

## The (Un)Substantiated in Dan Diner's Interpretations of the Islamic World's "Backwardness"

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### Abstract

The author develops a dialogue with thoughts and views of Dan Diner expressed in his book *Lost in the Sacred* (originally published in German as *Versiegelte Zeit*). This essay focuses on – and disputes – Diner's contentions that the Arab and Muslim/Islamic worlds are backward due to their resistance to such western concepts as democracy, human rights, and social and educational institutions, not to mention the Arabic alphabet and language and the Qur'an (e.g., printing the text on a printing press, variant readings, and as an obstacle to progress) themselves.

### Introduction

There are several reasons why Sulejman Bosto's excellent translation of Dan Diner's *Sealed Time* (*Versiegelte Zeit*)<sup>1</sup> into Bosnian aroused the local Bosnians' intellectual curiosity. But before we address some of them, allow us to share some technical remarks about this work.

Originally written in German (*Versiegelte Zeit, Über den Stillstand in der islamischen Welt* [*Sealed Time: On the Standstill in the Islamic World*])<sup>2</sup> and

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published in 2005, it was published four years later by Princeton University Press in English under quite a cynical title: *Lost in the Sacred: Why the Muslim World Stood Still*.<sup>3</sup> The title refers to Muslims, and the subtitle aspires to encompass the overall Muslim world, as if such concepts as progress or advancement, regardless of how we understand them or of how they could be interpreted or contested in philosophical, ethical, ecological, or other terms, had somehow eluded them.

But before we begin our review, it is appropriate to introduce Diner to the readers. Diner was born in 1946 in Munich and is a professor of modern history at Israel's leading and globally recognized Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He obtained his PhD (international law, 1973) at Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main and completed his habilitation in 1980. His academic career is as follows: professor in the Department of Modern Arab History at Denmark's Odense University (1980-85); professor of European History at the Tel Aviv University (1988) and director of the Institute for German History (1994-99); and director of the Simon-Dubnow-Institute for Jewish History and Culture at Leipzig University (1999-present).

Diner, who lives in both Germany and Israel, has authored numerous books on twentieth-century political history as well as Middle Eastern and Jewish history. His published works include *Cataclysms: A History of the Twentieth Century from Europe's Edge* (Zaprešić: 2013), *Beyond the Conceivable: Studies on Germany, Nazism and the Holocaust* (Berkeley: 2000) and *America Conceived as the Enemy* (Berlin: 2002). According to reviews, he "links the traditions of European history, history of the Middle East and Jewish history."

Thus, he structurally analyzes "cultural differences from the perspective of the periphery – in both its spatial and cognitive sense." His work is particularly "recognizable for its methodological questioning of the relation between history and memory," primarily during the years of National Socialism. Therefore, as many sources claim, Diner is the architect of the "breach of civilization" concept (*Zivilisationsbruch*). His critics also claim that currently "two main issues dominate his research: first, the re-conceptualization of Jewish history in modern times; and second, the significance of the Jewish historical experience as a seismograph for the turmoil of modernism."<sup>4</sup>

Diner clearly wants to "theoretically explain" two main things in *Sealed Time*: (1) to prove that the "sacred" (*das Heilige*) rules the Islamic or Muslim world, Muslim nations and societies, as well as Muslim institutions; that Muslims are "captured by the sacred," the slaves of the sacred or, as the English translation of *Versiegelte Zeit* clearly says, "lost in the sacred" and (2) that

Muslims and the Muslim world at large resist modernity and stubbornly refuse to become enlightened and modern. Therefore, they remain backward, a space in which all types of reactionism and obscurity exist.

## The Book's Format

As we will be dealing with several subtopics, it is appropriate here to share some technical remarks about the book itself. In addition to the "Introduction," the book comprises six chapters: "Knowledge and Development" (*Wissen und Entwicklung*), "Geopolitics and the World of Religion" (*Geopolitik und Glaubenswelt*), "Text and Speech" (*Schrift und Sprache*), "Rise and Decline" (*Aufstieg und Niedergang*), and "Domination and Benefit" (*Herrschaft und Nutzen*) and "History and Law" (*Geschichte und Gesetz*). The title of chapter 6 in the German original, "Historical Thought and the Divine Law," is translated into English.<sup>5</sup> We note here that it differs at times from its German original. We can only assume that Diner, after reading it, "toned down" some generally very strict judgments on this asserted backwardness.

One of the important technical remarks about *Versiegelte Zeit* is the mention of the *Arab Human Development Report*, a 2002 UN document. This report, or rather its data, as well as the data from the 2003 *Arab Human Development Report*, directly and initially served as the basis from which Diner deduced almost all of his conclusions on the "reactionism of the Arab and Muslim world," on its incomprehensible and "stubborn" abidance by the "sacred" in the time of science, advancement, progress, and secularism.

*Sealed Time* represents an overview or an inventory, so typical of him, of development (or standstill) in the Muslim world (*die muslimische Welt*), the measure of which is always the West (*der Westen*). What dominates and rules in this book is Hegel's matrix of history's overall movement toward its purpose, as embodied in the supreme – namely, the West. It was in the West that *Weltgeist* was revived as the world spirit, and therefore all of the efforts that men tried or dared to undertake have served the West's emergence.

It is, of course, legitimate to address all of the topics Diner deals with, to expose how Muslims practice their religion to intellectual exploration and analysis, and to study to what extent their societies and Muslim or Islamic countries have accepted democracy or the "democratic" values deemed acceptable by the West. It is legitimate to examine, even critically judge, how the rulers in Islamic countries exercise power, to explore the state of human rights there, and to study the speed with which the Islamic world accepted or rejected the inventions of printing presses and printing. And, finally, it is le-

gitimate to examine to what extent the Qur'an determines educational programs in the Islamic countries, to explore the role of literary Arabic in the public domain of the Arab world, even whether it prevents that world from being "secularized" or "citizen-oriented," as Diner suggests. Indeed, these are some of this book's "main themes."<sup>6</sup>

In this review, we intend to critically question some of the ways he used to address these themes, as well as to critically assess many of his views and opinions. We contend that it is precisely due to his treatment of these themes that he falls into several imprecise, incorrect, and at times completely untruthful generalizations – even in places where it seems that his generalizations can withstand criticism. Also, due to his selective use of themes and arguments, as well as the examples he provides to illustrate his arguments and statements, we dare say that his book often loses its academic leverage and reduces itself to a pamphlet, angry polemics, and a nervous and capricious elaboration on the centuries lived by Muslims in all spheres of human activity.

## His Sources

Here we look at the literature he consulted, an effort that we deem rather important. In this regard, we note that he relies heavily upon the writings of the mostly radical western messengers and conveyors of all sorts of atavisms in relation to Islam, Arabs, Muslims, and the never fully defined "Islamic world." The most consulted author is Bernard Lewis, whose generalized views of Islam and Muslims he most often accepted and supported uncritically. Maybe that is why his book makes scant reference to the authentic Arabic and Muslim literature that emerged at the end of eighteenth century and during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which in itself testifies that both Christian and Muslim Arabs debated about the great and important issues of modernism, secularism, civil society, tradition and its modernization, relations to Europe, and related topics.

