

Steinschneider's Contribution to the Study of Muslim Civilization

Author(s): Franz Rosenthal

Source: *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, Vol. 27 (1958), pp. 67-81

Published by: [American Academy for Jewish Research](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3622498)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3622498>

Accessed: 02/07/2013 01:38

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



American Academy for Jewish Research is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

STEINSCHNEIDER'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF MUSLIM CIVILIZATION

By FRANZ ROSENTHAL
Yale University

Only a few years before Steinschneider (1816–1907) was born, there appeared a bibliography of Arabic texts and studies theretofore published. This bibliography, by Christian Friedrich von Schnurrer, gives a good idea of the little that was then known of Arabic texts. Altogether it listed 431 numbers. Of these, editions of the Qur'ân, most of them small excerpts, accounted for about twenty numbers. There were fifty numbers of *Biblica*, and eighty-one numbers of *Christiana*, these being largely of European origin. The remaining less than 300 items listed many duplications and discussions of the same text or subject, and only very few complete or otherwise significant editions of larger texts.

Ninety-one years later, a few years before Steinschneider's death, Brockelmann's celebrated *History of Arabic Literature* was published in two substantial volumes, summing up and cataloguing the work meanwhile accomplished. The number of important text editions and studies had by then become too large to be counted. The Muslims of the Near East had overcome their dislike of the printing press and busily engaged in publishing all the major works of interest to them. This was done, it must be said, in editions that suffered grievously from a total ignorance of the purpose and technique of editing texts. Their quality also suffered from the hope entertained by their editors, I fear, often in vain, that their work might reach a potentially large and profitable commercial market. The Orientalists of the West, in turn, produced numerous editions of texts recognized by them as basic for the understanding of the history and civilization of Islam. On their part, they were often hampered by a lack of manuscripts, of which the most valuable ones were still buried in Near Eastern libraries. They also were

frustrated by the complete absence of any hope of ever finding a sound economic basis for their devoted efforts.

Even more striking than the mere increase in numbers and volume was the widening of the intellectual domain that was achieved during the nineteenth century. The old bibliography divided its material into works dealing with grammar, history, and poetry, in this order, followed by the *Christiana*, *Biblica*, and *Koranica* already mentioned, significantly putting grammar in the first, and the Qur'ân in the last place. There followed a category of *Varia* which included such diverse subjects as the sciences and medicine, a few works on logic and philosophy, Kalîlah and Dimnah and Maimonides' *Porta Mosis*, also a work on the law of succession and inheritance in Islam, and documents related to Napoleon's Egyptian campaign, the last mentioned item a clear indication of the Orientalists' constant and deep awareness of the contemporary world, an awareness that did not begin, as many people believe, with the post-World War II period, although the modern aspect of Oriental studies has been unreasonably favored in recent years.

Now, when Steinschneider died, many works on jurisprudence and theology, even on mysticism and philosophy were available fresh from the presses of the Near East. The preference for grammatical studies, Silvestre de Sacy's immortal contribution, lasted in the West throughout the century and helped to establish sound philological foundations for all scholarly work in the Muslim field. Steinschneider himself, as a pupil of H. L. Fleischer in Leipzig, inherited this great tradition. The study of history and poetry gained in importance and depth, but, in addition, there had occurred an intellectual awakening to the crucial significance and central position of Muslim law and all the other religious sciences, as they are called in Muslim terminology, a movement best represented by the fundamental and at the same time definitive work of I. Goldziher. An interest in mysticism and philosophy, on the one hand, and on the other, in the concrete manifestations of Muslim civilization, its daily life, its commerce and industry, its art and monuments, was noticeably stirring and was soon to reach highly articulate and gifted expression.

Steinschneider's lifespan thus coincided with a period of great and possibly unique opportunities for pioneering activities in the vast realm of Muslim studies, for that kind of digging up new material and using it to lead future research into new directions that was so characteristic of his scholarly method. The manner of his participation in these activities was determined by two important factors that must be constantly kept in mind. Both of them might conceivably be considered handicaps, but, as a matter of fact, they proved extremely helpful.

