

IBN AL-WARDI	IBN AL-WARDI, Sirrady al-Bin Rikabi $\frac{1}{3}$
IBN WÄSIL	Zayn al-Din Rikabi $\frac{1}{3}$ Thayyat $\frac{1}{2}$
IBN YA'ISH	v. Fück
IBN YAMIN	Ryplka
IBN YUNUS	Kennedy $\frac{1}{2}$
IBN YUNUS	Rosenthal $\frac{1}{2}$
IBN ZAFAR	Pellet
IBN ZÄFIR	Rizzitano
IBN AL-ZAKKÄK	Pellet
IBN ZAMRAK	de la Granja $\frac{1}{2}$ Hadji-Padok $\frac{1}{3}$ de la Granja
IBN AL-ZARKÄLA	[v. al-Zarkati]
IBN ZAYDÜN	Tha Zaydün Dewidun $\frac{1}{4}$ Lecomte 1
IBN ZAYLA	Crochon $\frac{1}{3}$
IBN AL-ZAYYÄT	Tha al-Zayyat Coudet $\frac{1}{3}$
IBN AL-ZUBAYR	Tanne $\frac{2}{3}$ Fück $\frac{1}{3}$ Hopkins $\frac{1}{4}$
IBN ZUHR	Arnaldos
IBN ZÖLÄK	B. Lewin
IBN ZUR'Ä	?
IBRÄHİM	Parat - Vajda
IBRÄHİM B. 'ABD ALLÄH	Veissa Vajl $\frac{2}{3}$
IBRÄHİM B. ADHAM	FMeier + Barat.
IBRÄHİM I B. AL-AGHLAB	} Talbi 2
IBRÄHİM II B. AL-AGHLAB	
IBRÄHİM B. AHMAD	i. A.

# A History of the *Encyclopaedia* of Islam

By Peri Bearman

Resources in Arabic and Islamic Studies

A HISTORY OF THE  
*ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ISLAM*

# RESOURCES IN ARABIC AND ISLAMIC STUDIES

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A HISTORY OF THE  
*ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ISLAM*

Peri Bearman

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# A HISTORY OF THE *ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ISLAM*

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## Series Editors' Preface

The first two editions of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* were—we daresay remain—the leading resource in the field of Arabic and Islamic Studies. When we began our graduate careers in the mid-1980's, the Second ('New') Edition had only reached the letter J, and the First Edition, which appeared from 1913–1936, had been reprinted. We had completed our PhDs and were already teaching when the Second Edition came to an end in 2005. We would hear stories from our teachers and from the editors—about the challenges and pitfalls of commissioning, vetting, editing, translating, copyediting, proofing, and delivering the articles, about the personalities involved, about the conflicts and concessions. Like everyone else in the field, we always wanted to know more about the history of this monumental work of scholarship. When we learned, therefore, that Peri Bearman—the only scholar who was both an in-house editor at Brill, the publishing house that for over a century produced the *Encyclopaedia*, and also a member of the editorial board—had completed a manuscript on the history of the *Encyclopaedia*, we asked if she would let us publish it. She immediately agreed. We are especially delighted to include, as part of our Resources in Arabic and Islamic Studies series, this engaging history of one of the premier resources in Arabic and Islamic Studies.

Joseph E. Lowry  
Devin J. Stewart  
Shawkat M. Toorawa



## Preface

This is the untold history of the first two editions of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, the unrivaled reference work on Islam in the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> Conceived at the dawn of collaborative scholarship, in 1892, interrupted by two world wars, and completed at the dawn of the electronic era, in 2004, it is a story of a monumental project undertaken by the greatest scholars of the age; a story of friendship and rivalry; and a story of the extraordinary circumstances in which it took shape.

