Killing or Sparing Inedible Animals: Ādāb and Internormativity in al-Jīlānī’s Kitāb al-Ghunya

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Abstract
This article draws on an excerpt of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166) in his al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī al-Ḥaqq (“The Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path to the Truth [God]”), dealing with ādāb related to killing or sparing inedible animals. It first pleads for a detailed textual analysis, in order to understand the normative frame the author uses. Keeping away from an exclusive juridical perspective, we try to consider Islamic normativity as a whole, using a holistic normative methodology and encompassing ādāb, popular beliefs, and spiritual tenets beyond fiqh rules. This analysis is the key to find out which function do ādāb toward animals have for believers.

Keywords
Al-Jīlānī – ādāb – Islamic normativity – animal ethics – hadīth – legal terminology – Sufi hermeneutics
Introduction

How should believers behave toward animals? Classical Islamic texts have tackled this question more than once. Excluding the philosophical and literary fields, which are not my concern here, hadith compilations and Islamic Jurisprudence are the two major sources addressing this question. Issues concerning animals arise especially when it comes to killing, hunting, and selecting lawful food. It is therefore permitted to kill animals in Islamic jurisprudence. However, many specific conditions apply, and it must not be for entertainment. The legal literature requires a necessity for killing: either to draw benefits from the animal (like food, skin, or pelt) or in self-defense.
It is difficult to find a comprehensive chapter about animals in plain *fiqh* literature which does not deal with their killing or eating but rather with ways to avoid their killing or even caring for them – which does not mean there are none. On the contrary, *fiqh* literature offers a number of materials and rules related to the status and the treatment of animals, their rights, and what duties men have toward them. However, such rules remain scattered through *hadith* collections and chapters in *fiqh* books (e.g., al-Ḥaṣkafī 2002, 679; Ibn al-Khaṭīb 1997, 764).¹ In light of this peculiar observation, I have found only one exception within *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī al-Ḥaqq* (“The Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path to the Truth [God]”) of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (470–561/1077–1166), with a section entitled “Fi al-ʿAdāb fi Ṭaḥal al-Ḥayawān: Mā Yubāḥ wa-Mā Lā Yubāḥ” (About the Ḥadīth Regarding Killing Animals: What is Permitted and What is not Permitted) (al-Jīlānī 1997, 85–87). Somehow, it resembles some *ḥadīth* sections (Abū Dāwūd 1997, 256–263), though it is definitely longer and more normative in tone. Noticeably, the section is mostly about inedible animals, making it one of the seldom full – albeit short – texts that does not deal with the above-mentioned types of rules.

ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, the eponymous founder of the Qādiriyya ṭarīqa and Sufi master, was already during his lifetime highly regarded as a theologian and a pious figure. He was a Ḥanbali and had a significant role as a teacher. His reputation of being a popular saint (Schimmel 1992, 350) has its relevance here, as it aligns with the text that we are examining. Among his writings, *al-Ghunya* emerges as a guide into and within Islam.² Due to its structure, it is presented as belonging to a genre on its own which deals simultaneously with theology, jurisprudence, devotional practice, and Sufism. In the manner of Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī’s (d. 386/996) *Qūṭ al-Qulūb* (“Nourishment of the Hearts”) or Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī’s (d. 505/1111) *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn* (“The Revival of Religious Sciences”), it provides guidelines and gives insights for a holistic conception of Islamic principles, beliefs, and practices.

Those elements prompt us to pay attention both to the author in his various aspects and to the book as a whole when examining the section about the killing of animals. The book’s title, as well as the presence of an end section about Sufism, speaks all the more of the design of this book as a guide to the Sufi path. Likewise, al-Jīlānī uses legal terminology, while talking generally

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¹ We find such rules in specific contexts as to the *ḥurma*, i.e. the sacrality of animals, within explanations about hunting rules (in the Ḥanafi jurist al-Ḥaṣkafī’s book), and the extremely blamable character of damaging (*itlāf*) animals during the time of *ihrām* in *Ḥajj* (by the Shāfīʿī al-Khaṭīb al-Sharbīnī).

² The book begins with the indication of what to do for those who want to enter Islam.
about ādāb, a Sufi normative category (Knysh 2017, 137–143; Gril 2017, 57–59). The concept of “Sufi legal hermeneutics” has slightly entered into common use in the latter-day research and fits here. It is a reminder that most of the Sufi discourse requires references to shari’a and fiqh (starting from ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī in his Risāla (“Treatise’)). This connection has the purpose of either legitimating Sufism or giving it a foundational base, an opportunity for the spiritual Sufism to be experienced in a structured reality (Belhaj 2013; Pagani 2004). That said, I also wish to mention the ever-evolving conceptions of shari’a as “more than a juridical system,” which emerged in the last decades (especially in the works of Bernard Weiss, Rudolph Peters and Peri Bearman).

When it comes to Sufi legal hermeneutics, the question of defining Islamic law is brought up, especially in the area of tension and interpretation between the (wider) sources of shari’a and the fiqh. My initial assumption is that this field is not yet firmly defined and that it is subject to factors, such as the era we live in, particularly changes in our society and the subjective perceptions of our scholars. With this in mind, my point is to define and understand the pattern of the normative frame used here, and through that, to reflect on Islamic normativity. This paper will explore the small section of al-Ghunya about ādāb as being the expression of a plural normativity and will bring into light a certain idea of norms which stands at the junction of several Islamic disciplines and worldviews. A fair number of academic studies on animal ethics is directed without access to primary sources, which affects their accuracy (Tlilli 2018, 5). All the more reason for us, since we have a complete text on this topic, to review it in detail and let readers understand it themselves afterwards. The actual place of animals in this context will arise from the structural and terminological/intertextual analysis.

Due to its location in the book, its inner structure, which rules are referred to and how, I will show that the section “Fī al-Ādāb fī Qatl al-Ḥayawān” offers one example – though probably not the only one – of Islamic internormativity. The concept of internormativity (originally, internormativité) was initially pushed by Jean Carbonnier in the 1970s and means either the coexistence of different normative orders or a normative order drawing from hybrid sources (Carbonnier 1977, 42; Chevallier 2012, 2–3, 7). We shall favor the latter here. This internormativity can be understood as a part of Sufi legal hermeneutics but also as the transposition of a holistic Islamic methodology and a complex

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3 The French sociologist Carbonnier was aware that legal rules are anchored in a greater ensemble of social rules and defined internormativity as the expression of connections, either conflicting or not, between the legal order and other normative systems (Carbonnier 1977, 42).
vision of the world integrating the unseen into the physical realm. Putting the bigger text frame in the next lines will help picking up the small pieces together in the following paragraphs of this article.

