

## **Carl Brockelmann and Fuat Sezgin in Islamic Heritage: An Analysis of Their Contributions**

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### **Abstract**

The works of Carl Brockelmann and Fuat Sezgin are important contributions to the history of the Islamic heritage. Carl Brockelmann's (1884-1956) *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, on the one hand, was a pioneer in the study of Islamic theology, history, and literature. His work provided a comprehensive overview of the intellectual and cultural developments in the Islamic world from its inception to the modern period. Brockelmann emphasized the importance of understanding Islamic thought and literature within its contextual and historical backgrounds. Fuat Sezgin's (1924-2018) *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* focused on studying Arabic manuscripts with a methodology that combined historical and scientific approaches. Sezgin believed that studying Arabic manuscripts could provide insights into Islamic civilization's scientific and intellectual achievements. The contributions of Brockelmann and Sezgin have been instrumental in shaping the study of the Islamic heritage and continue to be influential in contemporary scholarship.

**Keywords:** Carl Brockelmann, Fuat Sezgin, German orientalists, history of the Arab peoples, Islamic heritage, literature, critique of orientalism from the east.

### **Introduction**

The Islamic heritage is rich with contributions from scholars who have delved into various aspects of the history of science in the Muslim world. Among these scholars are Carl Brockelmann and Fuat Sezgin, who both contributed significantly to this field. Both scholars extensively researched and wrote on the history of Islamic science and philosophy, providing valuable insights into the Islamic intellectual tradition. This article will delve into their works and examine their contributions to the field.

Carl Brockelmann, a German orientalist and scholar of Islamic studies, is best known for his work *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur* (History of Arabic Literature), a five-volume comprehensive survey of Islamic literature and culture, covering various topics, including poetry, literature, philosophy, and science. Brockelmann emphasized the importance of examining the Islamic intellectual tradition in its historical and cultural context. He highlighted the contributions of non-Arab Muslims to the development of Islamic thought and culture, recognizing the diversity of the Islamic heritage. His work also demonstrated the influence of Islamic culture on European literature and philosophy, highlighting the role Islamic thought played in shaping European intellectual history.

Fuat Sezgin, a Turkish historian of Islamic science, is renowned for his research on the transmission of scientific knowledge from the Islamic world to Europe during the Middle Ages. His magnum opus, the *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums* (History of Arabic Writing), is a comprehensive survey of the development of science and technology in the Arab world from the

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8<sup>th</sup> century to the present. The 17-volume work covers various topics, including mathematics, astronomy, medicine, chemistry, and physics. In his work, Sezgin emphasized Islamic scholars' role in preserving and transmitting knowledge from the ancient Greek and Indian traditions. He highlighted the contributions of Islamic scholars such as al-Khwarizmi, al-Farabi, and Ibn Rushd, who made significant contributions to the development of scientific knowledge. Sezgin also explored the impact of Muslim scientists on European thought and culture, demonstrating the role they played in the European Renaissance.<sup>1</sup>

## **Background of Arab and Islamic Civilization**

Arab-Islamic civilization gradually began to form in the second/eighth century when Arab culture had grown and begun to prosper. At the time, cultural centres were established in Arab and Islamic cities, such as Medina in the Hijaz, Basra and Kufa in Iraq, Damascus in the Levant, Cordoba in Andalusia, and Fustat in Egypt. These centres were homes to diverse cultural arts with their own unique characters. In these cultural centres, over the generations, scholars produced thousands of works, making a lasting contribution to human heritage.<sup>2</sup>

Before the modern era, study of this heritage outside the Muslim world was marked by Orientalism. The emergence and development of Orientalism was associated with two phenomena that had the most impact in defining its priorities and research agenda.<sup>3</sup> The first was the phenomenon of Christian evangelization in the Muslim world.<sup>4</sup> This required evangelists to have some knowledge of Islam as a religion to search for loopholes through which to criticize it. The second was the phenomenon of colonialism that made understanding the culture of the occupied peoples an urgent necessity.<sup>5</sup> Over time, though, Orientalism took on a more scientific nature, as Orientalist increasingly focused on an objective understanding of Islam and Muslims.<sup>6</sup> German Orientalists especially had a prominent role in this development.<sup>7</sup> This is because Germany had only limited colonies in East Africa, which were quickly liquidated after the First World War.<sup>8</sup> Several German orientalists, such as Nöldeke, Flügel, and Brockelmann (1868-1956), were characterized by some impartiality and provided great services to the historiography of Islam and Arab culture.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Arfan Yilmaz, *Muktashif al-Kanz al-Mafqud (The Discoverer of the Lost Treasure: Fuat Sezgin and a Documentary Tour of the Inventions of Muslims)* Translated by Ahmad Kamal. Cairo: Dar al-Nil (2009), 29–30.

<sup>2</sup> Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, *Tarikh al-Khulafa' (History of the Caliphs)*. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, (2013), 101.

<sup>3</sup> William Montgomery Watt, *Muslim-Christian Encounters*. London: Routledge (2013); Faris Aziz al-Modarres, *Al-Tatawwur al-Tarikhi wa-l-Wazifi lil-Istishraq (The Historical and Functional Development of Orientalism)* (n.p.: Dār al-Khalij li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī', 2021), 129.

<sup>4</sup> Jerzy Zdanowski, *Saving Sinners, Even Moslems: The Arabian Mission (1889–1973) and Its Intellectual Roots* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 99.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas S. Kidd, *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 125.

<sup>6</sup> Chantal Verdeil, "Mission Movement to and from the Middle East," in *The Rowman & Littlefield Handbook of Christianity in the Middle East*, ed. Mitri Raheb and Mark A. Lamport (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), 103.