This abundant literature, which was created in circles of both Arab and Muslim modernists and reformists, deals extensively with what *Sealed Time* is trying to deal with, but in a very different manner. It is precisely Diner's avoidance of literature on contemporary trends among Muslims – the literature that emerged both in the Near and Middle East and in Western universities – that tells us a great deal about his methodological standpoint.

For instance, he does not mention (perhaps he did not even consult) Marshall G. S. Hodgson's large three-volume *The Venture of Islam or Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam and World History*,<sup>7</sup> which addresses

in a highly sophisticated manner the “rise of the West” since 1800, along with the issues faced by the Arab and Muslim intellectual circles. Also absent is the landmark work *History of the Arabs* by the Arab Christian historian Philip K. Hitti.<sup>8</sup> Both of these scholars devote numerous pages to, and often write critically about, Arab and Muslim pursuits of their own contemporaneity, modernity, or the contemporaneity and modernity aligned to their own needs, how they are aligned to their own needs and the extent to which they are shaped by and deliberated in the West.

Moreover, and much to the dismay of serious readership, Diner fails to consult the work of Fazlur Rahman, a University of Chicago professor who published several critically worded books on authentic Muslim pursuits of contemporaneity, reformism, modernity, and similar trends.<sup>9</sup> These works were written in “secular” language, critically oriented (we could say self-critically) toward the ideological trends in the Islamic world. Diner ignores all of this scholar’s books, which fall into the top university literature on Islam in Europe and in the West, and fails to mention them, presumably because he does not approve of the author’s arguments or because he is unaware of them.

In addition, he does not mention Wilfred Cantwell Smith’s *Islam in Modern History*,<sup>10</sup> which is considered the critical breviary of the main topics of modernism and contemporaneity in today’s Islam. Notably, Smith writes reasonably (at the level of the western “university mind” and discourse) about Islam and contemporaneity as well as Islam and modernity. Diner also does not reflect upon the well-regarded works of Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi‘ (e.g., *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World*<sup>11</sup> and *Contemporary Arab Thought, Studies in Post-1967 Arab Intellectual History*<sup>12</sup>), both of which address in detail (and critically!) the intellectual, ideological, Islamist, fundamentalist, and secularist trends in the Arab world. In addition, these works clearly and reasonably show that the Arab intellectual (and the Islamic) scene is highly plural, that Arab capitals and cultural centers thoroughly discuss the encounter of the Islamic world and Europe as well as the West, and that thousands of reasonably grounded views, opinions, attitudes have been published on the topic.

In other words, there is no unison or cemented attitude either in the Arab or the Islamic worlds on Europe, the West, modernity, contemporaneity, secularism, civic state, and so on. To the contrary, the scene is covered by a multitude of answers, reflections, and views. But when one reads Diner’s book, one can get the impression that the Arab and Islamic worlds are as uniform as a massive granite block!

Nevertheless, as one of *Sealed Time's* tasks is to show that the Arab and Islamic worlds are intoxicated, numbed, stupefied, and destroyed by the sacred, those sources and literature that analyze and reflect upon contemporaneity and modernity in the Near and Middle East are "unsuitable." Thus, he does not even consult Akbar S. Ahmed's *Islam under Siege*,<sup>13</sup> which could have been quite fecund for certain sections of his own book's argument, as Ahmed points to, although rarely, the common Muslim lamentations, rants, and wails about (or against) Europe and the West.

Other seminal works are also missing, among them Jack Goody's *Islam in Europe*.<sup>14</sup> Goody is professor emeritus at Cambridge University and the global authority on Islam in contemporaneity. His *Islam in Europe* deals with the issues of Islam and terrorism, even the Taliban, in a few paragraphs. Diner refers to two other works by Goody that, in essence, do not deal with the topics fundamentally addressed in *Sealed Time*. And where is Hans Küng's epochal *Der Islam, Geschichte, Gegenwart, Zukunft*,<sup>15</sup> which should be consulted by anyone who wants to write a serious paper on the alleged backwardness of today's Muslims? This work critically addresses the contradictions faced by Muslim intellectuals and thinkers when discussing Islam and contemporaneity, Islam and modernity, Islam and secularism, and similar issues. Perhaps Küng's very methodology, which exudes an understanding of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, so repels Diner that he does not want to have it, under any circumstances, on his shelves. Besides, Küng dedicated this book to his Muslim friends all over the world<sup>16</sup> (*Meinen muslimischen Freunden in aller Welt*).<sup>17</sup> Clearly, Diner does not have similar interests in mind.

It is particularly noteworthy that he did not consult Olivier Roy's many critical works on contemporary trends in the Arab world and movements in the Islamic world. Roy wrote extensively and critically on the manifold "banalizations of Islam" for political purposes. His arguments are presented with dignity and firmly grounded, and the manner in which he presents them is most respectful. One also wonders why, when Diner discusses the Arab world's backwardness he never refers to the works of Annemarie Schimmel or Katharine Mommsen. Notably, Mommsen wrote an extremely valuable work on Goethe's relation with the Arab world (*Goethe und die arabische Welt*); he did not find it backward.

Neglecting the thousands of Arab and Muslim contemporary thinkers who have reflected boldly and seriously on the problems of modernism, secularism, and the technological era, Diner chose mainly to refer to the works of Abu al-Ala Mawdudi and Seyyed Qutb, who have been labeled the greatest arch-fundamentalists and those who most notoriously reject the West, Europe,

modernity, and so on. It would be methodologically accurate to include the Arab and Muslim critics of these two men, for there are surely thousands of them, but Diner does not do so. In general, he reduces the overall ideological and intellectual movements and discussions on the contemporary Arab and Muslim scenes to these two individuals in order to show that Muslims have, allegedly, by rejecting modernity, progress, the West, and so on, made Islam itself a backward religion, one that is anachronistic and a hindrance to the “enlightened West.”

Diner also openly ignores Arab Christians (e.g., Hitti) who have written, in such an engaged and intellectually enviable manner, about projects of modernization and secularization in the Near and Middle East. He also clashed with Edward Said from the very onset, portraying him as an Arab hurt by “Westerners dealing with Islam,” disregarding the fact that Said’s *Orientalism* is far from any hurt and is focused on criticizing the manner and methodology applied to interpreting or “inventing the Orient.”

Of the prominent Arab Christians, Diner consults Albert Habib Hourani, but relies little upon his views of contemporaneity and modernity in the Arab world. He also says nothing about Nikola Ziyadah, the famous Arab Christian who reflected on reform ideas. What else can one say but that it is a true pity that Diner underestimates the deliberations of Arab Christians about the contemporaneity and modernity of the Arab and Islamic worlds.

