Exploring Islam

Theology and Spiritual Practice in America

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4 Scripture

The Qur'an

In January 2020, I attended a formal gathering at a mosque in Virginia. The event was held in the mosque's community hall, which was decorated as if for a wedding. Around 250 members of the community were present, including a diverse array of men, women, and children. During the event, teachers of the Qur'an gave talks about Islamic scripture and the significance of knowing it by heart. On a special stage, two teenage girls sat in fancy chairs. They recited short chapters of the Qur'an. The event concluded with the late evening prayer followed by a dinner.

As it turned out, the community had come together to celebrate the accomplishment of Janan and Asena, two sisters who had memorized the entire Qur'an. The girls had been born in the United States to a Uyghur Muslim family after their mother moved to the United States to pursue an education. Enjoying the religious freedom the Constitution guarantees, their mother wanted her children to have an Islamic education and dreamed that her children would memorize the Qur'an. The sisters were well motivated to carry the divine words in their hearts, and they embarked on the journey of memorizing the scripture. However, doing so was not a straightforward process. In addition to attending school, they studied with teachers at various qur'anic schools. After three years, they had committed the Qur'an to memory and thus became *hafiza*, or a Muslim woman who knows the entire Qur'an by heart. Janan and Asena are not the only US Muslims who have achieved this feat. Hundreds of Muslim children have memorized the sacred words in the United States. In this chapter, I explore the Qur'an and its significance and role in Muslim life.

The Qur'an and the Birth of Islam

The history of Islam begins with the Qur'an. While many communities of religious believers have created their own texts, Muslims assert that the Qur'an itself formed their community. For Muslims, the Qur'an has served as a book of wisdom, prayer,

supplication, invocation, law, worship, contemplation, and science as well as a source of happiness and morals. It is a sacred guide to navigating the hereafter. The book reveals the meaning of life and serves as an introduction to divine attributes and their manifestations in the universe.[1]

The Qur'an describes itself as the "Word of God" (*kalamullah*), and Muslims consider it as such. As explained in chapter 2, the first verses of the Qur'an were revealed in 610 CE, when Muhammad was on a spiritual retreat in the outskirts of Mecca. The first revelation began with the word *read* or *recite* and then pointed to the embryonic development of humans as a sign of God's power in their creation.[2]

God revealed the Qur'an gradually, over many years, until Muhammad's death in 632 CE. The Prophet mostly received these revelations through the archangel Gabriel. Sometimes Gabriel arrived as himself, in his own form; at other times, he appeared to the Prophet in the form of one of his companions (known as Dihya); and on still other occasions, he manifested in the form of an unknown human. Whenever the Prophet received a revelation, his companions could see that the Prophet's attitude had changed. The divine words would be brought to him in many ways. When they were delivered on cold days, for example, he often broke into an unusual sweat. According to some hadith narratives, the Prophet's companions asked him how the revelations would come to him. He answered that it was "like the ringing of a bell." He continued, "When it departs, I remember what Gabriel said, and this is the hardest on me. And sometimes the angel comes to me in the form of a man and reveals it to me."[3]

Some revelations addressed a specific case or issue within the nascent Muslim community. On one occasion, for example, Abdullah bin Umm Maktum, a blind man, came to the Prophet Muhammad seeking his guidance. At the time, the Prophet was in conversation with a number of elites of the Meccan society conveying the message of Islam. When Abdullah kept asking for guidance, the Prophet then frowned at him and continued his conversation with the unbelievers. Upon this occasion, the first ten verses in chapter 80 of the Qur'an were revealed, in which

1. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Signs of Miraculousness*, trans. Şükran Vahide (Istanbul: Sözler, 2004), 16.
2. Qur'an 96:1–5.
3. Al-Tirmidhi, *Jami' al-Tirmidhi*, book 49, hadith 3994.

God admonished Muhammad for frowning at the blind man.[4] The same chapter of the Qur'an also takes its name from the occasion: "He Frowned" ("Abasa").

Muhammad was eager to preserve the revelations and transmit them to his companions. He would recite every revealed verse, and his scribes would take dictation. The Prophet and the archangel Gabriel would recite the revealed verses to each other and review them once a year during the month of Ramadan. They did this traditional recitation and review of the revelation twice in the last year of Muhammad's life.[5] In addition, the revealed portions of the Qur'an would be recited communally during the Prophet's time, especially during the month of Ramadan. Muslims continued this tradition after Muhammad's death. From early times, recitation was one of the most common ways of engaging with the Qur'an. This form of engagement with the words of God made them accessible to the entire community, as men, women, and children were able to hear and recite scripture from the beginning of the revelations.

