

Reflections on The Life and Legacy of Fuat Sezgin: Reviving The Heritage of Islamic Knowledge

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Abstract

Prof. Fuat Sezgin, who died at the age of 94 in the year 2018, was an erudite Turkish scholar who left an unmatched legacy behind him. He was indeed a pioneering scholar, devoted his entire life to the field of the history of science in Islam, par excellence. His major aim was to investigate the contributions of the Muslim scholarship to human civilization. Even though he was among the most renowned Turkish academician outside Turkey, there is little information about his life in Turkish circles. What makes him so special is not just his illustrious academic career or the amount of his publications, but also his extraordinary personality. Apart from providing biographical information, this paper will shed some light on his contributions and reveal some aspects of his productive life. Finally, the paper will examine the nature of the relationship that Fuat Sezgin had with the Orientalist tradition and try to answer the question of whether he can be characterized as an 'Orientalist' or not.

Keywords: Fuat Sezgin, History of Science, Technology in Islam, Orientalism.

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Fuat Sezgin'in Hayatı ve İlmî Mirası Üzerine Düşünceler: İslam Bilim Geleneğini Yeniden İhya Etmek

Öz

2018 yılında 94 yaşında aramızdan ayrılan Prof. Fuat Sezgin, arkasında muazzam bir ilmi miras bırakan eşsiz bir Türk âlimidir. Tüm hayatını İslam bilim tarihine adanmış ve Müslüman bilim insanlarının dünya medeniyetine olan katkılarını ortaya koymayı hayatının en büyük gayesi haline getirmiştir. Türkiye dışında en çok tanınan Türk akademisyenler arasında yer almasına rağmen, hayatı üzerine yeterince çalışmanın olduğu söylenemez. Fuat Sezgin hocayı bu denli özel kılan sadece başarılarla dolu akademik kariyeri ya da geride bıraktığı eser sayısı değil, aynı zamanda olağanüstü kişiliğidir. Bu makale Fuat Sezgin hakkında biyografik bilgiler sunmanın yanında, onun ilim dünyasına katkılarını ve üretken çalışma hayatının çeşitli yönlerine ışık tutmayı hedeflemektedir. Makalede ayrıca, Fuat Sezgin'in Oryantalist gelenekle olan ilişkisi ele alınmakta ve kendisinin bir 'Oryantalist' olarak nitelendirilip nitelendirilemeyeceği sorusuna cevap verilmeye çalışılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Fuat Sezgin, Bilim Tarihi, İslam ve Teknoloji, Oryantalizm.

تأملات في حياة وإرث فؤاد سيزكين: إحياء تراث المعرفة الإسلامية

الخلاصة

كان البروفيسور فؤاد سيزكين، المتوفى عام 2018م عن 94 عامًا، عالمًا تركيًّا واسع الاطلاع، ترك وراءه إرثًا لا مثيل له. لقد كان حقًا عالمًا رائدًا، كرّس حياته كلّها في مجال تاريخ العلوم في الإسلام بامتياز. كان هدفه الرئيسي التحقيق في إسهامات العلماء المسلمين في الحضارة الإنسانية. على الرغم من أنه كان من بين الأكاديميين الأتراك الأكثر شهرة خارج تركيا، إلا أن المعلومات حول حياته في الأوساط التركية قليلة. لا يكمن سرّ تميزه في حياته الأكاديمية اللامعة أو كمية منشوراته فحسب، بل أيضًا في شخصيته الاستثنائية. ستلقي هذه الورقة بعض الضوء على إسهاماته، وتكشف عن بعض جوانب حياته المثمرة، وستدرس طبيعة العلاقة التي ربطت فؤاد سيزكين بالتقاليد الاستشراقية، وتحاول الإجابة عن التساؤل المتمثل فيما إذا كان يمكن وصفه بالـ "مستشرق" أم لا، إلى جانب تقديم معلومات عن سيرته الذاتية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: فؤاد سيزكين، تاريخ العلوم، التقنية (التكنولوجيا) في الإسلام، الاستشراق.

A. The Biography of Fuat Sezgin

Prof. Fuat Sezgin was born in Bitlis, Turkey, on 24 October 1924, one year after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. He was the third of five children born to Feride Cemile, a woman of Arabic-origin¹, and a mufti, Mehmed Sezgin,² who was instrumental in arousing Sezgin's interest in the Arabic language, as he was surrounded at home by shelves full of Arabic books.

After graduating from elementary school in Doğubeyazıt in the city of Ağrı, he had completed his schooling in Erzurum, in the eastern part of Turkey. And in 1943, he moved to Istanbul with the intention of studying mathematics and becoming an engineer. This was an ambition he had never realized, but it led him to pursue his real passion. He states in his own words how he changed his mind with just one crucial encounter in the same year, something that was destined to be a key event in his life:

In 1943, one of my relatives took me to the Faculty of Arts at Istanbul University. I was dreaming of being an engineer back then. There was a great German scholar who knew Arabic. That relative of mine said to me that he wanted to take me to his lecture, and I said, "Let's go." I was fascinated by that great scholar. From that day on, I did not want to be an engineer or anything else anymore. All I wanted was to be a student of his. Enrolment date had already expired, but I went to the Dean's office, nevertheless. When I was at the Dean's office, that great scholar, who was a big man, came by chance into the office.

He waited until our conversation ended with the Dean. The Dean said: 'O, Mr. Ritter, I was just talking to someone who wants to be your student.' He looked at me and said: 'I think he was in my lecture yesterday.' He was a tough man, only a few people would go to his lectures and most of the students would run away. I remember mostly being the only person in his classes.

He said, 'Let's have a few words with you. What you are searching for is hard. You need to learn Arabic. And you know what, I am a tough teacher. My students run away from me all the time.' And I said: 'Yes, I know, they have already told me about that, but I still want to face this challenge.' He smiled and said: 'Okay'. That was when I became his student... I was fortunate to be a student of such a great teacher. For some reason, I was fascinated by this man... like he had all the knowledge of wise people before him. ... He was different. He was most likely the greatest among

¹ Merve Rukiye Dillice, "Fuat Sezgin ve İlmi Hayatı", *I. Ulusal Genç Akademisyenler Sempozyumu, "Prof. Dr. Fuat Sezgin ve İslami İlimler"*, ed. Feyza Betül Köse (Kahramanmaraş: SAMER, 2019), 49.