In the first place, Steinschneider considered his Islamic studies merely a part, if an indispensable one, of his chosen life's task, the study of Jewish history and, in particular, the study of the contributions Jews had made in the course of history to the intellectual progress of humanity. Unlike other Jewish scholars who came to devote themselves to Islamic studies as such, he always thought of these studies as only one aspect of the great project to which he was committed, and he repeatedly said so. In the preface of his *Al-Farabi*, dated September, 1868, he stated that for over twenty years he had looked with special attention for points of contact between the Arabic and Jewish cultures and literatures and, in particular, had been collecting material for two works, complementary in part, on the Arabic literature of the Jews and the Jewish translators; a chapter in the last mentioned work was to contain the information on the Arabic authors who had somehow been accessible to the Jews or become known to them, and an evaluation of the importance of those authors, constituting at the same time a valuable contribution to Arabic literary history from Hebrew and other sources rarely tapped by Orientalists and, furthermore, clarifying the influence of oriental upon occidental literature.¹ A

¹ "Seit mehr als zwanzig Jahren verfolge ich die Berührungspunkte der arabischen und jüdischen Cultur und Literatur mit besonderer Aufmerksamkeit und sammle namentlich das Material zu zwei, einander theilweise ergänzenden Werken über die arabische Literatur der Juden und die jüdischen Übersetzer. Einen Abschnitt des letzteren bilden Nachrichten über die den Juden irgendwie zugänglich oder bekannt gewordenen arabischen Autoren und deren Bedeutung, zugleich eine Bereicherung der arabischen Literaturgeschichte aus den hebräischen und anderen, von Orientalisten selten benutzten

decade later, we hear him say, in the introduction of his *Polemical and Apologetic Literature in the Arabic Language by Muslims, Christians, and Jews*:² "About thirty years ago, I made it my task to investigate the relations between Judaism and Islam in all conceivable directions." Again, in greater detail, as he phrased it in his paper entitled *Islam and Judaism*, a translation of Simon Duran's polemic against Islam, which appeared in 1880 in the *Magazin für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums*: "About forty years ago" — that would be, when he was still in his early twenties — "when I was full of great hopes both because I was young and because the scholarly discipline I was cultivating [or perhaps: scholarship in general] was young and promising, I set for myself a task which, upon further study of the details it involved, turned out to be one of a size, scope, and demanding character that were almost discouraging. This task was the investigation of the relations between Islam and Judaism in matters of religion, literature, and cultural history."³ And as late as 1902, when he published the *Arabic Literature of the Jews*, he felt called upon to repeat that his investigations (in the Arabic and medieval fields) centered around the relationship of Jewish literature to other medieval literatures, particularly with regard to the sciences.⁴ In accordance with this program that he

Quellen, so wie eine Beleuchtung des Einflusses der orientalischen Literatur auf die occidentalische."

² *Polemische und apologetische Literatur in arabischer Sprache, zwischen Muslimen, Christen und Juden* (Leipzig, 1877, *Abh. für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* VI, 3), p. 2: "Vor beinahe 30 Jahren hatte ich es mir zur Aufgabe gemacht, die Beziehungen zwischen Judenthum und Islam nach allen Richtungen hin zu erforschen."

³ *Islam und Judenthum. Kritik des Islam von Simon Duran (1423), aus dem Hebräischen übersetzt und erläutert*, in *Magazin für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, VII (1880), p. 1: "Vor ungefähr 40 Jahren, im hoffnungsvollen Eifer der Jugend meiner Person und einer aufblühenden Wissenschaft, stellte ich mir eine Aufgabe, deren Umfang, Tragweite und Anforderungen allerdings erst bei weiterem Vordringen in die Einzelheiten fast entmutigend sich enthüllten: die Beziehungen des Islams und Judenthums in religiöser, literarischer und culturhistorischer Beziehung."

⁴ *Die arabische Literatur der Juden* (Frankfurt a. M., 1902), p. XLIX: "der Centralpunkt für alle jene Untersuchungen war die *Beziehung der jüdischen*

had evolved at the beginning of his scholarly career, it was always the connection with Jewish studies and Jewish history that motivated Steinschneider in his research on Muslim civilization, and few indeed are his relevant publications that do not betray this background already in their titles.

