

Fred M. Donner

Fred M. Donner began to wind down his study of early Islamic historiography. His book *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton: Darwin Press) appeared in June. In November, he read a paper entitled "The Development of an Historical Mentality in the Early Islamic Community" at a conference convened by the Islamic University of Lebanon in Beirut, Lebanon — his first visit to Lebanon in over fourteen years. Later in the month, he attended the Middle East Studies Association annual meetings in San Francisco and presented a paper, entitled "Sayf ibn 'Umar's Sources for the Conquest of Syria," dealing with the narratives of an early (eighth century) Iraqi historian whose accounts contain many problematic features, such as chronological uncertainties and (sometimes) patently chauvinistic descriptions of the role of his own Arab tribe.

Meanwhile, Donner has begun to work in earnest on the role of eschatological concepts in Muhammad's movement and early Islamic history. He presented a paper entitled "Was Early Islam an Apocalyptic Movement?" at the Medieval Institute at Notre Dame University in February and at the History Department and Medieval Studies Program of Miami University (Oxford, Ohio) in April. He is currently drafting a short article on the problem of messianism in the earliest Islamic period. Along somewhat different lines, he attended the American Oriental Society meetings in New Orleans in early April and made a presentation on "Concepts of Communal Identity" in a panel on "What Was the First Islamic Century Really Like?"

Donner continued to serve as editor of *Al-'Usur al-Wusta* ("The Middle Ages" in Arabic), the semiannual Bulletin of Middle East Medievalists, for the seventh year. His usual load of teaching duties, advising students, and administrative responsibilities as Chairman of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations amply filled his remaining time.
