-Ghazālī argues that Prophet Muhammad received revelation while he was in his wife's bed (Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 64.). While sexual pleasure is presented rather functional throughout al-Ghazālī's argumentation, see e.g. 63. Even the argument "sexual pleasure is a harbinger of the promised pleasures of *Jannah*" is explicated functionalistic as "inducement to the worship of God." (Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 29.).
[486] Murata, "Mysteries of Marriage", 349.
[487] Murata, "Mysteries of Marriage", 344.

ʿibādat)."[488] Once more, Kāsānī argues with the exalted status of: As friend of God, *walī Allāh*, a Sufi experiences more intensely.[489] Thus, – here Kāsānī provides a new explanation for al-Ghazālī's argument – "The Ṣufis also have special states, and like the Prophet they seek rest from them through companionship with women."[490]

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[488] Murata, "Mysteries of Marriage2, 348. Kāsānī even discusses why Prophet Muhammad is the best prophets even though he had less wives than Salomon and David (Murata, "Mysteries of Marriage", 350.)

[489]i.e. are in service of God, possibly the *walī* is understood here according to the *nawafil* tradition as vessel or agent of God. The term *walī Allāh* first appears in "the early Shi'i perception of the *imām*." (Ebstein, "The Organs of God", 285.) According to Ebstein, this is the main influence for the development of the *nawafil* tradition in Sunnī mysticism during the 8th century CE or the mid-second century in Islamic counting. One of the earliest texts on the matter, written by al-Muhasibi therefore attributes an elevated and guarded status to such a mystic, as Ebstein paraphrases: "The high status of the mystic whose organs have become divine or the mystic who functions as God's organs on earth is reflected in the "protection" from sin and "immunity" granted to him." (Ebstein, "Organs of God", 276.)

[490]Murata, "Mysteries of Marriage", 350.

VI. Conclusion

In the *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*, al-Ghazālī promotes marriage as a command, as *sunnah*, and as a logical result of the principle of *hirāthah* in divine cosmology. The first part of his argumentation could be characterised as an interpretation of Scripture (*tafsīr*) or as a work of *kalām*. In addition to the philosophical-theological discussion of advantages and disadvantages of marriage, al-Ghazālī presents detailed practical advice for the reader and follows the nature of the *ādāb* genre which he refers to in the title of his book. The incorporation of elements characterising the *ādāb* genre allows al-Ghazālī to ensure the accessibility of his argumentation, despite its complex argumentative structure. By giving specific advice and providing the reader with a presentation of different problems, the cosmological *kalām* argumentation in the beginning disperses into concrete instruction to his readers.

It is argued that marriage is not necessarily a hinderance for worship, since a seclusion for worship is still possible.[491] Rather, marriage can constitute an aid for the development of the believer´s *dīn*[492] and the companionship of the wife allows the believer to rest from worship[493] and can allow him to be "in presence" with God.[494] Even though al-Ghazālī distances himself from anti-marital asceticism proposed in *tasawwuf* apologies in the beginning of the argumentation, al-Ghazālī develops a moderate position in the contemporaneous debates in the course of the discussion: marriage is preferred over celibacy and celibacy is an acceptable option. Noteworthy is that nuanced and typologized advice is given to his male readers, which is suited to match their spiritual states and characters. For that reason, the argument "marriage is a command" is specified in the development of his argumentation. Marriage is commanded to those who are suitable for it. Here, al-Ghazālī seems to follow an interpretation of 24:32–33. Further, he distinguishes acts of worship hierarchically.[495] Attaining knowledge is an act of worship, as is marriage. But attaining knowledge is placed above the ʿibādah of providing for a family.[496] As a result, those believers on the path of knowledge can refrain from marriage. Al-Ghazālī's position exhibits a distinct viewpoint, which accepts the celibacy of ʿĪsā/Jesus as an example of the different possibilities of spiritual corporeality. In comparison to the 16th century text by

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[491] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 62.
[492] It is argued that e.g. marriage is equivalent to *jihād*, Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 46.
[493] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 39.
[494] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 63–64.
[495] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 51.
[496] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ*. Transl. Farah 2012, 51.

Kasānī, which no longer mentions ʿĪsā/Jesus or the option of chastity in an otherwise systematically similar argumentation, a modulation of al-Ghazālī's argumentation can be observed. Kasānī now stresses the necessity of a marital and sexually active life as a signifier for a developed spiritual corporeality, establishing a clear spiritual hierarchy of believers, who are distinguished through their closeness to God.

