INTRODUCTION
Images of Muḥammad in the course of time

Muḥammad, the Prophet of Islam, was undoubtedly one of the most influential persons in history. He was not only the founder of one of the world religions, but has served as a role model for Muslims throughout the ages. The records of his deeds and sayings are among the most important sources in various fields of Islamic learning, and several Muslim festivals commemorate events of his life. In sharp contrast, the non-Muslim views of Muḥammad over centuries have been almost exclusively negative, only gradually improving in the wake of the Enlightenment. Since the nineteenth century, Muhammad has become a major object of research in Western scholarship on Islam, and there are a huge amount of articles and books devoted to various aspects of his life, the sources for his life and his role in Islamic tradition.

From the emergence and spread of Islam in the early seventh century ce, Muslims and non-Muslims alike have engaged with the personality of Muḥammad and his role in history. The assessment of his role has been addressed and answered in very different ways by Muslims and non-Muslims, usually in the framework of their respective existing or developing theological and dogmatic viewpoints.

With regard to the Muslim view, the Qurʾān may provide an idea of how Muḥammad was seen by his contemporaries. There are, however, some caveats: Muḥammad is not a major topic in the Qurʾān and thus the information on him is scarce. In several cases it is not entirely clear whether the Qurʾān actually speaks about Muḥammad in verses that are commonly understood in this sense, and while the views of the believers as alluded to in the Qurʾān may reflect the historical reality, it is not unlikely that the Qurʾānic views of the unbelievers or ‘hypocrites’ are distorted and polemical and not necessarily an accurate rendering of their views. Some scholars would go further and even call into question the connection between the Qurʾān and the Prophet.

Even if we were to accept this connection and may thus get an idea of the earliest Muslims’ views of Muhammad, the issue gets much more difficult for the following generations, and the question of how perceptions of Muḥammad changed in the course of the following one and a half centuries is contentious. The earliest Muslim sources with notable information on Muḥammad that have come down to us date from roughly 150 to 200 years after his death, and the manuscripts
in which they have been preserved often have been copied centuries after the original works are said to have been composed. The question to what degree earlier sources can be reconstructed from the existing texts is highly controversial and has not yet been resolved. We are on much safer ground with regard to the Muslims’ views of Muḥammad from around the ninth century CE. From at least this time, Muḥammad has been seen as a role model and his behaviour has been regarded as normative, not only in legal matters but also in everyday life. His biography abounds in miracles, and he is presented as knowing about the future, both of which are in sharp contrast to the Qurʾānic view of Muḥammad. These aspects remained important and were elaborated upon in the Muslim perception of Muḥammad in the following centuries. The concept of a pre-existing divine light that is passed on through the prophets down to Muḥammad figures prominently and is linked to cosmological models that identify Muḥammad as the pole of existence. Muḥammad came to be regarded as the embodiment of the perfect human being (al-insān al-kāmil) and as completely sinless, a concept that originated in Shiite Islam with regard to the Imams and was soon extended to encompass the Prophet. The stories of his miracles were embellished and aggrandized. They came to be regarded as proofs for his prophethood (dalāʾil al-nubuwwa) and were collected in works of similar titles. Other works emerged that were devoted to his moral and personal excellence and in which the obligations of the believer towards Muḥammad were developed. In theology, the view that Muḥammad can and will intercede on behalf of the believers at the last judgement became common. The veneration of Muḥammad also began to manifest itself in a number of festivals commemorating events of his life such as his birth (mawlid or mawlūd) and the story of his nightly journey to Jerusalem and ascent to heaven (isrāʾ and miʿrāj). The Prophet’s mosque in Medina, where he is also buried, became to be considered one of the holiest places for Muslims, second only to the mosque surrounding the Kaʿba in Mecca. While several of the above views and practices have been challenged and opposed by different groups of Muslims over the course of time, most of them continue to remain important for large numbers of Muslims. In more recent times, a number of Muslim authors have written biographies of Muḥammad that they deemed more suitable to modern times, responding to Western historical-critical studies of Muḥammad and, in general, to the challenges that a more scientific worldview poses to the traditional sources.