According to Diner’s book, there seems to be only one type of secularism – the Western one – and one type of modernism – again, the Western one. Of course, many Arab and Muslim modernists have searched for other types of secularism and modernism, as well as civic society, striving to find solutions and apply them in the context of their cultural and civilizational home. But Diner refers to very few of them. It is not enough to mention Amir Shakib Arslan, Rifa‘at at-Tahtawi, and some other radical Arab auto-critics every now and then and based on these references, conclude that, due to the omnipresence of the sacred, only a few people in the Arab and Muslim worlds have deliberated about secularism, liberalism, separation of religion and state, and similar topics. By doing so, it seems that Diner is suggesting that the majority of these intellectual circles are unable to deliberate upon the West and adequately elaborate upon such contemporary ideas of liberalism, progress, and secularism.

The various topics and subtopics that Diner tackles are all conceived of in the “Western manner,” namely, in accordance with what he considers to be the West. His generalizations are conditioned by the following prerequisite: “The Islamic world must catch up with Europe, catch up with the West!” And



yet he fails to clearly elaborate anywhere in his *Sealed Time* the exact time frame of the West. Moreover, he never lists those “unquestionable values” to which the “backward worlds” and “people lost in the sacred” should seek to acquire by joining this frantic race.

### **Diner's Methodology and Other Weaknesses**

In my opinion, *Sealed Time* is written entirely in line with what I would call “sprint methodology.” Diner does not hide this fact. In fact, he contends that the West was created more or less during the time of the Industrial Revolution and ever since then it has been imposing a competition of worlds and civilizations upon everyone. Thus, today's Islamic world is “lost in the sacred” because it is the least successful “racer,” which can only mean that it is backward.

One of this book's great weaknesses, other than its methodology, is its presentation of an essentialized West. That the West was the main culprit behind the two world wars, as well as the birthplace of ideologies that led to the Holocaust and other horrors, is not mentioned. His discussions on secularism, modernity, progress, liberalism, and similar themes give us the impression that they originated from some of his lectures held in Heaven, as if secularism had never led to fascism and communism or given birth to atomic, hydrogen, and neutron bombs. Luckily, there is literature in Europe and the West that treats such ideas differently.

It is a pity that Diner only sparingly refers to Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, the famous critics of progress, enlightenment, and similar themes. Had he consulted them more often, he would not resent the Arab and Islamic worlds for having many thinkers and intellectuals who have reservations about treating the idea of progress as an unquestionable deity.

In *Sealed Time*'s essentialized treatment of the West, there are probably many reasons for Diner to attack Said and his *Orientalism* in the very beginning of his book. One of these reasons is Said's allegedly huge mistake in showing and revealing how orientalism treats Islam (and the Orient) from its own (i.e., western) “image of the Other” (*in dem eigenen Bild vom Anderen*).<sup>18</sup> Allegedly, *Orientalism* is, as we discern from Diner's *Sealed Time*, a proof in itself of the resentfulness that Arabs and Muslims display when anyone else studies them. As we read in *Sealed Time*: “Any concern about the Middle East and its inhabitants' lived experience arouses suspicion” (*In der Tat gerät jede Beschäftigung mit dem Vorderen Orient, mit den Lebenswelten der Araber oder Muslime in Verdacht*).<sup>19</sup>



But the book under review proves just the contrary, for it is one of the thousands of books that have appeared, particularly from the second half of the twentieth century onward, that do not spare Muslims and the Islamic world. Moreover, literature that crucifies Islam, Arabs, and the Islamic world is conceived of in a way that made Said, a secular intellectual and Christian Arab, publish *Covering Islam* at a later date. In that book, he showed the increasingly frightful trend in many western circles, particularly the media, to unconditionally defame Muslims, Islam, and the Qur'an as the greatest conspirators against modernity and progress, as rebels against Europe and the West.

In many of his own books, Lewis is doing his best to present Muslims as people who reject everything that is not Muslim. In fact, he often portrays them as seeing themselves "surrounded on all sides by an outer darkness of barbarism and unbelief."<sup>20</sup> In other words, Muslims know nothing about communication with others, about neighborhood or friendship.

Diner's frequent reference to the *Arab Human Development Report*, submitted in 2002 and in 2003 to the UN, is also problematic. He claims that this report provides a dismal picture of the Arab world's economy, culture, human rights, democratic institutions, and so on. At one point, he states:

This picture of the Arab world sketched in dry statistics may serve as a stimulus to tackle historical questions from the more distant past." (*Das dort mittels trockener Statistiken gezeichnete Bild der arabischen Welt dient der Darstellung als materialer Anstoß für die historischen, in eine weitere Vergangenheit verweisenden Frage*).<sup>21</sup>

He neither provides the names or biographies of the "intellectual authorities" who drafted this report, nor does he mention who composed it – Arabs, secularists, liberals, fundamentalists, erudite people, or university professors? Do the Arab countries represented at the UN stand behind the report, or was it composed by Arab emigrants living in the EU and the West? When Diner mentions its claim that the Arab countries reached a GDP of US\$604 billion in 2002, does this figure include the enormous flow of oil dollars to western banks via investment funds and other financial measures?

*Scaled Time* contains a great deal of imprecise data. For instance, following the report's conclusions, Diner claims that the overall Arab world has been seized by consumption, is ruled by pure consumerism and the principle: "If you spend, you are somebody!" (*Wer ausgibt – gilt*).<sup>22</sup> If we follow the facts on consumerism, we cannot but see that the contemporary West is pretty similar to the oil-rich Arab countries in this regard. Let's recall how many times during the twentieth century that the various popes have criticized the consumerism

of contemporary western societies. On the other hand, Diner's argument about consumerism in the Arab world violates the book's general thesis, namely, that those who spend most often spend on western goods and, therefore, participate in the trends prevalent in the global consumption and consumerism markets. This might not be as backward as some people seem to think.

Diner often presents arguments recklessly, apparently not counting on people reading his *Sealed Time* thoroughly. For instance, when he concludes that Arab governments are absolute, he forgets that the same can be said of some European (e.g., Russia under Vladimir Putin) and western governments in general. Diner says: "Rule is absolute – no matter how enlightened it might be." (*Es gilt ein Absolutismus der Herrschaft – und gebe sie sich noch so aufgeklärt*).<sup>23</sup> Of course, it would be a great thing for humanity if "ruling absolutism" characterized just the Arab regimes. But it also comes to the fore in the West – the democratic and liberal West. Remember how President George W. Bush launched a war against Iraq in 2003 despite the (ultimately futile) protests of millions of people, including Christian secularists, in the West? Besides, we see both in the West and the East the common absolutism of corporations, however "enlightened" they may be.