The Book al-Ghunya li-Tālibī Ţāriq al-Ḥaqq ‘Azza wa-Jalla: Structure and Topics

The Ghunya comprises five major parts (aqṣām): fiqh, exposing the five pillars of Islam; the Islamic dogmas and groups (al-aqā’id wa-l-firaq); reports of educational sessions about Qur’ān and hadith (majālis mawā’iz al-Qur’ān wa-l-alfāẓ al-nabawiyya); virtuous actions (faḍā’il al-a’māl); and a brief, last part on Sufism. Hamza Malik already noted that the structure, regardless of the in-between sections, follows the pivotal “ḥadīth of Gabriel”, that defines ĭmān, islām and iḥsān (faith, submission, and perfection, or doing what is ethically excellent) and sets the foundation for a tripartite division of sciences in Islam (Malik 2018, 152). Reading al-Ghunya can only confirm his assertion that al-Jīlānī’s writings should be considered as a means to an end and not the depiction of a system of thought (Malik 2018, 150). This might explain why the author closely curates topics and materials from the fields of fiqh, theology, and Sufism. Rather than providing the reader with an in-depth handbook on Islam, he provides them with a concise and efficient guide to practice. For example, in the part about fiqh, he only broaches individual ritual rules, i.e., ʿibādāt, and not the social rules of fiqh, the mu‘āmalāt.4

The section “Fī al-Ādāb fī Qatl al-Ḥayawān” is found in “Kitāb al-Ādāb” (The Book of Good Manners), which itself can be found in the part about fiqh, i.e. the first chapter of al-Ghunya. Al-Jīlānī first exposes a selection of fiqh rules relating to the five pillars of Islam. The “Kitāb al-Ādāb” starts straightway after the fifth pillar “Kitāb al-Ḥajj” and the relevant section is found practically at the beginning of the second half of the “Book of Ādāb.” The ranking reveals another unsettling detail: after listing many principles regarding hygiene, eating and drinking, sleeping, clothing, traveling, etc., the section about the animals follows immediately after the one on how to conduct oneself with parents (birr al-wālidayn) or the one about respects to be paid to old people (tawqīr al-shuyūkh) or compassion to show to children (al-raḥma bi-l-ātffāl). We will try to address this peculiar prioritization after having gone through this very section.

4 That distinguishes obviously his intention from al-Ghazālī’s in his Iḥyāʾ, where all aspects of fiqh are treated.
2.1 Ethics and Animal Ethics

As a foreword, the subject of animal ethics as seen by al-Jīlānī should be inserted in the bigger framework of Islamic ethics. Latest research has shown how difficult it is to assess the role of ethics in the Islamic tradition, given its wide scope, its versatility through time and its implicit nature, despite its pervasiveness both in religious texts and in many practices. Defining ethics requires putting several concepts into historical perspective. The first and most essential concept is that of adab (pl. ādāb), which was earlier intellectually connoted and meant “general culture needed to perform a social function” (Mayeur-Jaouen and Patrizi 2017, 3). It then was for scribes (adab al-kātib), judges (adab al-qāḍī), or teachers (adab al-muʿallim) between the fifth and the eleventh centuries. Concurrently, the widely accepted meaning of “entertaining literature” flourished, which described profane literature – or the “Belles-lettres” – in contrast to the religious sense. The later formalized Sufi adab is not entirely separate from adab in the profane meaning (Mayeur-Jaouen and Patrizi 2017, 640), though tensions may arise from their encounter (Elger 2017, 567).

The word adab has several meanings that remain the same despite its evolving usage: “etiquette, education, manners, and conformity to an ideal, that of an honest, worldly man, knowledgeable in all things, a lover of literature with its ethical and moral facets” (Mayeur-Jaouen and Patrizi 2017, 2). Within a religious context, the last bit of the definition, especially, lacks relevance, as the textual origin of adab is no longer literature, but rather Qurʾānic and Prophetic guidelines.

Before Sufis, traditionists such as Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767) already insisted on adab as being more important than science (ʿilm) and jurisprudence (Gril 2017, 49). While adab – i.e. “the respect of traditional and spiritual conventions” (Gril 2017, 47) – is a core concept in Sufism (as the quote attributed to Abū Ḥafṣ al-Ḥaddād al-Nishābūrī (d. 260/880) “Sufism resides entirely in adab” can attest; Mayeur-Jaouen and Patrizi 2017, 1), it still represents a foundational part of the Islamic ideal behavior in general. This status derives probably from the concept being deeply rooted in the Prophet’s example, whom is considered to be the ultimate embodiment of noble virtues – the pursuit of good morals outside his figure is thus unavailing, whereas his imitation is crucial (Pagani 2017, 254). As for the Prophet, the concept of khulq (pl. akhlāq), also mirroring ethics, is worth mentioning. The Qurʾānic verse depicting the Prophet as a man of a great moral character (ʿalā khuluq ʿaẓīm; Q 68:4) lays one of the main foundations for ethics in Islam, besides more specific ḥadīth reporting in detail the Prophet’s way of life and setting the standards for an adequate moral behavior.

Confronting both concepts helps to better define their respective meaning. While khulq is rather about the own character and how to improve it, adab originally refers to both teaching and education, and implies a relation to...
others, not just to oneself (Gril 2017, 48, 50, 57). Sufism refined the concept of *adab* and granted it a “vertical dimension”: *adab* has become a standard of behavior and relation between the Sufi adept and God (Gril 2017, 57).

This could be summed up as *ḥadīth* sources and Sufi literature being the very basis of Islamic ethics. As *ḥadīth* will on numerous occasion command a merciful behavior towards animals, it is most often used to ground the principles of animal ethics in Islam. Still, it remains difficult to connect *ādāb* toward animals to the Islamic rules about them in *ḥadīth* on an epistemological level from the mere observation of *al-Ghunya*’s text. In fact, the usual *ḥadīths* about animals are not only about their welfare but also about their consumption or killing. In some cases, *adab* and the treatment of animals are very clearly connected, but *adab* – i.e., ethics – is not the driving normative frame. It is jurisprudence, which appropriates and elaborates on these rules; there *adab* remains an ideal behavior only in specific sections. Then comes *ādāb* as it is expressed within Sufism. There are available texts such as *al-Luma*’ by Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī (d. 378/988) that partially recall the whole chapter about *ādāb* in *al-Ghunya*. However, nothing specific about animals is to be found there.

Al-Jīlānī’s text is perhaps a seldom found example of these two genres merging *ḥadīth* and Sufi *ādāb*, in that he tackles the *ḥadīth* rules about animals, inside a chapter about *ādāb*, while clearly following a normative objective. While this approach appears marginal, it could provide interesting foundations for a normative frame regarding animal ethics.

2.2 The Section about Animals

The section regarding correct behavior towards inedible animals is a surprisingly general and short enumeration. For example, the only animals mentioned are snakes, geckos, frogs, ants, scorpions, dogs, and leeches. Also, only at the end is there a brief mention of rules about potentially edible animals. The rules are scarce and lack many references to the source texts of Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*, despite al-Jīlānī being a well-versed scholar in various disciplines such as *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, or *fiqh* (Malik 2018, 93). Thus, his terseness may not be viewed as resulting from a lack of knowledge or from negligence. By using the word “sufficient” in the title of the book, one would assume every chapter and section of it is strictly comprehensive. In this regard, the section about *ādāb* towards animals is surprisingly short compared to all the available *ḥadīth* literature about how animals should be treated. Moreover, it is selective in a singular way, with each entrance being unequal in length. Nothing is to be found about spiders, flies, or other inedible animals.