² Hüseyin Hansu, "Mehmet Fuat Sezgin'in Aile Çevresi ve Türkiye'deki Akademik Serüveni", *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 60/1 (2019), 187.

European Orientalists. I was so impressed by him that I cannot express it adequately in words.³

Deeply moved and influenced by his teacher's words, Sezgin abandoned his idea of being an engineer. He immediately went to the Oriental Research Institute to enroll and started to study Arabic and Persian Philology at the Faculty of Arts at Istanbul University.⁴ So, it was the German scholar, Helmut Ritter (1892-1971), who had been the primary reason for Fuat Sezgin's choice of study.⁵

Although Turkey had not participated in World War II, all educational and academic activities were suspended in Turkish universities after Germany invaded Bulgaria. His master, Helmut Ritter, told him to benefit from this six-month "sabbatical" by studying Arabic. Acting on this recommendation, Sezgin decided to dedicate all his time to learn the language. He started reading the 30-volume Qur'ānic exegises, or *tafsīr*, compiled by the famous 10th century scholar named Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923). At the beginning, he did not understand much, so he used Turkish commentaries for reference. After the six months, as a result of his daily 17-hours of study, he completed reading the Ṭabarī's *tafsīr* and was able to read classical Arabic texts. At the first lecture Sezgin attended after the six-month-break, Ritter gave him an Arabic text, the *Iḥyā' ulūm al-dīn* by the great scholar, Imām al- Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), to test him. He read passages from it in the presence of Ritter and other German scholars, who were pleased with his progress.⁶ Noticing his talent in linguistics, Ritter advised him to learn a new language every year, a counsel which Sezgin kept, mastering about 27 different languages, including Syriac, Hebrew, Latin and

³ Sefer Turan, *Bilim Tarihi Sohbetleri*, (Istanbul: Pınar, 2019), 24; Prof. Dr. Fuat Sezgin İslam Bilim Tarihi Araştırmaları Vakfı (IBTAV), "A Life Dedicated to Science: Prof. Dr. Fuat Sezgin" (Retrieved on 17 October 2019).

⁴ IBTAV, "A Life Dedicated to Science: Prof. Dr. Fuat Sezgin".

⁵ Kadir Temuçin (ed.), *Amerika'nın Keşfinde Müslümanlar: Prof. Dr. Fuat Sezgin- Söyleşi ve Konferans*

(Kayseri: Doğuş Ofset Matbaacılık, 2016), 7. Nurettin Gemici, "Fuat Sezgin'in Almanya'daki İlim Hayatına İntisabında Hellmut Ritter'in Rolü ve Önemi", *Fuat Sezgin ve Temel İslam Bilimleri, Güncel Tartışmalar, Teorik Teklifler*, ed. Ali Karakaş and others, (Istanbul: Divan Kitap, 2019), 369-380.

⁶ Turan, *Bilim Tarihi Sohbetleri*, 26.

German. Ritter himself was a dedicated scholar and a man of many tongues, who was familiar with about 32 languages.⁷

Sezgin, after having had a conversation with Ritter, decided to study the history of science. Ritter advised him to study mathematics, mentioning that the great Muslim mathematicians in history, such as al-Khwārizmī (d. after 232/847), Ibn Haytham (d. after 432/1040), al-Birūnī (d. ca. 442/1050) and many others, had been at the same level -sometimes even higher - than the European scholars. Overwhelmed by this, Sezgin decided to focus on the history of science.⁸

The two, i.e. the teacher and the disciple, would go to the libraries of Istanbul such as the Süleymaniye Library, the Topkapı Library and the Hagia Sophia Library to do research. Ritter had already proven to be one of the most recognized world scholars on manuscripts in Turkey. Hence, Sezgin used their visits to libraries as a good opportunity to learn and memorize things from Ritter without using pen and paper. In an interview he gave at the age of 84 he would say, “I would never take notes, he (Ritter) would explain, and I would just remember. Most of the things Ritter told me are still in my head.”⁹

Sezgin graduated from the Faculty of Arts and received there five certificates in Arabic-Persian Philology, French Philology and Turkology in 1947, completing his thesis entitled *The Development of the Science of al-Badī*.¹⁰ During his sojourn in Istanbul, as shown in the archival records of the Presidency of Religious Affairs in Ankara, Sezgin worked in the office of Mufti of Istanbul for about 15 months. Having had a good command of Arabic, he became a scribe at the office. Upon the request of Ahmet Hamdi Akseki, the then president of the Presidency of Religious Affairs of Turkey, he translated a book by the Egyptian scholar, Muḥammad al-Bahīy, into Turkish under the title *İslam Düşüncesinin İlahi Tarafı (The Divine Aspects of Islamic Thought)*, which was published in 1948. This translation was Sezgin’s first published work.¹¹

⁷ Turan, *Bilim Tarihi Sohbetleri*, 121. Gemici, “Fuat Sezgin’in Almanya’daki İlim Hayatına İntisabında Hellmut Ritter’in Rolü ve Önemi”, 372-374.

⁸ İhsan Fazlıoğlu, “Fuat Sezgin ile Bilim Tarihi Üzerine”, *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 2/4 (2004), 356.

⁹ Turan, *Bilim Tarihi Sohbetleri*, 25.

¹⁰ Hansu, “Mehmet Fuat Sezgin’in Aile Çevresi”, 192.

¹¹ Muḥammad al-Bahiy, *İslam Düşüncesinin İlahi Tarafı*, trans. Fuat Sezgin (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 1948). This book is republished in 2020 by the Turkish Diyanet Foundation.