<sup>7</sup> Ataullah Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Twentieth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1997), 101; Tara Alberts, *Conflict and Conversion: Catholicism in Southeast Asia, 1500–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 53; Ursula Wokoeck, *German Orientalism: The Study of the Middle East and Islam* (London: Routledge, 2009), 1.

<sup>8</sup> Henning Trüper, *Orientalism, Philology, and the Illegibility of the Modern World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020), 270.

<sup>9</sup> Theodor Nöldeke, Friedrich Schwally, Gotthelf Bergsträsser, and Otto Pretzl, *The History of the Qur'ān*, trans. and ed. Wolfgang H. Behn (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Johann Fück, *Tārīkh Ḥarakāt al-Istishrāq (The History of the Orientalist*

German Orientalists had a distinct interest in classical Islamic texts, of which they began to publish several critical editions on a large scale in the eighteenth century. Interest increased in the nineteenth century as hundreds of ancient texts were published. The topics of these texts were diverse, including ancient pre-Islamic poetry, Islamic language and literature, history, geography, philosophy, arithmetic, and astronomy. Some German orientalists who played a role in critically editing and publishing classical texts include Gustav Freytag (1802-1870), Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866), Carl Eduard Sachau (1845-1930), and Helmut Ritter (1892-1971). Several German orientalists also began to categorize this heritage's many texts and their locations in indexes, whether in German or international libraries. Alfred von Kremer (1828–1889), Philipp Franz von Siebold (1796–1866), Carl Brockelmann, and Helmut Ritter all developed catalogs of Arabic manuscripts and published the catalogue of the Islamic Library of the German Orientalists Association in Istanbul.<sup>10</sup>

The efforts of German orientalists in critically editing and publishing classical Arabic were of great importance in preserving several texts that would have otherwise perished. Many texts were damaged and lost amid the tribulations and disasters the Islamic world went through, which led several Muslims and non-Muslims to become concerned with preserving this heritage. In this context of German Orientalism, Brockelmann studied Semitic languages under the guidance of Friedrich Wilhelm Martin Philippi, who influenced his life.<sup>11</sup> This directed him towards studying oriental languages while still a high school student.<sup>12</sup> Brockelmann joined the university in 1886 in his hometown of Rostock after receiving a scholarship due to his high academic performance. He learned Arabic and Turkish as well as history and the Islamic sciences.<sup>13</sup> After graduating, he specialized in Islamic history. He obtained his doctorate in 1890 with a thesis titled “The Relationship between the Complete Book of History by Ibn al-Athir and the Book of Reports of the Messengers and Kings by al-Tabari.”<sup>14</sup> Brockelmann's career path extended for more than six decades. Brockelmann transitioned across various German institutions until his retirement in 1945, after which he was employed under the German Orientalists Association.<sup>15</sup> He is credited with preserving its huge library from loss in the aftermath of the war, as he supervised the transfer of books to the stores designated for them despite his advanced age. Brockelmann ended his life working as a professor in Halle until he died in 1956.<sup>16</sup>

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*Movement*), ed. ‘Umar Luṭfī Sālim (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 2001), 254; Najīb al-‘Aqīqī, *Al-Mustashriqūn (Orientalists)*, vol. 2 (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1981), 383.

<sup>10</sup> Najīb al-‘Aqīqī, *Al-Mustashriqūn (Orientalists)*, vol. 3 (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1981), 708–709; ‘Abd al-Rahmān Badawī, *Mawsū‘at al-Mustashriqīn (Encyclopedia of Orientalists)* (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm li-l-Malāyīn, 1993), 411–412; Hāshim Ismā‘īl al-Ayyūbī, *Abḥāth ‘Arabiyya (Arabic Research)* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍa al-‘Arabiyya, 1994), 367–368.

<sup>11</sup> Aaron M. Butts, *Semitic Languages in Contact* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 293; Ursula Wokoeck, *German Orientalism: The Study of the Middle East and Islam* (London: Routledge, 2009), 237; Raphael Patai, *Apprentice in Budapest: Memories of a World That Is No More* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 321.

<sup>12</sup> Aaron M. Butts, *Semitic Languages in Contact*, 293.

<sup>13</sup> Brockelmann, Carl. *History of the Arabic Written Tradition*. Vol. 1. Translated by Joep Lameer. Leiden: Brill, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Götz Nordbruch and Umar Ryad, *Transnational Islam in Interwar Europe: Muslim Activists and Thinkers* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 118; Youssef M. Choueiri, ed., *Routledge Library Editions: History of the Middle East*, vol. 11 (London: Routledge, 2021), 193; Najīb al-‘Aqīqī, *Al-Mustashriqūn (Orientalists)*, vol. 2 (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1981), 425–426.

<sup>15</sup> Henning Trüper, *Orientalism, Philology, and the Illegibility of the Modern World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020), 347; Jacques Waardenburg, “Study of Islam in German Scholarship,” in *Mapping Islamic Studies*, ed. Azim Nanji (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 29–30.

<sup>16</sup> Brockelmann, *History of the Arabic Written Tradition*, 1: viii.