In this article, we examine the normative features of this section in order to primarily determine which rules are important to the author and which are not. After that, I will describe how he expresses the rules in words, and
whether or not the words chosen change how they apply. In my own judgment, al-Jīlānī does define a set of rules on its own, but in a very eclectic relationship to wider religious settings. Through intertextual analysis, I will show that the text is rooted in a complex heterogeneous Islamic ethos. Although it depicts behavior towards animals in a traditional way, it does so in a specific, even personal way.

Now that the context is set, let us gradually read through the analyzed section, and then draw more universal conclusions. My analysis will align with the author's linear progression, in order for his priority ranking to remain clear to the reader.

2.2.1 Snakes and Vipers (al-Jīlānī 1997, 85–86)
The part discussing vipers and snakes is surprisingly long and full of nuances compared to the rest of the section (making up for one of two and a half pages). There may be several reasons explaining this particular attention to those reptiles. First, they are dangerous, but secondly, they are more than animals. Their being frequently associated to the unseen realm of jinn adds in complexity to how they should be dealt with.

The author starts by differentiating cases: if the viper is found inside the house or if the viper is met in the desert. In the former case, the viper must be warned three times and may only be killed if appearing after being duly warned. In the latter case, it is permitted to kill it without warning.

When first confronted to these rules, irrespective of the hadīth rules that come in support of this reasoning, they make little sense. Here, the author would be expected to urge the desert snakes to leave, since this is their natural habitat, and they should not be bothered if they keep away from urban areas. Conversely, it feels only instinctive to want to kill a snake found in a home, for obvious safety reasons. But reading further makes it easier to understand this apparently paradoxical proposition.

Subsequently before that, the text defines the warning (īdhān) as urging the animal to “go in peace and do us no harm,” supporting this with a hadīth recommending speaking solemn words to the animal. The spell is as follows: “We conjure you by that which took Noah from you, we conjure you by that which Salomon took over to you, to do us no harm” (al-Jīlānī 1997, 85).

In light of this, the reader having somewhat obtained a clearer picture of every situation, the next lines completely overturn the previous statements,

5 We should understand it as “informing the animal that it should leave and that it will be killed if it appears again.”
When al-Jilānī cites two hadīths ordering the killing of all vipers, as well as two other species of snakes (dhū al-ṭufyatayn, and al-abtar). Despite these two clear injunctions, the author however circles back to the theme of īdhān with two reports from the Companions. A brief one is introduced by the verb “qāla” (“he said”) for which it is hard to clearly define a subject in the text. Here, a Companion, ‘Abd Allāh, who would kill any viper he would come across, was reprimanded by Abū Lubāba ʿAbd al-Mundhir who reminded him that he (i.e. the Prophet) forbade to kill the “house dwellers” (dhawāt al-buyūt) (Muslim 6, 89–96).6 Subsequently, al-Jilānī clarifies the interdiction of killing “house dwellers” through a long, abstruse khabar, which is worth reporting in detail.

In the first story, Abū al-Sāʾib, as he sat with Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī (d. 74/693) in his house, heard something moving under his bed and discovered a viper. He immediately stood up, ready to kill it, but Abū Saʿīd stopped him, trying to dissuade him from doing so by telling him about his neighbor, a young, newlywed man who found his wife at the doorstep when he came back from the battle of al-Aḥzāb. He pointed his spear at her, whereupon she explained having left the house because of the presence of a “wicked viper” (ḥayya munkara) inside. He entered and skewered it with his spear. Abū S aʿīd’s story has an even stranger end. He concludes, “We do know not who died first, the man or the viper.” Other hadīth variants have taught us that the viper, although struck by the man, had also bitten him. His family went to the Prophet and asked him to pray to God that He would save him. The Prophet answered that they should instead ask God to forgive him and explained: “A group of jinn in Medina became Muslims, so, if you see one of them, warn them three times. Then, should they appear to you again, after you warned them, kill them” (al-Jilānī 1997, 86).

The story, while supposed to provide a clear foundation for the interdiction of killing “those of the houses,” remains cryptic for several reasons. In the Islamic tradition, like in other world traditions (El-Zein 2009, 95–98), snakes are frequently associated with jinn (Lory 2018, 223; Von Hees 2002, 208; Benkheira et al. 2005, 115; Nünlist 2015, 114–123; El-Zein 2009, 98–99). By contrast, the report from the Prophet seems to interpret all snakes that one sees in a house belong to the jinn of Medina, as he does not specify that snakes can sometimes be jinn but rather implies that all those that one meets are jinn. The expression “one of them” alludes apparently to the idea that “they” are always (Muslim) jinn metamorphosed in snakes. The Prophetic saying informs us furthermore that there is a specific group of jinn, settled in Medina that became Muslims. (The debate about whether there were such jinn in other

6 Interestingly, the hadīth is reported in the “Book of Greeting.”
places arose later among Muslim scholars; Lory 2018.) Their “Islamicness,” not the benevolence towards some snakes, is, therefore, the criteria for benefiting from this extraordinary treatment. Snakes should not be killed, as long as they are not solely animals but actually Muslim jinn. On the other hand, if they are in fact not Muslim jinn, but rather non-believer jinn or perhaps not jinn at all – here, the text remains subject to interpretation – they can be killed. It is then quite likely, that they are at least non-Muslims, maybe even devilish (shayṭān; Muslim 2007, 97), and killing them would be justified. Their nature reveals itself when they are warned and do not heed the warning.

A further consideration of the core story about the man who attacked the viper is not very helpful in understanding the Prophet’s quote. From its appreciation as “wicked, devilish,” giving it a baleful character, we would deduce that the viper could not belong to the Muslim jinn, since it is a priori not considered in the positive light of being a believer. All the same, the reaction of the Prophet to the mortal incident does not appear to interpret it in this way. He seems to induce that the man committed a mistake, since his family must ask for him to be forgiven. The immediate connection to the Muslim jinn embodied in snakes and the recommendation how to deal with them, force us to conclude, that the viper was one of those and that the man died, either because he did not warn it, or because he did not respect the procedure of warning it three times, all of this necessitating that his family asks God to forgive him.

The Prophetic quote crowning the story, and especially the injunction to ask for forgiveness for the man, appears to be useful to understand the meaning behind it. It is not about killing snakes but about killing Muslim jinn metamorphosed into snakes. The section bears admittedly the title “ādāb regarding the killing of animals” but it deals with deeper dimensions of the animal reign, which can be in fact a manifestation of another species, that of jinn, which is invisible and apparently more worthy of protection.

By admitting this interpretation, we can better understand the order to kill the snakes met in the desert. Those are merely wild snakes, moreover dangerous animals, whose lives do not deserve to be spared.

