

*Who will Bell the Cat? That is the Question! Oskar Rescher's Copy of Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur (GAL) and Fuat Sezgin's Uncompleted Brockelmann Project**

Çanı Kediye Kim Takacak? İşte Bütün Mesele! Osman Reşer'in Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur (GAL) Nüshası ve Fuat Sezgin'in Akım Kalan Brockelmann Projesi

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ABSTRACT

Born in Stuttgart in 1883, Oskar Rescher (a.k.a. Osman Reşer) was a productive Orientalist of the 20th century. He maintained a life between Germany and Istanbul from 1909 to 1925 and then settled in Turkey in 1925. Rescher visited many manuscript libraries in Turkey, saw thousands of manuscripts, sold thousands of manuscripts abroad, and performed bibliographic studies; he constantly updated the copy of *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur (GAL)* and placed additional note slips in places where the margins were insufficient. Upon reaching the agreement to co-prepare the updated edition of *GAL* containing the manuscripts found in Istanbul, Fuat Sezgin brought Rescher from the Süleymaniye Library to the Istanbul University-affiliated Institute of Islamic Studies and took Ramazan Şeşen as the assistant to this project. However, withdrawing from the project upon Sezgin making changes to the plan, Rescher continued to update the copy of *GAL* on his own. This mentioned copy currently is in the possession of Prof. Dr. Claus-Peter Haase. Rescher wrote in the articles how the new revised edition of *GAL* should be prepared and added a note to the top of the list. In the last article, he recommends not making an update without considering his additions and corrections. The value of Rescher's updates will be appreciated if one takes into account that Brockelmann while having benefitted from daftars and catalogues of Istanbul manuscripts, had not seen the libraries of Turkey while preparing his work. This article presents the details of Sezgin's *GAL* project and discusses why the project failed and what can be done next while querying the value of Rescher's copy of *GAL*.

Keywords: *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, Carl Brockelmann, Fuat Sezgin, Oriental Studies

Öz

1883'te Stuttgart'ta dünyaya gelen Osman Reşer (Oskar Rescher), 20. asırın üretilen şarkiyatçılarındandır. 1909-1925 yıllarında Almanya-İstanbul arasında bir

hayat sürmüş, 1925'te Türkiye'ye yerleşmiştir. Türkiye'de pek çok yazma kütüphanesini ziyaret eden, binlerce yazma gören, yurt dışına binlerce yazma satan ve bibliyografik çalışmalar yapan Reşer, bu esnada elindeki *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (GAL) nüshasını sürekli güncellemiş, marginlerin yetersiz kaldığı yerbere ilave not kâğıtları koymuştur. GAL'in İstanbul'da bulunan yazmaları da ihtiva eden güncellenmiş edisyonunu birlikte hazırlama konusunda mutabakata varmaları üzerine Fuat Sezgin, Reşer'i Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi'nden İstanbul Üniversitesi'ne bağlı İslâm Tetkikleri Enstitüsü'ne getirmiştir, Ramazan Şesen'i de bu projeye asistan olarak almıştır. Fakat Sezgin'in planda değişiklik yapması üzerine projeden çekilen Reşer, GAL nüshasını tek başına güncellemeye devam etmiştir. Söz konusu nüsha bugün Prof. Dr. Claus-Peter Haase'nin temellükündedir. GAL'in gözden geçirilmiş yeni baskısının nasıl hazırlanması gerektiğini maddeler hâlinde yazan Reşer, kendi ilave ve tashihleri göz önünde bulundurulmadan bir güncelleme yapılmasını tavsiye etmemektedir. Brockelmann'ın, eserini hazırlarken defterler ve kataloglardan istifade etmekle birlikte Türkiye kütüphanelerini görmediği göz önünde bulundurulursa Reşer'in güncellemelerinin kıymeti anlaşılacaktır. Bu çalışmada Sezgin'in GAL projesinin detayları sunulmuş, projenin neden akamete uğradığı irdelenmiş ve Reşer'in GAL nüshasının kıymeti sorgulanırken bundan sonra neler yapılabileceği üzerinde durulmuştur.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, Carl Brockelmann, Fuat Sezgin, Şarkiyat Çalışmaları

Introduction

The mice meet to discuss ways of getting rid of their enemy the cat. As they cannot leave their burrows night or day, they at the very least want to be aware of the cat's arrival. Many plans are put forth and discussed. Ultimately, a young mouse says she's come up with a plan that appears very simple but she's sure it will work. All they have to do is put a bell around the cat's neck. All the rats liked this exciting idea. Meanwhile, an elder mouse spoke: "I must say, the young mouse's plan is very good. But if I may be allowed, I would like to ask, 'Who will bell the cat?'"

