THE SCIENTIFIC PERSONALITY OF FUAT SEZGİN THROUGH THE HISTORY OF ARAB HERITAGE

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Abstract

This paper deals with the efforts of scientist Fuat Sezgin in reviving the Arab heritage. What motivated him to study Arab heritage? How was his scientific personality affected by that study? How did he move from the stage of collecting the history of the Arab scientific heritage to the stage of investing in the renaissance of the Muslim nation in the contemporary time? We will discuss the merger between the results of the Islamic heritage and the scientific personality of Sezgin, and the influence of Sezgin on the products of that heritage as the leading scientist in this field. The research will discuss the influence of Sezgin on the scientists of his time, and how Sezgin moved from the collection of Islamic heritage to the stage of awareness and defense of this heritage. This is an overview of the research that we will discuss here.

Keywords: Fuat Sezgin, Heritage, Arab, Islamic, Civilization.

ARAP KÜLTÜR TARIHİ ADLI KİTABINA GÖRE FUAT SEZGİN'İN BİLİMSEL KİŞİLİĞİ

Öz


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Anahtar Kelimeler: Fuat Sezgin, Kültür, Arap, İslam, Medeniyet.

Initiation

Fuat Sezgin 1924 -2018, a Turkish researcher who lived in Germany, majored in Arab and Islamic scientific heritage. He is the founder of the Institute of Arab Islamic Sciences at the Goethe University in Frankfurt. He was born in small town of Bitlis in Anatolia. Then, he moved as a youth to Istanbul. He studied at the University of Istanbul in the Department of Oriental Studies and he learned Arabic. Then, he has spoken Arabic fluently, then he mastered 27 languages, including Syriac, Hebrew, Latin, German, and others. He met the orientalist Hellmut Ritter 1892 -1971, who had been teaching in Turkey since 1926, and directed him to study Arab-Islamic history (Sezgin, 1983: 14 -15). His teacher Helmut Ritter is a famous German orientalist, he mastered the Arabic language while studying in the Department of Eastern History at the University of Bonn in Germany, where he received Ph.D in 1914, then he traveled to Iraq to work there as a translator for the German army for two years (1916-1917), then moved to Turkey to work as a translator for the German army again in Turkey (1918). After the war Ritter returned to Germany, where he was appointed professor of Oriental Studies at the University of Hamburg until 1926, then he returned to Turkey to be director of the Oriental Institute in Istanbul (1927), besides he was appointed professor of Arabic literature at the University of Istanbul (1936). Consequently Ritter was able to see the Arabic manuscripts in Istanbul. During this period, he met Sezgin who was an intelligent student, Ritter encouraged his student Sezgin to pay attention to Arabic sciences, he led him to study Arabic literature and the history of Arab heritage. So Sezgin became passionately interested in Arabic studies, and then he specialized in the history of Arab heritage (Badawi, 1993: 277).

In 1951, Sezgin received his doctorate from the same university. The thesis was about Saheeh al-Bukhari and later he published it as a book entitled “Studies on the Sources of the Right Mosque of Al-Bukhari”. He worked at the University of Istanbul until 1960. Posteriorly, he left his homeland towards Germany,
specifically for the University of Goethe in Frankfurt where he worked as a visiting professor. He quickly obtained in 1965 professor degree for his pioneering researchs which chronicled the development of natural sciences in the Arab-Islamic civilization. In 1965, he presented a second doctoral thesis on the chemist Jabir bin Hayyan.

He received many international awards and decorations throughout his life from various institutions such as The Arabic Language Academy in Cairo, The Arabic Language Academy in Damascus, The Arabic Language Academy in Baghdad and The Academy of Sciences in Turkey, he also received The Great Medal of Honor from the Federal Republic of Germany and The Goethe Medal from Frankfurt, all these awards are famous and have high scientific value. It focuses on studies that contribute to building knowledge among human beings in the fields of history and humanities, which aim to promote genius and excellence, These awards include a certificate of honor, and a good amount of money to encourage scientific research, in addition to being the first winner of The King Faisal International Prize in Islamic Studies, he was awarded this prize in recognition of his scientific efforts in authoring his huge encyclopedic book The History of Arab Heritage. The money he earned from the King Faisal Prize was spent on the establishment of the Institute in Frankfurt, which we mentioned earlier in this research. He worked also on establishment of another institute in Istanbul in 2010 and the waqf of the History of Islamic Science with the aim of supporting the activities of the Museum of Islamic Science and Technology in Istanbul (Sezgin, 2010: 6).