Here we come back to the two hadīths at the center enjoining to kill all vipers. The second hadīth provides us with two reasons for killing vipers, as well as two other types of snakes: they are supposed to cause blindness and miscarriage.7 They represent in substance the actual norm about how snakes should be treated in that, in principle, they should always be killed. When it comes to the “domestic” vipers, however, one should be careful, for one does not know who or what the viper really is.

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7 Because of the fright they can engender in pregnant women?
To recapitulate, by analyzing both the content of each paragraph and the order of the rules and the *ḥadīth* respectively, the normative hierarchy and the rulings system become clearer. We can summarize it as follows:

1. There are two types of vipers, the “domestic” ones and the “wild” ones.
2. One should follow a precise protocol (the concept of *adab* takes here its full meaning) to – if necessary – kill domestic vipers. Wild ones can be killed without consideration.
3. Still, all vipers should be killed. A different rule put in a secondary rung is usually, in a juridical logic, an exception to the precedent one – which is, in this case, impossible – or a rule that was abrogated but has to be cited because it is part of the *ḥadīth* transmission or because it still has relevance. However, if we think in terms of ratio, vipers that are the embodiment of Muslim *jinn* in Medina form a minority among the whole species of snakes. So why would the ruling about them be prioritized that all other cases would form an exception? It is more congruous to place the rule about killing all vipers as the general one, while the rule distinguishing two types of vipers, the domestic and the wild one, and enjoining to spare the first one, would fit into the special cases. The question remains: why would the author prioritize the particular case of domestic vipers?

The Shāfiʿī scholar Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449) presents the Prophetic enactment of the two rules, this of killing all snakes and that of sparing the “domestic ones” as a chronological process (Lory 2018, 106–107). The execration of snakes originates in the story of the temptation of Adam and Eve in Paradise (Lory 2018, 50). In the eyes of the monotheists, the role that the snake played in the history of humanity is obvious, as it is symbolically connected with the fall and all its consequences: hunger, death, and earthly dangers. Thus, the first attitude of the Prophet would have been prone to the annihilation of all snakes. Later, he introduced a specification for some of them, who live in houses, and could benefit from a delay if they were to be killed.8

It may appear as if Ibn Ḥajar would try to get around the difficulty engendered by the presence of contradictory *ḥadīth* and looks here for a logical explanation, involving the actualization and the refinement of the Prophetic norms of the era. Well considered, his explanation could be grounded through practical experiences Muslims had at the time of the Prophet. Perhaps it was sometimes more dangerous to try to kill the reptiles found in one’s house, than giving them a little time to leave by themselves. The *ḥadīth* report mentioned

8 Of course, these norms did not arise *ex nihilo*. That is why it would be important to know how people dealt with these situations previously.
above – as well as some other modern accounts of “snakes’ specialists” who were bitten by the snakes they were missioned to remove from houses (Corkill 1939, 50) – could explain how he came to prioritize this precaution.

2.2.2 Geckos (al-Jilānī 1997, 86)
After discussing snakes and vipers, al-Jilānī’s text provides the permission to kill the gecko (Arabic: wazagh or fiwaysiq, which means “noxious” but could also be understood as “small sacrilegious” or “miscreant,” thus leading to bad associations) in four lines, followed by a hadīth that even commands to kill it. In another, more radical, hadīth there is even the promise of a reward of seventy ḥasanāt when the gecko is killed in one hit (Muslim 2007, 99).9

It is noteworthy that al-Jilānī rules about the geckos by permitting (yajūz) their killing; although the hadīth used as reference explicitly commands this (the verb used in the hadīth is amara). Could his attitude be seen as his personal mitigated view of the Prophetic rule? Or could it be understood as an answer to those who would prohibit the killing of geckos, whereas al-Jilānī would come with two Prophetic hadīths contradicting this cautious opinion? This alternate interpretation is less satisfying and realistic; it seems absurd why some contemporaries would refuse to kill a potentially venomous animal unless they knew it is in fact not venomous (Ullmann 1994, 78, 84).10 Thus, either al-Jilānī supports a milder position than that of the Prophet, or he understands his “command” (amr) as not mandatory.

As with the snakes, there is a connection to a story of a Prophet in the case of the gecko. In some hadīths, ʿĀ’isha (d. 58/678) justifies the command to kill them with a story involving Abraham. When his tribesmen threw him into the fire, all animals tried to fight the fire, except for the gecko, which kept blowing on the fire in an attempt to inflame him even more. This incident has cast upon the gecko the everlasting hostility of Muslims, as it was the only animal that did not try to help the Prophet (Ibn Māja 1952–1953, 1076; Benkheira et al. 2005, 114). This hostility goes so far as to allow the killing of geckos in the

9 The reward for killing it at the first hit could also be understood as an incitement not to torture it.
10 Following Manfred Ullmann, the idea that the gecko is venomous had spread since antiquity and was still held for being true among Arab authors like Ibn Sinā (Avicenna, d. 428/1037), al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868), and al-Qazwīnī (d. 682/1283). It is, in reality, not venomous; nevertheless, its reputation as a dangerous animal is somehow justified by the fact that it can host a big quantity of microbes and transmit them on its passage, causing bacterial infections (see Kallo 2006). Later, al-Nuwayrī, (d. 733/1333) classified this animal as one that unintentionally kills (Benkheira et al. 2005, 34).
holy precincts of Mecca and Medina (al-Fākihī 1994, 399). Nevertheless, it is impossible to establish a clear connection to this story since al-Jīlānī does not mention it; still, this report can help us to understand the aura surrounding the animal in the mind of those aware of the hadith and in popular belief.

2.2.3 Ants (al-Jīlānī 1997, 86)
The killing of ants has only one justification: if they should be highly harmful (illā min adhiyya shadīda). Apart from the readiness of ants to bite, they were also sometimes classified as venomous insects (Benkheira et al. 2005, 34). Following al-Jīlānī, if they are not very harmful, their extermination is blameworthy (yukrah). He supports this rule invoking a single hadith saying that a Prophet ordered to burn the anthill of ants, after one of the ants had stung him, receiving thereupon a divine revelation: how could he wipe a God-praising hive only because one ant had bitten him (a-fī an qaraṣatka namla ahlakta umma min al-umam tusabbih)? (al-Jīlānī 1997, 86; Benkheira et al. 2005, 157).

The ant is one of the most notorious insects in Islam, due to the existence of a Sūra in the Qurʾān bearing the name “al-Naml,” as well as a story involving an ant speaking to Salomon. It is striking regarding this that al-Jīlānī does not refer to the Qurʾānic encounter of the ant with the Prophet as a base for this rule, but rather to a story with an unnamed Prophet. This is probably due to the norm in the hadith al-Jīlānī uses being more precise and obvious. Simply reminding that ants are communities that worship God as wise speaking beings would prove insufficient to create a rule and grant them a protective status worthy of their specificity. In the example herein provided, God explicitly scolds the Prophet. Through the medium of revelation, the hadith acquires a normative power, like the shari‘a in the sense of a regulating revelation. In contrast to the Qurʾānic episode, however, the ant does not have its own voice in this report; it remains entirely passive and submissive to human behavior, while at the same time being formally represented and defended by God.

