

Fred M. Donner

As noted in last year's report, **Fred M. Donner** co-directed, with his colleague Kenneth Hall, Professor of History at Ball State University, a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute for College Teachers during the summer of 2005, on the subject "Culture and Communication in the Pre-Modern Islamic World." It occupied much of Donner's time during late June and July of 2005. Later in the summer he enjoyed, with several colleagues and students, a visit to the Limestone Massif "Dead Cities" region of northern Syria, which contains over 750 sites with standing remains of towns and villages from the late antique and early Islamic periods (roughly third to ninth centuries).

During summer 2005 and again in summer 2006, Donner participated in the second and third of the series of workshops on the Umayyad dynasty (A.D. 660–750) and its legacy, the first of which was held at the University of Notre Dame and the second at the Institut Français du Proche-Orient in Damascus, Syria.

During the fall Donner taught his usual survey of Islamic history, A.D. 600 to 1150 (larger than ever this year because of the increased, and seemingly still increasing, demand for courses on all things dealing with Islam). He also taught a graduate seminar on Islamic origins. In the spring quarter, he taught his "Introduction to the Middle East" course intended for College students with no background in the region, and an Arabic course on the Sira literature devoted to biographies of the prophet Muhammad and other figures in the Islamic tradition. He also handled, like all his colleagues, individual reading courses, student advising, committee assignments, and work on faculty searches. He continued to serve as editor of *Al-'Usur al-Wusta: The Bulletin of Middle East Medievalists*, a semi-annual serial that deals with the Middle East in the period A.D. 500–1500. He also did his share of manuscript reviewing for the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (University of London), and *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, and performed tenure evaluations for the University of Illinois at Chicago, the American University of Beirut, and the United Arab Emirates University, as well as performing an evaluation of the History Department of the American University of Beirut. In April, he gave a public lecture at the Gleacher Center for the University of Chicago's Graham School of General Studies "The Many Faces of Islam."

These varied activities collectively consumed a lot of time, but Donner was able to complete two articles during the year. The first, "Al-Ya'qubi on the Saqifa Episode and its Implications," for a forthcoming volume on the ninth-century historian and geographer al-Ya'qubi, examines historiographical peculiarities of al-Ya'qubi's reporting of a critical episode in early Islamic history. The second article, "Western Approaches to Early Islamic History," will appear in the first volume of the new *Cambridge History of Islam*, due to appear in 2007 or (more probably) 2008. Most important, however, was completing — after too many years — the draft of his monograph *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam*, which colleagues are now reviewing before being sent off to a publisher. Donner is eager to get this project behind him and embark on

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several new ones dealing with apocalypticism in early Islam and with Islamic political vocabulary. Check next year's report to see if he succeeded!

Donner was gratified by the appearance this year of his article "The Islamic Conquests" in *A Companion to the History of the Middle East*, edited by Youssef M. Choueiri, pp. 28–51 (Malden: Blackwell's, 2005).