Although he emigrated to Germany, where he worked, wrote, married, and fathered, he remained until the end a honest who was concerned about the issues of Islamic Nation and wanted a goodness, for example, he received the Hessen Cultural Prize together with Salmon Korn, head of the Jewish community in Frankfurt, but Sezgin refused to receive the award because of Salmon Korn who supported the Israeli offensive in Gaza.

**His Major Scientific Works**

Sezgin has three major works, one of which is the Encyclopedia of Arab Heritage, "Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums" is the title of the original book in German, which is a founding work in the field of Arabic and Islamic studies. Sezgin began publishing volumes of this encyclopedia since 1967. The last two volumes were published in 2015: Volume XVI on Rhetoric and Criticism, and Volume XVII on Educational and Entertainment Literature. He had difficulties in
completing this work mentioned in the introduction to his book. Sezgin mentioned these details in the introductory section of his book, and can be consulted there (Sezgin, 1983: 14).

The second work is a large bibliography entitled "Bibliographie der Deutschsprachigen Arabistik und Islamkunde" is titled in German. In English it means: "Bibliography of Arab and Islamic Studies in the German-speaking region". This encyclopedia has been published in two parts: the first part in twenty-two volumes includes the indexes of those works from its beginning until 1986. The second part includes works that were issued between 1986 and 1994 from this second part, eight volumes were published in 2006.

Sezgin' third scientific work was through the annual scientific journal that he founded in 1982, entitled "Zeitschrift für Geschichte der arabisch-islamischen Wissenschaften", which means "Journal of the History of Arab-Islamic Sciences", there is important study by Akram Al-Omari, a professor of history at Baghdad University, which he mentioned in detail the contents of this scientific work by Sezgin. So, we think that there is no need to enter into it here, and readers can refer to that study (Al-Omari, 1994: 58), Sezgin dedicated that journal to publish his scientific studies, studies of other scholars of the Institute and orientalist studies which interested in Arab Scientific heritage.

These three scientific works have had a great impact in all the countries of the world, thus scientists can benefit from these three books. This has contributed to spread of these books and make all researchers depend on it in the Arab Islamic heritage. In this article we look at his first book which explored the history of Arab heritage. We want to learn about Sezgin's scientific personality through this book. Some people think that this book is an encyclopedic bibliography of the history of Arab heritage only. But, this book is in fact a completed picture of the scientific personality of Sezgin -in my view- for two reasons:

First, Sezgin's relationship with the science of Arab and Islamic heritage, on the one hand the desire to know this heritage and combine this heritage in great encyclopedic bibliography. This aspect cost Sezgin a long research in ancient bookcases about manuscripts scattered around the world, for example, he obtained pictures of many manuscripts from many international libraries, including the library Zahrieh in Damascus, which is known to be a library that included many manuscripts in the Arab and Islamic heritage, as well as pictures of some manuscripts from the libraries of Iraq by help of some friends. The most important manuscripts he was able to obtain were preserved in the National Library of Germany, as well as the manuscripts in Istanbul, where many Arabic
manuscripts were transferred to Istanbul during the Ottoman period to preserve them safely. It is a great effort of hard work, to access the scientific treasures of the Arab-Islamic heritage that has spread throughout the world. We should also know that Sezgin's effort is a purely individual work, which he has patiently for decades. It is known that Islamic manuscripts were carried with the invasions to many libraries of the world, and the Muslim still does not know much about them. But, when he began collecting Arab-Islamic heritage, he showed these great information by accomplishing this great scientific project. This work revealed to us the great spiritual relationship between Sezgin and Islamic scientific heritage. But, through this work we have seen how the scientific vision of Sezgin has shifted from the science of the lost Arab-Islamic heritage to the attempt to accomplish a modern project of Islamic ages. This point we will just explain in the next paragraph (Sezgin, 1983: 11).

