

## Fred M. Donner

**Fred M. Donner** was pleased to see the appearance of two articles, both long delayed in publication; by chance, both also represent byways in his research. "Mesopotamian Trade from the Tenth to the Fifteenth Centuries C.E.," originally written several years ago on invitation for an East German scholarly journal that went under with East Germany, finally appeared in *Asien Afrika Lateinamerika* 20 (1993): 1095–1112. "The Colloquial Arabic Dialects and the Importance of Studying Them" was published in the American University of Beirut's journal *Al-Abhath* 41 (1993): 3–26 [Arabic section], after having languished for several years in the clutches of another publisher.

Most of Donner's research time this year has been devoted to clarifying the origins of Islam and the early Islamic state, a subject in which he has a long-standing interest. His article, "The Growth of Military Institutions in the Early Caliphate and Their Relations to Civilian Authority," appeared in *Al-Qantara* (Madrid) 14 (1993), 311–26. In May, he attended the fourth Late Antiquity and Early Islam workshop, sponsored by The Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine and University College London, where he presented a paper entitled "From Believers to Muslims," which will be published in the proceedings of the workshop. In this paper, Donner presented the thesis that the prophet Muhammad's followers in Medina initially thought of themselves as a community of Believers (Arabic *mu'minûn*) in God's oneness and in the imminence of the Day of Judgment, and that this early community was open to Jews and Christians who shared these beliefs. The crystallization of a distinct religious identity as Muslims—separate, confessionally, from Jews, Christians, and other monotheists—seems to have taken place only in the second half of the first century after the prophet, that is, toward the end of the seventh century C.E. This interpretation remains in many ways hypothetical, but it appears to be supported by a variety of evidence, including some passages of the Qur'ân and the testimony of the earliest Christian sources in Syriac. Donner continues work on this theme and on the closely related issue of early Islamic historiography, about which he hopes to complete a monograph in the near future. He enjoyed being active this year in the workshop in Middle Eastern urbanism organized with his Oriental Institute colleagues Dr. Donald Whitcomb and Tony Wilkinson.

Besides his research, Donner has been heavily engaged in teaching and in administrative duties for the Oriental Institute, the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, and the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, as well as for several scholarly organizations. As coordinator of the University of Chicago-University of Damascus Affiliation program (which expired this year), he organized the visit of the last visitor to Chicago, Prof. Najah Muhammad of the University of

Damascus History Department, a specialist in the modern history of Syria. He has continued to serve as a member of the Board of Directors of the Middle East Studies Association of North America and as President of Middle East Medievalists. He also continues to edit Middle East Medievalists' semiannual Bulletin, *Al-'Usur al-Wusta*.

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