It is hardly necessary to add that there was nothing parochial in Steinschneider's attitude. He was immune to the immature desire that often lay behind the study of Jewish-Arabic relations, particularly in his own time, namely, the conscious or unconscious tendency to show that Islam was a tolerant religion — in contrast to contemporary Christianity — and that its tolerance greatly benefited itself no less than the Jews who gained prominence as scholars, statesmen, or merchants in medieval Muslim countries. As always, so in his studies touching Islam, Steinschneider was, as he said, "writing about Jews, not for them, not in their defense."⁵ He clearly recognized that the difference in the position of the Jews in Mediterranean countries as compared to the rest of Europe, did not lie in material factors, that persecution and torture, as well as occasional individual compassion, were the lot of the Jews in both civilizations. The thing that made all the difference in the world was that the Jews found science and enlightenment in the South, which were not in existence in the North.⁶ He might have added that the fact that the legal situation of the Jews was clearly determined in Islam while it was confused in the Christian environment, made for an even more important difference.

Steinschneider's objective approach rescued many a deserving

Literatur zu anderen Literaturen des Mittelalters, insbesondere auf dem Gebiete der Wissenschaften."

⁵ *Die hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher* (Berlin, 1893), I, p. XXIV: "Ich schreibe über die Juden, aber nicht für sie, nicht *pro domo*."

⁶ *Ibid.*, I, p. XX: "Das deutsche Mittelalter bot den Juden Torturen und Scheiterhaufen für Menschen und Bücher, doppelten Zoll an Kaiser und Lehensherrn am Schlagbaum und am Friedhofe, Straferlass und Praemien für Abfall vom väterlichen Glauben und Gesetz, Aberglauben für alle Fährnisse des Lebens, auch Mitleid und Erbarmen mit Einzelnen, Alles wie in den Ländern des Südens, nur nicht Wissenschaft und Aufklärung."

personality and important achievement from oblivion. While this was a welcome and inevitable result, there was something more important. Approaching Islam from the Jewish point of view, as Steinschneider did, was not at all a bad thing. Well-integrated in the Muslim environment, the Jews nevertheless kept a certain distance from the cultural phenomena that surrounded them. This very fact often enabled them to see things more clearly, to distinguish the more general human values in Islamic civilization from what was time-bound and restricted to an individual culture, and also to express at times with greater freedom ideas that members of the majority group considered dangerous or unworthy of expression. For instance, the importance of historiography as a force in history, or the importance of change and development for science and scholarship were realized by Arabic speaking Jews and expressed by them in their native tongue as well as, or better than by any Muslim. The lasting scientific contributions of Muslim civilization, its concern for man's physical welfare as promoted by medical science, its speculations about the basic problems of philosophy, all these were subjects particularly appealing to the Jews in Islam. Interest in the specifically Muslim religious sciences, in jurisprudence and mysticism, was, of course, less developed, even though we have since found ample evidence to show that even these matters touched Jewish life rather deeply. For Steinschneider, the approach to Islam through Jewish problems was, therefore, not a devious or misleading one, but it guided him directly toward the mainsprings of the greatness of medieval Muslim civilization.

In the second place, the technique to which he remained true in all his scholarly endeavors, proved most proper and useful in the hardly more than embryonic state of nineteenth-century Islamic studies. The bibliographical mania, one might say, for which he became famous and which drove him toward his extraordinary accomplishments, did not fail him when he turned toward the Arabic field. There are obvious objections to putting too much stress on the bibliographical and biographical aspects of historical research, some major but most of them minor. However, here it was a question, not of listing second-

hand material, but of collecting primary sources, of discovering manuscripts, of eradicating old errors on the basis of the new bibliographical data, and, above all, of trying to lay down important new lines of research and of driving scholarship out of old, familiar blind alleys. At the time, this was needed most. The little information on Islam available in print was based upon second hand sources, such as medieval Latin translations, to an almost inconceivable degree. There were substantial collections of Near Eastern manuscripts in Europe that had lain almost untouched for some centuries, such as the treasures of the Bodleian Library and the Leiden, Paris, and Vatican collections, and important new collections of great size were in the process of formation. Going through these collections with the bibliographer's eye for new bibliographical details or biographical data was an enterprise that could not fail to be rewarding and stimulating.

