

Fred M. Donner

Fred M. Donner's translation of a part of the vast Arabic chronicle by the medieval Islamic historian Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d. 923) was published in June 1993, by the State University of New York Press (*The History of al-Tabari, Volume X: The Conquest of Arabia*). In October 1992, Donner attended a workshop at King's College, London, organized by the Late Antiquity and Early Islam Project, which is sponsored by the British Academy. At this workshop he presented a paper on "Centralized Authority and Military Autonomy in the Early Islamic Conquests," which will be published in the proceedings of the workshop.

During this year he also completed an article on “The Growth of Military Institutions in the Early Caliphate and their Relation to Civilian Authority,” to appear in a special monograph published by the Spanish journal *Al-Qantara* and dedicated to the theme “Poder civil y poder militar.” Donner continues his research on early Islamic historiography and hopes to complete a short monograph on this subject during the coming year.

During 1992–93 Donner continued to coordinate the University of Chicago–University of Damascus Faculty Exchange, a program funded by a United States Information Agency Affiliations grant. Professor Mufid al-Abed of the University of Damascus, a specialist in the history of the Hellenistic period, spent three and one-half months doing research in Chicago during the winter, and three faculty from Chicago went to Damascus for visits ranging from four weeks to three months. One of the visitors was Donner, who collected information about the traditional rope-making industry in Damascus and did research on early Islamic history in the manuscript collections at the Assad Library. The other visitors from Chicago were colleagues Farouk Mustafa, who did research on modern Syrian literature, and Heshmat Moayyad, who explored medieval Arabic poetry.

Donner continued to serve as president of Middle East Medievalists and as editor of its bulletin, *Al-'Usur al-Wusta*. Among other things, he completed and filed Middle East Medievalists' application to the Internal Revenue Service for tax-exempt status as a non-profit organization. He is pleased that Middle East Medievalists seems to be growing significantly and expanding its membership in the countries of Europe and the Middle East. He also continued his service on the Board of Directors of the Middle East Studies Association of North America and as a member of its Committee on Academic Freedom. In addition, he became involved as a member of the steering committee for a group of scholars interested in establishing an American Research Institute in Syria (ARIS). Like many others, Donner has long felt the need for such a center, which could provide some administrative and (eventually) material support for American scholars doing research in Syria and, perhaps more importantly, could provide a focus for collegial contact with other American scholars active in Syria. The American Research Institute in Syria is now incorporated, but inauguration of significant programs or facilities—such as modest research grants or a hostel for scholars in Damascus—must await location of secure sources of funding.

Teaching duties and university administration occupied the remainder of Donner's professional time—and then some.