Not only Muslims engaged with the personality of Muḥammad; non-Muslims likewise did so from the very beginning of their encounter with Islam, but in a very different manner. For non-Muslims – mostly Christians and to some degree also Jews and Zoroastrians – the success of Muḥammad and his followers posed a challenge to their own claims of truth. In the early Islamic conquests, a significant part of Byzantine and Sasanian territories had fallen to Muslim rule and people had to accommodate the fact that a new and successful religion had started to emerge. Over the following centuries, a number of stereotypical images emerged that were used over and over again in polemics and as reassurance of their own faith, not only in the regions under Muslim rule but subsequently also in Europe.
They included the view of Muḥammad as pseudo-prophet, as a heretic, an impostor, an epileptic, and the anti-Christ. Some of these views were based on a vague knowledge of the Muslim sources, though often presented in a distorted way, while others were completely independent from them. Throughout the Middle Ages, the European view of Islam and of Muḥammad was largely informed by these stereotypes, and they remained active and can be found in polemical literature until today. In the wake of the Enlightenment, a more neutral or even slightly positive stance towards Muḥammad emerged with some authors seeing in him a significant legislator and starting to acknowledge the political achievements of his career. In the nineteenth century, more positive views arose, from the view of Muḥammad as a hero, who was sincere in his aims, to acknowledging his achievements in leading people to monotheism, and even regarding him as a prophet.

Serious academic scholarship on Muḥammad can be said to have begun in the first half of the nineteenth century when historical criticism started to gain popular recognition. The question of the personality of the Prophet remained central, but now became linked with the question of the reliability of the sources. Initially, despite their late date, the sources were not perceived as particularly problematic, as they claimed to cite earlier authorities, in most cases alleged eyewitnesses. This view started to change at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, when a number of works were published that called the reliability of the sources into question. Their conclusions were deemed too radical and were criticized by other scholars, who tried to defend the overall soundness of the sources, and maintained that with a critical mind and careful approach to the sources it was still possible to write biographies of Muḥammad. On the other hand, these publications led the way to a much more sceptical approach to the biography of the prophet, culminating in the view that the nature of the sources makes it impossible to write any such biography and that Muḥammad might not even have been a historical figure at all. Needless to say that these more radical theses were likewise not universally accepted and sparked refutations of their own.

The debate on the reliability of the sources brought about different approaches to the study of Muḥammad. Some scholars tried to confine themselves to the Qurʾān as a source for the life of Muḥammad, as this was regarded by most as the only source originating in his lifetime. Others discarded the Islamic sources altogether and attempted to reconstruct the history of early Islam on the basis of non-Muslim sources. Studies on late antique Arabia and the Jewish and Christian traditions of the Middle East aimed for a better understanding of the context in which Muḥammad was active and to what extent he may have been influenced by these traditions.

A different line of research focused on the sources themselves and tried to better understand how and when they were composed, how they related to each other, and how they were transmitted. Several studies focused on individual works or on genres. Those who were still interested in the historical Muḥammad mostly
concentrated on single events or aspects rather than trying to discuss the personality of Muhammad as a whole. Only in recent years have there been attempts to take the broader picture into consideration once more, and to write longer scholarly biographies of Muḥammad.

A different approach was to exclude the question of the historical Muḥammad and study the development of the Muslim tradition on his life and his reception in the Muslim tradition. Initially, these studies were mostly focused on the early tradition, but in recent years the scope has been broadened to include the study of modern Muslim reinterpretations of Muḥammad and specific aspects such as the depiction of Muḥammad.

While these studies in general originated from a preoccupation and engagement with the written sources, other approaches arose from a study of later Muslim thought and practice. They enquired about the origins and development of dogmatic positions regarding Muḥammad, such as the finality of his prophethood, his illiteracy, or his sinlessness, or they were interested in the background of the veneration of Muhammad or his role in Sufism.

These investigations are complemented by the study of the image of Muḥammad in the non-Muslim tradition, from the earliest contacts through the Middle Ages to early modern views, depictions and dramatisations and the history of the academic study of Muḥammad.

This collection

This collection of articles aims at providing an overview of several aspects of scholarship on Muhammad, the sources on his life, and his reception in Muslim as well as in non-Muslim thought. Naturally, a series like this has specific requirements that limit the choice and thereby influence the selection and arrangement of the articles. In this case, the focus on journal articles and the confinement to publications in English had a significant impact, as this excluded on the one hand a large amount of excellent scholarship on Muḥammad in particular in German and French, but also in other languages. On the other hand, scholarship on Muḥammad did not only take place in journal articles but was often published in monographs devoted to specific aspects. The collection thus can in no way claim to be comprehensive. It nevertheless offers insights into various topics on different aspects of the study of Muḥammad. Where possible, an attempt was made to offer different views on a topic to show the various approaches scholars took and the different conclusions they reached.

