

Non-Muslim (Western) Scholars' Approach to *Hadīth*: An Analytical Study on the Theory of "Common Link and Single Strand".¹

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ملخص

هناك فرق أساسى بين دراسة لحديث فى أوساط علماء المسلمين وبينها فى أوساط المستشرقين حيث إن الأول يركزون فى دراستهم على تفريق الأحاديث صحيحها وموضوعها بينما يركز هذا الأخير فى دراستهم على تاريخية حديث معين للبحث عن أصالته. وذلك لأن معظم المستشرقين - إن لم نقل جميعهم - يشككون إسناد الأحاديث إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم حيث إنهم يعتقدون أنه لو كان هناك أحاديث يمكن إسنادها فى الواقع التاريخي إلى النبي فقليل جدا. بناء على ذلك فإنهم مضطرون إلى بحث أصالة الأحاديث: متى وأين صدر الحديث ومن أصدره.

فهناك عدة نظريات تم تطويرها فى أوساط المستشرقين لحل هذه المسألة الأساسية منها ما يسمى *commom link* التى تولد منها عدة نظريات أخرى مثل *link, spider, diving, single strand, partial common* إلى غير ذلك.

¹I am grateful to Prof. Dr. Stefan Wild and Prof. Dr. Harald Motzki for their comments on an earlier version of this article.

وقد تقدم بنظرية *commom link* لأول مرة يوسف سخت

(Joseph Schacht) في كتابه *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (1950) وقد أثره في ذلك كتاب إغناز جولد زيهر (Ignaz Gold Ziher) وهو *Muhammadan Studien*. وقد أثرت هذه النظرية المستشرقين الذين جاءوا بعده بصفة عامة، من أبرزهم ج ه أ جوينبول (G.H.A. Juynboll) ولا يكفيه تبيينها فقط وإنما قام كذلك بتطويرها إلى حد بعيد رغم أنه يختلف عن سابقه في عدة مسائل هامة .

على أن هناك انتقادات لعدة قضايا ونظريات سخت وجوينبول

قام بها هرال موتزكى في كتابه *Die Anfänge der islamischen jurisprudence. Ihre Entwicklung in Mekka bis zur Mitte des 2 / 8 Jahrhundert* 1991, رغم أنه كذلك تلقى انتقادات من أرني سخنيدير Irene Schneider. إن النقاش حول صحة نظرية *common link* والنتائج التي تترتب عليها مازال جاريا في مجلة الدراسات الإسلامية مثل *Der Islam*. كيف تعمل هذه النظرية وإلى أي مدى تتمكن من إعطاء التفسيرات التاريخية لتحديد درجة الأحاديث النبوية؟ عن هذا الشأن تتكلم هذه المقالة.

فهناك عدة نظريات تم تطويرها في أوساط المستشرقين منها ما

يسمى *common link* وقد تولد من هذه النظرية عدة نظريات منها.

Abstrak

Dalam studi ḥadīth, ada perbedaan fundamental antara metode yang dikembangkan oleh sarjana-sarjana Muslim dengan metode yang dikembangkan oleh sarjana-sarjana Barat. Sarjana-sarjana Muslim menekankan pada penelitian tentang bagaimana memilah ḥadīth sahih dari yang palsu, sedangkan penelitian ḥadīth di Barat adalah *how to date a particular ḥadīth* (bagaimana menentukan tanggal atau umur) ḥadīth tertentu untuk menaksir asal-usulnya. Hal ini disebabkan karena sebagian besar, untuk tidak mengatakan semuanya, sarjana-sarjana Barat percaya bahwa sangat sedikit, walaupun ada, ḥadīth yang bisa disandarkan secara historis kepada Nabi. Oleh karena itu, penelitian tentang kapan, siapa dan dimana ḥadīth yang sedang diteliti dibuat harus dilakukan. Untuk menjawab pertanyaan sentral tersebut sejumlah metode telah dikembangkan dalam kesarjanaan barat (*Western scholarship*). Diantara metode tersebut dikenal teori *common link* yang telah menelorkan sejumlah konsep seperti *single strand*, *partial common link*, *spider*, *diving* dll.

Teori *common link* pertama kali diperkenalkan oleh Joseph Schacht dalam bukunya *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (1950) yang mendapat inspirasi dari Ignaz Goldziher dalam bukunya *Muhammadan Studien*. Teori tersebut secara umum telah menginspirasi sarjana Barat yang datang sesudahnya. Diantara yang paling setia, yang bukan hanya mengadopsi teori Schacht tapi telah mengembangkannya secara signifikan dalam skala besar, meskipun berbeda dari Schacht dalam sejumlah point penting, adalah G.H.A. Juynboll. Sebaliknya kritik tajam terhadap sejumlah premis dan metodologi Schacht dan Juynboll diartikulasikan oleh Harald Motzki dalam karya monumentalnya *Die Anfänge der Islamischen Jurisprudence. Ihre Entwicklung in Mekka bis zur Mitte des 2./8. Jahrhundert* 1991, meskipun kemudian dikritik oleh Irene Schneider. Polemik tentang akurasi teori *common link* dan implikasi metodologis yang ditimbulkannya sampai hari ini masih terus berlangsung dalam journal internasional studi Islam seperti *Der Islam*. Bagaimana teori tersebut bekerja dan sejauh mana akurasi teori tersebut dapat menyajikan taksiran historis untuk menentukan kualitas ḥadīth akan dibahas dalam artikel ini.