Such arbitrariness is abundant in Diner's book. At one point, for instance, he claims that (in the Arab countries), allegedly: "It is not an orderly, transparent procedure in line with the norms of economic viability that brings success, but rather proximity to the ruler" (*Nicht das ordentliche und transparente Verfahren, das den Maßgaben von Wirtschaftlichkeit folgt, führt zum Erfolg, sondern die Nähe zum Herrscher*).<sup>24</sup> Naturally, these things happen in the Arab world and rulers spoil their protégés with "ducats and dollars."

But in the EU, "proximity to the ruler" also resolves everything – as we saw in the recent economic turbulence and bank failings in Greece, where billions of dollars were lost. Even Diner cannot claim that this ruin happened "in an orderly and transparent procedure," although Greece's proximity to the "great ruler" (viz., Germany) saved it from inevitable bankruptcy. Similar parallels can be drawn with the not-so-distant economic and bank turbulence in Italy, Spain, and elsewhere, all of which could have been saved only by their "proximity to the ruler," as this would enable them to receive favorable loans and move toward economic recovery. Therefore, actions similar to those of "Oriental despots" occur worldwide, even within the liberal parliamentary democracies of Europe and the West.

The *Arab Human Development Report* of 2002 and 2003 serve as basis for many of Diner's conclusions, and yet he never verifies them. We shall leave this aspect of his book to some other researcher.

Other evident weaknesses are the author's abundant arbitrary generalizations, unsubstantiated general statements, and conclusions about the Arab and Islamic worlds. It would take too long to cite all these relevant passages, written in his overwhelming nervousness and often with open scorn bordering on atavism. But a few examples should be pointed out.

Diner claims that:

There is no department of humanities or social sciences dedicated to researching the West and its unique character – if you will, a kind of scholarly 'Occidentalism'. (*Ein geistes- oder sozialwissen-schaftliches Fach zur Erforschung des Westens und dessen, was ihn ausmacht, also eine Art von "Okzidentalismus", gibt es nicht*).<sup>25</sup>

This is incorrect, rudely false, and scornful, for the Arab world has universities and institutes, many of which conduct strategic research and deal with the West. Indeed, it is unnecessary to list them, for proving that they exist would be equal to proving that human beings breathe air. It is enough to google (in Arabic) the word *ma 'had* to get a vast amount of data on these numerous Arab institutes.

Despite everything he arbitrarily presents about the Arab world, Diner does, however, allow that these Arabs could know a thing or two. He therefore says, in a manner uncommon for any serious theoretical discourse,

The abilities of educated people in the Arab world are no less than elsewhere. On the individual level, they may meet the highest standards (*Die Fähigkeiten der Gebildeten in der arabischen Welt sind nicht geringer als die in anderen Gemeinwesen. Als Einzelne vermögen sie dem höchsten Standard zu entsprechen*).<sup>26</sup>

We make no comment about this statement, of course, for there are hundreds of Arab professors today at western universities, be they Muslim, Christian, or secular. They achieve extraordinary results in science, and so any claim of the Arabs' ability to learn seems highly scornful and ridiculous.

Diner remarks that the Arab world's "lack of secular culture" is an obstacle for its scientists "to be awarded the Nobel Prize": "But that a scientist working exclusively in an Arab country might be awarded the Nobel Prize is less likely." (*Dass ein Naturwissenschaftler eines arabischen Landes mit dem Nobelpreis ausgezeichnet wird, ist weniger wahrscheinlich*).<sup>27</sup> He has a point here. Every prize, including the Nobel, comes with significant political and ideological support. This is not about "the deficit of secular culture," but about the politics of awarding any prize, including the Nobel. Would Malala

Yousafzai have received it if a US drone had injured her? No, of course not. If we are to respect the facts, we must all ask these questions – and so should Diner.<sup>28</sup>

Another of his arbitrary judgments is: “A regulated, let alone a democratically regulated, acquisition of power in the Arab world is not evident” (*Von einem regulierten, gar von einem demokratisch geregelten Machterwerb kann in der arabischen Welt kaum die Rede sein*).<sup>29</sup> This claim is fair, even true, for the Arab world often lacks a democratic culture, particularly among its pro-western ruling elites. However Diner, as an unbiased scientist, should have mentioned France's sponsorship of the military coup that followed the FIS' democratic victory in Algeria (1990) and was approved by other western countries. Many of Noam Chomsky's books, essays, and interviews deal with this topic. The standards that he applies are much higher than those of Diner when it comes to assessing the western influence in preventing the emergence of democracies in Arab countries. In addition, Mohamed Morsi won the democratic elections held in Egypt several years ago, but was overthrown by protests and the western-sponsored military junta.

Diner soon touches upon “the Arab-Muslim world” (*arabisch-muslimischer Raum*)<sup>30</sup> as regards globalization: “Furthermore, the opening of a broader global market in the name of freedom unchained an extraordinary economic dynamic.” (*Zudem führten die im Zeichen der Freiheit sich weiter öffnenden globalisierten Märkte zu einer außerordentlichen wirtschaftlichen Dynamik*).<sup>31</sup> Do global markets most often open “in the name of freedom,” or for the sake of profit, interests, spreading corporate impact, and related factors? This has been the topic of many debates right from the onset of the various globalization projects. It is enough to mention just one of Chomsky's discussions on globalization to expose the fact that globalization processes often pursue enslaving goals and have common destructive consequences.

He continues by claiming that globalization processes are visible everywhere except, allegedly, in this “backward Arab-Muslim world”: “The trend [of globalization] was ubiquitous – except in the Arab-Muslim world.” (*Dieser Trend war allenthalben zu beobachten – außer im arabisch-muslimischen Raum*).<sup>32</sup> All of those who wish to be objective observers of the Near and Middle East will immediately notice how very strong these processes are (whether approved of or not) in Kuwait, Qatar, the UAE, Turkey, Egypt, the Maghreb, and Muslim Southeast Asia.

The oil industry and everything that accompanies it globalized the Gulf countries long ago, as hundreds of global offices following the trends of automobile and all other industries were opened there. In Riyadh one can find

shiny shops and malls selling Hugo Boss, Christian Dior, and other name-brand western products. Moreover, these countries organize all of the things dictated by globalization, among them global sports events. Qatar, which will host the World Cup in a few years, has hosted several tennis and other sporting events. And the region clearly participates in telecommunications and the media via Al Jazeera and dozens of other regional and satellite television stations.

Naturally, both those who glorify and disapprove of globalization see its strong traces throughout the Arab and Islamic worlds. For example, Abu-Rabi‘ said about his visit to Jeddah a few years ago: “[The people of Jeddah] are proud of their new space, their post-modern airport, and of Saudi Airlines... In Jeddah, I see big shopping malls, high rises, and highways. Oh my God, am I in New York or San Francisco?”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, whoever wants (or cares about the external signs of globalization) to see these or similar images can find them in Casablanca, Tunis, Benghazi, Alexandria, Brunei, Islamabad, Lahore, and elsewhere. Indeed, given these on-the-ground realities, one must wonder why Diner insists upon linking the Near East, even the entire Muslim world, with backwardness.