The *Encyclopaedia of Islam* started as a wisp of an idea, but became a colossus, not only because of its significance as the major research tool in the field of Islamic Studies for so many decades, but also because it consumed the lives of those intimately involved. “As soon as I find someone to take over the chairmanship [of the encyclopedia board] I’m resigning,” proclaimed Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, who was in charge of keeping the encyclopedia afloat in its first decade.<sup>2</sup> “Damn this Encyclopaedia,” wrote Victor Ménége in the 1970s.<sup>3</sup> The prospect of such a lengthy purgatory, however, was absent when the encyclopedia project was proposed in 1892 at the animated meeting of the Ninth International Congress of Orientalists in London. In the late nineteenth century, the novelty of scholarly conferences and of meeting colleagues face to face had not yet dulled, ideas flowed freely among new acquaintances and old friends, and grand plans flourished, even if impractical in the extreme. There were many gaps to fill in the nascent field of Islamic Studies, which at that time was but a small subdivision of Oriental scholarship, just emerging from its role in supplying scholars of theology and practitioners of missiology with enough facts—however misinformed—to refute the veracity and call of Islam.

A few wrong turns in the first years sealed the fate of the encyclopedia. Had the author of the proposal, a Cambridge University professor, not abruptly died before any steps could be taken, the project might well have appeared with Cambridge University Press; had the first chosen editor been less modest and more organized, the Dutch might not have formed a bastion at the head; and had there not existed such amity between one

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1. Hereafter, for the most part, referred to as “the encyclopedia.”

2. Letter Snouck Hurgronje to Theodor Nöldeke of March 1, 1915, in P. Sj. van Koningsveld, *Orientalism and Islam: The Letters of C. Snouck Hurgronje to Th. Nöldeke* (Leiden, 1985), 227. Hereafter, unless given a qualification, all correspondence is epistolary.

3. Victor Ménége to Emeri van Donzel, December 6, 1974. In author’s possession.

of the towering Dutch Arabists and professor at Leiden and the esteemed Dutch publisher's co-owner in the late 1800s, the encyclopedia could have perished stillborn. But with the surreptitious arrangement between the two Dutchmen, the outcome was shaped, for the scholar was methodical and resourceful, the publisher eager and experienced, and the Dutch view of the world not fettered by the weight of an international language—it is difficult to imagine that a British or German publisher would have welcomed an encyclopedia in three separate language editions, which was to be the fate of the first edition.

Those three languages—English, French, German—and, in particular, the cultural attitudes that were harbored in them, would cause no end of trouble, extra work, and tensions, but the prospect of money flowing from as many countries as possible required acceding to these very cultural demons. With no omen of the First World War on the horizon, when Germany—and Germans—would fall out of favor, and with an expectation that the national Academies were rife with funds that they would spend freely on an international project such as the much-needed encyclopedia when published in their own language, another surreptitious agreement was entered into. The ultimate editor of the first edition, also a Dutchman, faced a *fait accompli*; but the unorthodox decision was both better than having to choose one of the three languages to publish in—not to mention far better than a polyglot edition, which was tentatively considered—and more successful in cementing the scholarly loyalty it relied on than had it embraced only one. Yet, the trilingualism of the first edition required an assortment of native or quasi-native speakers of German, English, and French to assist in the editing, and in particular, the translating of articles. As is described in chapter one, this was not always a smooth process. The aggravation of translation persisted with the second edition, although the languages had been reduced to English and French (figs. 1 and 2). Also in contrast, this edition began with three editors, one for each of the encyclopedia languages and a Dutch scholar based in Leiden, continuing the legacy of the Dutch involvement.

After the First World War, scholars from the Central Powers faced a wall of reproach and were barred from conferences and other scholarly ventures until the welcome sign was hung out again in 1926. The encyclopedia was more tolerant—although some Germans involved in the encyclopedia had waved the flag of war in reprehensible fashion, their involvement continued, their contributions requested and published. This tolerance was likely due in large part to the Dutch majority presence, for the Netherlands was neutral in the war, did not suffer as much as other countries, and had ties to Germany that were historically close and lengthy. It is conceivable that the German edition was the most consulted in the Netherlands; this certainly played a role in the conniving after the Second World War of the Dutch editor to re-include German in the second edition. Although he was not successful, it seems to have been less anti-German sentiment that dispatched it than the overriding desire to continue in just one language—English. The attempt to eliminate the French edition was thwarted, however, by heroic posturing by the French editor who pulled the equivalent of Khrushchev banging his shoe on the table.