I

Unlike Muslim scholarship's emphasis on *ḥadīth* research, which stresses on how to verify a particular *ḥadīth* to distinguish the reliable from unreliable one, Western most important emphasis on *ḥadīth* research is how to date a particular *ḥadīth* to assess its provenance. This is because most Western scholars, if not all, believe that very few, if any, *ḥadīth* can be historically attributed to the Prophet. Then, the research on when, who and where a particular *ḥadīth* was invented must be undertaken. In order to answer that question, a number of methods have been developed in Western scholarship. One of the methods has introduced the so-called 'common link' concept, which has created other concepts like "partial common link", "spider", "single strand" and "diving".

The concept of common link was introduced by Joseph Schacht. His book *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, published in 1950, has become the primary source of inspiration for *ḥadīth* research in the Western scholarship. Schacht's general conclusion on *ḥadīth* was that no *ḥadīth* can be historically traced back to the Prophet. This was based on the hypothesis that *isnāds* tend to grow backwards. By studying carefully the growth of *isnāds* and by analyzing the *isnāds* of a particular *ḥadīth*, he tried to identify the common transmitter of the *ḥadīth* in question. He came to the conclusion that the occurrence of a common link in all or most *isnāds* of a given *ḥadīth* would be a strong indication of its having originated in the time of common link². Thus, in spite of their partially fictitious characters, *isnāds* could be used to discover the author of a given *ḥadīth* by comparing their different *isnāds* and looking for their common link.

Schacht's concept has been adopted by Josef van Ess. Like Schacht, he recognizes that *isnād* grew backwards and he accepts the common link theory. That is, when the *isnāds* of parallel *matn* converge on a particular transmitter. Contrary to Schacht, however, the common link may serve not only a *terminus post quem* but also a *terminus ante quem*³. How the com-

²Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, Oxford 1950, p. 172.

³For van Ess' work with *isnāds* see his *Zwischen Hadīth und Theologie*, Berlin, New York 1975, pp. 5-32.

mon link works and to what extent can we lay credence on it will be dealt with in the following pages.

II

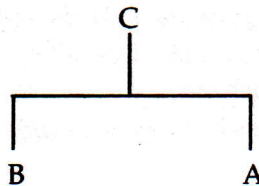
Unlike van Ess, Michael Cook is skeptical about the value of common link theory and historical information it may convey. Criticizing the phenomenon of common link, Michael Cook deals with the proliferation or the spread of *isnāds*⁴. That is, the creation of additional authorities (transmitters) for the same *matn*. The proliferation of *isnād* might have occurred in various ways: Firstly, by omitting a contemporary transmitter. Hypothetically speaking, assume that a transmitter (we call him A) has heard of a tradition from one of his contemporary traditionist (we call him B), who has heard it from his teacher (C). If A is scrupulous in his transmitting, he will mention B as his authority when he in turn passes on the *matn* (see diagram 1).

Diagram 1



Because the shorter the *isnād* the more elegant it is, and imaging some credit for himself, A does not quote B, who might be a mere contemporary or even younger. Rather, he directly mentions the teacher of B, i.e. C (see diagram 2).

Diagram 2



⁴Michael Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma*, Cambridge 1981, pp. 107-116.

Secondly, by ascribing a saying to a different teacher. Hypothetically speaking, let us assume that 'Abd Allāh tells Ibn Sa'īd a saying he has heard from Ibn Jubayr who got it from Ibn 'Abbās. But instead of claiming to have heard it from 'Abd Allāh or 'Abd Allāh's teacher Ibn Jubayr (diagram 3), Ibn Sa'īd ascribes the *ḥadīth* from Ibn 'Abbās to his own teacher Ibn Jurayj (it is probably well-known that Ibn Sa'īd never met Ibn Jubayr or perhaps the latter is not regarded by the former as an important person.) Assuming that the transmission of 'Abd Allāh survives independently of Ibn Sa'īd, later generations put the two transmissions together⁵. See diagram 4.

Diagram 3

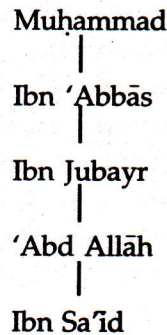
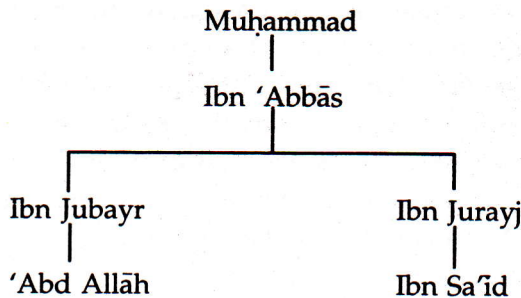


Diagram 4



⁵The names are not given by Michael Cook but by Herbert Berg. See Herbert Berg, *The Development of Early Exegesis in Early Islam*, pp. 42-45. The names chosen, however, are not convincing as example because Ibn Jurayj cannot have heard Ibn 'Abbās. Thus Ibn Sa'īd most likely would not make this choice for a fictitious *isnād*.

Thirdly, by obviating the "isolated" *ḥadīth*. "Because a well-attested *ḥadīth* carries more weight, there would be a strong motivation to discover other *isnāds*"⁶.