Jan Just Witkam has said that at least 100 more copies of the work *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (*GAL*, 1897-1902, 1937-1942, 1943-1949) exist that have similar importance to the unpublished copy updated by the author himself, Carl Brockelmann (1868-1956).¹ One of these copies had also belonged to Oskar Rescher (a.k.a. Osman Reşer, 1883-1972). For years, Rescher had noted the additions and corrections in his copy of *GAL*'s addendum published between 1937 and 1942. He additionally wrote some notes in the revised edition of the first two volumes (1943-1949). Having been aware of this copy, Fuat Sezgin (1924-2018) wanted to prepare an updated version of *GAL* together with Rescher but abandoned this project for several reasons.

In our previous study, which we again prepared jointly, we wrote about Rescher's life story and his relationship with the Berlin State Library by evaluating the materials we were able to gather.² In another study, which was prepared independently, a list of 1,192 manuscripts Rescher had sold to the Berlin State Library between 1913-1936 was presented.³ In the last study which deals with his manuscript trade, a list of 262 manuscripts Rescher had sold to the Leipzig University Library between 1925 and 1934 was presented along with the sales process.⁴ Here we've found the information we've gathered about Rescher's copy of *GAL*, which as far as we know has not been addressed so far, to the attention of the relevant circles to be appropriate. This study cites what *GAL* means by giving brief information about it; the study mentions *GAL*'s issues, talks about Rescher's relationship with Brockelmann and Sezgin following a brief story about Rescher's life, and addresses the project that had failed along with Rescher's copy of *GAL*.

1 Jan Just Witkam, "Brockelmann's Geschichte Revisited Once More," in: Carl Brockelmann, *History of the Arabic Written Tradition*, vol. I, trans.: Joep Lameer, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2014, p. x.

2 Güler Doğan Averbek, Thoralf Hanstein, "Oskar Rescher - Biographical Finds around Manuscripts, Books and Libraries," in: *Sammler – Bibliothekare – Forscher: Beiträge zur Geschichte der Orientalischen Sammlungen an der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin*, ed. Sabine Mangold-Will, Christoph Rauch, Siegfried Schmitt, Frankfurt/Main: Vittorio Klostermann Verlag, 387-449.

3 Güler Doğan Averbek, "The Manuscripts Oskar Rescher Sold to the Berlin State Library Between 1913-1936," *Journal of Islamic Review / İslam Tetkikleri Dergisi*, 11/2 (2021): 477-568.

4 Güler Doğan Averbek, Beate Wiesmüller, "The Manuscripts Oskar Rescher Sold to the Leipzig University Library Between 1925-1934," *Journal of Islamic Review / İslam Tetkikleri Dergisi*, 12/1 (2022): 157-185.

1. Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur (GAL)

In our opinion, saying that Brockelmann's work *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (GAL) [History of the Arabic Written Tradition] still retains its feature as one of the main reference works in Orientalist studies despite more than 120 years having passed is enough for describing its importance.

While still a young scholar, Brockelmann first designed *GAL* as three books in two volumes; he then designated the entries that were spread over a geographical framework and separated into subsections according to type. Brockelmann first provided biographical information for each author and then supported this information with the works and copies attributed to the authors.

The first volume of the work was published in 1897-1898 and covered the period from the beginning of the Arabic written tradition up to the Mongol invasion of Baghdad, and the second volume covering the period from 1258 to 1902 was published in 1902. Both were published by Felber in Weimar. Between 1937 and 1942, Brill published three volumes in addition to this first edition. The appendix in Volume 3 indexes approximately 25,000 titles and 18,000 authors. *GAL*'s magnified and complex structure had just one exemptible reason: The first publisher, who'd cheated Brockelmann, held the copyright. For this reason, Brockelmann had been unable to issue an expanded edition of the first two volumes. A good solution was the addendum, which was not congruent with the work. Brill also published an updated version of the first edition between 1943-1949. Brill would later go on to publish a new edition in 1996 and an online version in 2009. Meanwhile, an English translation (*History of the Arabic Written Tradition*; 2016-2018) is available both in print and online. The Arabic translation of the work was prepared by a large group under the title *Tārīh al-adab al-Ārabī* in Cairo in 1959-1962, 1975-1977, and 1992-1995. Muhammad Hamidullah's Urdu translation has yet to be published.

