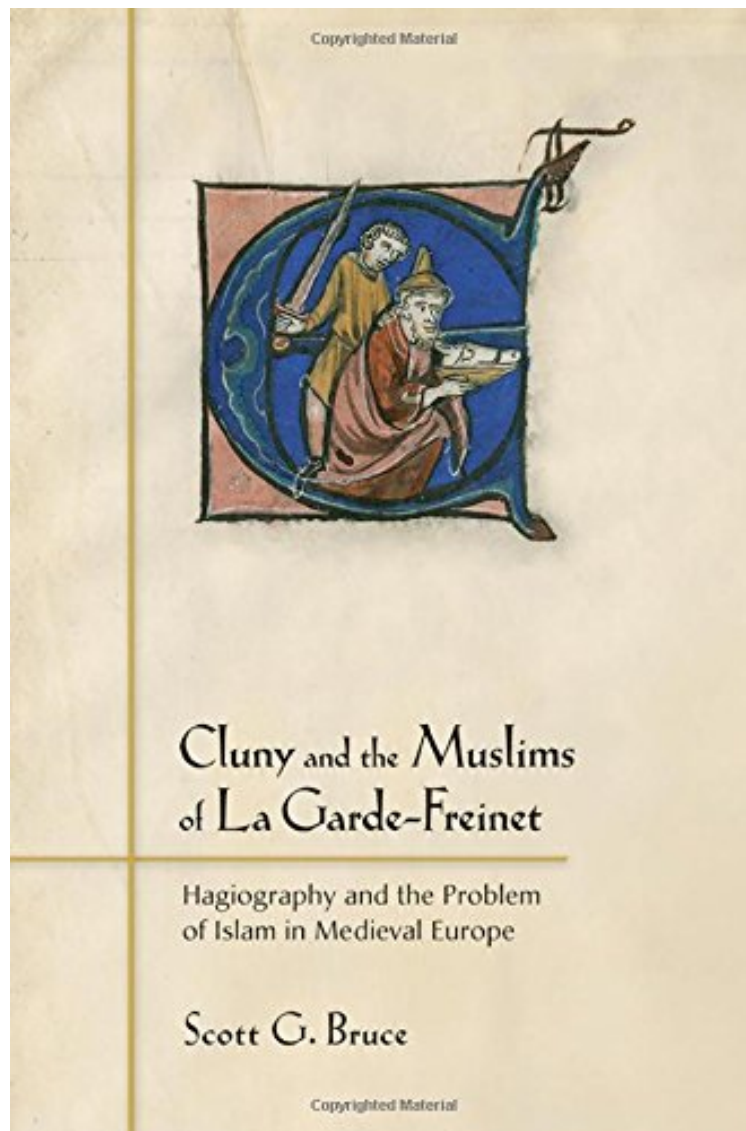


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Cluny and the Muslims of La Garde-Freinet: Hagiography and the Problem of Islam in Medieval Europe

Scott G. Bruce

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Cluny and the Muslims of La Garde-Freinet: Hagiography and the Problem of Islam in Medieval Europe:

In the summer of 972 a group of Muslim brigands based in the south of France near La Garde-Freinet abducted the abbot of Cluny as he and his entourage crossed the Alps en route from Rome to Burgundy. Ultimately, the abbot was set free and returned home safely, but the audacity of this abduction outraged Christian leaders and galvanized the will of local lords. Shortly thereafter, Count William of Arles marshaled an army and succeeded in wiping out the Muslim stronghold. In *Cluny and the Muslims of La Garde-Freinet*, Scott G. Bruce uses this extraordinary incident, largely overlooked by contemporary scholars, to examine Christian perceptions of Islam in the Middle Ages. The monks of Cluny kept the tale of their abbot's abduction alive over the next century in hagiographical works and chronicles written to promote his sanctity. Bruce explores the telling and retelling of this story, focusing particularly on the representation of Islam in each account, and how that representation changed over time. The culminating figure in this study is Peter the Venerable, one of Europe's leading intellectuals and abbot of Cluny from 1122 to 1156. Remembered today largely for his views of Islam, Peter commissioned Latin translations of Muslim historical and devotional texts including the Quran. As Bruce shows, Peter's thinking on Islam had its roots in the hagiographical tradition of the abduction at La Garde-Freinet. In fact, Peter drew from the stories as he crafted a "Muslim policy" relevant to the mid-twelfth century, a time of great anxiety about Islam in the aftermath of the failed Second Crusade. Compellingly written, *Cluny and the Muslims of La Garde-Freinet* provides us with an unparalleled opportunity to examine Christian perceptions of Islam in the Crusading era.

"Scott G. Bruce's book uncovers the driving forces behind views on Islam, and on Islamic culture, in Cluniac texts of the tenth to twelfth centuries. It makes a strong case for the need to examine their genesis explicitly in a context that takes into account the evolving societal, spiritual, and intellectual position of Cluny and its subsidiary institutions. Most surprisingly, his empirical approach to the evidence reveals that Cluniac monks did not have a single, cohesive opinion of Islam up until the second decade of the twelfth century; and that Peter the Venerable's campaign to overcome Islam by use of rational arguments was determined more by circumstance than design. In many ways, Bruce's work is a radical departure from previous scholarship in this field. Its most important achievement, perhaps, lies in the fact that it helps the reader come to the inevitable conclusion that there was no such thing as 'the medieval Christian view' on Islam." Steven Vanderputten, Ghent University, author of *Imagining Religious Leadership in the Middle Ages: Richard of Saint-Vanne and the Politics of Reform* "In a highly original work, Scott G. Bruce has brought together the abduction of Abbot Maiolus of Cluny by Muslims in 972, eleventh-century monastic stories about Muslims before the First Crusade forced Christians to gain a better understanding of Islam, and Abbot Peter the Venerable's twelfth-century efforts to use rational arguments to persuade followers of Islam that they were wrong once the Second Crusade made clear that force alone was not going to work. He demonstrates that accounts of a saint, here Maiolus, were not simply concerned with the saint himself but could influence how one thought and wrote about religious and cultural issues many years later. A particular strength of the book is Bruce's understanding of how complex were medieval approaches to religion, polemic, and reason." Constance Brittain Bouchard, Distinguished Professor of History, The University of Akron, author of *Every Valley Shall Be Exalted: The Discourse of Opposites in Twelfth-Century Thought* About the Author Scott G. Bruce is Associate Professor of History at the University of Colorado at Boulder. He is the author of *Silence and Sign Language in Medieval Monasticism: The Cluniac Tradition*, c. 900-1200 and editor of *Ecologies and Economies in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*.