These methods of creating *isnāds*, according to Cook, yield the appearance of common link. It was the result of forgery. The appearance of common link, therefore, cannot provide a fixed historical point of *ḥadīth* transmission. Thus, he doubts not only the transmissions of single strands but also those of common links. Cook is, however, not sure yet about whether "spread of *isnād* was a process operative on a historically significant scale, or just an ingenious idea of Schacht's"⁷. The process of creating authority as described by Cook may have occurred in a certain degree, but to imagine that it was the common feature of *ḥadīth* transmission is historically untenable, for at least two reasons. (1) Cook's description is more an imaginary than a historical fact. He does not provide his description with historically enough evidence. (2) It is not difficult to find in *ḥadīth* literature a *ḥadīth*, which has independently been transmitted by some transmitters of different regions (Juynboll terms them partial common links (pcl)), who ascribe their respective transmission to a given transmitter (according to Schacht's term the common link (cl)). In such case, though according to Juynboll's later theory are very rare,⁸ the historicity of the transmission of common link is difficult to deny⁹.

Another scholar who criticizes the common link theory and the reliable information it may convey is Norman Calder. He denies that the common link has any relevance for dating traditions. A *ḥadīth*, which has a common link was not the result of a *ḥadīth* having been fabricated by common link. Calder's understanding of the scenario of the appearance of common link in the *ḥadīth* literature is different from what Schacht has depicted. The common link was, according to him, the result of competition among groups in and after the second half of the third century.¹⁰ Also, when a *matn* of *ḥadīth* attained acceptance in several groups, each group provided the *matn* with an *isnād* reflecting their respective groups. "Since nearly all

⁶Michael Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma*, pp. 107-116; Cf, Herbert Berg, *The Development of Early Exegesis in Early Islam*, pp. 42-45; G. H. A. Juynboll, "Some *Isnād* Analytical Method...", pp. 354-355.

⁷Michael Cook, *Ibid*, p. 111.

⁸See later discussion.

⁹Cf, Juynboll, "Some *Isnād* Analytical Method", pp. 355-356.

¹⁰Norman Calder, *Studies*, 237.

groups recognized the common heroes of the age of the Prophet, it tends to be at about the level of Successor that *isnāds* start converging". When they were competing to one another "they engage in a mutual process of *isnād* criticism, which, again because they share a common respect for the generation of Companions and the Successors, tends to focus on ousting a *ḥadīth* by destroying the third and fourth link.¹¹ This scenario "leads to the common link phenomenon, which reflects nothing whatsoever about the origins of the *matn* of the *ḥadīth*. It reflects *isnād* criticism and competition in or after the second half of the third century".¹² According to him "the common-link phenomenon as a feature of *ḥadīth* relates to a method of *isnād* criticism current amongst jurists and others in the second half of the third century".¹³ Thus, unlike Schacht who regards the common link as the fabricator of *matn*, he considers it to be the figure preceding the figure, which became the focus of dispute in mutual *isnād* criticism. Calder states "The dispute took place in the second half of the third century. It was during this period that all of these *isnāds* were discovered (or invented)".¹⁴ To substantiate his claim, Calder analyzed the *isnāds* of *ḥadīth* about *mass al-dhakar*, with material from Ṭahāwī's *ma'ānī al-āthār*, where the Mālikis and Hanafis took simple opposing positions.¹⁵ His conclusion on the analysis on the *isnād* of this particular *ḥadīth* leads him to a general conclusion about the appearance of common link as described above. If Calder's scenario is generally true, then the common link concept loses every utility for dating *ḥadīth*. That it is generally true can be doubted however, for he based his conclusion only on Ṭahāwī's *ma'ānī al-āthār*, which is of, according to himself "partisan nature" and works not only with "ad hoc arguments" but also with "arbitrary and irresponsible manipulation of prophetic and Companion dicta".¹⁶ The scenario of the appearance of common links, claimed by Calder, has been challenged by Motzki. Having analyzed and identified the common link of "cat" *ḥadīth*, he suggested the inapplicability of Calder's scenario.¹⁷

¹¹ Norman Calder, *Studies*, 237.

¹² Norman Calder, *Studies*, 237.

¹³ Norman Calder, *Studies*, 240.

¹⁴ Norman Calder, *Studies*, 240; Cf. Herbert Berg, *The Development of Exegesis in Early Islam*, p. 47-48.

¹⁵ Norman Calder, *Studies* 237-240.

¹⁶ Harald Motzki, "The Prophet and the Cat", pp. 37-8.

¹⁷ Motzki, "The Prophet and the Cat", pp. 36-38. For another critique, see M.

III

Different from Cook and Calder who criticize Schacht's concept of common link, Juynboll has completely picked it up and has even given it a new light at a large scale, even though he differs from Schacht in several significant points. Juynboll, like most other Western scholars, is not inclined to ascribe a particular *ḥadīth* to the Prophet merely because it is found in the so-called canonical collections. In dating a given *ḥadīth*, he has always addressed himself to three key questions, i.e., where, when and by whom may a certain *ḥadīth* have been brought into circulation. The answers of the three questions can, in his view, answer at the same time questions of provenance, chronology and authorship of a particular *ḥadīth*¹⁸. To answer the three questions, one must, first of all, identify the common link of a given *ḥadīth*. In so doing, the *isnād* of a particular *ḥadīth* must be analyzed, for example, by constructing an *isnād* bundle¹⁹.