His bibliography reached 550 multilingual books.<sup>17</sup> Many factors contributed to this huge achievement, including his determination and unmatched ability to work, strong memory, mastery of the arrangement of scientific literature on tens of thousands of note cards that he carefully categorized, and, finally, his ability to express ideas accurately. This abundant and diverse scientific production can be categorized within two frameworks. The first is philology, among which is *Intermediate Turkish Vocabulary according to the DiwĒn of Turkic Languages* by Mahmoud al-Kashgari,<sup>18</sup> and “The Handbook of Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages”, one of his most famous writings, in which he explained Semitic linguistics using historical linguistic methods and knowledge of Arabic language, dialects, and styles.<sup>19</sup>

His second masterful synthesis is his history of Islam and Islamic civilization.<sup>20</sup> His two books, *GAL I Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur* and *Gal II Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur*, are the most famous and important of his works and remain canonical texts for students of Arabic and Islamic studies.<sup>21</sup> The first edition of the work appeared in two volumes between 1898 and 1902 and was then supplemented with a three-volume appendix between 1937 and 1942.<sup>22</sup> The book, along with the revised versions of the first two volumes, is not a history in the strict sense, rather, it is a catalog of all Arab writings, both in manuscript and published form, along with biographical details of the authors. The book's content is divided into four chronological sections.<sup>23</sup> The first studies Arabic literature from its inception to the Umayyad era. The second studies Arabic-Islamic literature in the classical era from the Umayyad era to the Mongol invasion in 1258.<sup>24</sup> The third studies the deterioration of Arabic literature after the Mongol invasion through to the Ottoman conquest of the Arab region and the end of Western imperialism. The fourth component encompasses examining contemporary Arabic literature from the eighteenth century onward. It comprises extensive indexes spanning around six hundred pages, encompassing the titles of Arabic literary works and the names of their respective authors.<sup>25</sup>

In juxtaposition to the favorable reception that the book garnered in Western societies, it faced severe criticism in the Islamic world due to methodological complaints pertaining to the absence of source citations, along with critiques of the author's prior writings on the biography of the Prophet (PBUH), which led critics to assert that Brockelmann questioned the universality of the Islamic message which he saw as intended only for Arabs. Notwithstanding, Brockelmann's works

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<sup>17</sup> Najib al-‘Aqīqī, *Al-Mustashriqun (Orientalists)*, vol. 2 (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1981), 708–709.

<sup>18</sup> Ali Muhammad Sharif Rasul, *Al-Awda‘ al-Haqariyya fī Bilad Ma Wara‘ al-Nahr fī ‘Ahd al-Turk* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2020), 40; ‘Abd al-Rahman Badawi, *Mawsu‘at al-Mustashriqin (Encyclopedia of Orientalists)* (Beirut: Dar al-‘Ilm li-l-Malayin, 1993), 103.

<sup>19</sup> Raḍwān al-Sayyid, *Al-Mustashriqūn al-‘Almān (German Orientalists)* (Beirut: Dār al-Fārābī, 2007), 16–17.

<sup>20</sup> Hashim Isma‘īl al-Ayyubī, *Abḥath ‘Arabiyya (Arabic Research)* (Beirut: Dar al-Nahḍa al-‘Arabiyya, 1994), 22; Najib al-‘Aqīqī, *Al-Mustashriqun (Orientalists)*, vol. 2 (Cairo: Dar al-Ma‘ārif, 1981), 425; Muhsin Muhammad Husayn, *Al-Istishraq bi-Ru‘ya Sharqiyya (Orientalism with an Eastern Vision)* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2012), 270.

<sup>21</sup> Najib al-‘Aqīqī, *Al-Mustashriqun (Orientalists)*, vol. 2 (Cairo: Dar al-Ma‘ārif, 1981), 425; Muhsin Muhammad Husayn, *Al-Istishraq bi-Ru‘ya Sharqiyya (Orientalism with an Eastern Vision)* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2012), 270; Muhammad Mahmud al-Tanahi, *Madkhal ila Tarikh Nashr al-Turath al-‘Arabi* (Cairo: Dar al-Qalam, 1984), 260.

<sup>22</sup> Ahmad Mahmud Huwaydi, *Al-Istishraq al-Almani (German Orientalism)* (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-‘Arabi, 2000), 16–17; see also Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1898–1902), vols. I–II.

<sup>23</sup> Muhsin Muhammad Husayn, *Al-Istishraq bi-Ru‘ya Sharqiyya (Orientalism with an Eastern Vision)* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2012), 270.

<sup>24</sup> Johann Fück, *Tarikh Harakat al-Istishraq (The History of the Orientalist Movement)*, ed. ‘Umar Lutfi Salim (Cairo: Dar al-Ma‘ārif, 2001), 227.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Abd al-Rahman Badawi, *Mawsu‘at al-Mustashriqin (Encyclopedia of Orientalists)* (Beirut: Dar al-‘Ilm li-l-Malayin, 1993), 104.

effectively addressed a lacuna in the scholarship in examining Islam, its historical trajectory, and its cultural achievements.<sup>26</sup>

### Specific Critiques from Arab Scholars of Carl Brockelmann's Work

Arab scholars have engaged in constructive debates and discussions with European scholars to promote a more balanced and culturally sensitive approach to studying Arabic literature and Islamic culture. These discussions have led to a more nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in cross-cultural scholarships.

Although Brockelmann's scholarly contributions have garnered significant recognition and admiration within Western academic communities, it is imperative to acknowledge the wider academic discourse and responses to his work in the Middle Eastern region. Some Middle Eastern scholars have raised concerns about the context of the colonial era in which Brockelmann conducted his research. They argue that this context may have influenced his perspectives and methodologies, potentially perpetuating colonial narratives and biases in his work. These scholars call for critically examining Brockelmann's sources and methodologies considering this historical backdrop.<sup>27</sup> Brockelmann himself contends that his works, although of significant worth, frequently exhibit Western biases and Eurocentric viewpoints. Critics argue that Brockelmann's analyses of Arabic literature and culture exhibit an inherent bias due to the influence of colonial-era Orientalism, which was pervasive in European research at that period. It's important to note that these specific critiques are not limited to Brockelmann's *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* but apply to the broader field of Orientalism.