The criticism of globalization’s processes is, of course, a completely different matter. Even if we approve of or support Diner’s unconditional belief in “market globalization,” as well as his opinion that it all (allegedly) unfolds “in the name of freedom” (Chomsky sees in globalization many signs of enslaving the weak and powerless), one cannot but wonder just a little about his failure to see and understand that the Gulf countries, as well as Turkey, Malaysia, and Indonesia are fully involved in this undertaking.

## Diner and Arabic

In this book, Diner appears and even introduces himself as a historian of and specialist in Arabic. He therefore tries to show that Arabs are incapable of conceiving (or developing) freedom in a secular and modern manner:

It is not that Arabic has no word for freedom, but the original meaning of the Arabic *hurriyah* is merely the opposite of slavery, not at all what is associated with *libertas* in the Western tradition – the right to participate in governmental affairs (*Nicht, dass das Arabische kein Wort für Freiheit hätte, aber die ursprüngliche Bedeutung des arabischen Wortes hurriyya meint das Gegenteil von Sklaverei und nicht das, was in der westlichen Tradition mit libertas in Verbindung gebracht wird – das Recht, an den Angelegenheiten des Regierens beteiligt zu sein*).<sup>34</sup>

Diner should know what any good philosophical and other dictionary underlines: Words have their history; many change their meaning over the vastness of time. Just like 700 or 500 years ago the Latin word *libertas* did not mean all of the civil rights exercised in today's Germany or France, the Arabic word *hurriyah* could not have denoted, for instance, modern voting rights and free elections.

When one consults André Lalande's (1867-1963) multi-volume "Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie,"<sup>35</sup> one finds his remark that *liberté* originally had the following meaning (for which Diner finds many faults in its form *hurriyah*): *ma 'nā qadīm: al-insān al-hurr huwa al-insān alladhī lā yakūn 'abdān aw sijīnān* (The old meaning [of the word freedom/*liberté*] is: A free man is a man who is not a slave and is not a prisoner.)<sup>36</sup> Certainly, the fact that Diner finds faults here with *hurriyah* (humiliating the notion by claiming that it is, in a way, a premature baby not old enough to bear all of the semantic, political, democratic, and civic meanings that *libertas* allegedly carries in its contemporary western use) only serves to introduce his discussion about literary or classical Arabic (*al-fuṣḥā*). This deserves some attention.

A special dimension of this book is his assertion that what greatly inhibits the Arab-Muslim world and prevents its true development is not only the "sacredness [of Islam and the Qur'an]," but also the "sacredness of the Arabic literary language," even the Arabic alphabet. In other words, Diner thinks that Mustafa Kemal's introduction of the Latin alphabet in 1928 and abolishment of the Arabic alphabet was a great sacrilege in Muslim eyes.

When in 1928 the Turkish Republic did away with the Arabic alphabet and replaced it with the Latin one, the secular attack on religion seemed to have reached its zenith (*Und als im Jahr 1928 die türkische Republik das arabische Alphabet mit einem Federstrich abschaffte, um es durch das lateinische zu ersetzen, schien das laizistisch unternommene Sakrileg vollkommen*).<sup>37</sup>

This example contradicts his book's general thesis.

A cynic could say there are Muslims who accept secularism, but that Islam survives even under that secularism (as shown by Turkey's modern history). Besides, it is common sense that introducing the Latin alphabet could not possibly lead to the "abolishment of Islam." To the contrary, this same alphabet became, in addition to everything else it already was, an "Islamic script" in modern Turkey and the Balkans, among the Albanians, Bosniaks, the Torbesh, Pomaks, and other indigenous Muslim communities. Many Muslims in traditional Islamic countries are now bilingual or multilingual, for in addition to their native language they often speak English, German, or French. A cynic

could also find numerous examples in the Muslim world (including the one of the Latin alphabet) to prove that many Muslims have found a *modus vivendi* with modernism, despite living in a “sealed time.” Of course, Diner fails to draw such conclusions because they would thwart, even destroy, many of his unfounded generalizations.

Furthermore, despite the raving rush of modernism in the traditional countries of Islam, millions of people in Iran and Pakistan use the Arabic alphabet, even those who are secular. But Diner does not give up on being the unchallengeable expert in linguistics. Thus, in the part about “the Arabic alphabet being difficult,” he says:

Whereas Christian and Jewish children in foreign schools in the Ottoman Empire quickly learned the Greek or Hebrew alphabets, because of their greater simplicity, as well as the Latin alphabet, and so were soon able to use them to gain knowledge, Muslim children had to struggle much longer with the complex Arabic alphabet (*Während christliche und jüdische Kinder im Osmanischen Reich das griechische oder hebräische Alphabet seiner Einfachheit wegen in kürzester Zeit erlernten und diese früh erworbene Leseleistung rasch für die Aufnahme von Wissen einzusetzen vermochten, mussten sich muslimische Kinder viel länger mit dem komplexen arabischen Alphabet abmühen*).<sup>38</sup>

These claims deserve no comment beyond the one that contemporary linguistics long ago resolved the unacceptable and immature questions regarding “difficult” and “easy” languages or alphabets. Just to show how anachronistic this view is in terms of the field’s achievements and views, Arabic, just like Cyrillic and other non-Latin scripts, are used in computer programs and the computers running them have yet to go “crazy.”

Now that we have come to Diner’s indignation toward the “complex Arabic alphabet,” let us say that he, in an utterly ignorant manner, draws similar conclusions about literary (or classical) Arabic (*al-fuṣḥā*) in many an incompetent paragraph. Among the largest claims, supported by nothing, is that this alphabet is a dam or a wall that prevents Arabs (or Muslims even) from being “secularized.” We suppose that Diner should know, given the fact that he is a German and Israeli university professor, that Arabs – with of all their complex relationships and complicated reception of the European Enlightenment, secularism, and so on – long ago translated the masters of European literature (e.g., Shakespeare, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, and Kafka) into Arabic. Hundreds, even thousands of European “secular” literary works have been beautifully received and embodied in Arabic, which expresses – is there truly a need to provide evidence for this? – the original authors’ “secular” worldview.



The same applies to the hundreds of translations of contemporary European philosophical works translated into literary Arabic. One wonders if Diner devoted even one hour to flipping through those European philosophical works (e.g., in Cairo Library) that were translated in Beirut, or at least two hours to flipping through those translated in Cairo. Does one even need to mention that Arab intellectuals have translated, for instance, Spengler, Hegel, and Kant into literary Arabic? If Arabic is "sclerotic," "fossilized," and "backward," as Diner claims for *al-fuṣḥā*, why have Arab intellectuals and scholars, as well as Arab Christian priests, spent the past 200 years and so much mental energy translating books into Arabic that nobody will read or even be able to understand?