In his research, Juynboll has pointed out that the common characteristic of *ḥadīth* transmission from the Prophet to the collectors "consists of only single strand of three (or four, or five) transmitters after the Prophet before the transmission paths of a report start branching out in various directions along several different strands"²⁰. See diagram 5. The fourth or the fifth transmitter, from whom onwards the *matn* is transmitted through numbers of transmitters, to end up finally in a number of canonical collections, is, since the time of Schacht, called 'common link'. The pupil of the common link who himself has several pupils is called by Juynboll 'partial common link' (pcl), whereas the single transmission line from the common link to the Prophet is called by Juynboll 'single strand'.

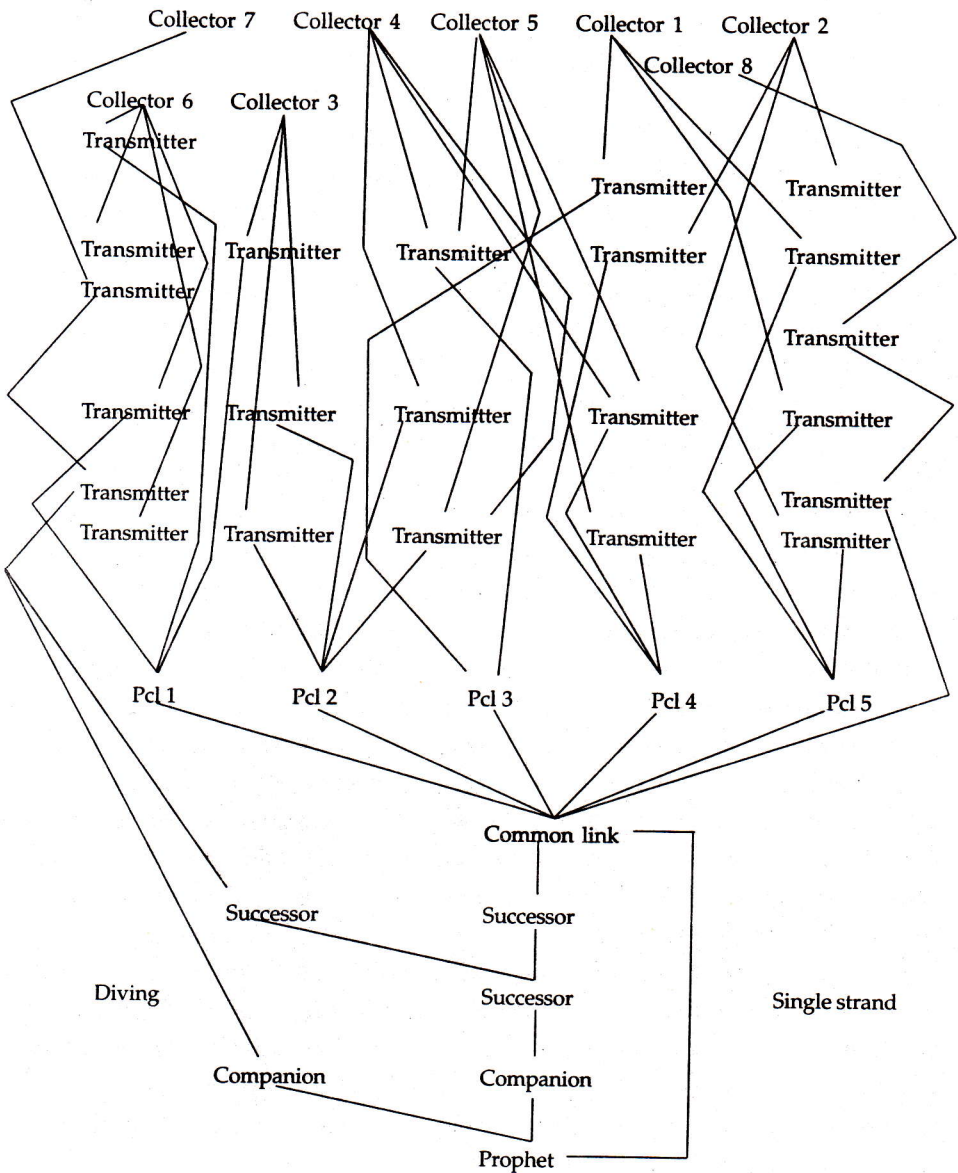
Muranyi, "Die Frühe Rechtsliteratur zwischen Quellenanalyse und Fiktion," pp. 224-41.

¹⁸G. H. A. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, p. 7.

¹⁹Juynboll makes use of Mizzi's *Tuḥfat al-ashrāf bi ma'rifat al-aṭrāf* in most of his *isnād* bundles.

²⁰G. H. A. Juynboll, "The Role of the *Muḥammadūrī*", p. 155.

Diagram 5



According to Juynboll, only the transmission of a common link, which is backed up by several partial common links can be regarded historically tenable (the transmission from the common link to collectors 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6). Whereas diving transmissions, i.e. *isnāds* which circumvent the com-

mon link and single strand transmissions, either from the Prophet to the common link or from the common link to the later generations, until they reach a collector (see collectors 7 and 8), have to be rejected for being historically improbable or, to say the least, historically fragile. This has to be supposed even if the text was transmitted through written materials. As Juynboll puts it: "If someone gave his tradition files, his *ṣaḥīfas*, to just one pupil for copying, it is unlikely that the latter passed them on for copying similarly to just one pupil, and it is even more unlikely that the last mentioned passed them on for copying again in the same fashion to another single pupil. In early Islam *ṣaḥīfas* are described as going from hand to hand, even if there was no formal master / pupil relationship between original compiler and later transmitters".²¹ Moreover, owing to his distrust of single strands, Juynboll coined the term "diving" to explain the phenomenon of given *ḥadīth*, which are transmitted by more than one Companion or Successor.

