



BROCKELMANN, CARL

BROCKELMANN, CARL, German orientalist, born in Rostock 17 September 1868, died in Halle/Saale 6 May 1956. Brockelmann pursued Oriental studies, classical philology, and history in Rostock, Breslau, and Strasburg. He took his Ph.D. degree in Strasburg, in 1890, under the direction of Th. Nöldeke and his Dr. habil. degree in Breslau in 1893. In 1900 he was appointed to a chair in Breslau, in 1903 in Königsberg, in 1910 in Halle, in 1922 in Berlin, and in 1923 in Breslau again. After his retirement in 1935 he returned to Halle/Saale, where he died.

During a long and serene life as a scholar Brockelmann produced a wealth of fundamental publications that determined the direction of orientalism, from cuneiform studies to the political and literary history of the most recent periods, for generations to come. His monumental output represents, more than that of any other scholar, the unity of oriental studies in his time. It in no way detracts from his central significance that, as a result of expansion and accompanying specialization, the field has since been subdivided into numerous more restricted disciplines. Although research will continue to become more intensively focused, nevertheless the framework first laid down in Brockelmann's encyclopedic studies will remain essentially unchanged.

Brockelmann's work in Iranian studies is interwoven through his entire output. In *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (5 vols., 2nd ed., 1937-49) he listed, described, and characterized thousands of Persian scholars and their works in Arabic—as well as occasionally also in Persian and Turkish. He relied, first, on published manuscript catalogues that had been compiled since



the 18th century mainly by Europeans and, second, on the rich biographical and bibliographical literature of the Islamic Middle Ages in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, which he brought together and summarized under the heading of secondary literature. He also wrote for the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1913-37) many articles on significant Persian contributors to this literature, including poetry and *adab* in Arabic, from Boḳārī to Zamaḳṣarī, from Abu'l-Faraj Eṣfahānī and Abū Nowās to Ta'ālebī. Persian manuscripts were included in two catalogues that he prepared for the municipal libraries of Breslau (1903) and Hamburg (1908). In his *Geschichte der islamischen Völker and Staaten* (1939), which was frequently translated into both Western and Oriental languages, he repeatedly emphasized the political and cultural connections among Islamic lands, from Moḥammad to the period before World War II, rating especially high the Persian contribution to general Islamic culture. In numerous reviews Brockelmann, who combined a unique gift for languages with an awe-inspiring memory and extraordinary power of expression, came to grips with the problems of New Persian philology. In commenting on the difficulty of establishing critical text editions of the Persian classics, he warned against expecting too much: "The Iranians, who so often brilliantly applied their philological skills to Arabic texts, unfortunately evinced hardly any scholarly interest in their own national literature. One read the poets for the sake of aesthetic enjoyment, and every educated scribe not only felt himself entitled to "improve" the text as he copied it, but even took pride in doing so. He thus made many interpolations, from which no Persian poetic text is free; nor was any part of it secure from arbitrary changes. Indeed, the copyist often sought to compensate for an error of his own by trying to adapt the rest of the verse to it. The richness and flexibility of the Persian poetic language are extraordinarily illuminated by such a practice" (review of H. Ritter and J. Rypka, *Zeitschrift für Semitistik* 10, 1935, pp. 337f.). In this and other works Brockelmann contributed many observations and interpretations related to Persian lexicography, especially etymology. Persian loanwords in Syriac (see [SYRIAC i](#)) can also be found listed and explained in his *Lexicon Syriacum* (Berlin, 1895 [[Figure 1](#)]; 2nd ed., 1928).



BIBLIOGRAPHY

J. Fück, "Carl Brockelmann als Orientalist," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Universität Halle* 7, 1958, pp. 857-76, with complete bibliography.

R. Sellheim, ed., "Autobiographische Aufzeichnungen und Erinnerungen von Carl Brockelmann," *Oriens* 27-28, 1981, pp. 1-65.

Search terms:

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ carl brockelmann