Edward Said's seminal work *Orientalism* (1978),<sup>28</sup> is a foundational text for understanding the critique of Western scholarship on the Middle East. Said provides three distinct interpretations of Orientalism. Said's definition characterizes Orientalism as a scholarly field that examines the "Orient," or the East. The second description delineates it as a cognitive framework that accentuates the ontological and epistemological disparities between the Orient and the Occident.<sup>29</sup> According to Said, this mode of thinking permeates Western history. It can be discerned in the literary and philosophical works of the ancient Greeks and the intellectual movements of Enlightenment and post-enlightenment Europe. It is possible to think of Orientalism as a Western paradigm that exerts dominance, restructuring, and authoritative control over the Orient.<sup>30</sup>

Another criticism concerns the selective representation of Arabic literature in Brockelmann's *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*. Middle Eastern scholars, such as Mohammed Mustafa Badawi, argue that his work primarily focuses on classical and pre-modern Arabic literature,

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<sup>26</sup> Muhsin Muhammad Husayn, *Al-Istishraq bi-Ru'ya Sharqiyya (Orientalism with an Eastern Vision)* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2012), 270; Hashim Isma'il al-Ayyubi, *Abhath 'Arabiyya (Arabic Research)* (Beirut: Dar al-Nahḍa al-'Arabiyya, 1994), 382; 'Abd al-Rahman Badawi, *Mawsu'at al-Mustashriqin (Encyclopedia of Orientalists)* (Beirut: Dar al-'Ilm li-l-Malayin, 1993), 104; Carl Brockelmann, *History of the Islamic Peoples*, trans. Nabih Amin Faris and Munir Baalbaki (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), 5–8.

<sup>27</sup> Alexander Lyon Macfie, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 2014), 128–129; Nina Berman, *German Literature on the Middle East: Discourses and Practices, 1000–1989* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), 251; Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>28</sup> Bashir Abu-Manneh, "Said's Political Humanism: An Introduction," in *After Said*, ed. Bashir Abu-Manneh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 25–26.

<sup>29</sup> Bashir Abu-Manneh, "Said's Political Humanism: An Introduction," 202–21.

<sup>30</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979); Muneeb Hafiz, *Can Muslims Think? Reclaiming the Voice of Reason* (London: Hurst, 2022), 57–58.

neglecting contemporary and post-colonial literary developments. This selective representation, they contend, provides an incomplete and outdated view of Arabic literary traditions.<sup>31</sup>

## **Fuat Sezgin and His Work**

This section explores the biography of the Turkish scholar Fuat Sezgin and the bibliographical study related to his most important scientific achievements. His 17-volume *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* (History of the Arab Written Tradition) is considered the most comprehensive study of Arab and Muslim historians from the pre-Islamic era until today. Sezgin not only followed in the footsteps of Carl Brockelmann's *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, but exceeded the breadth of his encyclopedia by adding additional translations and works.<sup>32</sup> Fuat Sezgin's work is similar to Brockelmann's work, bearing a similar name and focusing on the period of scientific renaissance that the Islamic Arab state witnessed during its first centuries.<sup>33</sup> Sezgin found hundreds of documents, and compiled them into two volumes added to the book as appendices. He extensively reviewed the history of the East and published several articles and research before the book's appearance. For the first time in 1939, it became famous and was translated into several languages, such as Arabic, Turkish, English, and Dutch, after the end of the World War.<sup>34</sup>

Muhammed Fuat Sezgin was born in Bitlis, Turkey, where he completed his primary and secondary studies. Sezgin was raised in an Islamic family fluent in Arabic, which appears to have significantly impacted him and his future direction in studying and reviving the Arab-Islamic heritage.<sup>35</sup> He intended to study at the Technological University, but one of his relatives took him to the orientalist Hellmut Ritter, who had taught there since 1926. Ritter, who was in love with the Arab heritage, persuaded Fuat Sezgin to study Arab-Islamic history and mathematics to satisfy his scientific ambitions and helped him move to Germany as a professor at the University of Frankfurt.<sup>36</sup>

Sezgin demonstrated proficiency in a diverse range of languages, encompassing Syriac, Hebrew, Latin, Arabic, and German, among others, amounting to 27 languages. In 1954, he assumed the position of professor at Istanbul University, where he developed a keen interest in documenting the authentic history of Arabic science during the Islamic Golden Age and its subsequent influence on Western societies.<sup>37</sup> In one of his most significant works, he employs a particular methodology in his historical trajectory of Arab heritage.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Mohammed Mustafa Badawi, *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

<sup>32</sup> Fuat Sezgin, *Tarikh al-Turath al-'Arabi (History of the Arabic Heritage)*, vol. 1 (Riyadh: Jami'at al-Imam Muhammad ibn Sa'ud al-Islamiyya, 1983), 12.

<sup>33</sup> Erez Naaman, *Literature and the Islamic Court: Cultural Life under al-Shahib Ibn 'Abbad* (London: Routledge, 2016), 6; John O. Hunwick and R. Rex S. O'Fahey, *Arabic Literature of Africa*, vol. 4, *The Writings of Eastern Sudanic Africa to c. 1900* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), ix.

<sup>34</sup> Abd al-Rahman Badawi, *Mawsu'at al-Mustashriqin (Encyclopedia of Orientalists)* (Beirut: Dar al-'Ilm li-l-Malayin, 1993), 102–103; Najib al-'Aqqi, *Al-Mustashriqun (Orientalists)*, vol. 2 (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1981), 379–380.

<sup>35</sup> Shawkat Aref Mohamed, "Fuat Sezgin as a Historian of Islamic Science and Civilization," *Third Ahmed Khani Conference: Commemorating the First Anniversary of the Passing of Fuat Sezgin*, Ibrahim Seşen University, Ağrı, Türkiye," *Cannes Historical Journal* 12 (2019): 159–160.

<sup>36</sup> Beatrice Gründler and Michael Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Humanities in Their Own Terms* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 38.

<sup>37</sup> Beatrice Gründler and Michael Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Humanities in Their Own Terms*, 38.