Certainly, as everywhere among populous peoples, Arabs have millions of peasants, workers, and other uneducated individuals who do not know literary Arabic well or do not know it at all! They speak their native dialects (*'ammīyah*). However, can German Bavarian peasants read and understand perfectly the works of Martin Heidegger written in literary German, or of Eugen Fink or of Goethe? Of course we know that the gap between German dialects on the one hand, and standard (or literary) German on the other, is much narrower than is the case with Arabic. But there is, nevertheless, a single generally understood literary Arabic language stretching from Iraq to Morocco, just as there is a "single general Arabic dialect for the educated" (*'ammīyatu al-muthaqqafīn*) that is easily understood throughout the Arab world.

There is not enough space in this critical review to deal with Diner's utterly unfounded opinions that contemporary Arabs do not understand literary Arabic. Why, then, do they have thousands of television and radio stations broadcasting programs in literary Arabic, not to mention the hundreds of daily and weekly science and art magazines? What is the use of all of this production if they do not understand the language used?

What lies behind Diner's nervously presented theories about literary or classical Arabic is his utter torment over the Qur'an's status in traditional Muslim societies, including the Arab ones. There is no need to mention that the Qur'an is the fundamental text that watches over the preservation of classical Arabic. This is exactly what Hitti emphasizes in his view of the Qur'an:

Its literary influence may be appreciated when we realize that it is due to it alone that the various dialects of the Arabic-speaking peoples have not fallen apart into distinct languages, as have the Romance languages. While today an 'Iraqī may find it a little difficult fully to understand the speech of a Moroccan, yet he would have no difficulty in understanding his written language, since in both al-Iraq and Morocco – as well as in Syria, Arabia, Egypt – the classical language modelled by the Koran is followed closely everywhere.<sup>39</sup>

We now provide one of Diner's opinions about the Qur'an. It appears, as with many of his statements, that he is not completely aware of what he is saying:

It is one of Islam's founding dogmas that no book can enter into rivalry with the Koran; beyond God's word, no other scripture can be admitted. Just as there can be no God but God, so there can be no book but the Koran (*Es gehört zum Gründungsdogma des Islam, neben dem Koran kein zweites Buch aufkommen zu lassen, jenseits von Gottes Wort keine weitere Verschriftlichung zuzulassen. So wie es außer Gott keinen Gott geben kann, darf es neben dem Koran kein anderes Buch geben*).<sup>40</sup>

To the uninformed haters of Islam, these words might seem striking, might confirm his theses on the "backwardness of Muslims" and their "overall narrow-mindedness and bigotry." But these words contradict the elementary truth that Islamic dogma proclaims the belief in "God's books" (*wa kutubihī*). That is the first thing. The second thing is that anyone who ever attended as much as an evening course in Islam knows that Muslims are commanded to believe in the *Tawrāt* (Moses), the *Zabūr* (David), the *Injīl* (Jesus), and the Qur'an (Muhammad). Therefore, it is *books*, not *book*!

Third, Muslims have always written books, a fact easily proven by the existence of thousands of ancient Islamic and Muslim manuscripts on all kinds of topics (e.g., theology, philosophy, natural sciences, mysticism – even "rabies in dogs," as Umberto Eco mentions in his brilliant novel *The Name of the Rose*) in libraries worldwide. Does that mean, following Diner's conclusions, that Muslims committed sacrilege? Furthermore, the Abbasid caliphs founded a translation school in Baghdad, which was most productive from 813 to 833 (under Caliph Al-Ma'mun, and employed Muslims, Christians, and Jews who spoke Arabic to translate numerous works of Greek philosophy as well as Syriac, Pahlavi, and Sanskrit manuscripts into Arabic. So if we follow Diner, al-Ma'mun committed sacrilege because he allowed books other than the Qur'an, even those that were "infidel," Greek, and pagan.

### Other Spurious Claims

Particularly sad are his paragraphs about how modern scientific inventions rattled the Muslims' faith in the "God's sovereignty and the eternal character of the Koran as the book of revelation." Let us share one of these statements in its full form:

These novelties not only changed everyday life and made it easier, but they also aroused doubts about God's sovereignty and the eternal character of

the Koran as the book of revelation. Islamic purists saw these modern machines as works of the devil challenging God's control over time (*Diese Neuheiten veränderten und erleichterten nicht nur den Alltag, sondern ließen auch an der Souveränität Gottes und dem ewigen Charakter des Korans als dem Buch der Offenbarung zweifeln. Islamistische Puristen sahen diese Gerätschaften als Teufelszeug an, das Gottes Herrschaft über die Zeit herausforderte*).<sup>41</sup>

This excerpt is a typical example of Diner fighting tooth and nail to prove that technical inventions “scared” and “terrified” the “backward Arabs and other narrow-minded Muslims,” of how the “devil’s technical inventions” intensively shook their faith in God and the Qur’an’s divine nature. This raises a logical question: “If western technology from the end of nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century so terrified the Muslims, why did they not all become unbelievers? After all, science was going to provide all of the answers, even those related to the greatest metaphysical secrets.

How could Diner write such a book at this point in time, when Arabs and Muslims are full participants in globalization and yet continue to live their religion, go to mosques, and recite the Qur’an? In other words, why did the mighty technological West fail to turn them into atheists with its machines, to take them out of Islam and turn them against the Qur’an?

In these and similar parts of *Sealed Time*, one can clearly see that Lewis has influenced Diner so strongly that he should, in Islamic terms, be treated as the *muqallid* (the blind follower) of “shaykh” Bernard Lewis.

Various other paragraphs are so false that they seriously challenge Diner’s asserted specialization in dealing with Islam at all. For example: “For Muslims, the Azhar Koran is the authoritative text” (*Der Azhar-Koran ist der einzige für Muslime verbindliche Korantext*).<sup>42</sup> This is a harsh and cruel falsehood, to say the least, for the original Qur’an is not being printed and published only in the consonant and vocalization systems characteristic of the al-Azhar edition. In fact, it has been published (and printed!) many times before in different consonant and vocalization systems all around the Arab world.

One notices that the Maghreb countries are inclined to print it according to the Warsh style (*bi riwāyati Warsh*), but also in other recitation systems. There have been several editions. In Syria, a number of editions of the Qur’anic original appeared in the Qalun consonant and vocalization system (*bi riwāyat Qālūn*). Furthermore, those Qur’anic originals whose consonant and vocalization systems are given by Khalaf tradition (*bi riwāyati Khalaf*) enjoy wide circulation throughout the Muslim world. In addition, Madinah’s huge King Fahd Printing Complex publishes hundreds of thousands of copies

of the original Qur'an according to consonant and vocalization systems given in the traditions of Qalun, Warsh, Shu'bah, Duri, and others.