Moreover, Steinschneider's method was most congenial to that practiced by the Muslims themselves throughout the centuries of their intellectual primacy. The history of science and scholarship was seen by them preferably as the sum of the lifework of individuals. Therefore, they attempted to follow the course of that history by means of voluminous collections of biographies of individual scholars, most of them restricted to a small amount of biographical data and a list of published writings. The history of medicine, for instance, was treated in this manner in the thirteenth century by Ibn Abî Uṣaybi'ah. Ibn Abî Uṣaybi'ah's bibliographical zeal and critical acumen were such that practically nothing from all the earlier literature on the subject escaped him, and when the older sources, previously believed lost, slowly became known in recent years, it turned out that they did not contribute a great amount of essential information beyond the references and excerpts contained in Ibn Abî Uṣaybi'ah's work. To European scholars, Ibn Abî Uṣaybi'ah had been known since the seventeenth century, but a Steinschneider was needed to appreciate and use this work as the vast mine of information it was. Another famous bibliographical work that became known in Steinschneider's time was the *Fihrist* of Ibn an-Nadîm from the tenth century. As a

classified bibliography it can be considered the oldest work of its kind and size that has come down to us.

These two works, and others of their kind, were published during Steinschneider's lifetime. Most of them, however, he had to use while they were still in manuscript form. Others, again, were published subsequently, while some have remained unpublished to this day. The interrelationship of most of these works was not fully recognized in Steinschneider's day, and the fact that very frequently, manuscripts had to be used, did not make it easy to check and compare the data derived from them. In addition, it is notoriously difficult to draw conclusions as to the true nature, contents, and size of a work from brief bibliographical references, often limited to the somewhat ambiguous titles cherished by some Near Eastern authors. Dangerous errors were almost unavoidable. However, the bibliographical approach of Muslim scholars suited Steinschneider's method. The information they had prepared met the needs of the time. Combining it with, and supplementing it from new data derived from the study of manuscripts and the very few facts formerly known to Western scholars, almost guaranteed impressive results for Steinschneider's work.

With his Jewish outlook and his bibliographical method, Steinschneider was well prepared to contribute essentially to the progress of Islamic studies. It will be recalled that Schnurrer's bibliographical work mentioned at the beginning, relegated works on science, medicine, and philosophy to the catchall category of *Varia*. This was done not so much for want of material, but because it expressed what was then the modern attitude toward Islamic studies. Arabic science and medicine, in particular, had been of great practical importance well into the seventeenth century, and the first Arabic publications in these fields had been undertaken for practical purposes. With the end of the eighteenth century, it was definitely felt that this state of affairs had become a thing of the past, or at least was on the verge of becoming a thing of the past, and that, therefore, no interest could and should any longer be taken in these particular aspects of Muslim civilization. It was reserved to nineteenth century historicism to revive interest in medieval science and medicine

as historical phenomena. This was done at first upon a very small scale, and Steinschneider was in the forefront of those few who paid active attention to this type of research. On the many occasions his writings touched upon the scientific and medical achievements of Muslim civilization, he laid the groundwork for a better understanding of these achievements and for a better appreciation of their role in the formation of Islam. He even did not disregard the pseudo-sciences, such as astrology and alchemy, for which his time and he himself had little taste, which, in fact, they feared and abhorred; yet, like it or not, the part of those sciences in the scheme of things had been tremendous and in recent years, they have received more and more attention from students of Islam.