Al-Ghazālī's argumentation can be classified as an attempt to resolve the contradiction drawn between marriage and ascetic practices in early Sufi apologies. Further, al-Ghazālī's use of the term *jihād* for marriage exposes an inversion of early writings of the so-called *muṭṭawwiʿa* tradition, in which *nikāḥ* is conflated with the martial ideals of *jihād* warriors.[497] Al-Ghazālī's corrections of a corrupted *dīn*, present an alternative inward-oriented theology, which guides the individual, spiritual development of the believer. In a milieu, which was ridden by turmoil, the adoption of Sufi doctrines by a former teacher of Sunnī orthodox doctrines in the Saljūq Empire, might point to a possible general connection of mystical teachings and times of perceived crisis, as De Certeau has pointed out.[498]

Al-Ghazālī left his mark not only in Sunnī orthodox and *taṣawwuf* discourses but he also influenced Christian writings on the subject, as Weitz analysis shows.[499] The absence of anti-Christian polemics might have been a factor easing the transmission of his teachings to other religious communities. Further, the patriarchal presumption underlying his argumentation can be viewed as the other side of the "ancient valorisation of sex."[500] The patriarchal presumptions might have also made the text more adaptable across the religious communities.[501]

According to al-Ghazālī, the divine purpose and logics behind human *fiṭrah,* such as sexual desire, can be comprehended by observing divine *āyat,* and the divine order in creation. Thus, al-Ghazālī's argumentation does not only rely on the Qur'ān as source of divine authority but also on cosmological ideas, which are often ascribed only to Ibn ʿArabī.[502] Hoffmann-Ladd argues that Ibn ʿArabī is the first to go "beyond this merely functional view of sexuality to discover the mystical significance in the sexual act itself."[503] However, we can see a mystical significance of sexual pleasures already warily indicated by al-Ghazālī. When al-Ghazālī

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[497] Sahner, "Monasticism is *Jihād",* 154–157.
[498] See Finkelnde, „Metatheory der Mystik", 133.
[499] Weitz, "Good Wife", 203–223.
[500] Weitz, *Christ and Caliph*, 9.
[501] Weitz points out "men´s realization of piety and ideal masculinity" as point of connection between the ethico-religious communities. Weitz, "Good Wife", 223.
[502] E.g. Hoffmann-Ladd, "Mysticism and sexuality", 82.
[503] Hoffmann-Ladd, "Mysticism and sexuality", 86.

describes the divine purpose of sexual pleasure, al-Ghazālī presents the idea that sexual pleasure is a portent of the pleasures of *jannah*. The argument is then guarded by an added logical, functionalist explanation.[504] While we cannot find the idea formulated by Ibn ʿArabī that "Sexual union imitates God's relationship with man: `the man is yearning for his Lord Who is his origin, as woman yearns for man. His Lord made women dear to him, just as God loves that which is in His own image´."[505] The cosmological principles in al-Ghazālī's argumentation can be viewed as an enabler for one of Ibn ʿArabī´s arguments "there is no greater union than that between the sexes."[506]

In al-Ghazālī's cosmos, *nikāh*, in its double meaning of intercourse and marriage, takes place within the spiritual corporeality of a believer. The entire lifetime and the everyday actions are subjected to a theological purpose and deeply connected to eschatological beliefs. By altering actions and thoughts to become part of spiritual corporeality, the believer is urged to constantly remember his divine purpose and to worship God. The development of spiritual corporeality is a necessity to be closer to God in the earthly life, but it also hopes to safeguard an afterlife in paradise: the life-long developed spiritual corporeality will hopefully allow the believer to rest in *jannah* after his death – along with his family.