Right after his graduation, Sezgin immediately applied for a doctoral degree program upon the advice of his master Ritter. His dissertation analyzes *Majāz al-Qur'ān* (The Metaphorical Expression of the Qur'an) written by Abū 'Ubayda Ma'mar b. al-Muthannā al-Taymī (d. 209/824 [?]). This dissertation, which he submitted in 1950, helped him further familiarize himself with the world of Islamic manuscripts. His thesis was later translated into Arabic and published in 1954 in Cairo.¹²

Sezgin left Istanbul University in 1950 and began to work as a research fellow at the Faculty of Theology in Ankara University, where he continued his work as an assistant in the Department of Basic Islamic Sciences until 1953. After three years of his stay in the modern capital of the Turkish Republic, he returned to Istanbul University and started working as an assistant at the Chair of General Turkish History.¹³

During his doctoral research, Sezgin already began to realize that Imām Bukhārī (d. 256/870) had made quotations from the aforementioned book, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*. This surprised him because contrary to the widely accepted theory that the science of *ḥadīth* was based solely on oral transmission, Bukhārī had in fact used written sources. This aroused in Sezgin a great interest, so much so that he thereafter decided to study this subject. With this objective in mind, he started to collect materials for his habilitation dissertation (a post-doctoral study for professorship) entitled *Buhari'nin Kaynakları Hakkında Araştırmalar* (Written Sources of the Book of Commentary of al-Bukhārī) while working as an assistant at the Chair of General Turkish History. This thesis, in which he explains the written sources of the *ḥadīths*, and the process of collecting of them into book form, was published under the title *Researches on the Sources of Bukhārī*.¹⁴

In this study, Sezgin challenged the conventionally accepted position and instead proposed the view that *ḥadīths* collected by Imam Bukhārī were based not only on oral tradition, but also on written sources dating back to the earliest

¹² Abū 'Ubayda Ma'mar b. al-Muthannā al-Taymī, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muḥammed Fu'ād Sezgin (Cairo: Muḥammad Sāmī Amīn al-Khanjī, 1954).

¹³ Ali Dere, "Mehmet Fuat Sezgin Hoca'nın Ankara İlahiyat Yılları: Sezgin ve Fakültenin Müşterek Tarihinden Bir Kesit", *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 59/2 (2018), 221-250.

¹⁴ Dere, "Mehmet Fuat Sezgin Hoca'nın Ankara İlahiyat Yılları", 238.

periods of Islam in the 7th century.¹⁵ Therefore, Sezgin's discovery is of great importance - both for Muslim and non-Muslim academic worlds alike, as his study was historically the first of its kind. While there was no concept of referencing in the Latin world until the 18th century, Bukhārī gave references in the 9th century.¹⁶

Sezgin himself expresses the importance of this study as to why this kind of study was very much needed in the academic arena:

Today, Muslims, even the Hadith professors at al-Azhar University, believe that the words of our Prophet were orally narrated. I mean, that it was heard from the Prophet and narrated to another person. And that the accuracy of such words would decrease (over time). For example, who are al-Bukhārī and Muslim according to the greatest orientalist Hadīth scholar, Goldziher? He says: 'All the Hadīths in Bukhārī's books consist of the ideas and inventions of the schools of thought in his era. So, it has no relation to the Prophet! They reflect the ideas of their time only. Bukhārī compiled these thoughts! And he added a chain of narrations, so he invented it.' In my research I proved that this is completely wrong. There are written sources behind them.¹⁷

Hüseyin Hansu, a professor of *ḥadīth* at Istanbul University, draws attention to the following remarks taken from the evaluation text of the academics who assessed his work and wrote Sezgin's habilitation report:

Dr. Fuat Sezgin, whose published/to be published works and articles we have mentioned, continues his deep research and efforts in the field of *ḥadīth* and the philological features of the verses, and is promising that he will be an esteemed Islamic scholar in the future.¹⁸

Another defining moment in Sezgin's life was the military coup that took place in Turkey on May 27, 1960. Five months after the coup on October 28, Sezgin learned that he was among 147 academicians who had been expelled from their posts by the post-coup government. He read his name on the list from a newspaper he bought whilst travelling on his way to work. Sezgin made an immediate detour and went directly to the Süleymaniye Library and penned letters to his university colleagues in the USA and Germany. He got responses from Frankfurt, Yale and Berkeley. To continue his research, he did not want to be too

¹⁵ Muhammed İkbāl Aslan, "GAS'ın Hadis Bölümü ile Buhari'nin Kaynakları'nın Karşılaştırmalı Bir Analizi", *Darulfunun İlahiyat [İstanbul Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi]* Fuat Sezgin Özel Sayısı 30, (2019), 181-191.

¹⁶ Elife Fıstık, "Batı'nın Şark Tasavvuru ve Prof. Dr. Fuat Sezgin", *I. Ulusal Genç Akademisyenler Sempozyumu, "Prof. Dr. Fuat Sezgin ve İslami İlimler"*, ed. Feyza Betül Köse (Kahramanmaraş: SAMER, 2019), 209.

¹⁷ Turan, *Bilim Tarihi Sohbetleri*, 93.

¹⁸ Ahmet Hamdi Furat, "Fuat Sezgin'in İslam Araştırmaları Enstitüsü'ndeki Faaliyetleri", *Darulfunun İlahiyat [İstanbul Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi]* 'Fuat Sezgin' Özel Sayısı 30, (2019), 2.

far from Istanbul and the East, particularly Egypt and Iran. So, he decided to go to Frankfurt as a guest lecturer. The fact that it had the only Institute of History of Science became another deciding factor for him to go there.¹⁹

Previously, he had received several academic research offers from abroad. He had laughingly turned them down, saying, “How can I leave Istanbul, how can I leave Turkey?” However, he understood that in 1960 the situation was beyond his control.²⁰ Consequently, Sezgin’s academic life, which had begun as a research fellow in the field of Oriental studies at Istanbul University, continued with Philology and Tafsir research at PhD level and advanced further in Hadith studies as an associate professor, now ended in Turkey in 1961, having been forced to leave his homeland at the age of 36.²¹

Being aware of the wisdom, “good is veiled behind what appears to be evil”, the prospect of exile did not put Sezgin down at all, a distinct characteristic of his that can be seen as one of the secrets of his success. This adverse situation or crisis, on the contrary, he took as an opportunity, which eventually led him to being a great scholar who would call out to the world from Germany instead of Turkey. When asked about those bitter days many years later, he replied phlegmatically: “I do not want to complain; the coup in 1960 was childish. People forgive the mistakes made by children. I forgave that mistake. It did not affect me. I went to Germany and got immersed in productive studies there. Therefore, I never got angry then and I still don’t.”²²

Frankfurt: Home away from Home

Fuat Sezgin continued his academic career at Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany. His study focus was on the History of Arabic-Islamic natural sciences. He wrote his second doctoral thesis at the Institute of History of Natural Sciences at Frankfurt University on Jābir ibn Hayyān in 1965 and received the title of professor in the following year.²³

He got married to Dr. Ursula Sezgin a year later. He fondly talked about her as “... one of the most important events of my life...” Ursula Sezgin was a German who had embraced Islam before she met her husband. She had initially

¹⁹ IBTAV, “A Life Dedicated to Science: Prof. Dr. Fuat Sezgin”.