The first two volumes are closely linked and complement one another. They are both broadly concerned with the historical Muhammad, the sources on his life and the problems these sources pose for any research on Muḥammad, but they focus on different aspects: while the contributions of Volume I mostly discuss the sources on the life of Muḥammad, their development, their interrelation and the broader question of their authenticity and originality, the contributions of Volume II focus more on single aspects of the life of Muḥammad and the question of the
historicity of the events. A number of contributions cover both aspects, however, and in these cases their major focus and their connection to other articles in the collection guided the decision to include them in one volume or the other. The third and fourth volumes, in contrast, are concerned with the image of Muḥammad in the perception of later generations. Volume III sheds light on the reception of Muḥammad in the classical Muslim tradition. It includes studies on some doctrinal aspects, the veneration of Muhammad as well as his position in Šūfī thought and practice. Volume IV includes, on the one hand, contributions that discuss modern Muslim reinterpretations of Muḥammad and, on the other hand, articles that deal with the image of Muḥammad in the eyes of non-Muslims.

**Volume I**

The opening volume deals with the sources on Muhammad’s life. It includes studies on some of the major biographical sources (ṣīra and maghāzī) as well as the Qur’ān and non-Muslim sources on the life of Muhammad. The first two chapters, by Watt and Cook, give two very different assessments of the major sources of Muḥammad’s life – while Watt argues for the overall reliability of these sources, later tendencies that may have shaped them notwithstanding, Cook holds a more sceptical view and points to the major inconsistencies within and contradictions between the different types of sources.

The chapters that form the reminder of the volume address the different sources in more detail, namely the Qur’ān, the ṣīra or maghāzī tradition that comprises most of the biographical material on Muḥammad, the Hadīth – the collection of the reports of Muḥammad’s sayings and deeds – and the non-Islamic sources on Muḥammad. For most scholars, the Qur’ān represents the oldest and most reliable source about Muḥammad. Chapter 3, in which Welch tries to gather all the information that the Qur’ān reveals about Muḥammad, can thus be seen as an attempt to reconstruct the earliest layer of information on Muḥammad, assuming that in most cases in which the Qur’ān uses the address ‘you’, it refers to the Prophet. Rippin, on the other hand, argues that this is not necessarily always the case and that one may need to be more careful when using the Qur’ān as a source for the life of Muḥammad.31

The next two chapters discuss the relationship between the Qur’ān and the ṣīra. While, in Chapter 5, Lammens argues that the ṣīra is for the most part secondary and the result of exegetical endeavours to understand certain verses of the Qur’ān, Rubin, examining the traditions about the hijra, argues to the contrary; namely that there was an independent ṣīra tradition and that this was only aligned with the Qur’ān and enriched by exegetical traditions at a later point.

These contributions lead us to the ṣīra or maghāzī tradition, which constitutes the bulk of the material on Muḥammad’s life. The contributions of Jones (Ch. 7) and Conrad (Ch. 8) in an exemplary manner point to two of the features of this literature that make it so difficult to use as a historical source. On the one hand, there are the discrepancies and contradictions that abound in the material, for
instance with regard to the dating of events. On the other hand, the literature is full of topos and elements that have a symbolical function rather than a historical value. These features, among others such as the salvation-historical character of many of the accounts, need to be taken into account when using the sīra as a historical source.

The following ten contributions all focus on specific parts of the sīra literature. Görke and Schoeler, in Chapter 9, try to reconstruct the sīra traditions of ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr (d. c. 94/712), which are among the earliest traditions to have come down to us, although they have been embellished and changed over the course of time. Boekhoff-van der Voort follows this when she analyses the maghāzī material contained in ʿAbd al-Razzāq’s Muṣannaf to unearth earlier sources, in her case going back to Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742). Both contributions employ the isnād-cum-matn analysis and thus also provide an insight into this method. The value of this method, aimed at reconstructing earlier layers of the Muslim tradition, and the results gained by employing it have recently been challenged, sparking a sometimes polemical debate on the issue.

Schacht’s article on Mūsā b. ʿUqba’s Kitāb al-Maghāzī (Ch. 11) displays a more sceptical view on the reliability of the sources. Following his studies of legal traditions and the conclusions that most of these emerged only in the second century after the hijra, he argues that this also applies for most of the historical traditions as evidenced in Mūsā b. ʿUqba’s work, and that the lines of transmission (isnād) often appear to have been improved or invented at a later date, some by a process he dubbed ‘spreading’. Subsequently, Schoeler challenges Schacht’s conclusions and argues that a comparison of different independent versions of the same historical traditions in other works shows that they are much older than Schacht assumed and that the lines of transmission appear to be genuine.

Robson likewise argues for the reliability of the isnāds as adduced by Ibn Isḥāq, a contemporary of Mūsā b. ʿUqba’s, and the most important single source for the life of Muḥammad. According to Robson the uncertainties or gaps in the lines of transmission as found frequently in this work are best explained by assuming that Ibn Isḥāq is honest in his statements.

