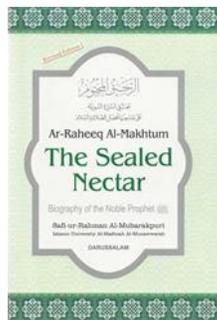


# So you want to read about Muhammad?

Without Muhammad there would be no Islam. Muslims believe that every verse of the Koran was a “revelation” to him from Allah. The Koran states that Muhammad spoke for Allah (4:80), Muslims must obey his commands (59:7), and he is the timeless standard of conduct for Muslims (33:21).

There are numerous biographies of Muhammad and histories of Muhammad’s time that were written by early, authoritative Muslim scholars. Many of these have been translated into English and provide an in-depth study of Muhammad. These works can be generally divided into two categories: *Sira* - works that look at the overall life of Muhammad; and *Maghazi* – works that focus on the military campaigns during Muhammad’s lifetime.

## Sira Literature

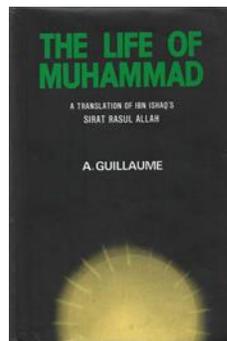


In terms of the *Sira* literature, I suggest starting out with an award-winning modern biography of Muhammad: *The Sealed Nectar*, written by

Safiur-Rahman al-Mubarakpuri (Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Darussalam, 2008). In 1979 this book was awarded first prize by the Muslim World League (based in Mecca) in a worldwide competition for a new biography of Muhammad.

This book starts out with an overview of the history of the Arabian Peninsula before Muhammad’s birth. The bulk of the book then chronicles Muhammad’s life, the Muslim military conquest of the Arabian Peninsula, and Muhammad’s death. It is well written and is a relatively easy read. If you have time to read only one biography of Muhammad, I recommend this one. From here you could then look at the *Maghazi* Literature on the other side of this brochure.

But if you want to learn more about Muhammad’s life, then you need to read the actual *Sira*:

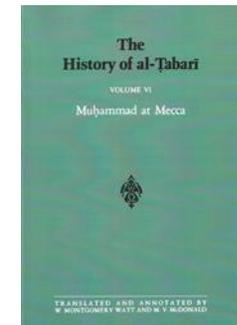


This is a translation of Ibn Ishaq’s authoritative biography of Muhammad, written a little over 100 years after Muhammad died: Muhammad ibn Ishaq (704-768), *The Life of Muhammad (Sirat Rasul Allah)*, trans. Alfred Guillaume (Karachi, Pakistan: Oxford University Press, 2007).

This is considered the authoritative biography (*Sira*) of Muhammad. It provides a very extensive look at Muhammad’s life and death, and the Muslim conquest of the Arabian Peninsula.

This book can be difficult to read because of the in-depth approach taken by Ibn Ishaq. Years ago this was the first biography of Muhammad that I read. The volume of names and information was somewhat overwhelming. Later I read *The Sealed Nectar*, and then read again *The Life of Muhammad (Sirat Rasul Allah)*. This second time Ibn Ishaq’s work was easier to follow, and this is the approach I recommend for others.

The next step in reading about Muhammad takes us to *The History of al-Tabari*.

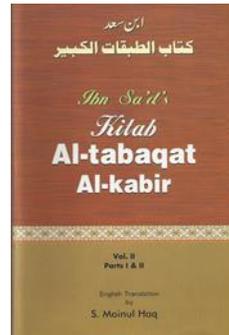


This is a multi-volume history written by Abu Ja’far Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari (839-923). The volumes below focus on the time of Muhammad:

1. *The History of al-Tabari: Muhammad at Mecca*, Vol. VI, trans. and annotated W. Montgomery Watt and M. V. McDonald (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1988)

2. *The History of al-Tabari: The Foundation of the Community*, Vol. VII, trans. and annotated W. Montgomery Watt and M. V. McDonald (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1987)
3. *The History of al-Tabari: The Victory of Islam*, Vol. VIII, trans. and annotated Michael Fishbein (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1997)
4. *The History of al-Tabari: The Last Years of the Prophet*, Vol. IX, trans. and annotated Ismail K. Poonawala (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1990)

Amal Ismail, and AbdulKader Tayob, ed. Rizwi Faizer (London and New York: Routledge, 2013).



Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Sa’d ibn Mani’ al-Zuhri al-Basri (784-845), *Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Kabir*, Vol. 2, trans. S. Moinul Haq (New Delhi, India: Kitab Bhavan, 2009).

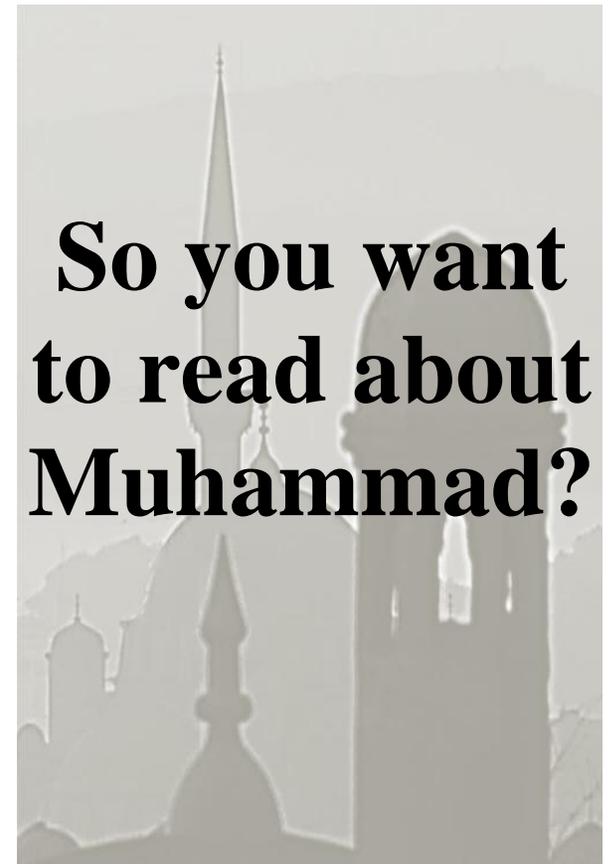
This book also includes a look at Muhammad’s terminal illness, his death and burial, and some of his close companions.

All of these books can be found online.

\*\*\*Thanks to Andrew for coming up with the idea for this brochure.\*\*\*

For a brief overview of Muhammad see my brochure titled *Muhammad*.

Dr. Kirby is the author of six books on Islam. His latest book is *Islamic Doctrine versus the U.S. Constitution: The Dilemma for Muslim Public Officials*. His books are available on Amazon.com.



### Maghazi Literature

*Maghazi* is an Arabic word that actually refers to the military campaigns led by Muhammad. But the *Maghazi* literature looks at both the Muslim military campaigns led by Muhammad and those military campaigns sent out by Muhammad.

I recommend the following books in this order:



This book provides an in-depth look at the military campaigns: Muhammad b. ‘Umar al-Waqidi (747-823), *The Life of Muhammad: Al-Waqidi’s Kitāb al-Maghāzī*, trans. Rizwi Faizer,

Part of a series on Islam

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