²⁰ Yaklaşan Saat, “Prof. Dr. Fuat Sezgin Kimdir?” (Retrieved on 19 November 2019).

²¹ Hansu, “Mehmet Fuat Sezgin’in Aile Çevresi”, 200.

²² Turan, *Bilim Tarihi Sohbetleri*, 30.

²³ IBTAV, “A Life Dedicated to Science: Prof. Dr. Fuat Sezgin”.

studied geography and political sciences, choosing Oriental Studies for her PhD on the Umayyad historian, Abu Mikhnaf (d. 157/773-74).²⁴ Ursula Sezgin provided great support to Sezgin. She helped greatly in his research, as well as giving him moral support when he needed it. Sezgin expressed gratitude for his wife often and emphasized the importance of her moral backing, saying, “It would have been very difficult for me without her. I had faith. I had absolute faith in Allah (but) I also had...her trust and support in achieving my goals...”²⁵

In another interview, he said, “I owe many thanks (to her) ...I found a wife who endures this difficult life of mine...my conditions were not so good. I was afraid. How will I start this book, can I complete it, etc.? While I was writing, Ursula would take what I wrote every week, would edit it and correct it... she would always comfort me.”²⁶ They had a daughter who was born in 1970, and Sezgin named her “Hilal”, meaning “Crescent”, one of the important symbols of Islamic civilization, to which he had dedicated his life. Hilal Sezgin is a writer, journalist and author.²⁷

In the same period, his first volume of *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* (*The History of Islamic Science*), known as *GAS*, was published.²⁸ During his time as a university student, Sezgin had studied at the libraries of Istanbul together with Ritter, and for the manuscripts, they had benefited from the book, *Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur* (*The History of Arabic Literature*) by Carl Brockelmann who was Ritter’s teacher. Despite being one of the primary sources in this field, they noticed that the book had deficiencies, and Sezgin took the decision to write an addendum to correct this. As he worked, he realized that many manuscripts had been missed out by Brockelmann. Therefore, he decided that it must be more than an addendum. It would have to be a new work including all the known Islamic-Arabic scientific manuscripts. When he mentioned this idea to Ritter in 1965, he said, “No one in the world can achieve this goal. Do not tire yourself for nothing, give it up.” But Sezgin, so confident and resolute as he was,

²⁴ Ursula Sezgin, *Abū Miḥnaf: Ein Beitrag zur Historiographie der umayyadischen Zeit* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971).

²⁵ IBTAV, “A Life Dedicated to Science: Prof. Dr. Fuat Sezgin”.

²⁶ IBTAV, “TRT Haber | İnci Ertuğrul ile Haber Tadında- Prof. Dr. Fuat Sezgin”, *Youtube* (2 December 2016).

²⁷ Mahmut Ak, “İslam Bilim Tarihine Adanmış Bir Ömür: Prof. Dr. Fuat Sezgin”, *Divân: Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Dergisi* 24/47 (2019), 229.

²⁸ Nurettin Gemici, “Fuat Sezgin’in Eşsiz Çalışması: Gas (Geschichte Des Arabischen Schrifttums) ve Almanya’da Şarkiyat Çalışmalarına Dair”, *Düzce Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 9, (2019), 31-37.

already made up his mind, and started working on his magnum opus, a project which would last for over 50 years.²⁹

During his early years in Frankfurt, he had heard that a committee would be set up to further develop Brockelmann's research. He went to the Netherlands and had a meeting with the committee. He received the response that the project was too big for one person and that therefore only the committee could handle it. This did not deter Sezgin, who determinedly carried on his work. So much so that the committee had to disband upon the publication of the first volume in 1967.³⁰ Sezgin immediately sent a copy of the book's first volume to Ritter, to which he replied, "No one has ever achieved such before, and no one but you will be able to. Congratulations."³¹

He received the King Faisal Prize and 200,000 US dollars for this book in 1979. Being the first to win the newly instituted prize, he had the opportunity to meet many influential statesmen. Taking the opportunity, he started working on a waqf project. He wanted to establish an institute focusing on the contribution of Islamic sciences to humankind. First, he convinced the university administration, and then, started lobbying for finances. During a conference in Kuwait, thanks to the popularity of the award, the Kuwaiti government agreed to provide financial support, and the waqf was established in 1981.³² The following year, he founded the Institute for the History of Arab-Islamic Sciences (Institut für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften) within the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University.³³

As one of the projects of the Institute, the Museum for the History of Arab-Islamic Sciences was founded in Frankfurt the following year. The Library of the History of Sciences, including 45,000 volumes collected from all over the world by Sezgin, were in the same building.³⁴

Sezgin prepared a five-volume catalogue titled *Science and Technology in Islam* with the aim of introducing the objects to the museum in 2003. It was written in German and translated into Turkish, English, Arabic and French. It is

²⁹ Fazlıođlu, "Fuat Sezgin ile Bilim Tarihi Üzerine", 358.

³⁰ Turan, *Bilim Tarihi Sohbetleri*, 90-91.

³¹ Fazlıođlu, "Fuat Sezgin ile Bilim Tarihi Üzerine", 359. Gemici, "Fuat Sezgin'in Almanya'daki İlim Hayatına İntisabında Hellmut Ritter'in Rolü ve Önemi", 372-374.

³² Fazlıođlu, "Fuat Sezgin ile Bilim Tarihi Üzerine", 362.

³³ IBTAV, "A Life Dedicated to Science: Prof. Dr. Fuat Sezgin".

³⁴ IBTAV, "A Life Dedicated to Science: Prof. Dr. Fuat Sezgin".

now also available online in Turkish, English, and German on the official website of Istanbul Museum for the History of Science and Technology in Islam.³⁵

Sezgin then decided to establish a similar museum in his home city, Istanbul, in order to provide both Turks and the millions of tourists, who flock there annually, to see more concretely the rich scientific heritage of Islamic civilization, as well as the contributions of Muslim scholars to the history of science. His untiring efforts were rewarded with generous support by the Turkish government. The Istanbul Museum for the History of Science and Technology in Islam was established in 2008. The inauguration ceremony was held on 25 May 2008 with the attendance of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the then Turkish Prime Minister. In the Museum, located at Gülhane Park in Istanbul, hundreds of replica objects that have been meticulously recrafted allow visitors to better appreciate the evolution of Islamic civilization.