In this connection, we may mention Steinschneider's short discussion of a little work by a certain al-Jawbarî of the early thirteenth century, which dealt with the many technical, pseudo-scientific tricks and just plain confidence games at which crooks were as adept in medieval Islam as they are now. This article appeared in 1865 and was subtitled "a source for the description of Oriental mores." Again, Steinschneider's own words, in his brief introductory statement, are remarkable and deserve quoting: "Scientifically trained Orientalists," he said, "are used to approach their sources critically. It is a strenuous task to look for some historical truth or material fact in (a literature full of) credulity and superstition, of fantasy and self-deception. Rarely do the (modern Orientalists) have the pleasure of encountering sober and prudent minds that did preparatory work along modern lines. However, the form and manner of viewing life found in the ordinary oriental sources must be known, and must be properly appreciated as part of the Orient. It is from this point of view that I believe," Steinschneider continued, "that I am justified in calling the twofold attention of the reader to a work that illuminates for us a number of true facts and of dominant beliefs from the wide field of *cultural history*."⁷ In his paper,

⁷ *Gäuberi's 'entdeckte Geheimnisse' eine Quelle für orientalische Sittenschilderung*, in *ZDMG*, XIX (1865), p. 562: "Wissenschaftliche Orientalisten sind es gewohnt, ihren Quellen gegenüber einen kritischen Standpunkt

Steinschneider restricted himself to bibliographical data and a few excerpts from the Arabic text. However, looking at it in the context of Steinschneider's scholarly efforts, we can easily understand why he bothered with al-Jawbari's strange little work beyond the brief chapter on the Jews it contains: the ideal of a total view of Islamic civilization is taking shape here.

The slowly starting rescue operations designed to rehabilitate Muslim philosophy from the contempt it had been exposed to since the time of the Renaissance, were greatly furthered by Steinschneider's *Al-Farabi*. As a "life-and-works" compilation, the *Al-Farabi* was not startlingly different from, say, G. Flügel's study of al-Kindî that had appeared a decade earlier, in 1857. Steinschneider, however, was able, mainly with the help of medieval Hebrew works, to give a much fuller picture of al-Fârâbî's activities and, again thanks mainly to information furnished by Hebrew literature, to place the philosopher in the cultural environment to which he belonged. Al-Fârâbî was superseded to a large degree by the later Ibn Sînâ. This applied to the eastern part of the Muslim world. The western part, which was culturally somewhat retarded (if this is the proper term to use in this connection), had retained considerable interest in the older thinker. Therefore, the preserved Jewish literature, mainly western in origin, contained a good deal of material on al-Fârâbî's philosophy and made it possible for Steinschneider to evaluate his position and influence. Moreover, the bird's-eye view of Muslim philosophy presented by the *Al-Farabi*, together

einzunehmen. Es ist ihre mühevollte Aufgabe, unter Wunder- und Aberglauben, Phantasie und Selbsttäuschung nach einem historischen oder realen Kern zu suchen, und selten wird ihnen die Freude zu Theil, nüchternen und besonnenen Geistern zu begegnen, die ihnen in gleicher Richtung vorgearbeitet. Aber zur Kenntniss und gerechten Würdigung des Orients gehört auch die Form und Anschauungsweise, die sich in den gewöhnlichen Quellen darbietet.

"Von diesem Gesichtspunkte aus glaube ich das doppelte Interesse der Leser auf ein Werk hinlenken zu dürfen, welches uns auf dem weiten Gebiete der *Culturgeschichte* einen Kreis von wirklichen Erscheinungen oder vorherrschenden Einbildungen beleuchtet, die im Oriente zum Theil noch in alter Kraft fortleben — und leider auch bei uns nicht so ganz ausgestorben sind, als mancher Verehrer seiner Zeit vermeint."

with the many bibliographical sidelights it contained on its various phases, was just what was needed to prove to skeptical nineteenth-century scholars the fact of the pervasiveness of philosophy in Muslim culture, and the *Al-Farabi* continued to exercise a powerful stimulus, for many years, on all those interested in learning about Islam. In all fairness it must be said, though, that Steinschneider's *Al-Farabi*, as little as Flügel's *Kindî*, shows any real familiarity with the thinking of their respective subjects and cannot be called a philosophical analysis or even an informed description of the philosophical ideas of these men. This is not surprising and could hardly have been different, since much too little was known of the original writings of al-Fârâbî at the time Steinschneider wrote. But it is also evident that Steinschneider lacked the philosophical penetration and the living interest in philosophy which, for instance, were possessed to such an admirable degree by his great contemporary, S. Munk. Thus, while the *Al-Farabi* greatly stimulated the study of Muslim philosophy, the philosophical aspect of the subject remained rather neglected in the work.