Juynboll is of the opinion that it was the common link, which was responsible for both *matn* (i.e. text) of a given *ḥadīth* and for the strand of transmitters connecting the time gap between him and the Prophet.²² He asserts that historical ascription to the Prophet would be that the transmission began to fan out after the Prophet i.e., at the level of Companions and not after three, four or five generations. That sort of transmission, as Juynboll claims, cannot regrettably be found in the so-called canonical collections. To explain the phenomenon of a strand, which is, according to him, seemingly transmitted by more than one Successor or more than one Companion beneath the common link, he introduced the term "diving", which, on the basis of his scrutiny, means that at first sight the *ḥadīth* seems to have been transmitted by more than one Successor or Companion, but upon inspection of the *isnād* it turns out to be a single strand. Such a strand is, according to Juynboll, invented by a particular collector to substantiate his transmission. It bypasses the common link, and directly dives either to the Successor's or to the Companion's level. About this phenomena of diving he said: the deeper the "dive" under the common link, the more recent is the date of origin of the transmission.

²¹Juynboll, "Nāfi', the *Mawlā* of Ibn 'Umar", p. 212; "Some Notes on Islams's first *Fuḡahā* distilled from Early *ḥadīth* Literature", p. 296.

²²G. H. A. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, pp. 206-217; "The Role of the *Mu'ammarrūn*", p. 155; *Nāfi'*, p. 210.

Juynboll's views on *isnād* analysis have continuously been subjected to modification. He has even strengthened the conditions of the real common link at the beginning of the nineties. This has consequently led him to conclude that most common links have turned out to be merely seeming common links, and it is partial common links that have to be regarded as the real common link. Juynboll has explained in detail this phenomenon in his artikel "Nāfi'...", in which he does not regard the common link Nāfi' as the real common link, but Mālik b. Anas (a partial common link).²³

How to explain the phenomenon that there is single strand from the Prophet to common link, and that the common link belongs to the third and fourth generation, instead of the first and second generation which is a general feature of *ḥadīth* according to Juynboll? Juynboll goes on speculating that this striking phenomenon was closely related to the birth of the *isnād* as compulsory authentication device. He claims, that was only between 63-73, when 'Abd Allāh b. az-Zubayr proclaimed rebellion against Umayyad authority.²⁴ Since this time every transmitters were obliged to name their informants or older authorities. To fill in the gap between themselves and the Prophet, transmitters after this time chose haphazardly both historical personalities and fictitious persons as their alleged informants.²⁵

What Juynboll described as the common feature of *ḥadīth* in the canonical collections is indeed very often to be encountered. That is, the transmission from the Prophet to the common link is a single strand, and it is only after the common link that the transmission begins to fan out. This fact, however, does not rule out the fact that there are some traditions, which do not follow this pattern but which are transmitted in a *tawātur* way (multiplied transmission from generation to generation). This kind of *ḥadīth* can be found in Azami's edition of Suhail's work. In editing Suhail's work, Azami put forward some *ḥadīth* which have been transmitted in *tawātur* way. For example, the *ḥadīth*

*"innamal imāmu layu 'tammu bihi, fa-idhā kabbara fakabbirū, waidhā raka'a farka 'ū, waidhā qāla 'sami'a al-lāhu liman ḥamidahu' faqūlū 'allāhumma rabbanā laka l-ḥamdu', waidhā sajada fajudū walā tasjudū ḥattā yasjuda, waidhā rafa'a farfa'ū walā tarfa'ū ḥattā yarfa'a, waidhā ṣallā qāidan faṣallū qu'ūdan ajma'ūn"*²⁶

²³ G. H. A. Juynboll, "Nāfi', the *mawla* of Ibn 'Umar..." in *Der Islam* 70, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin/New York 1993, pp. 207-244.

²⁴ Juynboll, "Nāfi'...", p. 210.

²⁵ Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, p. 5.

²⁶ *Ḥadīth* 3 of Suhail's work.

This *ḥadīth* was transmitted by seven Companions at the first stage, i.e., Abū Hurayra, 'Aisha, Jābir, Asīd b. Ḥuḍayr, Abū Umāma, Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī and Anas b. Mālīk. The first four belong to Madīna, the last two belong to Baṣra and Abū Umāma belongs to Shām. At the second stage the number of transmitters become larger. Abu Hurayra's tradition has transmitted by at least seven students of different regions. Four of which belong to Madīna, two students belong to Egypt and one student belongs to Yemen. These students of Abu Hurayra have in turn students, which amount to at least twelve students. This *ḥadīth* has also been transmitted by other Companions to their own students of different localities, which goes up to at least sixteen in the second generation and up to twenty six in the third generation.²⁷ If a particular *ḥadīth* was transmitted by a number of Companions to a number of Successors of different regions to a number of transmitters of different localities in the next generation, it is logically unlikely that the transmitters in every generation of different regions consulted to each other to forge the *ḥadīth*. It is, therefore, difficult to deny the historicity of such *ḥadīth*. However, we may wonder how much canonical *ḥadīth* have been transmitted in a *tawātur* way. It seems however that Juynboll is not sure yet of the historicity this kind of transmission. He would still ask the questions: are all these Companions partial common links, which have several partial common links as transmitters, and are the transmitters of the latter likewise partial common links? If this is not the case then Juynboll would not regard the transmission as historical. Juynboll's condition for historical transmission seems to be difficult to find, if any, in our *ḥadīth* literature. It may have been that the first generation before the common link did not feel necessary to provide their transmission with more than one informant. Juynboll's attention fails to catch this possibility.²⁸