In many places, Diner's knowledge is shown to be rather lamentable, particularly because of his ignorant and naïve conclusions on the literacy status of the traditional countries of Islam. But his claims that Muslims must use only the al-Azhar edition of the Qur'an (*Der Azhar-Koran ist der einzige für Muslime verbindliche Korantext*) truly devalues him as a serious scholar – especially when Germany has such competent Oriental studies scholars as Rudi Paret (1901-83), Theodor Nöldeke (1836-1930), and Annemarie Schimmel (1922-2003), whose books live on. Germany recently printed Nöldeke's classical *History of the Qur'an (Tārīkh al-Qur'ān)*<sup>43</sup> in Arabic, which was translated from the German original (*Die Geschichte des Qorans*). If Diner wanted the world to learn about his opinions of the Qur'an, why did he not get the basic information from Nöldeke's book about these readings? We wonder why Angelika Neuwirth, well read in Qur'an studies, and others – Germany has many living academic professionals in Arab studies and Islamic studies) – did not warn him that his "knowledge" of the alphabet is extremely inaccurate.

So much for whether Muslims can publish the original Qur'an in non-Azhar consonant, vocalization, and punctuation systems. Moreover, one must not forget that the commentaries to the Qur'an, especially those in Arabic, give thousands of variations of readings of the original Qur'an. One is deemed a good commentator of Islam in Islamic culture and civilization if one is, in addition to other disciplines, particularly informed about these variant readings.<sup>44</sup>

These critical comments of ours about *Sealed Time* should be brought to an end. There is no space to deal with Diner's completely unfounded conclusions about the Muslims' traditional teachers being oral teachers who allegedly prohibited the use of paper and writing. If this were the case, then how can one account for the many centuries-old and modern famous and large libraries of the Islamic world that contain hundreds of thousands of books? Moreover, the Qur'an itself mentions books, writing, quill, leaves of paper... in such a beautiful context.

We will just mention how he addresses printing and the printing press, for he claims that here, Muslims proved to be particularly ignorant, narrow, and bigoted because, in brief, their relation to the world supposedly prevented them from embracing printing when Europe did. We beg to disagree, for even his chief authority, Bernard Lewis, states in this regard that "printing presses had been introduced to Turkey from Europe by Jewish refugees before the end of

the fifteenth century, and Jewish presses established in Istanbul, Salonika, and other cities."<sup>45</sup> In other words, the Ottoman authorities were neither backward nor of the opinion that these were "Satan's invention." Furthermore, according to Lewis, "the Jews were followed by the Armenians and the Greeks, who also set up presses in their own languages in Ottoman cities"<sup>46</sup> and that printing presses "were, however, authorized on the strict condition that they did not print any books in Turkish or Arabic."<sup>47</sup> According to him, "this ban remained in effect until the early eighteenth century when it was abandoned..."<sup>48</sup> If we are to assign the invention of printing press to Johannes Gutenberg in 1450 and it appeared in the Ottoman Empire a mere four decades later, this can hardly be considered an instance of lagging behind.

Clearly, what Diner is suggesting here is the Muslims' overall backwardness and retrogradeness. Instead of praising the Ottoman authorities for allowing the Jews, Armenians, and Greeks to use their printing presses and spread their culture, Diner asserts that the traditional Muslim circles thought that the Qur'anic text and the Hadith text should not be stuffed into a machine, which would "disparage" their holiness. What, exactly, is wrong with this traditional Muslim view? After all, traditional Muslim environments had their own "printing presses," as did the traditional Chinese environments. One can see in museums all over the world the dozens of tools used to write, rewrite, and then copy Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and other manuscripts. In other words, neither the Muslims nor the Chinese lagged behind in spreading books and the written word. We wonder why some people see Guttenberg's invention as a machine, but refuse to apply this term to the hundreds of Muslim and Chinese tools used to copy manuscripts.

## Conclusion

Let us say at the end that we agree with Diner every time he speaks about the need to develop a democratic culture in the Arab world and the need to comply with democracy and civil exercise of authority in the Arab and Islamic countries. However, *Sealed Time* represents a summary of what part of the right-wing media in Europe and in the West in general constantly write about Islam and Muslims. Its basic characteristic is generalization, which leads to erroneous speech and mistaken reporting on Islam. We have already mentioned Said's *Covering Islam*, which details how the western media covers Islam. The book was translated into Croatian in Zagreb as *Krivotvorenje islama (Fabricating Islam)*.<sup>49</sup> They could not have opted for a better title.

It would be a good idea for Diner to ask whether the Muslims keep in their hearts what humanity might need at some future point in time? There is less and less hope that the atomic, hydrogen, and neutron bombs will not explode and destroy humanity. “Only a God can save us,” said Martin Heidegger (*Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten*).<sup>50</sup> Many Muslims are “inebriated by the sacred,” but isn’t that, in addition to all other things, their way of sublimating and forestalling the catastrophe that humanity faces today, regardless of faith or the lack thereof? One would welcome more intensive pursuits to revive the relation with the sacred among Christians, particularly those in the West, as well as among other believers in other parts of the world.

The English language edition of *Sealed Time* differs at times from the German original, as if the English translator had sent Diner the translation before publication and the latter had seen that there were some hasty claims in his radical secularist plowing of areas sacred to and treasured by traditional Muslims. We think that this explains certain differences in chapter 6,<sup>51</sup> where Diner talks about a group of “pro-Islamic Jews,” in fact colossally important European and world-class scholars who, at least at some point in their lives, benevolently studied Islam. Finding no way to avoid them, Diner says:

The evident proximity of Judaism and Islam has impelled some Jews working out their dilemmas vis á vis modernity to “discover” Islam. This can be seen in the works of certain nineteenth- and twentieth-century Jewish scholars of Muslim thought and life (*Die offenkundige Nähe von Judentum und Islam hat dazu beigetragen, dass Juden ihr eigenes Dilemma in und mit der Moderne – das Dilemma von Gesetz und Geschichte – in ihrer Beschäftigung mit dem Islam abarbeiteten. Dies lässt sich an den Werken jüdischer Islamforscher im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert nachvollziehen*).<sup>52</sup>

Included here are Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921), Leopold Weiss (a.k.a. Muhammad Asad, 1900-92), Abraham Geiger (1810-74), the famous German rabbi who warned Europe to “stop referring to Muhammad as a charlatan,” as well as Paul Kraus (1904-44), Leo Strauss (1899-1973), and others. Each of these scholars, at some points in their lives, expressed respect for the ways in which Islam “insists on man’s need for the divine enlightenment.” All of us, myself and Diner included, should take the views of these Jewish scholars seriously. May God grant that in the future we need the sacred as enlightenment, and not just as mere consolation when faced with the most diverse threats of war and bombs.<sup>53</sup>