Brockelmann, who is said to have had a photographic memory, made great use of it in his work, which he prepared only with the help of manuscript catalogs and biographical dictionaries. He is reported to have been able to list all the copies of a work and their locations from memory. Unfortunately, this brave pioneering work was plagued with many errors and omissions due to the information being written from memory, but also from less-than-perfect sources. In addition, another factor in this was that the contents of the majority of the manuscript collections had not been cataloged and copies of many of the works had not yet been published.

Witkam and Mehmet Kanar have also previously mentioned *GAL*'s weak points. Kanar listed these as follows: "Due to the scarcity of information about the persons and books in the original volumes, references are frequently made to supplementary volumes; because the arrangement is chronological, a single topic is broken down concerning century and region, and this situation is maintained in the supplementary volumes; some library names mentioned in the text are not included in the initial list; no list is provided with all the abbreviations used; some mistakes are found regarding the subject, author, and copy dates of the manuscripts apart

from the errors arising from the referenced library catalogs; and some information needs to be changed in light of the subsequent research and manuscripts that have appeared...”⁵

To date, some initiatives have occurred aiming to adapt *GAL*’s legacy to the demands and developments of science. Although thinking that many copies of *GAL* have been revised as a result of the faults and shortcomings categorized above and in line with Witkam’s remarks would be reasonable, we think that Oskar Rescher has an exceptional place among those who’ve consistently and systematically done this.

2. Oskar Rescher (a.k.a. Osman Reşer, 1883-1972)

Rescher’s full name was Oskar Emil Rescher (Osman Yaşar Reşer after gaining Turkish citizenship). He was born in Stuttgart on October 1, 1883. He knew Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Greek, Latin, French, English, Spanish, Russian, Dutch, and Danish in addition to his native language of German. He began his law studies at the University of Munich in 1903. In 1905, he transferred to the Department of Oriental Languages at the University of Berlin (known as the Friedrich-Wilhelm University when he was a student and as Humboldt University of Berlin today), Faculty of Philology. He completed his baccalaureate in 1908, received the title of doctor in 1909, and continued his studies at the University of Leipzig in 1909-1910. He served in World War I in Montmédy and at the Wünsdorf Halbmondlager POW Camp near Berlin. He became an associate professor in 1919 and a professor in 1925. He’d been conducting visits to Istanbul since 1909. During these travels, he studied Islamic manuscripts and published the results from them. He particularly benefitted from İsmail Saib Efendi (1873-1940) in his studies. He settled in Istanbul in 1925, and apart from a short stay in Ankara, lived in Istanbul until his death. He gained Turkish citizenship in 1937. He worked at Istanbul High School, the Military School, Darülfünun, Gülhane Hospital (in Ankara), the Faculty of Language, History, and Geography Library, Archeological Museum Library, the Süleymaniye Library, Imam-Hatip School, the Topkapı Palace Museum Library, and the Institute of Islamic Studies (Istanbul University Faculty of Letter). In his last days, he stayed at the Artigiana Home for Old People in Istanbul’s Harbiye District. He passed away on March 26, 1972. His grave is in Silivrikapı Cemetery. From 1909 until his death, he published 58 books, 76 articles, 68 publication reviews, 5 book translations, and 2 article translations.

During the years he lived in Turkey, he sold thousands of manuscripts to European and American libraries and second-hand booksellers abroad. Islamic manuscripts purchased from Rescher are available in the British Library, Cambridge University Library, Oxford University Library, Uppsala University Library, Basel University Library, Wrocław University Library, National Library of the Czech Republic, Yale University Beinecke Library, California University Libraries, Vatican Apostolic Library, and Austrian National Library as well as in the

5 Mehmet Kanar, “Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur,” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 14, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1996, 36-37.

Berlin State Library and the collections of libraries in Munich, Hamburg, Leipzig, Göttingen, Tübingen, and Halle/Saale.

We would like to share the following anecdote on this topic. When the sale of Rescher's manuscripts caused rumors in Turkey, Fuat Sezgin was asked about the issue. Salih Tuğ told us about Sezgin's opinion on the matter as follows: "Fuat Sezgin saw these manuscripts. According to him, most of the manuscripts Rescher sold were sold over the counter; there weren't any manuscripts shedding light on science. They were the ordinary works that everyone had at home. Rescher may have sold them, and the recipient may have bought them just because they were manuscripts. Rescher was a person who'd 'palmed off' some manuscripts Sezgin described as rubbish to Europe with high prices."⁶ We can say the following here as something off-topic: The manuscripts Rescher sold were not unoriginal manuscripts in our opinion. We can refer to the above-mentioned Berlin and Leipzig lists.⁷ According to the example of the Leipzig University Library, the prices he charged were not high.

