

Frederick S. Colby

University of Oregon, Department of Religious Studies, Eugene OR 97403-1294
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Education

Duke University, Ph.D. in Religion, 2002

Dissertation: "Constructing an Islamic Ascension Narrative: The Interplay of Official and Popular Culture in Pseudo-Ibn 'Abbas"

Examines the role of interreligious and intrareligious polemics in the formation, reformation, circulation and contestation of a popular oral version of the Night Journey and Ascension of Muhammad, a narrative attributed to the Prophet's companion Ibn 'Abbas. Adds new evidence and theoretical sophistication to the recent debate over the utility of the concept of premodern Islamic popular culture. Co-directors of the dissertation committee: Dr. Bruce B. Lawrence and Dr. Vincent J. Cornell.

University of Chicago, M.A. in Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations, 1995
M.A. papers specializing in Qur'anic exegesis and early Islamic heresiography

Haverford College, B.A. Magna Cum Laude in Religion with Department Honors, 1991

Honors and Awards

Summer Fulbright-Hays "Silk Road" Project, China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkey, 2006;
Philip and Elaina Hampton Scholarship for International Travel, 2006;
Summer Research Grant, College of Arts and Sciences, Miami University, 2003;
Research Fellowship, American Research Center in Egypt, 2000; Research Fellowship, American Research Institute in Turkey, 2000; Award for International Research, Duke University, 2000; Fulbright Fellowship, Syria, 1999-2000; Research Fellowship, American Institute for Maghrib Studies, 1996; Award for International Research, Duke University, 1996; Fellowship, Department of Religion, Duke University, 1994-1998; FLAS Title VI Fellowship in Arabic Instruction, Duke University, 1994-1997; Century Fellowship, University of Chicago, 1992-1994; Thomas J. Watson Fellowship, Egypt, 1991-1992; Fellowship, Center for Arabic Study Abroad, American University in Cairo, 1991; Religion Dept. Thesis Prize, Haverford College, 1991; Phi Beta Kappa, Haverford College, 1990

Areas of Specialization

Early Islamic Thought, Qur'an and Hadith Studies, Islamic Mysticism (Sufism),
Islamic Ascension Narratives, Popular Islam

Areas of Competence and Teaching Interests

Islam: History, Literature, Law, Philosophy, Mysticism, Gender Issues, Arabic

Comparative: World Religions, Mysticism, Popular Religion, Religion and Violence

Contemporary: Religion and Media, Modern Islamic Thought

Teaching Experience

University of Oregon, Department of Religious Studies

Associate Professor of Religious Studies, 2009-present

Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, 2008-2009

Courses offered:

"Religion and Violence," REL 470/570, Spring 2009

"Islamic Mystical Thought," REL 407/507, Spring 2009

"Introduction to Islam," REL 233, Fall 2008, Winter 2009

"Qur'an and Interpretation," REL 407/507, Fall 2008

Miami University, Department of Comparative Religion

Assistant Professor of Comparative Religion, 2002-2008

Courses offered:

"Medieval Interactions and Conflicts between Western Christians, Eastern Christians, and Muslims," REL 103, Spring 2008

"Sufism of the West," REL 470/570, Spring 2008

"Islam in History," REL 326, Fall 2002, Spring 2004, Spring 2006, Spring 2007, Fall 2007

"Religion and Violence," REL H102, Fall 2003, Fall 2005, Fall 2007

"Islams and Modernities," REL 610, Spring 2004, Spring 2007

"Merchants, Mercenaries, and Monks along the Silk Road," REL470/570, Spring 2006

"Religion and Violence," REL 103, Spring 2005, Fall 2005

"Religion and Media," REL 402/502, Spring 2005

"The Thought and Influence of Mircea Eliade," REL 470/570, Fall 2004

"Religion and Literature of al-Andalus," REL 360 T, Fall 2004

"Comparative Mysticism," REL 360 R, Spring 2004

"Emergent Technologies & Religious Boundaries," REL 402/502, Fall 2003

"Varieties of Religious Expression," REL 101, Spring 2003

"Interpreting the Qur'an," REL 360 P, Spring 2003

"Otherworldly Journeys," REL 360 M, Fall 2002

Duke University, Department of Religion

Instructor "Islamic Civilization I," Spring 2001

"Ecstatic Experience and Otherworldly Journeys," Spring 1999

"Islam," Fall 1997

Duke University, Office of International Studies

Teaching Assistant "Beginning Arabic," "Intermediate Arabic," Fall 1994 - Spring 1997

