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Muhammad

Betty Kelen

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Betty Kelen : Muhammad before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Muhammad:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Interesting and informativeBy MetallurgistThis is one of a series of books on religious leaders that Betty Kelen has written. In all of them she tries to be as factual as the sources permit, while keeping as evenhanded a presentation as possible. This is no easy task when presenting a biography of Mohammad, as steering a middle ground between the hagiography of Muslim sources and the condemnation of those who oppose Islam is sometimes difficult. Being based largely on Muslim sources the book is generally complimentary of Mohammad, but does get into some of the more controversial side of the early history of Islam. The book covers the life of Mohammad and the early foundations of Islam, but does not go very deeply into Muslim theology, although some of this is discussed, but in a somewhat superficial manner.I enjoyed the book and found it interesting and recommend it to anyone interested in the life of Mohammad and the foundations of Islam. It is well written and definitely not a dull scholarly presentation. As is noted, it generally paints Mohammad in a favorable light, but not to the extent of being a hagiography.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A great independent insight into politics of Arabia and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)'s biography!By Matloub Husayn-Ali-KhanAfter reading this book by Betty Kelen, I can say without a doubt that her biography of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him - PBUH) in `Muhammad - the messenger of god' is very note worthy and a fast-moving account that reads like a novel. To some readers, it may not appear to be academic and scholarly and it is for those reasons, I found it to make a refreshing change of reading yet another academic or scholarly account from a Muslim author or a non-Muslim author. At Chapter five, entitled: the Mission, Betty Kelen elaborates those qualities: '...These people listened to Abu Bekr with

both ears, and his efforts drew a number of discontented teenage apprentices and the disgruntled sons of rich fathers to join the little group that met around Muhammad. These were a few men of greater substance too - the sort of thoughtful people who might previously have toyed with the notion of becoming Christian or Jews. But on the whole early Islam was a youth movement, which was at first thought of as a harmless club..."These lines put rise of early Islam and other recent revivals into context and the many social, political, cultural and faith-based movements across the world into perspective. Also, I could easily see the old and new activists in full swing in the reference I have just quoted! The first biography of our the prophet, I read was in 1971-2 at school by E. Royston Pike - which I would now call a very western-biased and orientalist's based account - even though it was scholarly at the time! Since that time, I read many other books on the life and times of Prophet Muhammad, but the one which I found to be excellent was the biography with a great historical account entitled: *Ar-Raheeq Al-Makhtum (The sealed Nectar): Biography of the Nobel Prophet (PBUH)* by Safi-ur-Rahman al-Mubarakpuri which was awarded the first prize by the Muslim World League at a world-wide competition on the biography of the Prophet (PBUH) held in Mecca (Makkah) in 1979. The other biographers by Zahur-ul-Haque: *Muhammad: The Greatest Leader*, 1988 is good and succinct account and the most authentic reliable is the traditionalist account by Ibn Ishaq: *The Life of Muhammad Apostle of Allah* (updated/edited by Ibn Hisham) through his use of anecdotal narratives rather than a biography in the modern sense of the word. This was in Arabic and was translated into English by Edward Rehatsek, published by Royal Asiatic Society, London, 1898. In addition, according to Muslim writer, Hamid Naseem Rafiabadi in his book: *'Hijra (Migration) a turning point in Islamic Movement'* (1995), takes E. Royston Pike and other orientalist's to task by elaborating that 'migration' was not just about moving from place to place and the flight to Medina was not just to save prophet Muhammad (PBUH) life or that he was a refugee. These are simplistic notions conjured up by orientalist's writers and the reality was that migration (hijrat) as a matter of 'policy, a step taken under God's (Allah) dictates and Jihad (Supreme Effort). H. N. Rafiabadi elucidated further: '...E. Royston Pike has repeated the 'rumour and fallacy' around the issue concerning Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) making a compromise with the Polytheists from Mecca (Makkah)...' prior to his migration (hijrat) to Medina (Madinah). Professor T. B. Irving (T'aleem Ali) counters the orientalist's biases further by stating: '...by blind and aggressive criticism these people deprive themselves from a "Great Gift i.e. Islam". H. N. Rafiabadi concludes: '...moreover, we know that in the light of Quranic provisions and historical facts migration (Hijrat) is not only a historical event but a very significant part of Islamic teachings. Probably for this reason the Orientalist's have made it a target of their criticism, as they have done with Jihad, to raise barriers in the way of Islamic revolution and to prevent Muslims from playing their revolutionary role...' Finally, I think that Betty Kelen's book is not just a primer for familiarising yourself with Islam but it has a much deeper insight into the politics of Arabia at the time, than it appears. I would recommend people to read this book by Betty Kelen as an independent account from a non-Muslim and I would also recommend them to read Ibn Ishaq's traditionalist Muslim account. There are many other good biographers who have written about Muhammad (PBUH) of which Rahman al-Mubarakpuri is the most eminent, as well. 2 of 11 people found the following review helpful. A B'Hai apologetic By Scruffy Scirocco I don't know Ms. Kelen's background, but based on the way she compares Muhammed to Christ, Buddha and Zoroaster, I strongly suspect that she's a B'Hai. Muhammed is given a very lenient treatment in this book, and there is no academic exploration of the fallacies of the underlying assumptions of Islam and the pre-Islam Arabic beliefs. For example, no modern scholar places Abraham of Genesis anywhere near Mecca in his life. Of Muhammed's reversals of his revelations, for example his changing attitude towards Jews, there is no explanation. In regards to his pedophilia, polygamy and the massacre of 600 Jews who had formerly been neighbors and allies, she sympathetically defends these actions as understandable given the time and culture, and not to judge him harshly because of it. In spite of the generous attitude of the author towards the beliefs and actions of Muhammed, the book is rich in the political matrix of western Arabia of the time. It is weak in placing this culture within the larger framework of history. It's a good primer for familiarizing yourself with the basics about Muhammed, but a more serious work should then be consulted if you want a more in-depth, scholarly treatment.

The most recent of the major religious prophets, Muhammad remains shrouded in mystery to much of the Western world. This biography explores Muhammad's roots and the impact the religion he founded has had on the world around us. A seventh-century Arabian tribesman, Muhammad received a vision in a cave and emerged to unite the Arab world with his revelation. The moral and ethical framework he established is still the guiding force for much of the Middle East. His visions and life are fully explored with an eye toward understanding the modern Arab world.

"Legends and controversies in Muhammad's life are given open-minded and reasoned interpretations . . . making this a reliable source of information." -- Library Journal "[Kelen] has successfully imparted some of [Islam's] culture and a basis for increased understanding of its development, mysticism, and philosophy." -- Kirkus About the Author Betty Kelen is the author of *Confucius*, *Gautama Buddha*, and *The Mistresses*. She was an editor at the United Nations and headed the publication department for the International Labor Organization's office in Vienna. She lives in Olympia,

Washington.