<sup>38</sup> Ousama Ekhtiar, "The Scientific Personality of Fuat Sezgin," *Bingöl University Journal of Social Sciences* 9 (2019): 3–6; Shawkat Aref Mohamed, "Fuat Sezgin as a Historian of Islamic Science and Civilization," *Third Ahmed Khani*

Brockelmann's extensive work on Arabic literature would push Fuat Sezgin from an early age towards Islamic sciences. Fuat Sezgin initiated the process of gathering scientific material for *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* in 1947. He dedicated a span of 15 years to expanding and refining the content of the book. The book underwent multiple phases, during which his initial plan underwent several modifications. Sezgin's initial objective was to provide a supplementary section to augment Carl Brockelmann's (1868–1956) seminal work, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*. The objective originated from the manuscripts that were conserved in libraries in Istanbul. The first volume was completed to fulfill this purpose. Subsequently, the focus shifted in subsequent sections to encompass a comprehensive examination of the historical development of Islamic sciences, initially documented in the Arabic language.<sup>39</sup>

Sezgin curated scholarly material in 1947 to create an annotation to be incorporated into Brockelmann's influential publication, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*.<sup>40</sup> However, he found many sources and manuscripts that exceeded his expectations, so he considered working on a new scientific project.<sup>41</sup> Sezgin adhered to a rigorous daily schedule, allocating 17 hours to compiling dispersed Arabic manuscripts meticulously. These manuscripts were sourced from diverse private and public libraries in different countries spanning the Eastern and Western hemispheres. He reproduced and translated the content into German, carefully selected and preserved significant artifacts, referenced profound statements, and distributed them to a wider audience.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, Sezgin published the encyclopedic “History of the Arab Heritage” in 17 plus volumes, which included many inventions, discoveries, and innovations produced by Muslim scholars. He divided his encyclopedia according to scientific disciplines. The first volume is devoted to the sciences of the Qur'ân, *ÎadÊth*, historical notation, jurisprudence, beliefs and mysticism, Quranic sciences, hadith science, history, jurisprudence, theology (Volume 1), and was published in 1967. Arabic Poetry from Pre-Islamic Times to 430. (Volume 2), published in 1975. Medicine, pharmacology, veterinary, and zoology (Volume 3), printed in 1970. Chemistry, Agriculture, Botany (Volume 4), published in 1971. Mathematics (Volume 5), reprinted in 1973. Astronomy (Volume 6), published in 1978. Seven: Astronomy, Eighth: Linguistics, and the Ninth: grammar.<sup>43</sup>

Volumes 10, 11, and 12 pertained to geographical and cartographic mathematics in the Islamic heritage and its continued existence in the West (two volumes for texts and the third for maps, 2000). Moreover, the thirteenth volume, Geographical and Cartographic Mathematics in the Islamic Heritage and its Continuous Presence in the West (the authors, 2007), and the fourteenth and fifteenth volumes, Human Geography (2010).

While Brockelmann's *History of Arab Literature* represents an extensive bibliography of Islamic civilization literature across 14 centuries (until the modern era), Sezgin's book in contrast represents the cultural history of Islamic civilization, its rich literature, and studies in various fields

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<sup>39</sup> Ousama Ekhtiar, “The Scientific Personality of Fuat Sezgin,” *Bingöl University Journal of Social Sciences* 9 (2019): 7–13.

<sup>40</sup> Ousama Ekhtiar, “The Scientific Personality of Fuat Sezgin,” 8-9.

<sup>41</sup> Arfan Yılmaz, *Discoverer of the Lost Treasure: Fuat Sezgin and a Documentary Journey through the Inventions of Muslims* (Cairo: Dar al-Nil, 2015), 57–58.

<sup>42</sup> Fuat Sezgin, *Tarikh al-Turath al-'Arabi (History of the Arabic Heritage)*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Institute for the History of Arabic–Islamic Science, 1991), 123–125.

<sup>43</sup> Fuat Sezgin, *Tarikh al-Turath al-'Arabi (History of the Arabic Heritage)*, 123-125.

of knowledge.<sup>44</sup> Sezgin's book—unlike Brockelmann's—chronicles Muslim scholars from the beginning of Islam until about 436/1044.<sup>45</sup> The book covers scientific achievements with the translation of each author along with an indication of the names of his books and their locations in the world's libraries and the names of publishers. It also includes related explanations, abbreviations, responses, appendices, systems, etc., arranged chronologically, in which the author's name is mentioned, followed by related literature.<sup>46</sup>

Sezgin wrote *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* in German and published it in Leiden in 1967.<sup>47</sup> The Arabic translation of the book, titled *TarĪkh al-TurĪth 'ArabĪ* (History of Islamic Heritage), was published in Egypt. The initial volume, released in 1978, consisted of two extensive volumes, spanning 651 and 520 pages, respectively. It is worth noting that the first edition lacked comprehensive indexes. It was translated by a group of more than seven translators. At the end of each volume, indexes of authors, books, and scholars of *hadith* are appended.<sup>48</sup> The Saudi edition published the sixth volume of the book under the title "Collections of Arabic Manuscripts in the Libraries of the World," a long list of indexes of Arabic manuscripts from different libraries mentioned and arranged according to country in 1991.<sup>49</sup>

The book serves as an indispensable reference for scholars specializing in Arabic and Islamic studies. The author's critical view of the science of hadith, which he describes as "ignorance," resonates with the orientalist C. Hermann's assertion: "It is strange that ignorance also has art and science." Fuat Sezgin meticulously analyzes and reveals that orientalist scholarship frequently suffers from significant errors, largely due to negative predispositions, overconfidence, illogical reasoning, and a limited understanding of the Arabic language, cultural intricacies, and Arab heritage. These shortcomings, as noted, have frequently resulted in deviations from initial scholarly positions. The author maintains an unwavering belief in the authenticity and sufficiency of the Qur'an.