Second, Sezgin wanted to make Islamic heritage a driving force for the return of the flourishing of science in Muslim countries today. Those sciences that had grown for centuries while Muslims in the present era have been oblivious to their ancestral heritage. Sezgin believed that this heritage contained major power factors that could have promoted the nation in modern times. Sezgin's work also included a complete picture of his scientific method in reviving the Arab-Islamic heritage, in terms of his rejection of the insults that some orientalists tried to attach to the Islamic heritage. These slanders were carried out by some orientalists who aimed to obliterate the features of the Arab heritage for special purposes in themselves. Some of these orientalists aimed to give credit to Europe alone in building scientific human civilization, therefore, they denied or concealed scientific facts found in the Islamic scientific heritage. But, Sezgin was able to reveal that process, and restored the Arab-Islamic heritage rights that were stolen.

The Heritage And Scientific Personality Of Sezgin - A Merger March

It is true that these key works in Sezgin project have produced other important works that are considered to be the development of topics already addressed in the history of Arab heritage. For example, his huge book "Wissenschaft und Technik im Islam" in German, which means in English "Science and technology in Islam". It have been published in many languages, including German 2003, French 2004, Turkish 2006, and Arabic 2007.

The important scientific event in Sezgin's life was before he traveled to Germany. This event changed the scientific plan for his life. Sezgin, who was born in an eastern Anatolian city in Turkey. He went to middle and high schools
in Erzurum Province. He was planning to join the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Istanbul. There, he attended a lecture by Helmut Ritter, professor of oriental philology at the university. So, Sezgin's plans changed completely. He lift the dream of engineering and became a student at Ritter beginning in 1942. When Ritter revealed the talents of his new student, he began to direct him to learn languages and study the history of science among Arabs and Muslims. Ritter's teaching methodology was that his pupils learn a new language every year, so Sezgin learned several important languages for his research (Sezgin, 1983: 15).

After Sezgin's close relationship with his teacher Helmut Ritter, he went together to the libraries of Istanbul, which he knew well. Ritter shared his manuscripts and conveyed his experiences and knowledge. Then Sezgin heard from Ritter a lot about his professors and their works, like the book by Carl Brockelmann 1868 -1956. Ritter said that this work is no longer enough to learn about the Arab heritage, especially after emergence of new collections of manuscripts that Brockelmann was not aware and after burgeoning movement of investigation and cataloging in Egypt and the Islamic world. So this work must be renewed, and this is the task that Sezgin took upon himself (Sezgin, 1983: 12).

Through Ritter, Sezgin became acquainted with the community of German Orientalists in Istanbul. Among them was the German Muslim orientalist Oskar Ritter 1885 -1948, who also believed that the work of his professor Brockelmann was no longer sufficient or appropriate even after renovation and additions. He also could regain his place if it was renewed and completed fully. Sezgin then discovered that Ritter had already begun collecting the bibliographic material needed to release a new edition of Brockelmann's book, for example, Brockman's book was limited to literature in terms of its title, but went beyond that to study issues outside the subject of literature. We find that confusion in many subjects in his book (Brockelmann,1959:2- 125, 135), this is a departure from the scientific method which Brockelmann used in his book. Brockelmann's work was incomplete because he did not mention all the subjects of Arabic literature, but we find that Sezgin's book is more complete in terms of historical times studied, and show scientific personality of Sezgin through the accuracy of scientific method; because he was keen to study the history of Arab heritage, including In that Arabic literature. However, we find that Brockelmann was wrong when he limited his book to literature in terms of title, then he confused literature with other topics related to other Arabic sciences, and thus the reader finds that the book of Sezgin is more comprehensive and more accurate in terms of the scientific method. But Sezgin also discussed controversial issues, such as the contention of the originality of Arab history and Arabic literature (Sezgin, 1983: 22).
It is important to mention here that Sezgin worked for a while as an assistant to Richer in the development of Brockelmann's book, but for reasons of health he could not continue the work and he was relieved. From the book "History of Arab Heritage" as the great world history of Arabic literature. By Subject "History of Arab and Islamic Sciences" Arab countries sought to establish an international institute specialized in the history of Arab and Islamic sciences, which 14 Arab countries and a number of organizations participated. The Institute of History of Arab and Islamic Sciences was established in 1982 in Frankfurt one of the most important accomplishments during his institute was that he remanufactured old Arabic instruments, many of which were found in ancient manuscripts, although manuscripts often describe only machines without drawing them. In 1983, he founded a museum inside the institute where he collected more than 800 copies of historical scientific instruments and maps (Sezgin, 1914: 13).