Watt, in Chapter 14, takes a closer look at the material of which the sīra is composed, based on a study of Ibn Isḥāq’s work, but applicable to other works as well. While his assessments of the reliability of this material have been challenged, the discussion of the different types of material that make up the biography of Muḥammad remains important.

In Chapter 15, Landau-Tasseron studies the account of a delegation of the Tamīm tribe to Muḥammad in different sources and shows how compilers used and shaped the material in various processes of redaction. While the compilers partly drew on similar sources, as a result of these processes, namely of selecting and arranging the material, they produced rather different accounts whose relation and careful composition cannot always easily be discerned.

Lecker’s study of al-Wāqidi’s account of the murder of Kaʿb b. al-Ashraf likewise focuses on the redactional processes that shaped the early Islamic
tradition, and in particular on the technique of combining different reports into a single narrative. He argues that for our understanding of the Islamic historiographical tradition, the distinction between ‘edited’ and ‘non-edited’ texts is at least as important as, and probably more important than, the distinction between ‘early’ and ‘late’ sources.

In his study of the accounts of the death of Muḥammad’s father, in Chapter 17 Lecker argues against the idea of a continuous growth of the Muslim tradition as advanced for instance by Cook (see Chapter 2 in this volume). According to Lecker, the fact that later sources provide more information than earlier sources is not necessarily based on this additional information being invented in the meantime, but rather on the compilers’ different selection of materials.

Faizer, in Chapter 18 on the issue of authenticity in al-Wāqidi’s work, re-examines both of Lecker’s articles and proposes a different interpretation of the data: in his view, al-Wāqidi uses the combined report as one of several techniques to deliberately distort and manipulate traditions in order to present his reinterpretation of the life of Muḥammad.

In the following chapter, in his comparison of Ibn Isḥāq’s and al-Wāqidi’s accounts on the Jews in Medina, Faizer stresses the importance of focussing on the compilers and their agenda to understand the traditions they cite and the way they present them, rather than focussing on single traditions taken out of their context. In this he brings in a perspective decidedly different from what Noth and others had suggested. His discussion can likewise be seen as a comment on a number of articles included in Vol. II, namely those on the so-called ‘Constitution of Medina’ and on aspects of the relation between Muḥammad and the Medinan Jews (in particular Chapters 26–29 and 32–34 in Vol. II).

The next two chapters deal with the relationship between ṣīra or maghāzī material and Ḥadīth. Different concepts of this relationship have been advanced, ranging from the idea that the biography of Muḥammad basically consists of ḥadīths – possibly of exegetical or legal origin – chronologically arranged, to the opposing view that the historical traditions of the ṣīra were stripped of their context and reduced to their legal or theological content to become normative ḥadīths. In Chapter 20, Zaman studies three Ḥadīth compilations containing historical traditions and concludes that they are of very different character and that it thus is not possible to regard any one collection as representative of the Ḥadīth tradition. He observes a development or shift in the interest of the Ḥadīth collectors. Görke follows on by arguing that the fields of the biography of the Prophet and the Ḥadīth, although closely connected, were distinct fields and that one cannot be seen as secondary to and dependent on the other.

In the final contribution of Vol. I, Hoyland (Ch. 22) takes a look at the non-Muslim sources – several of which predate the Muslim narrative sources considerably – and what they tell us about Muḥammad. He points to certain recurring motives and to the issues where these sources can complement their Muslim counterparts.
Volume II

The second volume deals with the central aspects of Muḥammad’s life. As the contributions of Volume I made clear, any study of events from the life of Muḥammad has to take into consideration the problems the sources pose, such as the late date of the major narrative sources, the often contradictory accounts in these sources, the political and theological tendencies that have shaped and influenced these accounts as well as the vagueness of the Qurʾān and its differences from the narrative sources, or, in some cases, the contradictions to the non-Muslim sources.

The first three chapters deal with the story of Muḥammad’s night journey and ascent to heaven, one of the major events and miracles of Muḥammad’s life prior to the hijra. In Chapter 23, Busse systematically discusses several aspects of this story and, following a position first held by Schrieke, argues that the earliest versions did not involve a journey to Jerusalem but rather took Muḥammad from Mecca straight to heaven and that the identification of the Qurʾānic Masjid al-Aqṣā (Q. 17:1) with Jerusalem was established only after the Muslim conquest of the Holy Land. Rubin holds the opposite view, namely that the Qurʾānic vocabulary is linked to the Old Testament and post-biblical apocalyptical literature and therefore clearly places the Masjid al-Aqṣā in an earthly Jerusalem. Van Ess introduces a new aspect and new perspectives in Chapter 24, when comparing Muḥammad’s ascent to heaven with Jesus’ and looking at the theological implications of Qurʾānic verses that were linked to Muḥammad’s visions.