The composition of the Qur'an, as viewed through the lens of melodic frameworks, reflects historical linguistic dynamics. The Qur'an compiled under 'Uthmān, with its four official copies, was subject to dialectal variations, as evidenced by the statements of 'Uthmān and Aisha: "There is a melody in the Qur'an, and the Arabs will evaluate it in their dialect." The state, under the authority of the Sultan, endorsed a standardized text that contrasted with the emergence of Qur'anic readings across tribal dialects. Such observations challenge the Islamic belief in the Qur'an's immutability, asserting that the text remains intact and free from distortion or alteration. Furthermore, Gabriel understood the diversity in Qur'anic recitations as a matter of interrogation and instruction, which he faithfully transmitted to his companions, leaving no room for negotiation or reinterpretation.

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<sup>44</sup> Fuat Sezgin, *Tarikh al-Turath al-'Arabi (History of the Arabic Heritage)*, 226–256.

<sup>45</sup> Fuat Sezgin, *Tarikh al-Turath al-'Arabi (History of the Arabic Heritage)*, 226–256.

<sup>46</sup> Arfan Yilmaz, *Discoverer of the Lost Treasure: Fuat Sezgin and a Documentary Journey through the Inventions of Muslims* (Cairo: Dar al-Nil, 2015), 30; Akram Diya al-Umari, *Dirasah Tarikhiyya* (Medina: Islamic University, 1983), 233–249.

<sup>47</sup> *Discoverer of the Lost Treasure: Fuat Sezgin and a Documentary Journey through the Inventions of Muslims* (Cairo: Dar al-Nil, 2015), 58; Fuat Sezgin, *History of the Arab Heritage*, vol. 1 (2018).

<sup>48</sup> Abdul Salam Haydar, "German Orientalism and the Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur," *Fikr wa Fann* 81 (2005): 54.

<sup>49</sup> *Discoverer of the Lost Treasure: Fuat Sezgin and a Documentary Journey through the Inventions of Muslims* (Cairo: Dar al-Nil, 2015), 58; Fuat Sezgin, *History of the Arab Heritage*, vol. 1 (2018).



Sezgin's engagement in subjects beyond his expertise, which demanded specialized knowledge, exposed him to the possibility of making inaccurate claims. For instance, he asserted that al-Nisābī had condensed *Sunan al-KubrĒ* into *Sunan al-ØughrĒ* by excluding weak *ĪadĒths* and that *Sunan al-KubrĒ* seemed to be unavailable in circulation.<sup>50</sup> Nonetheless, Sezgin exhibited greater neutrality, objectivity, fairness, and seriousness than many Orientalists. He responded to them patiently, including an extensive rebuttal in the fourth volume on Alchemy/Chemistry of the accusations against the chemist JĒbir Ibn ×ayĒn, which aim to challenge the status of chemistry in Islamic civilization.<sup>51</sup> A number of Orientalist had claimed a significant number of books on chemistry were incorrectly attributed to him, and some even claimed that he was a made-up character who did not really exist.<sup>52</sup>

Despite the criticisms expressed by Western scholars such as Paul Kraus regarding the contributions of Jabir Ibn Hayan and his contemporaries,<sup>53</sup> Sezgin was nonetheless able to acknowledge and appreciate their significance. Akram al-'Umari, professor of history at the University of Baghdad, commented:

It is worth noting that Sezgin deleted these views in the edition issued by Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University. Still, I mentioned them in the research to warn those who review the first edition, especially since the deletion took place without clarification or warning.<sup>54</sup>

Hikmat BashĒr YĒssĒn also published a paper in the *Journal of the Islamic University* in Madinah entitled *IstidrĒkĒt 'alĒ TĒrĒkh al-TurĒth al-'ArabĒ fĒ Kutub al-TafsĒr wa-l-QirĒ'Ēt* (Reflections on the History of the Arab Heritage) in the Books of Commentary on the Qur'Ēn and Variant Readings).<sup>55</sup> Najm Abdel RaĒmĒn Khalaf published a book entitled "*Reflections on the History of the Arab Heritage of Fouad Sezgin in the Science of Hadith*."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Muhammad Muslih al-Zubi, *Naqd al-Matun 'and al-Imam al-Nasai fi al-Sunan al-Kubra* (Amman: Amwāj, 2012): 50; 'Umar ibn Ali Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Al-Badr al-Munir fi Takhrij al-Ahadith wa-l-Athar al-Waqi'a fi al-Sharh al-Kabir*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1993), 314.

<sup>51</sup> Fuat Sezgin, *Tarikh al-Turath al-'Arabi (History of the Arabic Heritage)*, vol. 4 (Frankfurt am Main: Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science, 1991), 179; Alfred Hiatt, *Cartography between Christian Europe and the Arabic-Islamic World, 1100–1500* (London: Routledge, 2021), 30–33; William R. Newman, *The Summa Perfectionis of Pseudo-Geber: A Critical Edition, Translation, and Study* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 105; Dorothee Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 273; Francis E. Peters, *Allah's Commonwealth: A History of Islam in the Near East, 600–1100 A.D.* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), 758; Bent Sørensen, *Renewable Energy: Physics, Engineering, Environmental Impacts, Economics and Planning* (London: Academic Press, 2018), 5–26; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Life and Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 115.

<sup>52</sup> William R. Newman, *The Summa Perfectionis of Pseudo-Geber: A Critical Edition, Translation, and Study* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 105; Jamal J. Elias, *Aisha's Cushion: Religious Art, Perception, and Practice in Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 322; Syed Nomanul Haq, *Names, Natures, and Things: The Alchemist Jabir ibn Hayyan and His "Kitab al-Ahjar" (Book of Stones)* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012).