In addition to this, the hadith appears to be well known and widely used in this context (Bousquet 1958, 42). Nevertheless, another famous hadith, which absence here is notable, may have been even more suitable to such purpose. There is indeed a Prophetic report, which consecrates the killing of four animals as taboo: ants, alongside bees (naḥla), hoopoes (hudhud), and shrikes

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11 This opinion will persist among the fuqahāʾ at least until the epoch of al-Jīlānī, though I cannot affirm that it was majoritarian or very well spread. The Andalusī Mālikī jurist Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 543/1148) describes the gecko as dangerous, not only because of his infectiousness through aliments, but also because of this incident with Abraham. This dangerousness is even ontological (muḍī fī al-āṣl) (Ibn al-ʿArabī 1997, 218).

12 For intra-Islamic discussions on the wisdom of ants, see Tlili 2012, 21, 188.
ṣurd). The ants are therefore privileged insects, benefiting from a textual immunity (Abū Dāwud 1997, 262–263; Ibn Māja 1952–1953, 1074). Why then does al-Jīlānī refer to a more indirectly normative hadīth about killing ants? Despite the divine severity showed in it toward a Prophet, the hadīth used by the author noticeably does not in fact categorically forbid the killing of ants, but rather provides a valuable reason not to do it. Compared to the account involving the Prophet at fault, it, therefore, supports the prohibition of killing with a theological argument. Ants should not be killed as they form a community of believers devoted to God, perhaps this being a legitimating factor for enjoying life on Earth (El Maaroufi 2020, 77) or because it means that they are worth being a receptacle for God’s Word (Giese 2001, 121–122). All the same, it allows an exception to the prohibition found in the hadīth concerning the four animals, as it does not formulate a definitive rule. Therefore, the source he uses and the way al-Jīlānī articulates it allow for a little bit more flexibility and realism. The Prophet’s story insists on the importance of respecting the ants as a community and the result of harming them – a divine reproach. At the same time, it leads to avoiding the reference to an explicit prohibition (nahā) and to deeming the killing “blameworthy” (yukrah).

Notwithstanding, the choice of this hadīth may be otherwise explained. The hadīth involving the ant and an unnamed Prophet stems from the more reliable and notorious hadīth compilations of Muslim and Bukhārī. In Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, the location of the hadīth in a separate section dedicated to the prohibition of killing ants (“Bāb al-Nahy ‘an Qatl al-Naml”) grants the rule even more precision and authority. This probably advocates strongly enough for the selection of this hadīth, albeit diminished by the following: in this very hadīth, the Prophet does not escape the divine reprobation even though the ant does harm him. Shall we understand that what is actually condemned is the unproportioned reaction of killing an entire community of ants because of the harm done by a single member of the said community? (al-Nawawī 1991, 342–343). Such understanding of this hadīth would make more sense to its use and would reveal the actual rule: the act of killing ants should be exceptional and remain strictly proportional to what harm they may cause.

13 This is how al-Nawawī (d. 673/1277) explains the account. For him and some other scholars he does not name, the divine reproach does not focus on the killing of the ants, which was at that time allowed, but on the killing of a whole community, when just one member of it was guilty.
2.2.4 Frogs (al-Jilānî 1997, 86–87)
The norm concerning the frog is formulated in the same way as the ant: “It is blameworthy to kill the frog” (yukrah qatl al-ḍifḍa’). Similarly, a hadith report is referred to as a foundation. Again, al-Jilānî chooses to use a particular account, whereas he ignores some others.

Some variants of the “taboo-animals hadith” include the frog and thus forbid its killing. Although they prohibit explicitly taking the life of frogs, they remain of less use since they are weak (al-Bayhaqi14 2003, 533). This probably justifies why the author, out of loyalty toward the Sunna, avoids using it as a source for prohibition.

Also, the frog has a privileged place in the religious imaginary and the epic of the Prophets. Its croak is often assimilated to a praise (tasbīḥ) (al-Damīrī 2005, 728–731). Thus, another series of hadith states: “Don’t kill the frogs, as their croak is praise” (Von Hees 2002, 195). The frogs are described as the creatures who evoke God the most (laysa shay’ akthara dhikran li-Llāh minhu) (al-Damīrī 2005, 728). We retrieve this proximity to God in the assumption that the frog was the neighbor of God in the water upon which the divine Throne stood before heaven and earth were created (al-Damīrī 2005, 731). In another report, a frog jumped into the fire out of fear of God. God rewarded all frogs with the freshness of water and by turning their croak into praise (al-Damīrī 2005, 729).

Two longer stories go further and put the frog in a form of concurrence with the Prophet David. During a night where the latter promised himself to praise God as no one ever did, a frog snubbed him and displayed its own way of praise to him, whose perfection brought the Prophet to silence (al-Damīrī 2005, 729; Benkheira et al. 2005, 143). A second narration bears the same message: an angel sent by God makes the Prophet understand that the frog praises God in a much superior way than he does. In both stories, the Prophet feels humble compared to the frog.

In addition, the frog played a role in the episode where Abraham was thrown into the fire. Whereas the gecko was blowing on the flames, the frog is told to have brought water and poured it onto the fire in order to help the Prophet (al-Damīrī 2005, 731).

These narrative examples seem to be responsible for the reluctance to killing frogs through the construction of an aura of sanctity around this animal. The hadith cited by al-Jilānî might be a reflection of those religious representations,

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14 A muḥaddith and Shā.fi jurist, d. 458/1066.
15 An action including an eponymous animal leads to further consequences for the whole species seems to correspond to a narrative pattern.
but it might likewise contain the reason for the prohibition in itself. The complete report indeed mentions a companion, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿUthmān who asked the Prophet if he could use a frog for a medicine, whereupon the Prophet forbade him to kill it (al-Jīlānī 1997, 86–87).

In other versions of the *ḥadīth* there is a small addition to what al-Jīlānī says: it is a doctor who asks the Prophet (e.g., Abū Dāwud 1997, 263; Ibn Ḥanbal 1998, 471). In the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwud (d. 275/889), the *ḥadīth* is even situated in the “Book of Medicine” under “The Blameworthy Remedies,” which stresses its medical relevance and the religious ruling about a traditional medical usage.

In the medical and *adab*-books, the frog is not only recognized as a medicine, but also as a (deadly) venomous animal, against which some remedies are available (Von Hees 2002, 191, 198, 202). It remains a possible antidote to snake poison and is often considered as such (Von Hees 2002, 199). Moreover, there are traditional descriptions about using the frog with a cosmetic aim or as a talisman (Von Hees 2002, 200–201, 204). The classical literature provides the readers with diverse pseudo- and para-medical recipes making use of frogs. A good example for this is found in al-Qazwīnī’s (d. 682/1283) famous work ʿAjāʾib al-Makhlūqāt (“The Wonders of Creation”). Not all of these recipes necessitate killing the frog – we find, for instance, the recommendation to wipe a wart with a frog that has only just gone out of the water. Some of the recipes imply the need to kill them, as they describe how parts of their bodies constitute a healing drug or a talisman for an insoluble situation. For example, their tongues might be melted with some dough and be given to someone who is suspected of thievery. If he is guilty, the potion would bring him to confess the crime (Von Hees 2002, 192–193). Also, the heart, the blood, and the members of the frog may form a part of some magical mixtures to change one’s body or to kill somebody (Von Hees 2002, 192–193).