3. Rescher's Relationship with Brockelmann

Oskar Rescher's relationship with Carl Brockelmann was independent of *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur (GAL)*. Their acquaintance was likely based on the University of Breslau (then the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Breslau). Brockelmann worked there intermittently between 1892-1935, and Rescher worked there between 1919-1925. Namely, they were in the same faculty. In 1919, Rescher dedicated his dissertation titled "Studien über den Inhalt von 1001 Nacht" to Brockelmann at Breslau University, which he defended against Prof. Dr. A. Schaade (1883-1952) and Prof. Dr. A. Rücker (1880-1948); this must show that Rescher respected Brockelmann. Meanwhile, Rescher's relationship with people other than İsmail Saib Efendi, whom he described as his "sun," should be noted to have been based on benefit, according to our opinion. Therefore, one can assume from this dedication that Brockelmann had a strong position in the institution at that time.

In the 1940s, Brockelmann's works were also available at the Faculty of Language, History, and Geography Library, as Rescher had sold them there in 1939. Also, Brockelmann was one of the people who had helped Rescher in his studies. Rescher thanked Brockelmann for four of his studies.⁸ We think that Rescher kept in touch with Brockelmann after settling in Istanbul; however, no evidence currently exists other than the thanks in the 1926 publication of his book.

6 Interview with Prof. Dr. Salih Tuğ, 15 September 2019.

7 Doğan Averbek, "The Manuscripts Oskar Rescher Sold"; Doğan Averbek, Wiesmüller, "The Manuscripts Oskar Rescher Sold."

8 Rescher thanked Brockelmann for his support in the study *Das Kapitel über den Dschihād aus Ibn Tūmert's Kitāb*, which Rescher published in 1921; for offering the opportunity to consult orally about places where Rescher was unsure, and kindly answering Rescher's many questions in the work *Al-Mubarrad, Die Kharidschitenkapital aus dem Kāmil* published in Stuttgart in 1922; and for his assistance on the topic of Jahiz in the preface to the work (*Pseudo-*)*Ǧāhīz, Das kitāb el-mahāsin wa'l-masāwī*, the second volume published in 1922, and in the preface to the work *Orientalische Miszellen*, whose second volume was published in Istanbul in 1926.

Meanwhile, Rescher scanned the manuscript catalogs from time to time for the 1,192 manuscripts he sold to the Berlin State Library and 262 manuscripts he sold to the Leipzig University Library and noted these catalog references mostly with a pencil at the beginning of the manuscript. *GAL* is among the works he scanned.⁹ This was the first edition of *GAL*. Because we have not been able to find the opportunity to examine it for now, whether he had registered the manuscripts he sold before 1937 to the copy of *GAL* that was on hand is unknown to us.

4. Updating the Copies of *GAL* and Rescher's *GAL*

According to our determinations, three “improved” copies of *GAL* exist that have found fame. The first of these is the copy that Brockelmann personally updated and edited until his death. It is currently in the library of the Society of German Orientalists (DMG) in Halle (Saale). Another is the Fuat Sezgin copy. Like Rescher, Sezgin noted his corrections and additions in his copy of *GAL*. When he started these additions is unknown to us. However, we are sure he made the corrections and additions to his copy by benefiting from Rescher's copy of *GAL*.

The third copy mentioned was Rescher's. Apart from the many manuscripts he sold, Rescher visited Turkish libraries, seeing thousands of manuscripts, and making bibliographic studies. Rescher's research in the manuscript libraries, the manuscript collections in his places of work (at the Faculty of Language, History, and Geography Library of Ankara University, the Archeological Museum Library, Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul University Library, and Topkapı Palace Museum Library), and his time at the second-hand booksellers allowed him to note corrections and additions in his copy of *GAL*. He always carried the copy of *GAL* he'd procured with him and wrote down all the information he'd gathered in this copy. He placed additional note papers when the space on a page was insufficient, adding the relevant item number to this paper. Ramazan Şeşen, who'd been recruited as an assistant for Sezgin's *GAL* project in the spring of 1959,¹⁰ said in our interview, “I saw Rescher's copy of Brockelmann. Papers, notes written in the margins... There were too many notes. Notes and additions were almost half the book.”¹¹

Above all, this attitude that never aimed to conclude, shows Rescher's vital position in Oriental studies. This is because surely only a competent scholar in his field could dare revise and correct Brockelmann's monumental work. Witkam has the following to say on this topic: “Whereas Brockelmann dared to undertake the compilation of his *GAL* single-handedly a hundred years ago, it is out of the question that anyone would do this now, not even Brockelmann himself. This is proven by the very fact that no one has indeed dared to make even an updated version.”¹² Rescher asks, “But who wants to bell a cat?” after saying, “I do not recommend

9 For our determinations on this topic, see Averbek and Hanstein, “Oscar Rescher-Biographical Finds around Manuscripts.”, 444-445.