However, the *Al-Farabi* had another, far-reaching significance. The long title, in its complete form, tells the story. It reads: "Al-Farabi (Alpharabius), the life and works of the Arabic philosopher, with especial reference to the history of Greek science among the Arabs, with appendixes on John Philoponus among the Arabs, a description of Plato's philosophy, and the life and last will and testament of Aristotle according to Ptolemy."⁸ Steinschneider here prepared the way for the modern scientific study of the basis of higher Muslim civilization, the Greek translation literature. Not that the significance of this great intellectual movement had been unknown before; in fact, it had never been entirely forgotten since the time of the flourishing of the translation activity in the ninth century, and it was studied by other Western scholars simultaneously with

⁸ *Al-Farabi (Alpharabius), des arabischen Philosophen Leben und Schriften, mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Geschichte der griechischen Wissenschaft unter den Arabern. Nebst Anhängen: Joh. Philoponus bei den Arabern, Darstellung der Philosophie Plato's, Leben und Testament des Aristoteles von Ptolemaeus, grösstentheils nach handschriftlichen Quellen.*

Steinschneider. He, however, saw it in its totality, and with his enormous bibliographical knowledge, attempted to elucidate all aspects of it. His interest in Greek civilization went back to his student days in Vienna and Leipzig where he attended lectures on the subject,⁹ and at one point in his career, he even went so far as to declare that "Greece was the unique source of knowledge and right thinking,"¹⁰ a sentiment which would hardly be shared today even by the most ardent Grecophiles, or at least would require many qualifications.

The cultural problem posed by the Greek contribution to Islam was clearly stated by Steinschneider in his *Al-Farabi*:¹¹ "The Arabic philosophy and the scholastic one derived from it, which, as a matter of fact, include all secular sciences or presuppose their existence as propaedeutic disciplines, have for a long time been despised as mere caricatures of Greek philosophy. People have become fairer in their judgment and are interested now in the particular form taken by Greek science when it appears in a nation with completely different customs and beliefs, but in addition, they also attempt to find, in the Oriental translations and recensions and their reflections in later (Arabic literature), a substitute for lost Greek originals, or information on lost Greek works, or help for the reestablishment of the correct text of Greek works."

⁹ Cf. A. Marx, in *Jewish Studies in Memory of George A. Kohut* (New York 1935), p. 496 f.

¹⁰ "La Grèce était la source unique du savoir et de la droite pensée." This was the motto used by Steinschneider when he submitted his prize essay on the Arabic translations from the Greek to the Académie des Inscriptions. Cf. *CRAI* IV, 14 (1886), p. 448; IV, 15 (1887), pp. 183, 521.

¹¹ *Al-Farabi*, p. 7: "Lange Zeit hat man die arabische und die an sie sich lehrende scholastische Philosophie, welche eigentlich alle Profanwissenschaften selbst begreift, oder als propaedeutische voraussetzt, als eine blossе Verzerrung der griechischen verächtlich abgefertigt. Man ist gerechter geworden und interessirt sich für die eigenthümliche Gestaltung, welche die griechische Wissenschaft bei einer in Sitte und Glauben ganz entgegengesetzten Nation genommen; man sucht aber auch anderseits in den morgenländischen Bearbeitungen und deren weitem Ausflüssen einen Ersatz für verlorne griechische Originale oder Nachrichten über solche und ein Hilfsmittel für Herstellung von Texten."