Regarding this very widespread (possible) use of the animal, it seems to make sense to refer to the *ḥadīth* where the prohibition to kill is an answer to the question of using frogs for medical or magical aims. Conversely, the choice of al-Jīlānī possibly reveals that the idea of killing frogs occurs especially in this medical-magical context. It is interesting to see how the scholar focuses on this question, which was already present in the time of the Prophet some centuries before. The questions arise regarding the persistence of a practice under (and against) Islamic thought: did the popular practice never change during all this time? Or is this just a surviving literary motive with no grip on reality anymore?

It should be furthermore mentioned that al-Jīlānī appears to exclude another possible implication of the *ḥadīth*, which would be the prohibition of
consumption rather than that of killing the frog. This is obvious through his brevity, his exclusive insistence on not killing, and the fact that the whole section is about killing and not about consuming animals.

2.2.5 Killing with Fire (al-Jilānī 1997, 87)

Another exception to killing is introduced here, as it is stated that: “It is blameworthy to kill with fire all what it is permitted to kill, such as bugs (baqq), louses (qaml), fleas (barghūth), and ants, following the Prophetic saying that ‘Nobody (is allowed to) torture with the fire except the Lord of the fire’” (al-Jilānī 1997, 87). We understand from this that those animals can be killed in principle but not with fire; so, the prohibition does not concern the killing but rather the way of killing. Remarkably, the act of killing is qualified only as blameworthy, apparently contradicting the unambiguous formulae in the hadīth that gives this privilege only to God.

It is not easy to understand the exact intention behind this ruling. Is it meant to restrict the human activities that are particularly close to encroaching on a divine prerogative, or is it about respecting the theological meaning of the particular divine sanction with hell? The expression the “Lord of the Fire” gives an indication, that the divine power of sanction with fire should remain exclusive. All the same, if we suppose that killing insects by burning had been (still) a frequent practice at the time of al-Jilānī, which could explain his need to make a statement on this topic, the use of the hadīth could also be read as a mere warning not to imitate a divine prerogative – one among others. This could be a reminder of the legal frame that humans are allowed to move inside.

Another possible issue could be using or “playing” with fire, a delicate symbol for sins, their sanctions, and divine power within religion. We should remember here that jinn are described as having been created from fire, which is also the basic substance for angels and devils (Nülist 2015, 33, 49, 383). Therefore, the fire matter is essentially considered as something special, possibly sacred, which is not the constitutive substance of humans and thus does not belong to their realm. It is also a symbol of (reprehensible) pride, since Satan uses it as an argument for not bowing to Adam.

An additional connection is yet possible: jinn, being Muslim demons, are supposed to be spared the sanction with the fire (Nülist 2015, 97). If we keep

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16 The interpretation of the hadīth as a prohibition to consume the frog could be inferred from its classification within the “Book of Foods” by Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī in his Bulūgh al-Marām (“Attainment of the Objective”).

17 To be understood, as the word harām indicates, as both holy and forbidden for humans.
in mind that some animals are considered to be crypto-jinn (Nünlist 2015, 103), it would be logical to prohibit their killing with fire, or in other words, to prohibit their sanction with fire, since their Lord Himself protects them from it. Once again, the ruling about killing animals could be related to the realm of jinn, as we can see through these examples.

2.3 Killing Harmful Animals: A General Rule or an Exception?

The succession of specific rules concerning single animals is interrupted at this place in the text with a general assessment: “It is permitted to kill all what is harmful among animals” (yajūz qatl kull shayʾ yuʾdhī min al-ḥayawānāt) (al-Jilâni 1997, 87). The permission is expressed in the form of a general, absolute rule and is justified by the fact that those creatures are essentially harmful (“created in a way that is harmful” (makhlūq ʿalā ṣifa tuʾdhī) and that harming is part of their character.

Here should be remarked that this ruling is a classical point of view in fiqh and is formulated in a similar way in the Ḥanbalī School (Ibn Qudāma 1997, 355–356), for the obvious reason that one should be allowed to protect oneself from dangerous or harmful animals. Al-Jilâni adds, however, a precision that makes the rule harsher and gives it a preventive aspect: the fact that the animal could be harmful is enough to allow its killing, even if it did not cause concrete harm. An enumeration of some examples like the viper, the scorpion, and the biting dog makes the ruling clear, since it concerns animals that might be found in the immediate environment of humans and can be fatally dangerous. Although the mouse, which is also listed, does not constitute a life danger, its propensity to cause material damages to food potentially threatens the existence of humans. The last animal to be mentioned is the black dog and will be treated separately because its killing is justified differently.

The rule, in its generality, does not fit easily with the rulings we saw before. For instance, it is plainly allowed to kill vipers here, whereas it is explicitly prohibited in the case of “those of the houses” as mentioned above. One cannot exactly understand why the gecko has been treated separately, if the permission to kill is justified by its dangerousness. What is observable is a progression in the thought of the author who, after having dealt with a specific but exemplary animal, arrives to a rather conclusive norm regarding the permission to kill, while he explains which category of animals can be killed and why. The insistence on the rules above should be understood as a persistence of their validity but also as a way of distinguishing them from other rules – the reason

18 Following the Islamic tradition, those fire creatures can be metamorphosed to visible human or non-human beings.
for that is not explicit but can be easily connected to the reference texts in *hadīth* literature, whose patterns al-Jīlānī partially follows.

Causing damage or mistreating an animal and taking care or protecting it are both sides of the same reality that touches on the well-being of the creatures. Al-Jīlānī's thought turns clearly around this pivot in the paragraphs where he emphasizes the importance of watering non-harmful animals. Giving water to thirsty animals is a landmark duty in Islamic tradition and al-Jīlānī does not diverge from this consensus (Wescoat 1995). However, he sheds the light on a specific point, as he repeats twice that harmful animals should not be given water at all. Avoiding their harm emerges as an important pragmatic principle that counterbalances the value of quenching the thirst of animals. The animals' welfare is warranted, as long as it does not affect humans' safety. This is especially the case concerning dogs.

2.3.1 The Case of Dogs (al-Jīlānī 1997, 87)

The traditions on killing dogs are well known in Islam and reused by al-Jīlānī here. It is said that the Prophet has ordered their killing, especially black dogs. While numerous reports can testify for this, there is, however, a sort of reappropriation in the rulings of the scholars, who consider the words of the Prophet to be a chronologically changing set of rules, including a phase of abrogation (*naskh*) (al-Nawawī 1994, 335–340).