Sezgin engaged in the history of the Arab scientific heritage, investigation and scrutiny, in order to overcome the shortcomings of Brockelmann in his bibliographic book on Arabic literature. This book was published in 1967 in spite the financial obstacles he faced, the first volume of his huge encyclopedic book was entitled "Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums" in German. It was then translated into Arabic and published under the title "History of Arab Heritage" this encyclopedia chronicles the achievements of Arab and Muslim scholars, with a translation of each scholar, the names of his works, and their places in the world libraries of the manuscript. It includes the contributions of Arabs in all science fields of Arab Islamic civilization during its prosperity.

The Arabic version of that book translated in this order: in four parts mentioned: science of the Quran, science of Hadith, historical codification, jurisprudence, Islamic faith, and mysticism. In 5 parts: Arabic poetry. In two parts: medicine and veterinary. In one part: semiotics, plant chemistry and agriculture. In one part: mathematics. In two parts: astronomy. In one part: the provisions of the stars and the like. In two parts: linguistics. In one part: grammar. In three parts: geography and maps. In one part: maps of Islamic heritage found in the West. These parts were published by the Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University in Riyadh between 1991 and 2009 in successive parts. Prior to his death, Sezgin continued to write many volumes of the history of Arab heritage, the first of which was published in 1967. He merged in his scientific project and he worked 17 hours a day collecting scattered Arabic manuscripts in private and public libraries in the East and West. He copied, translated into German, extracted their treasures and then publishing them. He also used a lot of researchs and studies prepared by orientalists specialized in this field. But, he added a lot of
explanations and scientific comments, such as what we found in response to the orientalists’ claims about some of the historical scientific figures in Islamic civilization.

This encyclopedia quickly became the most important thing in Sezgin’s scientific life in half a century, but he died shortly after he published the seventeenth volume of this great encyclopedic work, which, after all these decades of hard work, became a world-class reference, where it was a cause in Sezgin's scientific fame for revealing treasures of the Arab-Islamic scientific heritage, which has been appreciated by many scientists around the world (Khalaf, 1999: 6).

To complement that project he has established the Institute of History of Arabic and Islamic Sciences within the framework of the Goethe University in Frankfurt in 1982, through which he sought to introduce scientific knowledge of Arabic science. The Institute has accumulated a huge knowledge harvest despite its modest financial resources. Many researchs have been published in this institute, mostly in German. These researchs have provided a clear and unambiguous picture of scientific achievements for Muslims in diverse scientific fields.

**Sezgin's Influence On Arab Heritage - The Leading Scientist**

Sezgin's interest in Arab-Islamic heritage has resulted in important observations that we conclude by looking at his book The History of Arab Heritage. This scientific trip resulted in a map of the world considered to be of high accuracy. The history of Arab heritage was not just a bibliography, it is a book that contains important investigations into Islamic heritage.

In order to provide evidence for this, we must know that Sezgin did not deal with the texts of heritage without referring also to the statements of Orientalists. He linked the past to the present in terms of scientific relationships to reach scientific facts that are beyond doubt and refute the claims of some unfair orientalists.

The ancient Islamic map developed by Muslim scholars of the ancient world was brought to us by Sezgin through his reading of the Arab-Islamic heritage. So he came up with a great scientific fact that the West hid for so long. This fact is that Muslims discovered America before Christopher Columbus. This theory was very important. Sezgin has provided scientific evidence that is beyond doubt, the important question here is: Where did Sezgin write the details of this
important scientific opinion about the ancient world, the map of the ancient world, and the discovery of Muslims to the continent of America? We find this in his book "History of Arab Heritage" we asked the previous question in order to reach this important fact, which is that the book sad is not just a work to collect information only. He was not interested in collecting manuscripts of Arab heritage in one book and was not interested in achieving the results of the information collected and looking at the results Scientific. There is accurate scientific criticism. This requires linking old information and current information. This section of Sezgin's views on the discovery of America was then published in an independent book because of its importance. The subject's importance was then singled out in a separate book (Sezgin, 2014: 53).