The great battle of opinion as to the relative importance of the Greek heritage and the Muslim contribution to it remains undecided to this very day, and the problem, being one that involves value judgments, will in all probability never be solved. But the crucial character of the problem, the fact of the importance of Greek science for the development of Muslim civilization, and even such a comparatively minor point as the value of the Arabic translation literature for classical philology, all this has never again been doubted after Steinschneider's work, in particular after his *Al-Farabi* was followed by his comprehensive bibliographical study of Greek translation literature, the *Arabic Translations from the Greek*. It is not surprising that this work for which Steinschneider had done so much preparatory work throughout his life, won the prize offered for the subject by the Académie des Inscriptions, but although sixty years have gone by, it is still difficult to accept the fact that it could not be published in the proper form but had to appear in four instalments in three different periodicals. But again, perhaps, we should not wonder as much about the fact that finding a publisher for such a masterly achievement was not easy even in the nineteenth century, as about the fact that Steinschneider was able to find publishers for almost all his publications, even though he had to contend with difficulties and there apparently were no outright subsidies available to help him. The prize of 3,000 francs he received for the *Arabic Translations from the Greek* was rather munificent as such prizes go, but it was a small reward for the tremendous work done and it probably was badly needed by Steinschneider in his rather restricted circumstances. Only once, he tells us proudly, did he receive advance support for his literary activities. That was in 1845 when he was not yet thirty years old, and this subsidy was — as he put it: “gottlob” — the only one in his long scholarly career.

Whatever the material aspects of scholarship, the *Arabic Translations from the Greek* (what can rarely be said about a scholarly work) nearly exhaust their subject. The problems: What is the true value of the translation literature? Were the translations made directly from the Greek or through a Syriac intermediary? Were all the Greek works known to Muslim

authors actually translated into Arabic?—all these problems were correctly posed, and all the sources available for their solution were thoroughly ransacked. Above all, the way was now open for all to discuss Muslim civilization intelligently, in the possession of the indispensable basic information.

The idea of the continuity of Western civilization in Islam through the influence of the Greek heritage, the recognition of the importance of philosophy and the sciences in Muslim civilization, and the stress placed upon viewing *all* manifestations of Muslim civilization together in order to see that civilization as it was in reality—these are the true components of Steinschneider's contribution to Islamic studies. It is in this spirit and following these directions that all valuable work on medieval Islam accomplished after his time was undertaken. Other scholars, of course, labored together with Steinschneider along the same lines, but the amount of his published work and his thoroughness as a bibliographer have added to his publications a permanent value for reference purposes which has not yet been obliterated by the passing of time, and time passes quickly in scholarship.

This brings me to the conclusion of these sketchy remarks. As a motto for his *Arabic Literature of the Jews*, characteristically subtitled *A Contribution to the Literary History of the Arabs*, Steinschneider quoted from Seneca's *Moral Essays* to the effect that much work remains to be done and will always remain to be done, and even after a thousand ages—*post mille saecula*—there will arise occasions for making additional contributions. The thousand ages have not passed yet, but the rapid progress of scholarship in the fields prepared by Steinschneider suggests that a renewal of some of his main works would be the best way to keep their usefulness undiminished and his memory alive. The work on al-Fârâbî has already been remade in part by various scholars restricting themselves to certain aspects of it. A study of the philosopher, on the same scale of comprehensiveness originally aimed at, is no longer feasible; the relevant material has grown too much. But the work on the Arabic translations from the Greek should be brought up to date in some form or other, to take care of the many new facts

that have been ascertained within the last sixty years. Above all, his *Arabic Literature of the Jews* urgently needs a modern successor volume. Brockelmann's *History of Arabic Literature*, which was completed in the same year, 1902, that marked the appearance of Steinschneider's work, was supplemented by its author in three majestic volumes not long ago. The *History of Christian Arabic Literature* grew from its humble beginnings in the first decade of this century under the hands of its industrious author, G. Graf, to an impressive opus of close to 2,400 pages published from 1944 to 1953. Steinschneider, writing the history of Jewish Arabic literature, was a man in his eighties, and there was no hope that he would ever be able to continue his work himself. This task is left to us. It has been postponed too long and should not be postponed to future generations. Especially in these days, it would seem necessary to remember the fundamental Jewish contribution to Islamic studies and to be guided by Steinschneider's spirit of universal understanding.