The Prophet would have initially ordered to kill dogs after waking up one morning only to realize angels had not entered his house for three days due to the presence a pet hiding in his house. This second *hadīth* usually opens room for arguments about ritual purity in the presence or in contact of dogs and actually bears no exegetical function with respect to the topic of killing or not killing animals.

The Prophet then tempered his order and issued a *hadīth*: “Were the dogs not (a part of) a community among the communities created by God, I would have commended to kill them” (*law-lâ anna al-kilâb umma min al-umam la-amartu bi-qatlihâ*). This raises questions. The formulation almost opposes how God treats dogs versus how the Prophet does, where the Prophet expresses personal wishes that are invalidated by his vision or knowledge of the Creation, where dogs form a community of God's creatures. With this first decision, it could be assumed that this immunity from killing was then non-existent or that the Prophet was unaware of it at the time he ordered their killing. There is a paradox residing here because of his reasoning. On the one hand, the Prophet reportedly ordered the killing of dogs; while on the other hand, it is made clear that even he would refrain from doing so, out of respect for his Creator, as He created dogs as communities which would make them immune from killing.
Although the immunity is absolute and granted by the will of God, the Prophet still expressed his own impulse and remembrance of the fact that dogs may prevent angels from appearing inside the house, subsequently making them unwanted in a human environment. The paradox is even stronger considering that this event conveys a schism between God on one side, protecting dogs as a community, and the angels joining the Prophet on the other side, as they refuse to visit the Prophet because of the presence of a pet in the house, thus expressing abhorrence of the animal within him.

2.3.1.1 *Black Dogs: An Exception in the Abrogation Process*

With this in mind, the last sentence of the main report alluded by al-Jilānī, in a somewhat direct reference, is all the more enigmatic in that it peremptorily orders to kill black dogs, or, according to differing reports, black dogs with two white spots above their eyes. Al-Jilānī does not fail to mention this rule in the paragraph authorizing the killing of dangerous animals but complements it with another justification, which is that black dogs (*al-kalb al-aswād al-bahīm*) are “demons” (*shayṭān*) (Benkheira et al. 2005, 94). This provision is not his alone and can be found in other *ḥadīths*. Here, how the rules are set deserves special attention. With the justification of the rule by the dangerousness of the animals on the one hand, and the qualification of black dogs as demons on the other hand, the author hints that their dangerousness derives solely from their demonic nature and deviates from his usual practical justification for killing (through harmfulness, for instance).

2.3.1.2 *An Authorization or an Obligation to Kill?*

Aside from the *ḥadīth* mentioned above, an exceptional rule allowing or even mandating the killing of dogs remained for dogs who bite (*al-kalb al-ʿaqūr*), we should be aware here that the wording *kalb ʿaqūr* can also be assimilated to a wider animal class including tigers, lions, leopards, and wolves (Mālik 1985, 357). Though never explicitly stated in religious literature, this rule is more evidently justified given that dogs might transmit rabies through bites that may turn fatal.

The rules on dogs consist of several lines in our text and constitute a complex multileveled set, where the author seemingly proceeds by association. The authorization to kill is followed by changing postures between the obligation, authorization, and prohibition.

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19 Not only black dogs but all dogs acquire a devilish character in another story, where the dog originates from the spit of Satan.
The killing is initially permitted as dogs are considered to be harmful species. An exception is then introduced, stipulating that they may be given water, provided they are not harmful.\(^{20}\) Lastly, there is another provision that they may not be given water if they are harmful.

Regarding giving water to dogs, the author tackles the question of keeping domesticated dogs at home, and, aligning with the Prophetic tradition, declares it lawful only if the dog is assigned a role, such as a hunting dog, a sheepdog, or a watchdog.

In the end, al-Jilānī insists on the obligation (with a noticeable evolution from the above-stated “authorized killing”) to kill dogs that are prone to bite. This part may be a conclusion bearing one radical message: “If a dog is prone to bite, it is forbidden (harām) to let it [live], in accordance to unanimous [scholarly opinions (qawl wāḥid)]. The killing is mandatory so as to keep people away from its evil-doing” (al-Jilānī 1997, 87). His position, which in his own words reflects the absolute consensus of scholars, is clearly expressed here. Killing dogs can possibly be necessary for a good reason – namely their proven dangerousness – and becomes therefore an obligation, after being authorized on the grounds of the potential dangerousness of the dog.

Though the criteria for killing dogs remains ambiguous, the next association represented through a ḥadīth implies an abhorrence per se of the dog.\(^{21}\) Al-Jilānī seemingly establishes a causal relationship with a report stating that anyone taking in a dog for a purpose other than guarding sheep or hunting daily loses a part of his/her (religious) reward.\(^{22}\) By doing this, he creates a relation between the obligation of killing dogs who bite and the risk of losing rewards by keeping domesticated dogs for no specific reason. Admittedly, both topics were already covered in the text, but al-Jilānī uses this space to provide a conclusive opinion on the topic, linking different aspects regarding dogs. In sum, he confronts believers with two types of deeds and two categories of interests. The first one and most vital is the public interest; harmful dogs must be killed because they are a danger to people (li-yadfā‘a sharrah ‘an al-nās). The second one is a private religious interest, warning believers that the domestication of dogs does not religiously benefit them. The status of dogs and their relation to humans is hence dealt with from various and complementary perspectives.

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20 Here, there is talk of “animals” instead of dogs, specifically. I understand from the structure of the text that indeed all non-dangerous thirsty animals are meant here, including dogs, because they are mentioned shortly before and after this line.

21 Alternatively, we could also understand it as an implicit reference to the impure status of the dog.

22 The complete ḥadīth says: “man iqtanā kalb li-ghayr māshiya aw ṣayd naqaṣa min ajrihi kull yawn qirāṭān.”
2.4 Taking Care of Animals

The following group of rules concern pack animals and is stated in three lines. Firstly, al-Jilānī states that it is not permitted (lā yajūz) to overload them with work or cargo, to make them walk more than they can, or to prevent them from eating what they require. His only justification is that it is a sin not to behave gently (inna fiʿl dhālika ithm). Secondly, he qualifies force-feeding, defined as “feeding the animal more than it can eat,” as a blamable act. In both cases, he does not give any scriptural evidence.

Regarding force-feeding, al-Jilānī appears to hold a marginal opinion (al-Ḥaṭṭāb 2010, 43). The use of the passive form yukrah makes the source of the norm abstract and impersonal but does not give a hint as to if it is the result of a consensual or individual opinion. Conversely, his statement about exhausting pack animals reflects a commonly shared opinion among scholars. Its shortness and the fact that he does not use any scriptural evidence surprises somehow, but it contains the essence of the command in fiqh (the use of the legal terms “not permitted” and “sin” actually summarize it well) to treat animals gently.