The first edition was completed in 1936, and when the International Congress of Orientalists resumed meeting after the Second World War, in 1948 in Paris, plans were laid to bring out a second edition of the encyclopedia. The growth of the field of Islamic Studies and the changing world order, especially as the imperialist enterprise neared its end, cried out for an update. The second edition was planned to be only slightly larger than the four-volume first edition, but when it reached four volumes, it was still struggling with the first half of the alphabet. It was finally completed in twelve volumes, in 2004.<sup>4</sup> A third edition, not treated here, was begun before the ink was even dry—indeed, while the editors of the second edition were still hard at work. Unlike the first two editions, it was initiated by the publisher, driven principally by the spectre of lost income rather than scholarship for scholarship's sake.

The extended service of the preeminent reference work in Islamic Studies demands an overview, but dredging up history can be a fraught enterprise. There might well be anxiety about potential revelations, for the combing of archives has the potential to smudge ensconced reputations. Indeed, there was considerable backbiting in the early years—getting the encyclopedia off the ground and keeping it in the air was a constant worry that did not always bring out the best in people, and being caught up in a world war against former friends and colleagues also had an adverse effect on the finest in one's character. But from the vantage point of at least a hundred years later, reading the testy remarks is more amusing than horrifying, and makes flesh and blood scholars of the names we have consigned to iconic status. As for the encyclopedia's second edition, most of those involved appear to have succumbed mutely to the rote routine of editing, or willfully self-censored when putting irritated thoughts to paper. Fiery words, malicious gossip, and the casting of aspersions are rare. Flashes of spitefulness and disappointment can be spotted in the background or read between the lines, but for the most part the second edition's fifty-five years seem to have passed in harmony, or in a civilized imitation thereof. During my time as editor—in the latter years of the second edition—I remember spoken indictments, of course, and even hurled some myself, but these cannot be footnoted; since this history is not intended as a memoir in which recall and regurgitation are given free rein, oral history is only sporadically relied upon. Even then, I have chosen to exercise discretion by omitting identifying particulars or indelicate details (possible readerly Schadenfreude notwithstanding). Any peccadillos, in any case, rarely transcend the norm for academe—prose too logorrheic, contributors too forgetful of deadlines, scholars too touchy about turf.

The first and second chapters cover the two editions, respectively, in a purely chronological order—chapter one moves from 1892 to 1936, and chapter two from 1948 to 2004. Chapter three treats the publisher, E. J. Brill, and the hugely complex publishing process.

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4. The English edition was completed in 2004, the French edition in 2006. Both the first and second editions included a supplement volume; and the second edition added a thirteenth, index volume.

Chapter four discusses the swirling world into which the encyclopedia was thrust. This chapter, which covers the times in which the encyclopedia was proposed and then toiled on, and the external processes that shaped it, is necessarily succinct in its coverage of context. So much has been written on the two world wars and on the large issues of nationalism, colonialism, and orientalism that any collective treatment in a chapter could only be seen as summary. It is hoped that chapter four nevertheless adds an historical dimension to the encyclopedia by treating some of the invisible influential events, without pretending to delve into the isms that have spawned literary genres of their own. The volume ends with three appendices: the first reproduces the sample of lemmata (*Spécimen*) prepared in 1899 to attract contributors and funding bodies to the project; the second is a translation into English of a French booklet written by a disgruntled editorial assistant who was let go in 1909; and the third is a brief history of two supplementary publications, *An Historical Atlas of Islam* and the indexes to the second edition.

Importantly, the encyclopedia was a European product. Americans did become involved—principally through the National Endowment for the Humanities, which was responsible for the luxurious funding it enjoyed for its last thirty years—but its sensibilities and the traditions it held onto were European. The cauldron of languages, the nationalist temperament, the aura of business attended to by venerable gentlemen—all were fundamental to the encyclopedia’s DNA, elevating it and encumbering it at will. To write its history is to bounce back and forth between English, French, German, Dutch, and a smattering of Italian and Spanish. Principal sources for the history of the first edition include: a Dutch dissertation on the first editor; Goldziher’s German diary; De Goeje’s Dutch letters to his friend Nöldeke and Nöldeke’s German letters in return; and the cantankerous booklet in French on the Encyclopedia’s presumed failures noted above. For the second edition, I relied heavily on the encyclopedia’s own archive of letters and reports of meetings, now in my possession, which bring the seminal figures of Sir Hamilton Gibb, Évariste Lévi-Provençal, Joseph Schacht, Charles Pellat, and Edmund Bosworth to life in the full epistolary glory of their native and adopted languages. In addition, the Harvard University Archives has two boxes of Gibb material, including two folders that relate to the encyclopedia, which I was able to consult, and Harvard University has an almost unparalleled library collection.