The so-called ‘Constitution of Medina’ is widely regarded as being the source for the life of Muhammad with the highest claim for authenticity apart from the Qurʾān. It has thus attracted a considerable amount of attention. The articles selected here focus on various aspects. In Chapter 26, Serjeant argues that the ‘Constitution’ is in fact a series of eight documents and not a single treaty. Gil, on the contrary, argues for the unity of the document and sees it as a preparation for war against Jewish tribes of Medina rather than a treaty concluded with them. A detailed discussion of several key terms in the ‘Constitution’, its signatories, the historical setting of the individual parts and allusions in the Qurʾān to this document can be found in Serjeant’s study ‘The Sunnah Jāmiʿah’. Rubin takes a closer look at the Jewish groups included, and also those not included, in the treaty and argues that the document was partly suppressed and partly reshaped in the developing historical tradition. Lecker, in Chapter 30, revisits Gil’s article and, in contrast to him, argues that Muhammad did indeed conclude treaties with the Jewish tribes of Medina – as not only the sources but also the economic and military situation hint at. Arjomand studies the ‘Constitution’ as a document for proto-Islamic public law. He agrees with Lecker’s division of the ‘Constitution’ into two main parts, but identifies a later supplement to the second part and thus proposes a tripartite document.

The next three chapters deal with the massacre of the Banū Qurayza, one of the Jewish tribes of Medina. To begin with, Watt, in Chapter 32, argues that the tradition was not reshaped at a later time in order to remove the responsibility of
the murder from Muḥammad and blame Saʿd b. Muʿādh instead, but that Saʿd’s prominent role belongs to the historical core. Arafat, in contrast, argues that the whole tradition of the massacre of the Banū Qurayza is inspired by, and modelled after, the story of the Jewish revolt against the Romans in 73 CE and the subsequent siege of Masada. Kister rounds off the section in Chapter 34 when he re-examines and refutes Arafat’s arguments and, drawing on a large number of sources, offers more insights into the background and details of this event.

The next section has four chapters that study the socio-economic and political background of Muḥammad’s success in Medina. Donner, in Chapter 35 on Mecca’s food supplies, argues on the basis of some comments in the exegetical literature that the relative ease with which Muḥammad was able to conquer Mecca only a few years after he was ousted was partly due to a blockade of Mecca’s trade routes that caused or aggravated a famine in the city. In his following chapter on Muḥammad’s political consolidation, he studies Muḥammad’s tribal policies and how they eventually, despite initial failures, helped him to win his cause. Kister likewise examines the events surrounding the blockade of Mecca and tries to make sense of several reports that refer to a co-operation between the Meccan leader Abū Sufyān and Muḥammad. Rubin rounds off with Chapter 38, in which he revisits the results of the previous three chapters and attempts to provide a date for the blockade.

The concluding four chapters of Volume II all deal with the question of the historical Muḥammad, in distinction to the figure of Muḥammad as he is presented in the sources. They can in some way be regarded as presenting different approaches, taking into account many of the single studies included in Volumes I and II. Peters begins by discussing the methodological challenges of the study of the historical Muḥammad, pointing to the differences of the more established studies of the historical Jesus and showing different approaches to the question. Crone follows on from what can be called a scepticist or revisionist position regarding the reliability of the sources on Muḥammad’s life. In this respect, it is remarkable that she argues strongly for the historicity of Muḥammad and, after discussing the main sources for his life – the Muslim tradition, the Qurʾān, and a growing number of archaeological findings in Arabia that help to understand the background – comes to an optimistic outlook with regard to what can be known about Muḥammad. Berg and Rollens compare the sources, methodologies and findings of historical Jesus scholars and historical Muḥammad scholars and discuss what they can learn from each other. Görke finishes off the section by focusing on the sīra material and examining the prospects and limits of four approaches that have been used to unearth historical facts in this material.

**Volume III**

The third volume is devoted to the role of Muḥammad in the Muslim tradition. The first two chapters study the emergence and development of the Prophetic sunna. Newby, in Chapter 43, looks at the different ways that Muḥammad was remembered
in the narrative biographical tradition (ṣīra) on the one hand, and the fragmented, normative statements of the sunna on the other hand, and how these two models interacted with each other. Lowry focuses on the development of the perception of Muḥammad as a legal authority and the resulting emergence of the hadith corpus and the sciences around it that were necessary to define that corpus. He also examines how hadiths – despite re-emerging controversies over the centuries – continue to keep their status as a basic source for Muslim thought and practice.

In Chapter 45, Muranyi examines the emergence of holy places connected to the life of the Prophet. He argues that, in contrast to previous scholarship, the commemoration of such places already began in the first century of Islam.