In that book Sezgin mentioned in seventy-one pages the invalidity of the prevailing theory among scientists about the discovery of America. He came with cartographic and scientific evidence taken from his study of ancient Arab heritage manuscripts preserved in the world's libraries. Sezgin brought this truth to people. He discussed the evidence of others and in a scientific method based on the principle of overturning the imposition was able to nullify the prevailing theory of the discovery of America and put a new theory based on maps and sayings that he had already found in the books of Arab Islamic heritage while working in writing the history of Arab heritage.

Sezgin was happy with his new discovery and was sad that all Muslims had left their knowledge treasures and were not interested in trying to obtain and consider them to learn how their ancestors created a civilization filled the world. It worked by orientalists while the owners of that scientific wealth remained ascetics and oblivious to it. So Sezgin was able to restore to Muslims the right that taken from them, but he also wanted the present generation to wake up from the deep sleep to rebuild the civilization that was started by their ancestors. Here Sezgin's scientific influence is reflected in the ancient Islamic heritage and its influence in the attempt to revive this heritage to reshape it in contemporary time.

In addition to the cause of the discovery of America, Sezgin was able to prove that the maps of the ancient world that was proud of Europe is indeed drawn by Muslim scientists much earlier. But, Europe did not show this until Sezgin discovered this scientific fact and proved in his book History of Arab Heritage. Sezgin proved that the maps of the world and partial European maps up to the beginning of the eighteenth century were of Arab origin during the reign of the Caliph al-Ma'mun at the beginning of the ninth century AD.
With unrivaled patience, Sezgin had a great practical effort in achieving the Arab heritage, such as his elaboration in the fourth volume "chemistry" of his book "History of the Arab heritage" in refuting the fabrications affixed to the chemist Jabir bin Hayyan which aims to challenge the status of chemistry in Arab civilization, with denial a large number of chemical books attributed to him. He is in the view of those who deny him personal imaginary, does not exist. It is strange that some orientalists deny the existence of the chemist Jabir bin Hayyan despite many other books that indicate its scientific effects and although many scientists have mentioned in the genealogy books the biography of this great world. It is known to all that the Arabs were The greatest nations in writing the genealogical history of Arab and Muslim tribes and individuals in huge books. But, it is hatred that led some orientalists to deny the existence of such great scholars, in order to hide the patent and to steal the efforts of Arab Muslim scholars.

This black hatred of Islamic civilization was entrenched and founded by some orientalist enemies of Islamic civilization. When we say that some of them did so, we do not deny that other orientalists were fair. When Taha Hussein traveled to France to get his Ph.D., he returned from there with a wonderful opinion claiming that the history of Arabic literature before Islam does not exist, Arabic poetry before Islam does not exist, and the Arabs after Islam put those poems. When the scholars of Arab literature responded with strong evidence, he left his old opinion. In fact, these poisons sometimes come from unfair orientalists who have infused intellectual poisons into the minds of Arab and Muslim youths so that these young people do not feel an ancient civilization project to which they belong. So that the nation becomes weak and without history, but Sezgin was able to silence all these untruthful voices when he directed these large volumes which he searched for the ancient scientific civilization of Arabs and Muslims in all fields of science, literature and language.

Sezgin's influence on Arab heritage - as a world leader in this field - was demonstrated by the principle of the unity of science. This principle is summed up by a great vision Sezgin found through the Arab-Islamic heritage. He saw that Muslims were aiming to build a scientific civilization that would benefit all humanity and confirming that knowledge was a right for all. They did not deny the right of others to know. Sezgin also strongly defended the principle of unity of science, and considered it the scientific heritage of mankind, which is growing in continuous batches. He sees his mission to show the contribution of Arabs in the history of public science and show Muslims themselves in order to give Muslims self-confidence (Sezgin, 2014: 10).
For a century and a half, Muslims continued to consolidate this fact, namely, the fact that God created man to live the earth with knowledge. Contemporary, however, the idea of unity of science remained prevalent and this idea means that one of the Arab scientists was working in all sciences in one circle, then specializes in one science and excelled in it. Muslim scholars linked science to the benefit of mankind. Sezgin found it strongly present in the history of Arab heritage.