Publications

Refereed Publications

Narrating Muhammad's Night Journey: Tracing the Development of the Ibn 'Abbas Discourse. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008. This book reflects an updating and reworking of my dissertation on the Ibn 'Abbas version of Muhammad's night journey and ascension, focusing upon the development of this pivotal ascension narrative during the formative centuries of Islamic history. It breaks new ground in the study of Islamic ascension narratives, establishing my position as one of the foremost experts on this subject. Length: 314 pp.

The Subtleties of the Ascension: Early Mystical sayings on Muhammad's Heavenly Journey as compiled by Abu 'Abd al-Rahman Sulami. Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2006. Length: 267 pp.

"Symbolic Imagery." In *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*. Vol. 5. Edited by Jane McAuliffe, pp. 180-84. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2005.

"The Rhetoric of Innovative Tradition in the Festival Commemorating the Night of Muhammad's Ascension." Chapter in *Historicizing "Tradition" in the Study of Religion*. Edited by Steven Engler and Gregory P. Grieve, pp. 33-50. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005.

Frederick S. Colby and Michael A. Sells [in that order]. "al-Mi'raj." In *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim world*. Edited by Richard C. Martin, pp. 454-56. New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004.

"The Subtleties of the Ascension: al-Sulami on the Mi'raj of the Prophet Muhammad." *Studia Islamica* (Fall 2002): 167-183.

Non-refereed Publications

"Abu Yazid Bistami," "Rabi'a 'Adawiyya," "Abu 'Abd al-Rahman Sulami." In *Holy People of the World: An Encyclopedia*. Edited by Phyllis G. Jestice, pp. 128, 715-16, 828-29. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2004.

Refereed Manuscripts under Contract and/or in Press

Christiane J. Gruber and Frederick S. Colby [in that order]. *The Prophet Muhammad's Ascension: New Cross-Cultural Encounters*. This collected volume of essays analyzes the theme of the Prophet Muhammad's ascension (*mi'raj*) in a variety of cultural, literary, and artistic contexts from the ninth century until the present day. The articles break fresh ground by discussing new materials and by providing alternative methodological approaches to the study one of the most popular Muslim tales. The collection includes my own original essay, "The Role of Imami Shi'i Narratives in the Construction of and Contestation over the Story of Muhammad's Ascension." Drafts of the essays were

successfully peer reviewed at Indiana University Press, and the volume is now under contract. The completed manuscript was submitted to IUP in March 2008. In summer 2007 we applied for and received a \$6000 subvention grant from the ILEX Foundation to support the inclusion of color illustrations in the volume. My co-editor and I equally shared all responsibilities, and we together supervised the editing of the revised essays. The completed manuscript was finished in June, 2008, and is now in press. Contracted length of volume: 300 pp.

Languages

high competence:	Arabic
intermediate competence:	Spanish
basic reading knowledge:	Persian, Turkish, French, German
very basic reading knowledge:	Biblical Hebrew

Presentations and Lectures

"Three Minor Festivals in Thirteenth-Century al-Andalus." Semi-Annual Meeting of the International Society for the Study of Religion. Santiago de Compostela, Spain, July 2009.

"Muslim Visionary Ascent in the Thirteenth-Century Maghrib." University of Oregon Department of Religious Studies. Eugene OR, April 2008.

"The Role of Early Imami Shi'i narratives in the Construction of and Contestation over the Story of Muhammad's Ascension." The Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion. Washington, D.C., November 2006.

"Muslim and Jewish otherworldly dialogues: Revisiting the question of Jewish influence upon early Islamic ascension narratives." The Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion. Philadelphia PA, November 2005.