The next three chapters examine the Prophet’s epithet al-nabī al-ummī, usually understood in the Muslim tradition as ‘the illiterate Prophet’. Goldfeld, on the basis of an analysis of exegetical works, argues that the understanding of ummī as ‘illiterate’ only emerged in the second century and only became prevalent in the third century. ʿAthamina extends the scope and includes other literary genres in his examination and comes to the conclusion that the Qurʾānic epithet cannot originally have referred to illiteracy. Günther argues that ummī in the Qurʾān does not have a single meaning at all, but covers a spectrum of ideas, including the ethnic origin and the originality of the Prophet, of which the latter goes well together with the notion of illiteracy.

Evstatiev concludes the section by taking a look at the doctrine of the Seal of the Prophets (Khātam Al-Nabiyyīn) and its development. In Chapter 49, he argues that initially this was understood by some to be a confirmation of Muḥammad’s prophethood rather than a statement of its finality and that this latter notion only became prevalent after the third century, but has since become a cornerstone of Sunnī Islam.

The veneration of Muḥammad is dealt with in the following five chapters. Rubin starts off by examining the notion of the pre-existence of Muḥammad and the Muḥammadan light and how it is conceptualized in the – mostly Shiʿi – sources. Kaptein then examines how the celebration of the Prophet’s birthday (mawlid) developed in Mecca from the sixth/twelfth to the tenth/sixteenth centuries and discusses its devotional, ceremonial and political significance. He shows that, despite some opposition to specific elements, the celebrations were firmly established and included the religious and political elite. In Chapter 52, Schussman looks at the debates regarding the permissibility of the celebration of this festival. She analyses a fatwā issued in 1993 and concludes that the fatwā appears to be a concession to popular religion rather than presenting an informed scholarly view. De la Puente discusses the emergence, development and significance of the taṣliyah, the prayer upon Muḥammad usually uttered by Muslims after mentioning the prophet. She looks at the various interpretations of its meaning and argues that, despite being based on a Qurʾānic revelation, it was transformed over the course of time in close connection with the evolution of the veneration of Muḥammad. Richman concludes the section by discussing the appropriation and adaptation of a traditional Tamil genre of poetry, the piḷḷaittamiḻ,
usually devoted to a deity or famous person addressed in the form of a child, to address and praise the Prophet Muḥammad. She explores how the particularities of the genre shape the depiction of Muḥammad, while at the same time Muslim concerns shape the structure and features of the poem.56

The five chapters in Part 6 conclude Volume II by examining Muḥammad’s position in Sufi thought and practice. In her chapter, ‘Devotion to the Prophet Muḥammad and his family in Egyptian Sufism’, Hoffman points to the importance of fieldwork in studies of contemporary Islam, which she argues is an essential supplement to textual studies when examining contemporary popular piety. Her results point to a close connection between Egyptian Sufism and Shiite Islam in devotion to the family of Muḥammad, the ahl al-bayt, but also indicate important differences, notably in the passion motif that is largely absent in Egyptian Sufism but of highest importance in Shiite Islam. In her next chapter, she examines the emergence and development of the Sufi concept of ‘Annihilation in the Messenger of God (fanāʾ fī’l-rasūl)’. She argues that this concept, in contrast to a common notion, is not a ‘neo-Sufi’ element that only emerged in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, but can be traced back to Ibn ʿArabī and is thus very much part of a long-standing Sufi tradition. With her findings, she also challenges the usefulness of the term ‘Neo-Sufism’.57 The next two chapters examine the adaptation of the story of Muḥammad’s night journey and ascent to heaven, dealt with earlier in Chapters 23–25 of Volume II, in the Sufi literature.58 El-Azma explores how the story was transformed and adapted by al-Bisṭāmī and Ibn ʿArabī by changing key elements, and was employed to symbolize the Sufi path with its various stages and states. Colby, on the other hand, studies al-Sulamī’s work Laṭāʾif al-miʿrāj (‘The subtleties of the ascension’) and argues that al-Sulamī in this work carefully selected and arranged sayings by Sufi masters on various aspects of Muḥammad’s ascension in an attempt to harmonize Sufi exegesis and the ‘official’ Muslim tradition.59 Bashir ends the section with Chapter 59 when he takes us to the Timurid period. In his study of three Sufi authors, he shows on the one hand the importance and significance of Muḥammad in Sufi thought and, on the other hand, the diversity of approaches the authors take to make their respective points.

Volume IV

The final volume comprises contributions on modern Muslim reinterpretations as well as Western views of Muḥammad. Waugh starts by examining how Muhammad Iqbal in his poems reinterpreted the role of the Prophet Muḥammad. He also draws attention to the importance of the non-scholarly views that often diverge from the ‘official’ image of the Prophet, for the understanding of the changing Muslim perceptions of Muḥammad.

