Preface

Thirty years have elapsed since the appearance of the first edition of this book, and the author has been much gratified by the positive reaction of professional colleagues as well as individuals previously unknown to him who have written to express their enjoyment of the book.

However, in those 30 years much has happened in the study of the history of mathematics in the medieval Islamic world. Young scholars, who were just beginning their careers when *Episodes* was written (or, indeed, were not yet born), as well as others, have made a number of important sources, together with penetrating studies of the same, available in European languages. Moreover, increasing attention has been paid to the setting of mathematics in medieval Islamic society, how it was taught, and how its study was fostered.

But, in addition to taking into account the growth of the field there is another reason for a second edition of this work, and that is that the first edition did not cover the role of mathematicians in the Western regions of medieval Islam. Shortly after the book appeared, a colleague in that part of the world wrote and asked why I had not included material on mathematics in that region. To this very reasonable question I could only reply, as Dr. Johnson had to a woman who asked him why a certain word was missing in his great Dictionary, "Ignorance, madam, sheer ignorance."

Since that time, happily, the author's knowledge of the history of mathematics in the Maghrib and al-Andalus has improved, thanks mainly to the work of scholars in that region as well as Barcelona and France who have contributed so much in the past few decades. And I hope that this second edition will go some way to inform a wider public of activities of mathematicians in Islam's western regions.

Finally, I have taken the opportunity of a second edition to correct typographic (and other) errors in the first edition, and I thank readers and colleagues who have alerted me to problems in the text. I also thank my editors at Springer, Dahlia Fisch

and Elizabeth Loew for their support and patience in waiting for a book that was promised so many years ago! Special thanks, however, are due to Dr. Petra G. Schmidl, who, in the course of translating the second edition for a German version of the book, made so many useful suggestions for improving it, and to Heinz Klaus Strick, for editorial work and his suggestion of including images he provided of postage stamps honoring eminent Muslim mathematicians. Special thanks, too, are due to Drs. A. Djebbar and J.P. Hogendijk, and other colleagues too numerous to mention, who answered many of my questions.

I dedicate this second edition to my wife, Tasoula Saparilla Berggren, who so willingly gave me the time and support necessary to produce this book.

Burnaby, Canada   J.L. Berggren