<sup>53</sup> Paul Kraus, *Jabir Ibn Hayyan: Contribution l'histoire des idées scientifiques dans l'Islam* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1942–1943), vol. 1; Fuat Sezgin, *Natural Sciences in Islam*, vol. 66 (Frankfurt am Main: Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science, 2002), 67–78.

<sup>54</sup> Akram Diya al-Umari, *Dirasah Tarikhiyya* (1983), 58.

<sup>55</sup> Hikmat Bashir Yassin, *Istidrakat 'ala Tarikh al-Turath al-Arabi* (Dammam: Dar Ibn al-Jawzi, 2002), 173–174.

<sup>56</sup> Najm Abd al-Rahman Khalaf, *Istidrakat 'ala Tarikh al-Turath al-Arabi li-Sezgin* (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyya, 1999).

MĒIĒd ‘Aouimir, an Algerian history professor, says that the well-known orientalist institutes in the West were not only limited to European Orientalists, but there are other centers and departments for Oriental studies founded by Arab or Muslim scholars in European and American universities. They supervised the formation of generations of European Orientalists and Arab researchers specialized in Arab and Islamic studies. Among these prominent professors were Sezgin in Germany, Albert Hourani in England, Philip Hitti in the United States of America, and Muhammad Arkoun, Ali Murad, and Rushdi Rashid in France.<sup>57</sup> Aouimir wonders if this Western environment had an impact on their scientific method, their knowledge production, their emotional relationship with their culture, and their connection to the fate of their nation or, on the contrary, if they benefited from the material capabilities and opportunities available to serve their heritage and introduce their civilization.<sup>58</sup>

As such, despite the book's flaws, Sezgin won the King Faisal International Award for Islamic Studies in recognition of his six-volume work.<sup>59</sup> Sezgin approached this work as an adventure, and there is no question that those who came before him approached it in a similarly exploratory manner. Nonetheless, when scholars comprehensively understand the extent and complexity of their research and acknowledge the pragmatic obstacles they encounter, they can forge a more profound connection with the subject matter under examination. This observation becomes particularly meaningful when a substantial volume of data and resources have been amassed, rendering it unfeasible for an individual to reverse the course of their research.<sup>60</sup>

### **Sezgin’s Vision and Scientific Contributions**

Sezgin vigorously defended the principle of the “unity of sciences” and considered it the scientific heritage of all of humanity, which is constantly advancing. He saw it as his mission to show the contributions of Arabs and Muslims to the general history of science.<sup>61</sup> This would give Muslims self-confidence and make it clear to Westerners that the modern world's prosperity is largely due to the scientific achievements of the Arab-Islamic world.<sup>62</sup> For instance, Sezgin proved that maps of the world and even partial maps of Europe until the beginning of the eighteenth century were based on Arab maps. During the reign of Caliph al-Ma’mĒn at the beginning of the ninth century, an estimated 70 geographers made a trip that lasted several years, during which they toured various parts of Africa, Europe, and Asia. This scientific trip developed a surprisingly high-accuracy world map for that time. The Frankfurt Institute put this map on display after artistically transforming it into a globe-shaped model.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Mouloud Aouimir, “The Arab Scientific Heritage of Fouad Sezgin,” *Association of Muslim Scholars in Algeria*, November 12, 2015, accessed October 19, 2024.

<sup>58</sup> Mouloud Aouimir, “The Arab Scientific Heritage of Fouad Sezgin.”

<sup>59</sup> Ziauddin Sardar, *Explorations in Islamic Science* (London: Mansell, 1989), 10.

<sup>60</sup> Ziauddin Sardar, “Can Science Come Back to Islam,” *New Scientist* 88, no. 1224 (October 1980): 212.

<sup>61</sup> Fuat Sezgin, *Iktishaf al-Kharitah al-Amrikiyyah qabl Kristuf Kulumbus* (2014), 10.

<sup>62</sup> David A. King, *World-Maps for Finding the Direction and Distance to Mecca: Innovation and Tradition in Islamic Science* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), xvi, 26; Alfred Hiatt, *Cartography between Christian Europe and the Arabic-Islamic World, 1100–1500* (London: Routledge, 2021), 30–33.

<sup>63</sup> Fuat Sezgin, *Iktishaf al-Kharitah al-Amrikiyya qabl Kristopher Columbus, (Discovery of the American Map before Christopher Columbus)* (Frankfurt am Main: Institute for the History of Arabic–Islamic Science, n.d.), 52–53; Fuat Sezgin, *Mathematical Geography and Cartography in Islam*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Institute for the History of Arabic–Islamic Science, 2000), 205.

Sezgin, George Saliba, Muhsin Mahdi, and others have pointed out that since the second half of the thirteenth century,<sup>64</sup> the Western world has been home an ideological hostile movement, which met the history of Muslim scientific advancements with fierce opposition.<sup>65</sup> Their intellectuals dishonored the accomplishments of Arab and Islamic civilizations by taking credit for themselves rather than giving credit where it was due. They argue that the Renaissance was an uninterrupted continuation of the Greek age, with Arabs/Muslims only intermediaries responsible for the preservation and translation of a few select Greek texts.<sup>66</sup>

Sezgin was not a dreamer who claimed he could independently realize his great scientific project of reviving the Arab heritage.<sup>67</sup> His relentless endeavors received a response from some Arab governments. He accomplished his work with his usual sternness, determination, and seriousness, and viewed Muslims' future optimistically if they can rise to meet the challenges inspired by their civilizational heritage and benefit and participate in the existing civilizational development.<sup>68</sup> Those who advanced did so thanks to their commitment to religion and their adherence to science.<sup>69</sup>

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Carl Brockelmann and Fuat Sezgin have greatly contributed to understanding the history of Islamic heritage. Their works provide valuable insights into the development of Islamic science, philosophy, and culture and demonstrate the impact of Islamic thought on global scientific history. One of the key contributions of Brockelmann's work is its emphasis on the diversity of Islamic culture and the various influences that have shaped it. Brockelmann emphasized the importance of examining the Islamic intellectual tradition in its historical and cultural context and highlighted the contributions of non-Arab Muslims to the development of Islamic thought and culture. Carl Brockelmann is best known for his monumental work, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*. This work, first published in 1898 and revised and updated numerous times, remains one of the most important references in Arabic literature. Brockelmann's approach to studying the Islamic heritage was characterized by his emphasis on philology and textual analysis. He believed it was essential to understand the linguistic and textual traditions of the Muslim world to understand its cultural and intellectual legacy.