An example of the necessary incorporation of everyday acts into the believers' spiritual corporeality is marital intercourse. It is inherently connected to purity rules, which make up another essential part of the spiritual corporeality of the believer. Al-Ghazālī's argumentation follows the presumption that the male worshipper has to remain undisturbed from worldliness at the time of worship. A woman can be a potential disturbance or even polluter.[507] Since al-Ghazālī believes in bodily resurrection after death, he reminds the believer that he has to constantly ensure his purity, so that – in the event of death – he would not be resurrected in an impure state.[508] Thus, al-Ghazālī presents the necessary instructions to ensure the purity of the believer through advice on the time for intercourse. In addition, the recitation of the beginning of the

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[504] Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 29.
[505] Ibn ʿArabī: Bezels of Wisdom. Translated by R. W. J. Austin, Paulist Press, 1980, 274 cited by Hoffmann-Ladd, "Mysticism and sexuality", 89.
[506] Ibn ʿArabī: Bezels of Wisdom. Translated by R. W. J. Austin, Paulist Press, 1980, 274 cited by Hoffmann-Ladd, "Mysticism and sexuality", 88.
[507] Due to the purity rules regarding prayer, see e.g. Hoffmann, Thomas: "The Intercourse in Prayer. Notes on an Erotic Passage in the Arabian Nights and the Islamic Ritual Prayer." In: Holm, Bent et al. (eds.): *Religion, Ritual, Theatre.* Peter Lang, 2009, 69. Similar ideas of pollution through female presence and the idea that the female body is polluted is found in Ancient Greek texts, see Carson, Anne: "Putting Her in Her Place: Women, Dirt and Desire." In: Halperin, David et al. (eds.): *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World.* Princeton University Press, 1990, 135–169.
[508] In contrast, reminding the husband to urge his wife to ensure her purity has the purpose that she is sexually available for her husband's needs. Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb ādāb al-nikāḥ.* Transl. Farah 2012, 127.

shahādah and the *basmalah* before intercourse remind the male believer of the divine purpose of the action and submits the intercourse – as an act of worship – directly to God.

The concept of spiritual corporeality allows further research from a comparative angle. For example, different positions towards *nikāḥ* can be studied either in Sufi texts or in a comparison with Jewish sources. Especially a comparison of spiritual "types" of believers, or a systematic comparison of spiritual states in different traditions could be insightful to further develop the concept within the framework of embodiment, as well as the connection of intercourse to states of *unio mystica* or *maqām*. As Immenkamp´s study showed, taking into consideration additional books of the *Iḥyā'* can add to the understanding of al-Ghazālī's theology of *nikāḥ* within his conception of a Muslim ascetic piety. [509] Especially writings with an explicit eschatological content, as well as books five and six on fasting and purification can help to specify and develop the concept of spiritual corporeality.[510] Al-Ghazālī's position towards Greek philosophy could be more precisely understood by taking into consideration his book *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa, "The Incoherence of the Philosophers."* Further the claims of the first modern Western orientalist scholars, that al-Ghazālī was influenced by early East-Christian authors, should not be dismissed but critically assessed by examining possible sources available for al-Ghazālī. [511] Moreover, the possible impact of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'* on Maimonides´ theology especially in his "Guide for the Perplexed" could widen the scope of the study, adding an additional layer of intertextuality and possibly allowing a comparison of Maimonides` to al-Ghazālī's spiritual corporeality.[512] In addition, inquiries into medical writings and their possible impact on or deviation from al-Ghazālī's theological conception of the bodily within spirituality could be fruitful.[513]

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[509] Immenkamp took into consideration book twelve and thirteen "On breaking the two desires", as well as the book on the subject of eating. Immenkamp, *Marriage and celibacy*, 13.

[510] Book 40: "Reminder on death and the afterlife". Perhaps the question on female spiritual agency could be specified with this text.

[511] With these inquiries inner-Islamic debates of celibacy as imitation of Christian practices could be further evaluated.

[512] See e.g. this comparative study on Maimonides´ and al-Ghazālī's eschatologies. Eran, Amira: "Al-Ghazali and Maimonides on the World to Come and Spiritual Pleasures." In: *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2001, 137–166. URL: www.jstor.org/stable/40727706. Last accessed 03.02.2021. See also Harvey, Steven: "The Changing Image of al-Ghazālī in Medieval Jewish Thought." In: Tamer, Geroges (ed.): *Islam and Rationality. The Impact of al-Ghazali,* Brill, 2015, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004290952_015, n.p., last accessed: 03.02.2021. Especially Maimonides´ use of the Aristotelian concept of the "golden mean" is noteworthy.

[513] For the influence of Galen´s theories on the body in Arabic and Persian medicine, see Yoeli-Tlalim, Ronit: *ReOrienting Histories of Medicine: Encounters along the Silk Roads,* Bloomsbury, 2018. She works on the transmission of medical ideas along the so-called 'Silk-Roads'.

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