10 Ramazan Şeşen, “Hocam Prof. Dr. Fuat Sezgin,” *Bingöl Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 9/9 (2019): 1.

11 Interview with Prof. Dr. Ramazan Şeşen, 5 September 2019.

12 Witkam, p. xii.

making a new edition without considering my corrections and additions” at the end of his list of recommendations to those who will make *GAL*’s new edition, which will be discussed in this article, confirms Witkam’s words. This is because this proverbial expression (“der Katze die Schelle umhängen?” [Who wants to bell the cat?]) asks who would be brave enough to do a difficult job that would bring great benefit. In our opinion, the answer Rescher predicts is that despite all its benefits, no one will be able to fulfill this task.

If one considers that Brockelmann hadn’t even seen the libraries of Istanbul let alone of Turkey while preparing his work, the value of Rescher’s updates is better understood. According to us, this is the main reason behind Sezgin bringing Rescher to the Institute of Islamic Studies by transferring him from the Manuscript Classification Committee at the Süleymaniye Library. This is because Rescher must have kept the *GAL* volumes on his desk while classifying the manuscripts. This copy was certainly as famous as it would be at the institute while still at the Süleymaniye Library. We think Sezgin had Rescher taken to the institute because he had seen this copy.

5. Rescher’s relationship with Fuat Sezgin

Fuat Sezgin was the one who invited and persuaded Rescher to work at the Institute of Islamic Studies. We can determine this from the Institute of Islamic Studies Archive. In a petition addressed to the dean on May 21, 1968, Rescher stated that Fuat Sezgin had brought him to the institute by deceiving him while he was working on the Manuscript Classification Committee at the Süleymaniye Library. This was because the working conditions at the institute were not at the expected level. Sezgin was also the deputy director of the institute at the time of Rescher’s arrival.

The institute administration is seen to have been pleased to work with Rescher, especially in the beginning, and to have allocated space for his books and to have mentioned his name among the staff in official correspondence. The part of Rescher’s library that didn’t fit in his flat in the Syrian Passage was in the Mawlawi (Sufi) Lodge in Galata. Sezgin involved Rescher in the institute to be able to preserve his remaining books.

In a letter sent from the Institute in 1960, the staff was listed as Prof. Dr. Zeki Velidi Togan (Director), Assoc. Prof. Fuat Sezgin (Assistant Director), Prof. Muhammed Hamidullah, Prof. Osman Reşer, and Salih Tuğ (Assistant). Sezgin left Istanbul that same year. The positive opinion about Rescher changed over time. By 1968, Rescher’s tenure, which had marched quite ahead, could not be extended. Thus, his adventure in the Institute of Islamic Studies, which had started in 1957, came to an end. By a strange twist of fate, Sezgin was in Istanbul when Rescher passed away. He was even seen around Bayezid Mosque at the time of Rescher’s funeral ceremony and told that Rescher had passed away. According to Yusuf Ziya Kavakçı’s account, Sezgin was startled when he heard the news about Rescher’s death but did not attend the funeral.¹³

13 Interview with Prof. Dr. Yusuf Ziya Kavakçı, 13 November 2019.

The most important *GAL*-derived project was Sezgin's *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* [*GAS*; History of Arabic Manuscripts]. We can summarize the emergence of this work as follows. Şeşen said, "Once Fuat Sezgin had Rescher's *GAL* notes, they wanted to work together. First Prof. Osman Reşer would have given what he'd done, but he was old and gave up."¹⁴

Sezgin also narrated this event in his preface to *GAS* as follows: "Since 15 year ago [1967], my decision to complete Carl Brockelmann's valuable work *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* [*GAL*] with the manuscripts in the libraries of Istanbul was the main motivation that led me to compose this work. At first, I didn't realize how heavy a burden I was under. Undoubtedly, the same was true for my predecessor... My initial plan was to write an addendum to Brockelmann's work based on the manuscripts of Istanbul. After a while, O. Rescher, the great expert in the history of Arabic literature, decided to get involved in this work, to make available and redact the material he'd been collecting for a long time, especially during his research at the Süleymaniye Library. However, I on one hand stopped sticking to the original plan after about six months from the catalogs and research that came to light with *GAL*'s publication and made a clear decision in the direction of collecting all the materials I could get based on my private studies on the published literature and available manuscripts, Rescher withdrew his invaluable support from me. In my opinion, the unpredictability in conducting and finishing such a project had forced Rescher at that age to give up carrying out this study in collaboration."¹⁵ According to this, Sezgin had initially aimed for an update similar to what Rescher was doing and had received a promise of support from Rescher; but after a short time, Sezgin reoriented his study in a different framework, and Rescher refused to involve himself in the evolution of the project. Sezgin related this to the result of this study being unknown and to Rescher's age. In our opinion, Sezgin abandoning the agreed-upon plan rather than results and age had led Rescher to withdraw from the project, and this decision from Rescher had caused Sezgin's dream to collapse. This was because Rescher would only arrange and proofread the material he'd collected up to that point in the first version of the project. A new project necessitated serious labor, and Rescher was over 75 years old.