In his work on the history of science in the Muslim world, Brockelmann focused on the role of the Arabic language in transmitting scientific knowledge. He argued that Arabic was the language of science and scholarship in the Islamic world and that translating Greek and other ancient texts into Arabic was a crucial factor in the development of science in the Muslim world. This belief also

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<sup>64</sup> Nidhal Guessoum, "A Short History of Science," in *Arabic Heritage in the Post-Abbasid Period*, ed. (editor's name if applicable) (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 92–93.

<sup>65</sup> Gerard Delanty, *Formations of European Modernity: A Historical and Political Sociology of Europe* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018), 99–100; Howard L. Turner (1995). *Science in Medieval Islam: An Illustrated Introduction*, p. 223; Howard L. Turner, *Science in Medieval Islam: An Illustrated Introduction* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 223.

<sup>66</sup> George Saliba, *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 34; Rushdi Rashid, *Mawsu'at Tarikh al-Uhum al-'Arabiyya [Encyclopedia of the History of Arabic Sciences]*, vol. 3 (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 2005), 1307–1311; Muhsin S. Mahdi, *Alfarabi and the Foundation of Islamic Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

<sup>67</sup> Ousama Ekhtiar, "The Scientific Personality of Fuat Sezgin," *Bingöl University Journal of Social Sciences* 9 (2019): 8.

<sup>68</sup> Ousama Ekhtiar, "The Scientific Personality of Fuat Sezgin," 8.

<sup>69</sup> Ousama Ekhtiar, "The Scientific Personality of Fuat Sezgin," 8, 14–15; Mohamed Khalid Hamid, "Fuat Sezgin," *IslamStory*, July 3, 2018.

influenced his work on Islamic science and the importance of objectivity and impartiality in scholarship. He argued that scholars should strive to remain neutral and objective in their analysis of Islamic texts and avoid imposing their biases and preconceptions on the material.<sup>70</sup> The scholarly endeavors of Carl Brockelmann in Arabic studies, particularly his monumental work *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, evoked diverse reactions among researchers based in the Middle East. While numerous academics acknowledged his rigorous scholarly approach and substantial impact on the discipline, some raised concerns regarding the perceived Eurocentric bias in his research. Scholars from the Middle East actively interacted with his ideas, placing his contributions within the wider framework of Orientalism's historical context. Furthermore, some scholars continued his intellectual legacy by expanding his research. Brockelmann's scholarly contributions persistently profoundly impact the domain of Arabic studies, encompassing regions extending beyond the Middle East.

Inspired by Carl Brockelmann's *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, Fuat Sezgin devoted his life to studying Islamic civilization. He was particularly interested in the history of science and technology in the Islamic world, and his works focused on the discovery and translation of ancient Arabic manuscripts. Sezgin's approach to studying the Islamic heritage was characterized by his belief in the importance of historical context. He believed it was essential to understand the social, political, and cultural factors that influenced the development of Islamic civilization. This understanding was crucial for interpreting the scientific and philosophical ideas of the time. Sezgin emphasized the need for a multidisciplinary approach to studying Islamic heritage in his work. He believed it was important to bring together scholars from different fields, including history, philosophy, theology, and science, to understand Islamic civilization's complexities fully.<sup>71</sup>

One of Sezgin's key contributions to Islamic heritage was his discovery and translation of numerous Arabic manuscripts, many of which had been lost or forgotten. He worked tirelessly to uncover these manuscripts, traveling to libraries and archives worldwide and spending countless hours poring over ancient texts. Sezgin's work on the epistemology of Islamic science focused on the relationship between science and religion. He argued that a deep sense of faith drove science in the Islamic world and that pursuing knowledge was a better way to understand the divine. He believed science and religion were not mutually exclusive but two complementary ways of understanding the world.<sup>72</sup> In essence, Carl Brockelmann and Fuat Sezgin's works are important contributions to the history of the Islamic heritage and indispensable resources for anyone seeking to delve into the diverse array of intellectual, scientific, and cultural achievements within the Islamic tradition. The unwavering commitment to academic pursuit these two scholars exhibited has had a lasting impact on the discipline, guaranteeing the continued research, admiration, and commemoration of Islamic history for future academics.

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<sup>70</sup> Carl Brockelmann, *Tarikh al-Adab al-'Arabi (Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur)*, trans. 'Abd al-Halim al-Najjar et al. (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1977).

<sup>71</sup> Fuat Sezgin, *Brief Presentation of the Istanbul Museum for the History of Science and Technology in Islam* (Istanbul: Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, 2010), 8.

<sup>72</sup> Halil Tekiner, "Prof. Dr. Fuat Sezgin (1924–2018) and His Contributions to the History of Medical Sciences," *Erciyes Medical Journal* 41, no. 1 (2019): 121; Ziauddin Sardar, "Can Science Come Back to Islam," *New Scientist*, October 25, 1980, 212–213; Muzaffar Iqbal, *The Making of Islamic Science* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2009), 23; Najm 'Abd al-Rahman Khalaf, *Istidrakat 'ala Tarikh al-Turath al-'Arabi li-Sezgin* (Beirut: Dar al-Basha'ir al-Islamiyya, 1999), 14.

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