**Completing Sezgin's Project**

In view of the volumes of the first phase of the encyclopedia, which was translated into Arabic, we find that Sezgin set the time period for this phase to end in 430 AH - 1039 AD. Among the many changes Sezgin made to Brockelmann's work related to that stage was that he rearranged the book materials, not starting with poetry like Brockelmann, but starting with the Quran sciences. He changed the title where he used the term heritage instead of the term literature to get rid of one of the main drawbacks of Brockelmann. The title "History of Arab Heritage" has become more suitable for its material, which includes a variety of scientific and literary fields. All these steps were good.

Despite the importance of Sezgin's work and distinguishing him from Brockelmann by mentioning all the available manuscripts globally, the number of papers, the date of copying, the name of its investigator if they have achieved, the place and date of publication. But, the volumes of this stage of his book do not only save us about half of the work of Brockelmann. The reason for this is that Brockelmann's goal was to count the dispersed Arabic manuscripts and Arab heritage in the world's libraries (Brockelmann,1959: 7).

After all, the book of Sezgin as a whole it ends as at the first third of the fifth century AH - 11th century AD, 430 AH - 1039 CE, while the book by Brockelmann continues until the end of the first half of the twentieth century. But, Sezgin's work remains more accurate and follows the correct scientific method. If Sezgin had lived longer, he would have completed this encyclopedic work to encompass the entire history of Arab heritage in all centuries. He dreamed to be able to realize his great scientific project on reviving the Arab heritage on his own.

Some Arab researchers took Sezgin's book with interest, it is natural for them to have comments on it. The first comment was important written by Akram al-Omari, a professor of history at the University of Baghdad, is the first to present a critical study of the book on the history of the Arab heritage. The existence of
some errors does not diminish the importance of the book written by Sezgin. It is known that scientists join forces in order to reach a distinct scientific vision in the scientific fields and therefore cannot find a book in the world without some errors, except Quran. That tremendous scientific work done by Sezgin is a long work spanning more than fifty years, spent in his life to write that encyclopedic book. The researcher Al-Omari mentioned these mistakes and it is enough here to refer to Al-Omari's book for those who wanted to refer to it for more scientific details on this issue (Al-Omari, 1994: 55). These are important points acknowledged by Sezgin and corrected in the new edition published by the University of Al-Imam Mohammed bin Saud, the best editions of the book in our opinion. Al-Omari did not deny Sezgin's great efforts in collecting Arab heritage. He mentioned that Sezgin's book is the best author in the history of Arab heritage.

Sezgin threw a torch of light into the minds of Muslim thinkers. In order to give proof of this, it is enough to say that senior university professors have taken the respect of Sezgin's book on Arab heritage. Evidence of this is that some scholars have refined certain things in Sezgin's book such as Omari, other scientists have also made inquiries on Sezgin's book. They are important additions but they are not enough, because those queries were in a specific area of science, for example remediation researcher Najam Abdul Rahman Khalaf, which deals with the science of Hadith only, while Sezgin's book was a general scientific knowledge encyclopedia encompassing all the sciences and technical, artistic, linguistic, religious, geographic and historical knowledge. However, the Arabs who wrote in remediation on the book Sezgin remained remediation limited in their cognitive disciplines, the specialist of the science of Hadith remained written in his specialty, and this is different from the encyclopedic vision on which Sezgin built his great book (Khalaf, 1999: 6).

We also have a major problem after the death of the great scientist which will complete that project, which stopped the death of Sezgin, so we recommend researchers to pay attention to a scientific institution that completes the project started by Sezgin to remove the dust from the hidden scientific and Islamic heritage of people, on the same curriculum that he had started.

Results

Sezgin's relationship with the science of Arab and Islamic heritage, on the one hand the desire to know this heritage and combine this heritage in great encyclopedic bibliography. This aspect cost Sezgin a long research in ancient bookcases about manuscripts scattered around the world. It is a great effort of
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