Two years later, the Fuat Sezgin Foundation for the History of Islamic Science was founded with the aim of supporting the activities of the Museum. Additionally, an independent Department of the History of Science was founded at the Fatih Sultan Mehmet Waqf University under the aegis of Sezgin in 2013, in order to provide courses at undergraduate, graduate and doctoral levels. The Fuat Sezgin Institute for the History of Islamic Science was established at the same university in 2013. Another great service to his homeland by Sezgin was to found the Fuat Sezgin and Ursula Sezgin Library of the History of Science. The Library that houses around 27.000 books was opened in Gülhane Park in 2017.³⁶

Sezgin spent the last years of his life in Istanbul. He would closely follow the activities of the Library and the Institute and his students would love to visit him. During his decades-long career he garnered many international awards and accolades from various institutes, from Cairo, Damascus and Baghdad, the Academy of Sciences in Turkey, as well as many honorary doctorates and the Federal Service Medal of Honor in Germany and the Grand Presidential Prize for Culture and Arts in Turkey.³⁷

³⁵ IBTTM, Istanbul Museum of the History of Science and Technology in Islam. (Retrieved on 3 December 2019).

³⁶ IBTAV, "A Life Dedicated to Science: Prof. Dr. Fuat Sezgin".

³⁷ Islamic World Academy of Sciences, "Fuat Sezgin Passes Away: The Departure of the Famous Turkish Historian at the Age of 94 Years" (Retrieved on 1 September 2020).

One of the most illustrious scholars and role models of our century, Prof. Fuat Sezgin passed away on the summer's day of June 30, 2018. He was buried in front of his precious museum in Istanbul and left behind a grand legacy that will continue to shed light on the little known and less acknowledged treasure in the field history of science.

B. Books and Literary Legacy

1. Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums – GAS³⁸: The major accomplishment of Sezgin is his 17 volumes of the History of Arab-Islamic Sciences. He passed away while preparing the 18th volume. The project started with manuscripts in the libraries of Istanbul but turned into a source of history of science in Islam by including Arabic manuscripts from all around the world.³⁹ For 50 years, Sezgin traveled to as many as 60 countries where he visited many libraries and studied over 400, 000 manuscripts. The first nine volumes of GAS were published by E. J. Brill (Leiden) between 1967-1984 while the remaining volumes were published by the Institute for the History of Arab-Islamic Sciences in Frankfurt at the Johann Wolfgang von Goethe University.⁴⁰

2. The Istanbul Museum for the History of Science and Technology in Islam (An Overview)⁴¹: Consisting of five volumes, this work was prepared as a catalogue of the museums in Istanbul and Frankfurt. Introducing the objects in the museums, it reveals through rich visual materials the contributions of Muslim scholars to the world's history of science in many fields, such as astronomy, medicine, geometry, geography, optics, chemistry and nautical science. It has been published in German, Turkish, English, Arabic and French.

3. Astronomy, Geography and Navigations in Islamic Civilization⁴²: This invaluable work was derived from the five-volume Science and Technology

³⁸ Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums* (Leiden: Brill, 1967-1984).

³⁹ Musa Sancak - Aziz Ençakar. "Erken Dönem Kelam Literatürü Fuat Sezgin'in GAS'ı Bağlamında Bir İnceleme" *Darulfünun İlahiyat [İstanbul Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi]* 'Fuat Sezgin' Özel Sayısı 30, (2019), 38.

⁴⁰ Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums* (Frankfurt: IGAIW, 1985-2015).

⁴¹ Fuat Sezgin, *İstanbul İslam Bilim ve Teknoloji Tarihi Müzesi (Toplu Bir Bakış); The Istanbul Museum for the History of Science and Technology in Islam (An Overview)* (Istanbul: İstanbul Kültür A.Ş, 2018).

⁴² Fuat **Sezgin**, *Astronomy Geography and Navigations in Islamic Civilization* (Istanbul: Boyut, 2010).

in Islam. Published in Turkish,⁴³ this book reveals the Arab origins of European maps, globes and shows world maps in the history of Islamic science, maritime objects as well as ship models and compasses are examined.

4. Architecture, Geometry, Physics, Chemistry, and Medicine in Islamic Civilization⁴⁴: In this second book derived from the five-volume Science and Technology in Islam, each object is presented with colored pictures, and detailed explanations as well as the dates and places they have been discovered are listed.

5. Kâtip Çelebi'nin Esas Kitâb-ı Cihânnümâ'sı ve Coğrafya Tarihindeki Yeri⁴⁵ (Kâtib Chalâbî's Book of Jihânumâ and Its Place in the History of Geography): Devoted to the sciences of astronomy and geography, Jihânumâ gives information about the latitudes and longitudes of cities and their distances to one another, industry in the leading countries of the era and the religion, language, and population information of the peoples. The facsimile of the Ottoman manuscript of this unique work (Topkapı Palace Manuscript Library, Revan Collection, MS 1624) is presented in the book accompanied by an English-Turkish preface by Sezgin in which he evaluates Jihânumâ, Kâtib Châlâbî, and his importance in the history of geography.

6. Amerika Kitasının Müslüman Denizciler Tarafından Kolomb Öncesi Keşfi ve Piri Reis⁴⁶ (Piri Reis/The Pre-Columbian Discovery of the American Continent by Muslim Seafarers): The works of Piri Reis are examined in this book with Sezgin's own research and evaluation. In addition to the cartographic depiction of the Mediterranean islands, the maps of Piri Reis in *Kitâb-ı Bahriye*, which guided the sailors for centuries, and the sources of these maps are studied in this book. It was authored and published in English first, and then translated into Turkish.

7. The History of Science and Technology in Islam⁴⁷: This work examines with several examples the role of Islamic science in the world's history

⁴³ Fuat Sezgin, *İslam Uygarlığında Astronomi, Coğrafya ve Denizcilik* (Istanbul: Boyut, 2009).

⁴⁴ Fuat Sezgin, *İslam Uygarlığında Mimari, Geometri, Fizik, Kimya, Tıp* (Istanbul: Boyut, 2012).

⁴⁵ Fuat Sezgin, *Kâtip Çelebi'nin Esas Kitâb-ı Cihânnümâ'sı ve Coğrafya Tarihi'ndeki Yeri* (Istanbul: Boyut, 2013).