Şeşen said the following about *GAS*: "Fuat Sezgin carried on and published. Sezgin's work generally covers the period up until the Seljuks, he didn't complete it. Fuat Sezgin benefitted from Rescher's copy only for geography and such in the first period, the classical period."¹⁶ Sezgin's work covers the period up to 430 AH/1038 AD. Tuğ also said that Rescher had kept his *GAL* on his desk at the institute at all times and added some notes showing where and in which library he'd seen the relevant manuscript and also that Sezgin had benefited from these.¹⁷

Rescher's copy of *GAL* was also used after Sezgin. After 1974, Prof. Dr. Claus-Peter Haase entrusted Rescher's copy of *GAL* to Rosemarie Quiring-Zoche to prepare the catalog of Arabic

14 Interview with Prof. Dr. Ramazan Şeşen, 5 September 2019.

15 Fuat Sezgin, *Arap-İslâm Bilimleri Tarihi*, vol. 1, İstanbul: Prof. Dr. Fuat Sezgin, İslam Bilim Tarihi Araştırmaları Vakfı, 2015, VII-VIII.

16 Interview with Prof. Dr. Ramazan Şeşen, 5 September 2019.

17 Interview with Prof. Dr. Salih Tuğ, 15 September 2019.

works that were among the 1,722 volumes allegedly belonging to Rescher that had been sold to the Berlin State Library in 1974. Quiring-Zoche wrote about this in the preface to the four-volume catalog: "I obtained additional information from Oskar Rescher's notes in his hand copy of the *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur (GAL)*, which is now in the possession of Dr. Claus-Peter Haase in Kiel. I am grateful to him for the generosity with which he allowed me to consult this valuable work."¹⁸

6. Rescher's list of the *GAL*'s revised edition

Rescher was aware of what he was doing with his copy of *GAL*, and he wrote in articles how *GAL*'s revised new edition needed to be prepared before deciding to work with Sezgin. This list was published in 1954-1955 at the end of the 1st part of the 6th volume of the series titled *Beiträge zur arabischen Poësie* (pp. 126–128). He added the following note like a testament to the top of the list, "After having to deal constantly and extensively with Brockelmann's gigantic work (to which I have noted a very large number of additions and improvements in the margin of the exemplar I've used) and due to the years of cataloging work in the Süleymaniye, I would like to make the following suggestions to future editors of a new edition, which is to be hoped for sooner or later." From his statement here, Rescher is understood to not initially have had the desire to update or correct the *GAL*; however, as the additions to the book increased, he thought others would be able to use these in a new edition of *GAL*. We understand from this statement at the end, "I would like to make the following suggestions to future editors of a new edition, which is to be hoped for sooner or later," that Rescher did not intend to take part in such an addition; besides, Brockelmann was still alive. Rescher adding the aforementioned list to his book shows that he wanted to inform the scientific world about his work and ensure that his additions and corrections were recorded. He recommended in the last article to not make an update without considering his additions and corrections. In this list, which also indicates *GAL*'s above-mentioned flaws, Rescher stated the following:

An additional remark to Brockelmann's *GAL*

Due to the years of cataloging work in the Süleymaniye and after having to deal constantly and extensively with Brockelmann's gigantic work (to which I have noted a very large number of additions and improvements in the margin of the exemplar I've used), I would like to make the following suggestions to the future editors of a new edition, which is to be hoped for sooner or later:

- 1) First of all, the most important thing would of course be - as is self-evident - **to merge the supplemental volumes with *GAL*.**
- 2) In the case of **frequent writers** such as Suyuti, Kemalpaşazade, Abdulgani an-Nabulusi,

18 Rosemarie Quiring-Zoche, *Arabische Handschriften. Die Handschriften der Sammlung Oskar Rescher in der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin-Preussischer Kulturbesitz*, 4 Bände, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner 1994 (Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland; XVII, 3), 11: "Zusätzliche Informationen erhielt aus ich den Notizen Oskar Reschers in seinem Handexemplar der *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur (GAL)*, das sich jetzt im Besitz von Herrn Dr. Claus-Peter Haase, Kiel, befindet. Ihm bin ich dankbar für die Großzügigkeit, mit der er mir das wertvolle Werk zur Einsichtnahme überließ."

and Ibn al-Arabi, the **articles** should be placed **in alphabetical order**.