Juynboll's explanation that the chronology of the appearance of the *isnād* led to the appearance of common links and single strands has been criticized by Harald Motzki. According to the latter, this chronology does not explain why common links are not usually found at the level of the Successors but one or more generations later. It does only explain the phenomenon of single strands. Motzki, therefore, has tried to find another

²⁷For more detailed informations about this *ḥadīth* and other *ḥadīths*, which have been transmitted in a *tawātur* way see Azami, *Dirāsāt fi al-ḥadīth al-nabawī*, Beirut 1968, pp. 27-31.

²⁸See below in the discussion of Motzki's views

explanation for the phenomena of common links and single strands.

Unlike Schacht, Juynboll and others, who consider the common link to be the fabricator and originator of a particular *ḥadīth*²⁹, Motzki interprets the common links as the first systematic collectors of traditions, who recorded and transmitted them in regular classes of students out of which an institutionalized system of learning developed³⁰. The common links, i.e., the first systematic collectors, who passed on the *ḥadīth* of the first century provided their transmission with *isnāds*, i.e., they named the informant from which they had received a particular *ḥadīth* together with an *isnād* or not. The explanation for the fact that these first collectors (common link) quoted only one authority for their transmission might be that they exclusively passed on the version of the *ḥadīth*, which they thought the most reliable one or that the necessity to quote more authorities and informants was not yet required. It is, however, possible that collectors (common link) independently added the most suitable informants if they were lacking from the *isnāds* of their informants³¹.

His interpretation on common link leads Motzki to a different explanation of the single strand between the common link and the earlier authority and the phenomenon of diving. The single strand in his opinion does not necessarily mean that there was only one line of transmission, through which a given *ḥadīth* was widely transmitted. The single strand exclusively means that the common link of a particular *ḥadīth* in transmitting *ḥadīth* mentioned only one line of transmission. There might have been other channels, which died out, because the common links (first collectors) did not receive them or did not pass them on, or because it was unknown at his time or place. Later on, students of the common links or later collectors tried to discover further information channels. If they succeeded they could "dive" one or more strands under the common link. This also means that a "diving" strand is not necessarily the result of the fabrication of later collectors, as Juynboll believes.³²

Unlike Juynboll who regards the common link as the one who is res-

²⁹ Schacht, *Origins*, pp. 171-172. Juynboll, "Some *Isnād* Analytical Methods", pp. 359-369.

³⁰ Harald Motzki, "Quo vadis, ḥadī' - Forschung?... ", p. 45.

³¹ Motzki, "Quo vadis", p. 45.

³² Motzki, "Quo vadis", p. 46; "Der Prophet und die Schuldner. Eine *ḥadī'* - Untersuchung auf dem Prüfstand", in *Der Islam*, p. 10.

possible for, besides the *matn*, the names linking their time with that of the first and oldest authority³³, Motzki does not reject *a priori* the claim of a common link to have received a particular *ḥadīth* from the informant or authority he mentioned. That is, the first member of the single strand which stretches from common link to an earlier authority (Successor, Companion or the Prophet). In other words, he does not reject the claim of a common link regarding his informant as long as no concrete indications of fabrication,³⁴ e.g., that the lifetimes of the common link and his alleged informant are not compatible with the claim that the former has received a particular transmission from the latter. If there was a fabrication, the motive of which may also be found through a thorough scrutiny of the *matn* of the *ḥadīth* in question³⁵, and by comparing the texts with the *isnāds* and the information available on the transmitters.³⁶ In principle, although Motzki's appreciation of the common link concept is different from those of Schacht and Juynboll, he is, like Schacht and Juynboll, inclined to believe that the *isnād* system in general and the common link concept in particular can be used for dating purposes.

Motzki's conclusions have not gone unchallenged. Irene Schneider has accused Motzki of having avoided the probability that the common link invented the message of the Prophet with one or more channels of transmission.³⁷ In fact, Motzki does not reject the probability. He merely rejects the idea that the common link has necessarily to be interpreted as the inventor of the *ḥadīth* in question. Motzki, according to Schneider, has implicitly argued that an authentic transmission was passed on the common link. To put it differently, Schneider rejects the probability that the original messages of the Prophet have been transmitted to the common link since the very beginning, for the care for transmitting the exact words of the Prophet inclusive of the accurate quoting of the transmitter was not yet practiced at the beginning. The structure of common link, therefore, means that people in a

³³ Juynboll, „Nāfi“, p. 210.

³⁴ Motzki, „*Ar-radd 'alā r-radd* - Zur Methodik der *ḥadīth* - Analyse“ in *Der Islam* (78) 2001, p. 157.