⁴⁶ Fuat Sezgin, *Amerika Kitasının Müslüman Denizciler Tarafından Kolomb Öncesi Keşfi ve Piri Reis* (Istanbul: Boyut, 2015).

⁴⁷ Fuat Sezgin, *İslam'da Bilim ve Teknik*, trans. Abdurrahman Aliy, ed. Hayri Kaplan, Abdurrahman Aliy (Ankara: Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi, 2007).

of science. Besides being an alternative to the Eurocentric scientific understanding, it is also a resource reminding the Islamic world of its great achievements in the realm of science and technology. The book explores the ten-century development in the history of science in Islam in such fields as architecture, medicine, nautical science, chemistry, geography, geometry, physics, and astronomy.

8. In Europäischen Sprachen Erschienene Vorworte zu Publikationen des Institutes aus den Jahren 1984 bis 2011⁴⁸ (The Prefaces in European Languages to the Publications of the Institute of the History of Arab-Islamic Sciences from 1984 to 2011): It was published as “the 30th anniversary special edition” of the Institute of the History of Arab-Islamic Sciences at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University. The book includes the Turkish, English, German and French prefaces of the books published by the institute. The prefaces were authored over thirty years, mostly by Sezgin himself. It was published in Germany in 2011 and was translated into Turkish after a few years.⁴⁹

9. The Sources of al-Bukhārī⁵⁰: This book by Sezgin, challenges and corrects many common misconceptions about al-Bukhārī’s Şahīh and his methodology. One of those misconceptions is that while preparing his work, al-Bukhārī collected *hadith* narrations only based on oral sources by traveling around many regions. This work, however, reveals the written sources benefited by al-Bukhārī, and demonstrates the methodology of the evaluation of the literature step by step.

10. Bilim Tarihi Sohbetleri⁵¹ (Conversations on History of Science): It comprises the interview of Sefer Turan with Sezgin, published in Turkish, and reveals the life story of Sezgin as well as the background of his studies and projects.

⁴⁸ Fuat Sezgin, *Jubiläumsband zum dreißigjährigen Bestehen des Institutes für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften. In europäischen Sprachen erschienene Vorworte (Mukaddimeler) zu Publikationen des Institutes aus den Jahren 1984 bis 2011* (Frankfurt: IGAIW, 2011).

⁴⁹ Fuat Sezgin, *1984 Yılından 2011 Yılına Kadar Arap-İslam Bilimleri Tarihi Enstitüsü Yayınlarına Yazılan Avrupa Dillerindeki Önsözler* (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2015).

⁵⁰ Fuat Sezgin, *Buhari'nin Kaynakları Hakkında Arařtırmalar* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1956).

⁵¹ Sefer Turan, *Bilim Tarihi Sohbetleri*, (İstanbul: Pınar, 2019).

We should also add that apart from these works, Fuat Sezgin published 1237 facsimile editions of valuable manuscripts on various scientific subjects, which are located in different libraries across the world.

A Few Notes on the Museum of the History of Science and Technology in Islam

After the establishment of the Institute in Frankfurt, Sezgin started developing projects, one of which was the idea of a museum. He was inspired by the German physicist and expert on the history of science, Eilhard Wiedemann (d. 1928).⁵² In 1900, Wiedemann began developing replicas to introduce Islamic scientific objects to the public. He succeeded in completing replicas of only five objects when he died in 1928. Taking this into consideration, Sezgin established the museum in 1983 with the intention of producing 30 replicas, enough to fill a room, hardly a museum.⁵³ Today with a collection of 585 replicas, the Istanbul museum has reached such a success and such a height that he could not imagine.⁵⁴ In an interview, he said that the main goal of the museum was to introduce the public to scientific implements and tools invented by Muslims.⁵⁵

The works exhibited in Frankfurt quickly gained recognition, and Sezgin received many requests to establish similar museums in other parts of the world. The Turkish Minister of Culture and Tourism visited the institute in 2005 and informed Sezgin of their wish to establish a similar museum in Istanbul. The Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality allocated a building in Gülhane Park for the museum. The Istanbul Museum of the History of Science and Technology in Islam welcomed its first visitors on May 24, 2008. It was also officially decided that an institute for the study of the history of science would be established next to the museum.⁵⁶

Extending over 3,500 square meters along the old Topkapi palace wall, the museum is a significant body, being the first in Turkey and the second in the world after Frankfurt in its kind, with a collection of 585 replicas. At the entrance of the museum a globe welcomes the visitors, which is a reproduction of the world map

⁵² For further information on Wiedemann, see Hilal Görgün, "Wiedemann, Eilhard", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2013), 43/159-161.

⁵³ IBTAV, "A Life Dedicated to Science: Prof. Dr. Fuat Sezgin".

⁵⁴ Turan, *Bilim Tarihi Sohbetleri*, 106.

⁵⁵ Turan, *Bilim Tarihi Sohbetleri*, 32-33.

⁵⁶ IBTTM.

that is believed to be drawn up on the order of Caliph al-Ma'mūn in the 9th century. Prepared by globular projection, the map is surprisingly accurate considering the limitations of the time. The Ibn Sīnā Botanical Garden, containing 26 of the medicinal plants mentioned in the second volume of Ibn Sīnā's (Avicenna) (d. 428/1037) *The Canon of Medicine (al-Qānūn fī al-ṭibb)*, is also located in the museum's garden.

The museum consists of two floors. On the first floor, maps, drawings and diagrams in the fields of mining, physics, mathematics, geometry, city-planning, architecture, optics, chemistry and geography are exhibited. A film hall, as well as sections on astronomy, clock technology, nautical affairs, arms technology and medicine are located on the second floor. The replicas and models of the works of Muslim scientists from the 9th to the 16th centuries can be seen in all exhibition halls.

A copy of the world map drawn by al-Idrīsī (d. 560/1165), a mechanical clock built by Taqī al-Din (d. 993/1585) in 1559, the planetarium by Abū Sa'īd al-Sijzī (d. 415/1024), the celestial sphere of 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Şūfī (d. 376/986), the astrolabe of Ḥāmid b. Khidr al-Khujandi (d. 390/1000), the minute scale made by 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Khāzinī in the 12th century and *The Canon of Medicine* by Ibn Sīnā are just some of the important objects exhibited in the museum. The replicas were prepared by the Institute of History of Arab-Islamic Sciences at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt. Most of them were based on descriptions and diagrams in the written sources, while a few of them were based on the originals of the objects that have survived today.