To my knowledge, there is no hadith source for making force-feeding blamable, although it is reported that people were fattening the sacrificial animals in Medina (Bukhari 2016, 2517) and that only Ibn Shaʿbān, presumably the Mālikī scholar who died in 355/966, considered it blameworthy, because it meant assimilating to the Jews. It seems to me that the formulation of al-Jilānī insists more on the very welfare of the animal, as he speaks of feeding it “more than what it is capable of” (al-Jilānī 1997, 87). This interpretation would make his point of view innovative for both its generalization, as he does not evoke the consensus of scholars, and its justification, which is his own.

2.5 Making a Living from Leeches

The last rule of the section rules money-making by use of leeches as blamable. Al-Jilānī then specifies that some of the Ḥanbalīs prohibited it (ḥarrama) in accordance with a report from Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855). The gradation of the rules and the corresponding justification is notable. While it seems al-Jilānī leans towards rather upholding the first opinion, he still feels compelled to mention the second one. A hadith of the Prophet, stating that “making a living with leeches is abject (khabīth),” supports that it is blameworthy, whereas its prohibition derives from the presumed opinion of Ibn Ḥanbal. This might explain why al-Jilānī prefers to rule it as blameworthy, rather than

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23 Notice that the rule is within the book of sacrifice, which aims at the consumption of animals.
unlawful, and it demonstrates that he favored the *ḥadīth*-based rule over the opinion of his own *madhhab*.

Moreover, it is remarkable that the author is no longer dealing with how animals should be treated or killed, but rather with how they can be exploited. He does not question whether it is convenient to work with leeches but only if it is allowed to earn money with them. This shift in his perspective confirms again the complexity of the text and its structuration through a subjective thinking structure.

3 Al-Jīlānī’s Framework about Animal Ethics: Sunna Loyal though Individualized

I hope our progressive reading of the section on *adab* toward animals helped to bring up several landmark characteristics of the text and thus of the thinking patterns of the author.

From the perspective of animal welfare, we found shades of all norms in the text, as defined in *fiqh* terms: obligation to kill, permission to kill, interdiction to kill, and obligation to treat gently. The overview reveals a concern about both animal and human welfare. Al-Jīlānī comprehends *ādāb* toward animals as creating a beneficial interaction and, at some points, a harmonious relationship between both sides. Ultimately, and not surprisingly, human safety prevails, but within a frame to be respected, as we saw for snakes or ants.

Methodologically and ethically, al-Jīlānī goes beyond his incontrovertible commitment to Sunna-norms – visible through his repeated use and referencing to the *ḥadīth* corpus – to give some crucial personal standpoints.

A particularity of the text lies in the selection of the animals, which appears to depend on three interrelated hermeneutical parameters. His focus follows above all everyday-life interests in the big city of Baghdad, surrounded by ruins in a desert area. This should be a good reason to deal exhaustively with snakes and dogs, which were an integral part of city-life in the Islamic areas during the middle Ages (Mikhail 2014, 80–81). Despite this, it is not clear why he does not mention animals like cats or spiders, also abundantly present in Islamic literature and likely in his environment. The question remains, whether all evoked animals are really relevant in his environment, or if he sometimes simply uses

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24 I am aware that anthropocentrism could be examined more in-depth but would like to focus on al-Jīlānī’s thought without categorizing it. And I am careful with labeling things as such, since the discussions on this subject are still open, as Sarrah Tlili proves in *Animals in the Qur’an* (2012).
some Islamic leitmotivs. Parallel to this, his commitment to hadīth cannot be overstated. Except the one rule attributed to Ibn Ḥanbal, he resorts only to Prophetic reports to ground his rulings. There are no Qur’ānic references here. His exhaustive treatment of snakes mirrors a mysterious, though central interest, for the ūdān rule regarding the reptiles in the hadīth related literature, as shown for instance in the prayers and works compiled by al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) (al-Suyūṭī 2016, 151). Beyond real-life immediacy and the stress on the Prophetic way, we can fairly consider that he refers to a Sufi normative frame because of an anchoring to Sufi pedagogy, requiring from the seeker to care about all aspects of life to improve one’s spirituality. We remember that the whole setting of the book al-Ghunya corresponds to a guide for the Muslim until the gnosis. Moreover, this appears to confirm his reputation as a Sufi interested in ethical norms, more than metaphysics or theosophy (Geoffroy 2009, 36). Al-Jīlānī reveals himself as a pragmatic, practice-oriented teacher, with a discourse anchored in the Sunnī tradition.

This endorsement on heterogeneous reference systems unfolds into what I call internormativity, with the simultaneous use of hadīth as a source for either legal or ethical rules, pre-Islamic motives (snakes, jinn, and black dogs belong to universal archetypes as shown in El-Zein 2009, 92–93), parables from the Prophets’ stories, morality (especially as a Ḥanbalī aspect but also a Sufi one, as embodied in the concept of compunction – i.e. wara’), and of course fiqh.

This wide range of references seems to convey that all materials are equally relevant to establish ethical rules, provided they were validated by Islamic scholarship. The stories and rules about snakes do not only connect the reader with hadīth but also with world mythologies (El-Zein 2009, 95–98). The oath by the Prophet Noah reminds possibly of the inclusion of Satan on the ship and the solidarity of the animal reign with the humans (Lory 2018, 52–53). In many points, as retraced through the fiqh terminology, the author picks up more or less commonly shared rules that fit his vision. With his choices and the “decontextualisations” of some rules evoked conventionally in specific chapters of hadīth books, al-Jīlānī fashions a basic frame for an ethical behavior toward animals. His clinging to different mindsets that are unified in one worldview supports this. Beside the Sunnī theological mindset (we remember that this is the Sunnī revival epoch), he remains linked with the popular (Islamic) culture, arising the question whether inclusion of jinn is so marginal regarding fiqh and Islamic norms, while building a personalized mindset; in the end, a teacher is speaking. Besides, one cannot resist seeing a relation between our text and his popularity as a saint and “the master of Djinns” (Schimmel 1992, 352; al-Yāfī 2006, 190, 201, 203).
4 Conclusion

In this context, *adab* should be understood in its original meaning in *hadīth* literature, i.e. an individual exercise and self-correction in order to reach a good moral standing through *sharīʿa* conform behavior. The rights of animals themselves are, however, not the focus here. Comparably to “virtue ethics,” the conception of the author promotes an attitude guided by virtue. Behaving with respect of moral standards with animals is an inherent part of developing *one’s own virtues* and explains why behaving correctly with animals takes precedence over good conduct toward one’s parents, who represent the next outer sphere in one’s life after personal spirituality. We should keep in mind that the concern of al-Jīlānī in the entire book is to teach the believer what is good for him on the spiritual path. We should read the section as a component of following the complete religious and spiritual path.

Through this detailed analysis of the text, I tried to emphasize the necessity of reading original sources thoroughly to let them “speak” and show how al-Jīlānī’s text is an input to the bigger picture with respect to norms, ethics, and Islamic thought. Looking at the position of the section within the book and its contents shed light on the normative character of *ādāb* as complementary, or even equivalent, to *fiqh* regarding some issues and underlines the necessity of bringing such texts in a more encompassing Islamic perspective, since al-Jīlānī does not make distinctions between disciplines when ruling.

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