³⁵ Harald Motzki, „The Collection of the *Qur'an*. A Reconsideration of Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments“, in *Der Islam* (78) 2001 p. 30.

³⁶ Harald Motzki, „The Prophet and Cat“, p. 32.

³⁷ Irene Schneider, „*Narrativität und Authentizität: Die Geschichte vom Weisen Propheten, dem dreisten Dieb und dem Koranfesten Gläubiger*“ in *Der Islam* (77) 2000, p. 89.

certain time was aware of this shortcoming and began to collect³⁸. It is, therefore, logical to assume that the common link has played a central role for a particular tradition. That does not mean, however, that the concerned transmitter, embodied by the common link, has been created by the common link from nothing. Rather, old materials as starting point might have been used, for example, by providing a higher authority (Prophet, Companion) or through an inner revision to adapt a newly emerged law problem³⁹. Schneider's judgment on the role played by common link is more in line with that of Motzki than those of Schacht and Juynboll.

However, Schneider is not convinced with Motzki's explanation of the single strand phenomenon. That is, that the common links quoted only one transmitter or authority because they might have thought it the most reliable one. This explanation is, according to Schneider, not convincing because it is contrary to the practice of later transmission, which consider the single transmission to be weak. Like Juynboll, she wonders, why there have been no other independent proofs for a particular *ḥadīth*, which was transmitted through other transmitters than common link⁴⁰.

Motzki's explanation of the "diving" phenomenon⁴¹ (the term coined by Juynboll) answers part of Schneider's curiosity. Motzki has also answered Schneider's wonder about the "single strand" phenomenon. He argues that (1) the first collectors or the early transmitters could not know what the later practice transmission would be, neither could they know that later generation would distinguish between the single transmission (*āḥād*) and *tawātur* transmission.⁴² (2) It can be shown from several *isnād* bundles that provision with several authorities for the same tradition (Juynboll terms it inverted common link) occurred at the level above common link. That is, at the level in which the channels of transmission fan out.

³⁸Schneider, "*Narrativität und Authentizität*", p. 91. Schneider does not give a certain date of the appearance of the *isnād* system. She simply quotes Juynboll's view, which appraises the appearance of *isnād* in 61-73. She agrees also with Motzki who said that it might have taken a certain time until the usage of *isnād* was generally practiced in several Islamic centers.

³⁹Irene Schneider, *Kinderverkauf und Schuldknechtschaft*, p. 70; „*Narrativität und Authentizität*“, p. 89.

⁴⁰Irene Schneider, *Kinderverkauf und Schuldknechtschaft, Untersuchungen zur Frühen Phase des Islamischen Rechts*, Stuttgart 1999, pp. 69-70.

⁴¹See above

⁴²This problem, according to Motzki, emerged in the time of al-Shāfi'i.

But this practice was the exception, not the rule. It was only the compilations of the third century or later, which often but not invariably, provided several channels of transmission.⁴³

Motzki does not reject *a priori* the claim of the common link to have received something from the authority he quoted⁴⁴, neither does he conclude *a priori* that the whole information or part of it really came from the quoted informants⁴⁵. In other words, he does not give a certain answer to the question whether or not the informants of common link are historical. According to him, this has to be investigated for every tradition. In some of his articles, Motzki has this problem and he has, however, pointed out that some *ḥadīths* can be dated before the time of common link⁴⁶ and that at least their cores, might have been circulated at the time of the Prophet already. In his article "The Murder of Ibn Abī al-ḥuqayq"⁴⁷ Motzki established that the transmission of this event, in which Zuhri is the common link, might really be ascribed to the Successor Ka'b b. Mālik (the informant of Zuhri). This event is, therefore, to be dated in the last quarter of the first century.⁴⁸

Gregor Schoeler has articulated a similar view as that of Motzki that common link does not have to be interpreted as the fabricator of a particular *ḥadīth*. His method of dating a particular *ḥadīth* has brought him to an earlier time of dating than the time of common link. In his article "Mūsā b. 'Uqba's *Maghāzī'*" he demonstrated that the sources of the common link Zuhri ('Urwa b. Zubayr) are authentic, for most of the concerned traditions going back to 'Urwa not only in the Zuhri transmission but also in the independent transmission of Hishām, a son of 'Urwa.⁴⁹ Additionally, ana-

⁴³ Motzki, "Der Prophet und die Schuldner", p. 10.

⁴⁴ Motzki, "The Collection of the *Qur'ān...*", pp. 30.

⁴⁵ Motzki, "Der Prophet und die Schuldner", p. 10.

⁴⁶ Motzki, "Ar-radd 'alā r-radd- Zur Methodik der *hadī'*-Analyse" in *Der Islam* 78 (2001), p. 151

⁴⁷ H. Motzki, "The Murder of Ibn Abī al-ḥuqayq..." in Motzki, *The Biography of Muhammad: The Issue of the Sources*, Leiden 2000, 170-239.

⁴⁸ See also his article "The Prophet and the Cat" in which he established that the *ḥadīth* in question is not to be dated in the time of the common link Ishāq b. 'Abd Allāh b. Abī 'alḥa (d. 130-134). The *ḥadīth* could have been brought into circulation in the time of the Successor Qatāda, i.e., in the last quarter of the first century. Another example see A. Görke, "Die frühislamische Gesichtsüberlieferung zu Hudaybiyya" in *Der Islam* 74 (1997), 193-237.