To impart the historical flavor of the era, I have taken over quotes originally in English verbatim, including typos, errors of grammar, lack of punctuation, and underlinings to indicate emphasis. I have chosen to avoid noting [*sic*] at every turn, so as not to overwhelm the text. When I paraphrase what someone has said or written, I include the original phrasing in a footnote, but otherwise I have translated nearly all quotations from the multiple languages into English. It is therefore merely a mirage that the encyclopedia embraced a lingua franca and that everyone spoke and wrote a fluent English.

Some technical matters: I followed Dutch onomastic conventions, thus M. J. de Goeje but on its own, De Goeje; E. van Donzel but on its own, Van Donzel, and so on. All referenced online sites were last accessed in August 2017, but since “the average life of a Web

page is about a hundred days” I have kept a copy of every webpage I reference.<sup>5</sup> When citing encyclopedia articles, I have omitted the ligatures. For currencies, I use \$ for the American dollar, £ for the English pound, f for the Dutch guilder, DM for the German mark, and FF for the French franc (and anciens francs up to 1960).<sup>6</sup> Finally, because I intend this to be as objective a history of the encyclopedia as possible, despite having some irreverent feelings about various matters described, I have chosen to speak of myself in the third person, however jarring that is.

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I am deeply indebted to family, friends, and colleagues for help with this volume, either actively—by giving of their time—or passively—by tolerating my absentminded self and not counting the days, months, and years that were taken up by it. In the first place, I owe my esteemed and treasured fellow editors, Thierry Bianquis, Edmund Bosworth, Emeri van Donzel, and Wolfhart Heinrichs a large debt of gratitude for their friendship and for the trust they placed in me. I will forever miss our good times together. I am grateful as well to the two French editors, Gérard Lecomte and Charles Pellat, whose lives I briefly shared, for accepting me into the fold although I represented much that raised their hackles, being female, American, and plainspoken. To fill in gaps or shore up my porous memory, I asked much of the far better ones of Hans de Bruijn, Julian Deahl, F. Th. Dijkema, Emeri van Donzel, Simone Nurit, and Roger Savory, and I am very appreciative of their willingness to help and delve deep. For giving freely and sweetly of their time to read drafts, advise, and encourage, I owe much to Daniël van der Zande and to my very good friend Anna Livia Beelaert; for help beyond the call of duty, and for general amenability all around, I am very grateful to Michael Hopper and Arnoud Vrolijk, and their respective libraries at Harvard and Leiden; and for his special brand of enthusiasm, matched with warmth and wisdom, I am beholden to Shawkat Toorawa, whose improvements to the text were always on the mark. Lastly, I thank my publisher and editors for including this volume in RAIS and for miraculously finding a reader who did not mind “pretty much another book in the footnotes.”

Words go only so far in thanking Harrie for his bottomless vat of love, patience, and support. It was a fine day when we met, and the weather has never turned. This work is dedicated to him and to Jule and Dashiell, who without choice but always without complaint came along for the encyclopedia ride.

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5. Quote from Jill Lepore, “The Cobweb: Can the Internet Be Archived?” *The New Yorker*, January 26, 2015.

6. Historical rates of conversion or currency worth are notoriously difficult to access. I have consulted various sources—printed and online—and only offer conversions in the footnote for an approximate understanding.



## Abbreviations

ACLS	American Council of Learned Societies
BSMES	British Society for Middle Eastern Studies
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
EI2	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition</i>
EIr	<i>Encyclopaedia Iranica</i>
IJMES	<i>International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland</i>
LUL	Leiden University Library
ZDMG	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>