## Endnotes

1. Professor Sulejman Bosto's translation will soon be published by Šahinpašić in Sarajevo.
2. For the purpose of this critical comment, the following edition is used: Dan Diner, *Versiegelte Zeit, Über den Stillstand in der islamischen Welt* (Berlin: List Taschenbuch, 3. Auflage, 2010).
3. Cf. Dan Diner, *Lost in the Sacred: Why the Muslim World Stood Still* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).
4. According to available sources, Diner has received the Ernst-Bloch-Preis of the city of Ludwigshafen am Rhein for "valuing the voice of understanding" (2006), the Capalbio Preis award (2007), and the Leipziger Wissenschaftspreis award (2013). In addition, during the 2004-05 academic year, he was a member of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton. Sources state that he has worked as a visiting professor at numerous faculties and research institutes, both domestic and abroad, and also that he is a member of several scientific boards.
5. Mr. Ajdin Šahinpašić told me that Diner requested that the last chapter – *Geschichte und Gezet* (History and Law) – not be translated from the German original (*Versiegelte Zeit*), but from the English translation (*Lost in the Sacred*). In the English translation, the last chapter is entitled "Historical Thought and the Divine Law." This is why this paper refers to the English version.
6. I would like mention that I personally, and in present circumstances of Bosnia and Herzegovina, often write and publish critical texts on various unacceptable occurrences among certain Muslims, be they believers or not. I published an essay entitled "Mošus Hazreti Fatime, ali i mošus Hazreti Aiše" ("Musk of Hazrat Fatima, but also Musk of Hazrat Aisha") in *Preporod*, Sarajevo (September 15, 2013), in which I criticized the contemporary inter-*madhhab* conflicts and bloodsheds in Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere. I also published the essay "Čekajući muslimanski Greenwich" ("Waiting for the Muslim Greenwich") in *Muallim* 13, no. 52, Sarajevo (winter 2012), in which I criticized how some traditional Muslim countries determine the start of Ramadan. Also, in my essay "Ko to doista vrijeđa Božijeg Poslanika Muhammeda, a.s.?" ("Who Is It That Really Offends Prophet Muhammad?") in *Preporod* 20 (October 15, 2012), I criticized the destructive demonstrations organized by some Muslims and their associations in numerous countries in the East or in certain diasporic communities in the EU. Typically, these demonstrations are organized after media provocations relating to dignity and worthiness of Muhammad (e.g., publication of cartoons). In this last-mentioned essay, I said, first of all, that many Muslims in the traditional Muslim countries in the Near and Middle East offend God's Prophet by failing to work for ending economic exploitation in their communities and to increase living, cultural, legal, institutional, democratic and other standards in their communities.
7. Cf. Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam, and World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).



8. Philip K. Hitti's work was translated into Bosnian (Serbian, Croatian) by the late Petar Pejčinović. See the second phototype edition by Veselin Masleša (Sarajevo: 1988).
9. Let us mention here, and in relation to the topic under discussion, two extremely important books by Fazlur Rahman: *Revival and Reform in Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000) and *Islam and Modernity* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982).
10. Cf. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (New York: New American Library, 1959).
11. Cf. Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi', *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996).
12. Cf. Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi', *Contemporary Arab Thought: Studies in Post-1967 Arab Intellectual History* (London and Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2004).
13. Cf. Akbar S. Ahmed, *Islam Under Siege* (Cambridge: Polity Press and Blackwell Publishing, 2003).
14. Cf. Jack Goody, *Islam in Europe* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).
15. Cf. Hans Küng, *Der Islam: Geschichte, Gegenwart, Zukunft* (München/Minhen: Piper Verlag, 2004). The English translation of this book was entitled *Islam: Past, Present, and Future* (Oxford: A Oneworld Book, 2007).
16. In Küng, *Islam*, v.
17. Küng, *Der Islam*, 19.
18. Cf. Diner, *Versiegelte Zeit*, 13.
19. Diner, *Versiegelte Zeit*, 12 (*Lost in the Sacred*, 2).
20. Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), 39.
21. Diner, *Versiegelte Zeit*, 18 (*Lost in the Sacred*, 6).
22. Ibid., 56 (Ibid., 33).
23. Ibid., 59 (Ibid., 35).
24. Ibid., 60 (Ibid., 36).
25. Ibid., 47 (Ibid., 27).
26. Ibid., 48 (Ibid.).
27. Ibid. (Ibid., 28).
28. I recently conducted an interview with Seyyed Hossein Nasr, a professor at George Washington University, during which I asked: "How do you see the modern western discourse on Muslim women? Is it saturated by the so-called 'savior complex' in which Muslim women are objectified and made a tool for achieving political gains? Let us, for example, consider the case of the brave girl Malala Yousafzai, a fighter for the education of girls in Pakistan. Would her case be known in the West if she had been wounded by a US drone?" Nasr answered: "Yes, I am sure that if Malala Yousafzai had been injured by an American drone, you would not have heard of her name." I published this interview in *Preporod*, no. 12/1022, Sarajevo (June 15, 2014).
29. Diner, *Versiegelte Zeit*, 50 (*Lost in the Sacred*, 29).

30. Ibid., 65 (Ibid., 39).
31. Ibid., 64 (Ibid.).
32. Ibid., 65 (Ibid.).
33. Abu-Rabi', *Contemporary Arab Thought*, 36.
34. Diner, *Versiegelte Zeit*, 52-53 (*Lost in the Sacred*, 30).
35. The dictionary is used in its three-volume Arabic translation, cf. André Lalande, *Mawsū'ath Lalande al-Falsafīyah* (Beirut and Paris: Manšūrātu 'Uwaydāt, 1996).
36. Ibid., 2:727.
37. Diner, *Versiegelte Zeit*, 72-73 (*Lost in the Sacred*, 45).
38. Ibid., 82 (Ibid., 52).
39. Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 10th ed. (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 127.
40. Diner, *Versiegelte Zeit*, 115 (*Lost in the Sacred*, 75).
41. Ibid., 91 (Ibid., 58).
42. Ibid., 133 (Ibid., 88).
43. Cf. Theodor Nöldeke, *Tārīkh al-Qur'ān* (Köln: Al-Kamel Verlag, 2008).
44. Diner dares to write full passages about the Qur'an not knowing the basics of Qur'an hermeneutics and exegesis. In addition, he is not aware of the twentieth-century printed editions of the Qur'an.
45. Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery*, 50.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Cf. Edward W. Said, *Krivotvorenje islama*, tr. from English by Suzana Sesvečan (Zagreb: ed. VBZ, 2003).
50. Der Spiegel-Interview 23 September 1966 in *Der Spiegel* 23 (31 May 1976): 193-219.
51. "Historical Thought and the Divine Law" (*Geschichte und Gesetz*) in the English translation of Diner's book.
52. Diner, *Versiegelte Zeit*, 247 (*Lost in the Sacred*, 168).
53. We remind the readers here that Diner selectively uses the *Arab Human Development Report* from 2002 (as well as other AHDRs he refers to). Namely, Diner does not mention, and definitely does not elaborate on, the fact that AHDR speaks critically about the state of Israel and the problems it causes in the Near and Middle East. It would be fair, at least methodologically, for him to analyze what Arab intellectuals who draft the AHDR say about Israel's practices and conduct.