- 3) In the case of frequently occurring **titles**, the **author** (abbreviated in parentheses) **should be added to the index**: i.e., “aurad” (I. Ar.); *arba‘un hadithan* (Naw.).
- 4) The **main passage of an author** who is cited more than once should be **indicated by boldface or an asterisk**.
- 5) Many authors and manuscripts are cited differently in the Orient than in the Occident; also, the author is sometimes referred to as a work in Madrasa jargon: e.g., Moharrem (= *hashiya ‘ala Molla Djami*); Fanari (i.e., *sharh Isagodji*); Djalal (i.e., *sharh al-aqa’id al-Adudiyya*). As such, these names should also be included in the index of book titles with a short note.
- 6) In my opinion, it is **unacceptable to Arabize Turkish names**, and it is an absurdity to change names such as “Gelenbewi” into (a never existing) “Kalanbawi.” How one would then have to arrange such names alphabetically is undoubtedly a *cura posterior*.
- 7) One would probably do better in my opinion to process h and Ȅ and/or t and Ȅ (perhaps also d and Ȅ and/or Ȅ) in the index together.
- 8) Even an approximately complete recording of the Arabic-written works of the Ottoman Madrasa Hodja’s and Tekke-Shaykh’s (a large part of which is printed in Fehmi Karatay’s “İstanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi Kataloğu, Arapça Basmalar” I-II, Istanbul, 1953), and of which a considerable number is preserved in the Istanbul libraries, would considerably swell Brockelmann’s compilation. Even if a recording of this epigone literature for cataloging purposes would not be without benefit, I believe that not too much could be gained from it for the progress of science (a typical example is the *sabiq Edirne müftüsü Mehmed Fevzi*; cfr. Karatay Vol. 1, pp. 464-466), and if one compares the rhetoric-inflated bombastic titles such as *hall asrar al-akhyar ila i‘rab izhar al-asrar* with the simple titles that the ancient Arab scholars gave to their works, then a certain doubt would creep over the value of such elucubrations not without reason; namely, whether the effort expended for cataloging is somehow adequate to the scientific yield.
- 9) At the beginning of the new hoped-for Brockelmann work, a complete **list of all abbreviations** should be given. This would save the user many useless headaches.
- 10) As in some cases uncertainty exists as to whether a treatise is to be considered a “risale” or not, it would perhaps be better to put this designation in parentheses and not use it; likewise, the expression “*fi tahqiq*,” so popular with Kemalpaşazade (which is hardly ever found in the older literature), also corresponds to the formulation “*fi bayan*” and “*fi hukm...*”
- 11) Works with generally accepted names such as *Kulliyat abi ’l-Baqā’ = Kulliyat al-’ulum* should be registered under both names as they are known by both titles. Likewise, it would be advisable, in my opinion, to list all *tafsir* by the names of their authors in the index (e.g., t. an-Nasafi, t. ar-Razi, t. as-Samarqandi), even though, in my highly superfluous opinion, these are personal titles; just as with the commentaries and titles of later periods whose extended titles represent nothing but completely purposeless puffing up. The phrase, not inappropriate here, reads, “Much clamor and little wool.”
- 12) In the case of works with many annotations (to which the scribes often clung like leeches!) and in the pursuit of the often page-long records, one often has trouble separating the works of the relevant author from these additions. Now and then Brockelmann does this by setting Latin numbers for them; unfortunately, however, this principle has been carried out only in exceptional cases. In the absence of typographical difficulties, I would advocate boldface printing of the numbers for the works of the author in question.

- 13) Works with an established title but an unknown author would have to be registered in the index of book titles (with the appropriately brief information).
- 14) A reprint without consideration of my corrections, and additions would hardly seem recommendable to me. But who wants to bell the cat? That is the question!

The last item to which Rescher directs his question “Who wants to bell the cat?” confirms that, as previously stated, he had no desire to prepare *GAL*’s new edition. In conclusion, we can reiterate our following view: For Rescher to have agreed to get involved in Sezgin’s project is reasonable as an edition suitable to current preparations was initially being considered. However, once Sezgin changed his plan, Rescher no longer was able to contribute to the new work.