"Innovative Tradition in the Celebration of Two Muslim Festivals." The Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion. Atlanta GA, November 2003.

"Cloaked in Spiritual Authority: Sufis, non-Sufis, and the Investiture of the Khirqa." The Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion. Denver CO, November 2001.

"Contested Heavens: Intrareligious Polemics and the Formation of the Kitab al-Mi'raj Attributed to Ibn 'Abbas." Fall Meeting of the Southeast Regional Middle East and Islamic Studies Seminar. Valle Crucis NC, October 2001.

"Elucidating the Subtleties of the Ascension: A Previously Unknown Work by al-Sulami." The Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion. Nashville TN, November 2000.

"Intimate Whispers: Conversations between Muhammad and his Lord on the Night of the Ascension." Seminar Lecture at The American Research Center in Egypt. Cairo Egypt, October 2000.

"A Sainly Autobiography: The Kunnash of Ahmad Zarruq (d. 899/1493)." The Annual Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association. San Francisco CA, November 1997.

"On Qur'anic Contradictions: Ibn al-Rawandi and the Kitab al-Damigh." The Annual Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association. Phoenix AZ, November 1994.

Professional Affiliations

American Academy of Religion; Middle East Studies Association of North America; Southeast Regional Middle East and Islamic Studies Seminar

Professional Activities and Service

Member of Religious Studies search committee, "Arab Religions," 2009-10

Member of History search committee, "Islamic History," 2009-10

University Senate member, University of Oregon, 2009-present

Internal Advisory Board member, University of Oregon Center for Intercultural Dialogue, 2008-present

Mellon Fellowship Committee member and advisor, The Council on Libraries and Information Resources (CLIR), Washington DC, 2008-present

Department of Comparative Religion, Miami University, recording secretary, 2006-8

Supervised two undergraduate thesis projects, Miami University, written by Michael Nau (summer scholar program, 2006) and Adam Utley (honors thesis, 2005)

Co-organized a film series at Miami University, "Muslims in Film," Spring 2005

Coordinated a conference at Miami University on "Muslims and the Media," February 2005

Department of Comparative Religion, Miami University, M.A. Thesis committee member for Jennifer Crye (co-director, 2007-present), Stephanie Kien and Casey Koons (director for both, 2006-8), Paula Ayad and Renaud Fabbri (co-director for both, 2005-7), Kathleen Hladky and Thomas Nagy (committee member for both, 2004-6)

Miami University, Director of the Middle East Studies Minor, 2004-5

Miami University, Member of the University Senate, 2004-5; elected but declined to serve again for 2008-9

Editorial Board member, *Comparative Islamic Studies*, a journal published by Equinox, 2003-present

Internal Advisory Board member, Miami University Center for Writing Excellence, 2003-8

Consultant for the book project *Understanding Islam and Muslim Traditions* by Tanya Gulevich (Detroit: Omnigraphics, 2005), 2003-4

Department of Comparative Religion, Miami University, departmental representative to the Divisional Appeals Board, 2002-4

Department of Comparative Religion, Miami University, member of search committees that selected Julye Bidmead (2003), Julie Gifford (2003), and Lisa Poirier (2002) as new tenure track members of the department

Department of Comparative Religion, Miami University, M.A. qualifying exams committee member, 2002-8

Community Service

Faculty Advisor, Miami Interfaith Circle, 2007-2008

Faculty Advisor, Miami chapter of the Muslim Students Association, 2004-8

Executive Board member, Oxford Citizens for Peace and Justice, 2003-8

Miami Summer Reading Program discussant, 2003-5

Participated in a series of lectures on Islam, Oxford Friends Meeting, 2006-7

Participated in the Oxford Ohio Institute for Learning in Retirement (ILR) lecture series on "Fundamentalism," Fall 2005

References

Dr. Daniel Falk, Department of Religious Studies, University of Oregon

Dr. Vincent J. Cornell, Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies, Emory University

Dr. Carl W. Ernst, Department of Religious Studies, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Dr. Bruce B. Lawrence, Department of Religion, Duke University

Dr. Michael A. Sells, Divinity School, University of Chicago