Khalidi, in his book Images of Muhammad, examines how the view of Muḥammad evolved and developed over the course of time in the Muslim community.60 Two chapters are reprinted here: in Chapter 61, ‘The Hero’, Khalidi discusses how Carlyle’s lecture ‘The Hero as Prophet’61 and Muir’s Life of
Mohammad influenced nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Muslim writers, and how these writers, among them Ameer Ali, Muhammad Iqbal and Muhammad Husayn Haykal, responded each in their own way to the need for a new and modern sīra. Then, in ‘The Liberator’, Khalidi focuses on twentieth-century biographies of the Prophet and in particular discusses those of Maʿrūf al-Ruṣāfī and Alī Dashtī, who radically reworked and demythologized the sīra. Roded, in Chapter 63, examines how the Syrian scholar and political activist of the Muslim Brotherhood, Muṣṭafā al-Sibāʿī, employed the biography of Muḥammad in his teaching to provide guidance to young Muslim propagandists and activists, covering among other things the role of the youths and of women, the question of violence and the attitude to the Jews as well as the ideal society and leadership. Bakker follows this when he discusses the first feature film about Muḥammad, Moustapha Akkad’s The Message, released in 1976, the difficulties this enterprise encountered on various levels, and the interpretation of Muḥammad’s life it presented. He points to the notable omissions – in particular with regard to the military campaigns and the relation to the Jews – and concludes that, similar to many modern biographies of Muḥammad, the film conveys a more peaceful image of the Prophet than Muslim tradition. Iqbal in Chapter 65, ‘Living in the time of Prophecy’, compares modern sīra texts – mostly Haykal’s Life of Muḥammad, al-Mubarakpuri’s The Sealed Nectar, and Ling’s Muḥammad. He argues that although they all recast the traditional sīra works, they differ considerably in the extent of their ‘internalization’, or the degree to which the author (and the reader) are able to immerse themselves into the time of Muḥammad.

Riexinger takes a look at the Mukhtaṣar sīrat al-rasūl (‘Short version of the biography of the Messenger’) by Muḥammad b. ’Abd al-Wahhāb. He shows that Ibn ’Abd al-Wahhāb omits most passages from the traditional narratives aimed at elevating the status of Muḥammad as well as almost all miraculous accounts and argues that the depiction of Muḥammad as an ordinary human being mainly occupied with eradicating idolatry and unbelief is used to reinforce him as a role model and, in particular, to legitimize warfare against idolatry.

Ali ends the section with Chapter 67 when she examines the different approaches Muslims had over the course of time to the question of how the Prophet’s behaviour should inform the believers’ attitudes towards marriage and how the conflicting sources – the general character of the Prophet as described in the sources on the one hand and specific normative statements ascribed to him on the other – have been used to arrive at very different conclusions.

Chapters 68 and 69 deal with specific elements of the sīra that were eventually detached from their context and acquired a history of their own. First, Buckley takes us through the changing Muslim views of the Burāq, the beast on which Muḥammad is said to have ridden on his nightly journey to Jerusalem (isrāʾ), before analysing the various ways it has been employed in Western literature. Then Szilágyi explores the Bahīra legend and how it was used and developed in Christian polemics against Islam. She argues that the major function of the legend was to help Christians living under Muslim rule to maintain their religion and that the constant transformation of
the legend makes it possible to study their changing attitudes towards Islam. Luchitskaja follows on by studying several Latin twelfth- and thirteenth-century works on Muḥammad and Islam and exploring the question of how the direct contact with Muslims during the age of the crusades affected the perception of Muḥammad. She shows how the writers built on previous, mostly Byzantine stereotypes and enriched them with more recent folkloric subjects and exotic tales, and concludes that overall the stereotypes remained very strong and that the image of Muḥammad and Islam evolved only very slowly. Mula draws our attention to the Golden Legend (Legenda Aurea), a collection of saints’ lives composed by Jacobus de Voragine around 1265, and the chapter it contains about Muḥammad. He shows in Chapter 71 that Muḥammad’s biography in this work is carefully constructed to appear as the opposite of the saints’ virtuous lives and argues that this work – despite its chapter on Muḥammad often being neglected – probably was the most accessible source of information on Muhammad and Islam in the centuries that followed its publication. Watt discusses the background and originality of Carlyle’s lecture on Muhammad in 1840. He argues that Carlyle was the first to focus on the inner experience of Muḥammad rather than on his achievements, and that his insistence on Muḥammad’s sincerity was a milestone in the history of Western perceptions of the Prophet. Gunni, in Chapter 73, offers a survey of the works on Muḥammad of some ten French-speaking authors, covering a period from the eighteenth to the twenty-first centuries. He discusses the different views they held, but sees them all contributing to a ‘more rounded picture’ of Muḥammad. Tolan takes a broader view and discusses the changing European perceptions of Muḥammad, which include his being represented as a trickster, epileptic, false prophet, impostor, but also as a lawgiver, statesman and sage. He shows that, despite being mostly negative, European views of Muḥammad were very heterogeneous. He argues that the authors often were less interested in Muḥammad himself but instead used the figure of Muhammad in their polemic against their direct opponents. In Chapter 75, Bosworth takes a look at Henri de Bornier’s play Mahomet, written in 1889, and discusses its background as well as its presentation of Muḥammad. He also takes notice of the protests by the Turkish authorities against the performance of the play, which led to its prohibition in France – apparently without those objecting actually having read the play. Marshall rounds off the volume with his chapter on contemporary Christian views of Muḥammad. After summarizing pre-modern Christian views of Muḥammad, Marshall discusses the theological difficulties inherent in the question and presents four approaches – put forward or represented by Daniel Madigan, Hans Küng, Jacques Jomier and Christian Troll, and Kenneth Cragg, respectively – ranging from a respectful recognition of Muḥammad’s political and religious achievements to his acceptance as a prophet.