7. The Fate of Rescher’s Copy of *GAL*

Prof. Dr. Claus-Peter Haase had seen a copy of *GAL* in the 1960s while Rescher was alive. Born in 1944, Claus-Peter Haase became an Islamic archaeologist and Islamic art historian. He was in Istanbul between 1968 and 1969 for education, during which time he met Rescher. He was director of the Berlin Museum of Islamic Art between 2001-2009. Haase mediated the sale of Rescher’s printed books in Turkey to Bochum University after Rescher’s death. Rescher’s relative, Ayla König (1918-1993) gave Rescher’s copy of *GAL* to Haase. Rescher’s copy of *GAL* is currently in Haase’s possession. According to the current situation, this copy of *GAL* is about to be delivered to the Berlin State Library. The library will make Rescher’s copy of *GAL* available digitally to researchers.

To prevent the notes written on separate pieces of paper in the Brockelmann copy in his possession from getting lost, Haase as per his statement has marked them with page numbers and extracted them from the volumes. We saw Rescher’s copy of *GAL* in Berlin in the summer of 2019 before these notes were taken out.

8. Other Revised *GAL* Copies

As stated above, Fuat Sezgin’s utilization of Rescher’s copy is also well-known around the Institute of Islamic Studies outside of Sezgin’s statements. Ramazan Şeşen was employed as a project assistant and is said to have copied the additions and corrections in Rescher’s copy of *GAL* and delivered them to Sezgin. A partial photocopy of Sezgin’s copy of *GAL* is found in the Istanbul Museum of the History of Science and Technology in Islam. In the photocopied edition, the first volume of the *GAL* addendum, which was published between 1937 and 1942, is in two parts and incomplete, while the second volume is complete in three parts. When we compare the Supplement from the second volume of Sezgin’s copy with Rescher’s copy of *GAL* (pp. 662–663), we arrive at the following result:

The addition Rescher made to work #5 from the Ism. b. A. *al-Anqirawi* article, which takes place at number 8 on page 662, is also repeated in the Sezgin copy. Rescher made the following additions:

Mişbah Düğ Baba-370 (1-10)

H. Mahm. 2872 (1-13)

Miftāḥ al-balāḡa we Miṣbāḥ el-Feṣāḥa ibd.

15^b/71 (Türk.)

These additions take place in the Sezgin copy as follows:

Miṣbāḥ Düğ Baba-370 (1-10)

H. Mah. 2872 (1-13f)

Miftāḥ al-balāḡa va miṣbāḥ al-faṣāḥa.

H. Mah. 2872 (15b-71) Türk Terceme-i Telhīṣ al-Miftāḥ. Ist. 1284, D. Mesn. 594 (1)

The additions Rescher made to Auḥadaddīn Ḥabdalahād’s works #3 and #15, which occur in the 10th article on the same page, also take place in the same form in the Sezgin copy. However, the additions Rescher made for the 8th article on a paper that he placed between pages, as well as some other notes, do not occur in the Sezgin copy. At first glance, a few possibilities come to mind here. Maybe Sezgin didn’t consider Rescher’s other notes to be necessary for his work, or perhaps Rescher made these additions after Sezgin received the notes. Another possibility that comes to mind is that Sezgin had received the notes not page by page but in a specific order and that his contact with Rescher had been cut off before he was able to receive the notes mentioned here.

When we compare the Supplement from the second volume of Brockelmann’s copy kept at the DMG Library in Halle/Saale with Rescher’s copy of *GAL* (pp. 662–663), we could not find any relation between the two copies.

Conclusion

As we understand from the pages in our possession, Rescher mostly benefitted from the Süleymaniye Library and Topkapı Palace Library collections and printed works while making corrections and additions. From this perspective, to assess Rescher’s interventions as an effort aimed at directly revising the work would be incorrect. In addition, the statements quoted from him above confirm this. Whether or not Rescher made use of the thousands of manuscripts he had sold over 60 years while making his corrections and additions remains unknown to us.

In our opinion, addressing Rescher’s corrections and additions from a scientific point of view has definite benefits. However, we do not think designing this *GAL* as a new edition is a matter upon which a decision can be immediately given. We think that having Rescher’s copy of *GAL* be open-access with field researchers consulting *GAL* for entries related to their studies will lead the way to determining the genuine value of Rescher’s copy.

Lastly, we would like to mention the issue that Witkam also pointed out. Dealing with all the copies of *GAL* together by determining the ones that contain corrections and additions, especially from Rescher, and putting all revised copies into an open-access database would be useful.

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