

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *AL-RADD 'ALĀ L-RADD:* CONCERNING THE METHOD OF ḤADĪTH ANALYSIS

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The Greek philosophers developed the method of dialectics for the evolution of their sciences. It consisted of solving the various conceivable possibilities of a problem through dialogue. Muslim scholars also practised this method and called it *munāẓara* (dispute, competition). As part of this procedure one not only set out one's own position clearly, but, particularly, also analysed the opposing position in order to discover its possible weaknesses. Regarding the latter, they (Greeks as well as Muslims) often overshot the mark in that they implied that their opponents held opinions that they did not advocate at all, or at least not in the manner described.

In issue 77/1 of the journal *Der Islam* a *munāẓara* between Irene Schneider and me was printed: my article, "Der Prophet und die Schuldner. Eine ḥadīth-Untersuchung auf dem Prüfstand"<sup>1</sup> and Schneider's response, "Narrativität und Authentizität: Die Geschichte vom weisen Propheten, dem dreisten Dieb und dem koranfesten Gläubiger". In her contribution Schneider not only summarises the text- and transmission-critical position that her book *Kinderverkauf und Schuldknechtschaft* is based on, but she also describes my position. However, in many instances her depiction of my views is incorrect. A rectification is thus necessary and sensible, as it would aid everyone (not just those directly involved) in obtaining greater insight into the opposing positions. It thus serves the aim of a *munāẓara*: the search for truth. In the following I shall elaborate only on the most serious misunderstandings and distortions, as well as on her objections to my opinions, but not on those passages where she only repeats her arguments without adding anything new.

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<sup>1</sup> See the English translation "The Prophet and the Debtors. A Ḥadīth Analysis under Scrutiny" in chapter 3.

I. MOTZKI'S *ISNĀD-CUM-MATN* ANALYSIS

In chapter 1.1 Schneider criticises the fact that in my explanation of why transmissions below the common link occur as single strands (i.e., a single chain of transmitters, and only branch out after the common link into several chains of transmitters), I neglect a third possibility, namely, “that the common link fabricated the statement by the Prophet as well as the chain in one or another form” (p. 89). It was unnecessary, however, to remark on this possibility at this point, since I had already mentioned it in my earlier article “*Quo vadis Ḥadīṭ-Forschung*” where my opinions on this topic are described in detail.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore Schneider claims that my concept of the common link implies “that an *authentic* tradition was transmitted to the common link” (p. 89, my emphasis). By ‘authentic’ she means “that the traditions... reached back to the Prophet” (p. 90). This interpretation prompts her to make this assessment: “The interpretation of the finding that authentic material was transmitted from the beginning and reached the common link in this state is not plausible due to the common link structure” (p. 91).

However, the implication that Schneider makes about my concept of the common link as collector is inappropriate. I neither assume the authenticity of a tradition in the sense that she thinks, nor that a tradition was indeed always transmitted. This is clearly expressed in my study “*Quo vadis Ḥadīṭ-Forschung*” that Schneider refers to as well.<sup>3</sup> If it is not clear enough there, I will stress once more: The concept of the common link as collector is aimed at emphasising the fact that the usual interpretation of the common link as creator and forger (which Schneider adheres to as well, as her book indicates) is one-sided and unsuitable for a general explanation of the phenomenon of common link. There are no grounds for assuming that *generally* the persons whom the common link names as his informant/s were invented by him, nor that the material that the common link transmits “was attributed to them in good faith (*pia fraus*)” (Schneider, “Narrativität und Authentizität”, 92). Is it reasonable to assume that Zuhri, for example, who is the common link in hundreds of tradition complexes, arbi-

<sup>2</sup> H. Motzki, “*Quo vadis Ḥadīṭ-Forschung*: Eine kritische Untersuchung von G.H.A. Juynboll: ‘Nāfi’ the *mawlā* of Ibn ‘Umar, and his position in Muslim *Ḥadīṭ* Literature,” 46; “Whither *Ḥadīṭ* Studies?,” 52–53 (chapter 2 of this volume).

<sup>3</sup> “*Quo vadis Ḥadīṭ-Forschung*,” 43–47; “Whither *Ḥadīṭ* Studies?,” 50–54.