⁴⁹ Gregor Schoeler, "Musa b. 'Uqba's *Maghāzī'*" in Harald Motzki, *The Biography of Muhammad. The Issue of the Sources*, Brill 2000, p. 86; Gregor Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentizität der muslimischen Überlieferung über das Leben Mohammeds*, Walter de Gruyter 1996,

lyzing the *ḥadīth al-ifk*, Schoeler believes that the common link Zuhri (d. 124/742) really received the *ḥadīth* in question from his informant 'Urwa b. az-Zubayr (d. 94/712), and did not fabricate it.⁵⁰ This *ḥadīth*, therefore, was already brought into circulation in the first century of Hijra. Motzki and Schoeler are probably not as skeptical as most Western scholars about the possible historicity of single strand transmissions. They are, however, not as optimistic as most Muslim scholars.

In the classical Muslim scholarship of *ḥadīth*, the single strand is labeled as *shādhah* (irregular) and *gharīb* (unusual or strange) or *fard* (single). The reliability of such transmission depends on the quality of transmitters. If the transmitters are reliable (*thiqa*), their transmissions are considered to be *thiqa* as well.⁵¹ However, if a *ḥadīth* is transmitted by a trustworthy transmitter, but goes against the narration of people more reliable than him (a *shādhah ḥadīth*), this transmission is considered to be unreliable. To put it differently, the single strand or the absolute singleness (*fard muṭlaq*) of transmitters in every stage does not affect the reliability of transmission as long as the transmitters in every stage are *thiqa*, and the transmission does not go against the narration of people, which considered more reliable.⁵² It is here that Muslim scholars in general differ fundamentally from Western scholars. The problem to which most, if not all, Western scholars object is the method of Muslim scholars to determine the reliability of transmitters. Muslim scholars base their judgment on transmitters on the *kutub al-rijāl*. Conversely, non-Muslim scholars consider it to be less reliable, if not devoid of value.⁵³

Classical Muslim scholars' view on the reliability of single strand (*tafarrud al-riwaya*), which is transmitted by reliable transmitters in every stage has not gone unchallenged. Asad Sālim Tayyīm, a Modern Muslim scholar, objects to consider *tafarrud al-riwaya* to be reliable. He claims that even reliable transmitters (*thiqa*) could have made mistakes in their trans-

pp. 20, 144, 150.

⁵⁰ Gregor Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie*, pp. 20, 144.

⁵¹ Ibn al-Ṣalāh, *Ulūm al-ḥadīth*, p. 68; al-Hākim, *Ma'rifat 'ulūm al-ḥadīth*, p. 148; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bā'ith al-ḥathīth*, p. 56; al-Suyūfī, *Tadrib al-rāwī*, ḥ, p. 232; al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-'tidāl*, III, pp. 140-141.

⁵² If a narration, which goes against another authentic *ḥadīth*, is reported by a weak narrator, it is known as *munkar* (denounced).

⁵³ For Western general judgment on *kutub al-rijāl* see, G. H. A. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, pp. 134-217; "*Ridjāl*", *Et*, Leiden 1995.

mission, especially when the path of transmission began to fan out in a large scale. He argues that the critics of hadith generally rejected the ahadith garaib, in which their transmitters (at the end of second century) are alone in their transmission. For example, Imam Abd Rahman b Mahdi (d. 198), one of the most reliable transmitters in his time, was alone in transmitting something from Malik. Rejecting his transmission, The critics of hadith asked how could Ibn Mahdi have transmitted the hadith from Malik and all other transmitters of Muwatta could have not. He said that the rejection or the suspension of judgment of the reliability of single transmissions is the principle of hadith critics. Their acceptance of such transmission is only exception.⁵⁴

IV

Although it has been differently interpreted, the common link concept has been extensively used as a powerful research tool for *isnād* analysis in the Western scholarship of *ḥadīth*. Because it is an orientalist one, it seems that this concept and its methodological implications have not been realized, or even unknown, let alone to be used, in the Muslim scholarship of *ḥadīth*. This theory has also driven some Western scholars to an earlier dating of a particular *ḥadīth* than ever before, even earlier than the dating of the champion of this theory. In other words, In spite of their fundamentally different judgment from Muslim scholars on the provenance of *ḥadīth*, Motzki's and G. Schoeler's⁵⁵ dating on particular *ḥadīth* are relatively earlier than that of Joseph Schacht, the one who coined the concept. Whereas Juynboll's dating on a particular *ḥadīth* has fundamentally changed due to the change of his views on the real common link. He found during his scrutiny of some *isnād* bundles that there are some common links turned out to be seeming common links. This modification of his views on *isnād* has in general led Juynboll to a later dating than that of Schacht. Juynboll claims that many common links appeared due to the fabrication of *isnād*, which were invented by later collectors. In this case he is in line with Michael

⁵⁴ Asad Salim Tayyim, *Takhrij hadith Aus al-thaqafi*, Jordan 1999. pp. 30-31.

⁵⁵ Motzki and G. Schoeler work with the concept extensively and developed it further in their *isnād-cum-matn* method of analysis. See Motzki, "The Murder of Ibn Abī al-huqayq..."; Gregor Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentieder muslimischen Überlieferung über das Leben Mohammeds*

Cook's views on the system of *isnād*. Juynboll's dating therefore cannot be regarded as a representative of dating, which tries to come to the time before the common link.

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