While Sezgin could not witness the effect of *GAS* on the public, seeing the reactions of those who visited the museum made him happy. In this regard, he says, "(People) are amazed when they see our museum. We can gradually put these tangible objects into the minds of people alongside the notions. And it can create an impact by correcting the false information (about Islam's contribution to science) ..."⁵⁷

The importance Sezgin attached to the museum projects indicates that he was a scholar who was not content with theoretical studies only, but also quite aware that supporting scientific notions with tangible objects would increase appreciation and understanding. Hundreds of scientific objects reproduced under

⁵⁷ Fazlođlu, "Fuat Sezgin ile Bilim Tarihi Üzerine", 364.

his leadership have created an impact in the East and the West, with similar museums opened in Riyadh and Dubai.⁵⁸

C. Reflections on The Legacy of Fuat Sezgin

Islam, whose first Qur'anic command is "to read", firmly holds that the seeking of knowledge is obligatory upon every believer. In this regard, the Prophet Muhammad said that the seeking of knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim.⁵⁹ Sezgin dedicated his entire life to learning and teaching others till his last breath. Sezgin's life can be viewed as one of best contemporary illustrations of the above-mentioned *ḥadīth* of the Prophet, who also said that we should seek knowledge "even (as far as) unto China".

Sezgin travelled to more than 60 countries in search of knowledge, working 17 to 18 hours a day, taking no holidays or days off. This could, indeed, be part of a biography of an ancient scholar, one of the giants who lived many centuries ago. This was also the characteristic of Fuat Sezgin, a modern-day Muslim scholar, who lived most of his life in Frankfurt, Germany, for his entire life is a testimony to his dedication to learning and teaching. In 2016, when he was 89 years-old, he was asked about how many hours he worked a day. He replied, "I used to work a lot, maybe 16-17 hours a day...but now I cannot work that much..."⁶⁰

There is a common tendency in modern academia that scholarly production decreases after people obtain their academic titles. This was not the case with Sezgin, who continued to publish until the last days of his life.

He adopted for himself as a guiding principle the famous *ḥadīth* narrated by 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar: "He whose two days are equal is a loser". He consciously tried to spend each day more fruitfully than the next and felt guilty whenever he could not learn something new or achieve something further. He interpreted the *ḥadīth* as a message of Islam, wanting a new thing from us each new day. Sezgin reasoned in a conversation with Sefer Turan that every Muslim had to ask this question just like a merchant would ask himself, "What have I

⁵⁸ Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization, (Retrieved on 15 August 2020).

⁵⁹ Ibn Mājah, "Muqaddimah", 17 (No. 2249).

⁶⁰ Fazlıoğlu, "Fuat Sezgin ile Bilim Tarihi Üzerine", 354.

earned today?” Scientists or those who do charitable activities also have to ask “What have I learned today? Which charitable act have I done today?”⁶¹

Sezgin spent most of his life among the Orientalist scholars, reading their academic works and completing his studies under their supervision. However, I argue that describing Fuat Sezgin as an “Orientalist” would be entirely incorrect and unfair. Like the famous author and academic Edward Said, a most prominent opponent of the Orientalist mindset, Sezgin, too, can be regarded as a leading critic, for his primary goal and lifelong struggle was to refute the disparaging claims of the Western Orientalists. His phenomenal work, *The Sources of al-Bukhārī*, thoroughly disproved the baseless claims of Orientalist scholarship on the unreliability of Islamic sources, and of the questionable traditions of *hadīth* transmission. Even though his book on Bukhārī was written in Turkish, and has never been translated, it still is among the most referred Turkish book in Western academic circles.⁶²

Without doubt, though, the *magnum opus* of Sezgin is his 17 volume *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums (The History of Arab-Islamic Sciences)* known as GAS. Beginning in 1967 and ending in 2018, he worked over 50 years on this project. His fundamental aim was to document the contributions of Muslims to the field of science and technology. Even though Sezgin himself had been taught at this school of the Orientalists, he decided to correct this misperception from the moment he realized that it was not true.

By compiling and cataloguing hundreds of thousands original manuscripts from all over the world, Sezgin was able to show that Muslim scientists did produce excellent scholarly works, almost in all fields, mathematics, astronomy, astrology, meteorology, geography, cartography, medicine, pharmacology, zoology, veterinary science, poetry, alchemy, chemistry, botany, agriculture and so many other disciplines.

His GAS project was undeniably a rectifier and even a “game changer” in the true sense of the word, as it shook the foundations of the Orientalist allegations that Islamic civilization had offered little. In doing so, Sezgin filled what is called

⁶¹ Turan, *Bilim Tarihi Sohbetleri*, 110-111.

⁶² Özcan Hıdır, ““Keşf-i Kadīm”i “Vaz-ı Cedid” Kılmak: Fuat Sezgin’in İslam Bilim Tarihine Katkısı,” *Diyanet Aylık Dergi* 337 (2019), 26.

“the great gap” and thereby brought back to the study of Islamic history a balanced and fair perspective.

Interestingly, Sezgin was against the idea of adopting a blind criticism of Orientalist scholarship. He insisted on evaluating their works with a fair and objective approach and giving credit to them whenever and wherever it was due. Yet, whenever he came across an unfair evaluation or analysis, he would not only criticize it, but furnish viable and justifiable alternatives. It should be noted that the German Orientalist institutions opened their doors for him when he was expelled from his own country in the 1960s and provided him assistance.

Sezgin was frequently asked about the secret behind his tireless work ethic and self-discipline. He once replied, “I cannot tell you enough how all the cells in my body need to rest! But every time I get this feeling, I once again convince myself that I have no right to rest while the Islamic world is in this (critical) situation. I will rest in the grave. I have been in Frankfurt for 40 years... (yet) I have never had a chance to see the city!”⁶³

As a master of time management, even his basic needs such as eating would not take long. One of the key elements in his success was when he became tired, he would then change the line of his work and “relax” by doing another thing. In this regard, he was critical of people today, lamenting that we forget the fact that our time is short. We, as he warns, are not conscious enough as to how to spend our time productively, -time: a blessing of Allah on us.⁶⁴

What can be gleaned from the life of Sezgin as examples for us today is his consistency, patience and never-ending optimism, even under extraordinary circumstances. Sezgin always kept in mind that “the good is veiled behind what appears to be evil”. Even though he faced many challenges, including exile from his beloved homeland, he never fell into despair. Faith and hopelessness could not exist in the same heart together. Instead, the difficulties he went through always prompted him to think and plan about what he could do next, and to take immediate action after deciding what to do. In this way, he mastered turning crisis into opportunity. Having been exiled was not an end for him but the beginning of something else.