Conclusion

Taken together, the four volumes provide an overview of several aspects of scholarship on Muḥammad. As Muḥammad has been a central object of study in
the preoccupation with Islam for centuries, this selection nevertheless only constitutes the tip of the iceberg, and quite a few topics had to be left out that could easily have filled several more volumes. The selection nevertheless hopefully is able to show the variety both in approaches and in assessment in the study of Muḥammad, which will certainly continue to grow.

**Notes**

1 See e.g., Andrew Rippin, ‘Muḥammad in the Qurʾān: Reading scripture in the 21st century’, in Harald Motzki (ed.), *The Biography of Muḥammad: The Issue of the Sources*, Leiden: Brill, 2000, pp. 298–309 (included as Chapter 4 of this volume).


11 See Chapter 75; Cf. Tolan, ‘Impostor or Lawgiver’, in Gruber and Shalem (eds), *The Images of the Prophet*, see note 10; Bobzin, *Mohammed*, see note 10, pp. 18–20; Reeves, *Muhammad in Europe*, see note 10, pp. 139–174.


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28 See e.g. Chapters 46–49 in Volume III of this collection; Nagel, *Allahs Liebling*, see note 4.

29 See e.g. Chapters 50–59 in Volume III of this collection; Schimmel, *Und Muḥammad ist sein Prophet*, see note 4; Nagel, *Allahs Liebling*, see note 4.

30 See e.g. Chapters 68–76 in Volume IV of this collection; Avinoam Shalem (ed.), *Constructing the Image of Muḥammad in Europe*, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2013.

31 See note 20 for further references on this topic.


34 This method, which in rudimentary form was already employed by Aloys Sprenger, Johannes Hendrik Kramers and Josef van Ess, has in recent years been further developed and used to reconstruct early reports on the life of Muḥammad by a number of scholars, among them Gregor Schoeler, Harald Motzki, Andreas Görke, Nicolet Boekhoff-van der Voort, and Sean Anthony. Apart from the two articles included here,


41 Advanced for instance by Henri Lammens (see Chapter 5 of this volume), and followed among others by Carl Heinrich Becker, ‘Prinzipielles zu Lammens’ Sīrastudien’, see note 16: 263–269. See also Crone, Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam, see note 18, pp. 214f.; Schöller, Exegetisches Denken und Prophetenbiographie, see note 24, pp. 5 and 128–133.
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43 For a different assessment of the historical materials in Ḥadīth collections, see Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, see note 23, pp. 277–279.

44 For a radical re-interpretation of early Islam on the basis of non-Muslim sources, see Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, see note 18. The non-Muslim sources have also been extensively studied with regard to the question of Muḥammad’s date of death in Shoemaker, *The Death of a Prophet*, see note 21, pp. 18–72.

45 See note 6 for further literature on this event.


48 The view that the ‘Constitution’ consists of several documents was previously already advanced by William Montgomery Watt, *Muḥammad at Medina*, see note 17, pp. 221–228.


54 See note 6 for further literature on the topic.


60 Tarif Khalidi, *Images of Muḥammad*, see note 27.

61 Held in 1840. See also Chapter 72 in this volume.


63 Of these, Haykal’s work has received the most attention in the West. See e.g. Antonie Wessels, *A Modern Arabic Biography of Muḥammad: A Critical Study of Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal’s Hayāt Muḥammad*, Leiden: Brill, 1972.
