

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, Mysticism, Sacred Texts
Comparative: World Religions, Mysticism, Popular Religion, Religion and Violence
Contemporary: Digital Religion, 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

Select courses offered:

“Introduction to Islam,” REL 233, Fall 2008, Winter 2009, Winter 2010, Spring 2011
“Introduction to the Qur’an,” REL 335, Fall 2012
“Mysticism,” REL 355, Winter 2011, Winter 2012
“Otherworldly Journeys,” REL 399, Fall 2010, Spring 2013
“Adv. Studies in Qur’an and Interpretation,” REL 435/535, Fall 2008
“Religion and Violence,” REL 470/570, Spring 2009, Winter 2012

Miami University, Department of Comparative Religion

Assistant Professor of Comparative Religion, 2002-2008

Select Courses offered:

“Medieval Interactions and Conflicts between Western Christians, Eastern Christians, and Muslims,” REL 103, Spring 2008
“Religion and Violence,” REL H102, Fall 2003, Fall 2005, Fall 2007
“Islam in History,” REL 326, Fall 2002, Spring 2004, Spring 2006, Spring 2007, Fall 2007
“Comparative Mysticism,” REL 360 R, Spring 2004
“Religion and Literature of al-Andalus,” REL 360 T, Fall 2004
“Religion and Media,” REL 402/502, Spring 2005
“Emergent Technologies & Religious Boundaries,” REL 402/502, Fall 2003
“Islams and Modernities,” REL 610, Spring 2004, Spring 2007

Duke University, Department of Religion

Instructor “Islamic Civilization I,” Spring 2001

“Ecstatic Experience and Otherworldly Journeys,” Spring 1999

“Islam,” Fall 1997

Publications

Refereed Publications

“Locating Hell in the Bakri mi`raj narratives, 13th to 15th centuries CE.” Forthcoming in an edited volume emerging from the conference “Locating Hell in Islamic Traditions,” University of Utrecht, Netherlands, 28-29 April 2012.

“Paradise in the Bakri Mi`raj.” In “Doctor Virtualis,” *Journal of History and Medieval Philosophy*, edited by a Università degli Studi di Milano research group, on paper and online, <http://riviste.unimi.it/index.php/DoctorVirtualis>. Article complete, expected 2013.

Christiane J. Gruber and Frederick S. Colby [in that order]. *The Prophet Muhammad's Ascension: New Cross-Cultural Encounters*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010. 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.” The entire collection was reviewed by an outside reviewer. My co-editor and I equally shared all responsibilities, and we together supervised the editing of the revised essays. I let her put her name first on the cover since she was coming up for tenure and thought it might help strengthen her tenure case to have her name first. Length: 389 pp.

“Qur'an.” In *Encyclopedia of Religion in America*. Vol. 4. Edited by Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams, pp. 1820-1824. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2010.

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

“Isra’ and Mi`raj.” In *Muhammad in History, Thought, and Culture: An Encyclopedia of the Prophet of God* (2 vols.). Edited by C. Fitzpatrick and A. Walker. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2013.

"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.

Book Reviews

Review of Nerina Rustomji, *The Garden and the Fire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009) in *The Journal of Religion* 91 no. 4 (2011): 574-576.

Review of William Chittick, *Sufism: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000) in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37 no. 1 (2005): 118.

Languages

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

Academic Presentations and Lectures

“Hell in the Bakri mi`raj narratives, 13th to 15th centuries CE.” Invited presentation at the international conference “Locating Hell in Islamic Traditions.” University of Utrecht, Netherlands, 28-29 April 2012.

“The Celebration of ‘Christian’ Holidays in al-Andalus.” Invited public lecture. Whitman College, Walla Walla Washington, February 2011.

“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.

“Saintly 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;
Pacific Northwest Regional American Academy of Religion

Professional Activities and Service

Co-Chair, the Steering Committee for the American Academy of Religion, Study of Islam Section, 2011-present

Chair, University of Oregon College of Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee, 2011-2013

Book Review Editor, *Journal of Sufi Studies* (Brill), 2011-present

Undergraduate Adviser, University of Oregon Religious Studies Department, 2010-present

Member, University of Oregon College of Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee, 2010-2011

Member, the Steering Committee for the American Academy of Religion Islamic Mysticism Group, 2009-2011

Chair, Honors College thesis committee for Maya Hamanishi, U of O Religious Studies, June 2011

Member, Honors College thesis committee for Matt Leasure, U of O Religious Studies, May 2011

Member, M.A. thesis committee for Patrick Jones, U of O International Studies, May 2011

Member, Ph.D. thesis committee for Carole Barnsley, Indiana University Religious Studies, April 2011

Member, Committee reviewing the portfolio of Professor Anita Weiss, Head of International Studies, University of Oregon, February 2011

Member, Arabic search committees that selected Arabic instructors Hanan Ahmad, Rana Mikati and Abeer Hasan, 2010-2011

Chair, Religious Studies search committee, "Arab Religions" that selected David Hollenberg, 2009-10

Member, History search committee, "Islamic History," that selected Sean Anthony, 2009-10

Member, University Senate, University of Oregon, 2009-2010

Member, Internal Advisory Board, University of Oregon Center for Intercultural Dialogue, 2008-2011

Mellon Fellowship Committee member and advisor, The Council on Libraries and Information Resources (CLIR), Washington DC, 2008-2010

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

Editorial Board member, *Comparative Islamic Studies*, a journal published by Equinox, 2003-2010

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

Select Community Service

Presentation “Intro to the Qur’an” and “Mary in the Qur’an,” St. Peter’s Catholic Church, Eugene OR, May 2013

Presentation “Questioning the Qur’an,” Eugene Metro Rotary, February 2013

Keynote Lecture, “Reel Bad Arabs and Muslims: Images of the Arab World Made in the U.S.A.,” introducing the film series “A Festival of Films from Around the Muslim World,” + core organizer and film presenter, Lane Community College, Spring 2013

“A Festival of Films from Around the Islamic World,” core planning committee and film presenter, Spring 2012

“Visiting Scholars on Islam” Lecture Series core planning committee, Lane Community College, 2010-2012

Presentation “Intro to Islam” and “Approaching the Qur’an,” Presbyterian Church of the Siuslaw, Florence OR, October 2011

Presentation on “Early Salafism and Fundamentalism,” Oregon Humanities Project, weekend conference at the University of Oregon, July 2011

Presentation “Intro to Islam,” Family and Human Services “World Religions and Human Services” class, February 2011

Presentation “Jihad,” together with Ibrahim Hamide, First Lutheran Church, Eugene, February 2011

Presentation “Intellectual Autobiography,” College Scholars Program, November 2010

Lecture “Islam 101,” Eugene Downtown Rotary Club, March 2010

Presentation “Intro to Islam,” Emmaus Lutheran Church, Eugene, March 2010

Lecture “Approaching the Qur’an,” Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, Eugene, March 2010

References

Dr. Mark Unno, Head of the Department of Religious Studies, University of Oregon

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

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