⁶³ Nermin Taylan, “İlmin Afakında Vakur bir Veda: Fuat Sezgin”, *Diyanet Dergi* 332 (August 2018), 42-45.

⁶⁴ Turan, *Bilim Tarihi Sohbetleri*, 130.

Another lesson taken from the life of Sezgin is his strong will and firm determination. Throughout his life after deciding what to do, he never looked back, no matter how challenging the conditions were. For example, when Hellmut Ritter, his master whom he respected more than anyone else, told him to give up his idea of *GAS*, Sezgin persevered. It is this same determination that made him work constantly for years after deciding to establish the institute, despite all the obstacles.

As a multidisciplinary scholar, learning about the requirements of his job was never enough for him. He was so devoted to his ideals that he would learn about related fields as well. We have already said he learnt 27 foreign languages to read and understand texts from their original sources. He even learnt bookbinding. This alone shows his perfectionist approach. The learning of languages is a common characteristic of top academics, who, through their endeavors, change existing paradigms.⁶⁵

Another critical point about his life is Sezgin's self-confidence. He left us a comprehensive exemplary scholarship. While talking about our past, sometimes we exalt it to such an extent that we make it something unachievable, turning it a utopia. This may cause us to perceive our historical figures with such an unrealistic, if not hopeless, perception that we feel we cannot reach great heights. However, Sezgin showed us that we can achieve success by working hard. In this regard, his life is a lesson itself for understanding that what we read about our past is not a myth, but a reality that can be attained today.

Although during his first years in Frankfurt he was told that *GAS* was unachievable,⁶⁶ he never lost his self-belief and kept on studying. Thus, he succeeded in his goal, leading to the disbanding of the special committee that had been set up for the project. He attached great importance to instilling self-confidence in the minds of young people. To draw attention to its importance, he recommended, "First of all, I would like to address teachers. They must try to save students from the sense of inferiority, for it eats up the Turkish nation like a cancer."⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Hıdır, ""Keřf-i Kadım"ı "Vaz-ı Cedid" Kılmak", 29.

⁶⁶ Adnan Yılmaz, *Bilimler Tarihi Dostu Prof. Dr. Fuat Sezgin* (İstanbul: NG yayıncılık, 2019), 176-177.

⁶⁷ Turan, *Bilim Tarihi Sohbetleri*, 73.

He said it was crucial to learn history properly and to understand the lessons drawn from it. In this context, we must neither feel inferior, nor boast too much. Sezgin instead emphasized that keeping balance in this regard was essential, and further crystallized his position in these words: “If we learn our history properly, we may perhaps overcome both the inferiority complex and (the) meaningless boasting.”⁶⁸

It should be noted that the people who met with Sezgin appreciate his human qualities as well. Apart from being a dedicated scholar who always focused on his work and never wasted his time, he was also a caring and generous person. He always addressed the needs of his students, even offering to pay for the train tickets of students who visited his institute.⁶⁹ It would be meaningful to conclude with the advice of Sezgin, the great scholar of our age, a role model for all:

I gave a lecture at the University of Kuwait. The sixth volume of my book was just released back then. A young man asked, ‘You are writing this challenging book, what do you recommend to us?’

So, I told him:

1. A true asceticism (*zuhd*). It means being able to make self-sacrifice from worldly pleasures! I could have lived in better conditions, but I go to the institute by taking a small piece of bread in my bag. I include a little piece of cheese or oil-free jam, and have my lunch with that, which means it does not take more than ten minutes.
2. “Sabr al-Jameel”, which means a beautiful patience.
3. Fear of Allah. I recommend you to be aware that Allah keeps all our actions under control.⁷⁰

D. Conclusion

By this preliminary study, we have aimed to draw the attention of those who wish to pursue research in the field of Islamic civilization in general and history of science in particular to the intellectual legacy of Fuat Sezgin. It is hoped that this will serve for them as a primer or a roadmap, furnishing a set of guidelines adopted and employed by Sezgin himself while doing his own research and also highlighting one by one the most important characteristics of his overall achievement as a world-renowned scholar. Sezgin, with his lifetime dedication, determination and hard work, unearthed the lost treasure of Islamic civilization;

⁶⁸ Turan, *Bilim Tarihi Sohbetleri*, 11.

⁶⁹ See Yunus Arslan’s interviews with Hüseyin Şen and Hayrullah Cengiz. Yunus Arslan, “İslam Bilim Tarihine Ömrünü Adayan Âlim: Fuat Sezgin”, *Lacivert Dergisi* 49 (2018) (Retrieved on 19 August 2020).

⁷⁰ Turan, *Bilim Tarihi Sohbetleri*, 103-104.

with his literary works, he was able to provide a rich academic resource and also open up new horizons for generations to come. Many people agree that what he managed to accomplish alone equaled the output of several men. All in all, Sezgin aimed at the de-colonization of Muslim minds and gave them hope by underscoring the golden message, “as your ancestors did, so you too can achieve.”

Even though he was taught and tutored by Orientalist scholars and benefited a lot from their tradition, Sezgin never became an Orientalist academic in his approach towards Islamic civilization. On the contrary, Sezgin’s legacy in its entirety challenges the deep-rooted, but unjust claims of Orientalists, who have either downgraded or belittled the contributions of Islamic civilization to sciences.

With the project of Museum of the History of Science and Technology, Sezgin’s intention was to show people, particularly Muslims, that Islamic civilization was not an imaginary world, but a concrete reality. For this reason, he worked meticulously to produce replicas of the scientific tools invented by Muslim scientists throughout the history of Islamic civilization. In doing so, he also demonstrated the practical aspects of the science of history, which is generally accepted as a theoretical science.

In short, the life and legacy of Prof. Fuat Sezgin, as we have tried to show in this essay, indeed contains numerous significant theoretical and practical lessons for young students and offers profound wisdom not just for the seekers of knowledge but for any Muslim as well who desires to lead a life of responsibility in accordance with the Prophet’s universal teaching: *in doing good deeds or learning, your two days, yesterday and today, should never be equal and the same.* This was the principle by which this great scholar of Islamic civilization himself studied, worked, and produced and also inspired his students.

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