Compilation and Canonization

While the Prophet was alive, scribes engraved the verses of the Qur'an on leather and bones, but the preservation of the revealed words was mainly done orally through memorization and recitation. A sizable number of Muhammad's companions, for instance, were known as memorizers (*huffaz*) of the Qur'an. During the reign of Abu Bakr (r. 632–34), some of these people died in a battle. These deaths raised concern within the Muslim community over possibly losing some of Muhammad's precious revelations. In order to preserve the Qur'an in a formal and durable way, Abu Bakr formed a committee and appointed Zayd bin Thabit, one of the Prophet's scribes, as chair. The committee brought together both the written versions of the revealed verses and the *huffaz*. The committee members were able to come to a consensus on the text of the Qur'an as a book (*mushaf*), which they entrusted first to Abu Bakr and then to his successor, Umar (r. 634–44). Tradition recounts that the copy was then passed to Umar's daughter Hafsa, who was married to Muhammad.

4. Joseph E. B. Lumbard, Commentary on *Surat 'Abasa*, in Nasr et al, Study Qur'an, 1475.
5. Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, book 1, hadith 6.

During the reign of the third caliph, Uthman (r. 644–56), Islam expanded into non-Arabic-speaking regions. This raised the issue of access to the Qur'an as well as its proper recitation. Some oral versions included minor differences, which all had been considered valid readings since the time of Muhammad. To address these differing readings, more copies of the Qur'an were needed. A committee of a dozen Muslims came together and copied the Qur'an. They then sent an exact copy of the same version of this Qur'an along with reciters to each of the seven major areas of the Muslim world, including Yemen, Kufa, Basra, Damascus, and Mecca. These books are known as the Uthmanic copies. While having copies in various regions of Islam settled many issues concerning the text as well as the recitation, some textual matters remained unresolved. The Uthmanic copies, for example, did not have diacritical marks or vowel symbols, which made reading the Qur'an a challenge. To make the Qur'an more accessible, a dotting and diacritical system was introduced in the late seventh century CE during the Umayyad dynasty. Khalil bin Ahmad, an Arab philologist, approved the system in use today in the eighth century CE.[6]

Form and Structure

The Qur'an neither follows a chronology nor concerns itself with genealogy. Although it contains 114 chapters and more than six thousand verses, the Qur'an is a relatively short text compared to the Bible or the Hindu Vedas. The chapters are divided into two groups: those that Muhammad received in Mecca and those that he received in Medina. The Meccan chapters confronted unbelievers who opposed the new message. They are centered on the belief in one God (*tawhid*), issues of moral accountability, and the resurrection. Because Meccans already believed themselves to be advanced in literature and poetry, the Qur'an challenged them with "the highest styles of eloquence [*i'jaz*]" in words.[7] Many of the Meccan chapters are short and poetic. Unlike the Meccan chapters, the Medinan chapters focus more on issues related to faith and practice. They provide guidelines for how believers should conduct both their personal and public lives. Given that a sizable number of Jews and Christians lived in Medina, these chapters also engage some theological and practical aspects of Judaism and Christianity.

6. Abdulhamit Birışık, "Kur'an," in *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: TDV, 2002), 26:386.
7. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Words* (Istanbul: Sözler, 2008), 469.

Major Themes

Some major themes recur throughout the Qur'an. The first is *tawhid*, or the unity of God, which almost all chapters of the Qur'an directly or indirectly discuss. The qur'anic verses repeatedly point to God's creations around us, continually referring to such things as the stars, mountains, seas, trees, birds, humans, fruits, and milk as signs of God (*ayat*). Many of the chapters of the Qur'an are named after things God created. For example, chapter 2, which is the longest, is titled "The Cow." Others are named "The Cattle," "The Thunder," "The Bee," "The Light," "The Spider," "The Mount," "The Star," "The Moon," "The Human Being," and so on. The Qur'an uses different names for God and presents creation as the manifestation of his names. In one of the verses, for example, God is described as light: "God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The Parable of His Light is as if there were a niche and within it a lamp. The lamp enclosed in glass. The glass is a shining star kindled from a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west. Its oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light! God guides to His light whomever He pleases and gives examples for people. God has knowledge of everything."[8]

The second major theme of the Qur'an is prophecy (*nubuwwa*). For the journey of knowing God (*marifah*), there are three major sources: scriptures, the universe, and the prophets. The Qur'an repeatedly invokes the stories of the prophets—Abraham, Jesus, Moses, Noah, Ishmael, and Joseph—and points out that there are messages in these stories for believers: "There is, in their stories, a lesson for those who understand. It is not a tale invented, but a confirmation of what came before it, a clear exposition of all things, and a guide and a mercy for people who believe."[9]

The third theme is the hereafter and resurrection. The Qur'an alludes to the signs (*ayat*) in the universe when it points to the resurrection. It emphasizes that everything done in life is recorded and that there will eventually be a bodily resurrection to a realm of accountability. When Meccan unbelievers questioned the rationality of a bodily resurrection, the Qur'an pointed to the creation of humans, stating that the One who created humans in the first place could give them life again.[10] The Qur'an mentions spring—the resurrection of creation after winter—as

8. Qur'an 24:35.
9. Qur'an 12:111.
10. Qur'an 36:77–83.

more evidence of life after death: "Look, therefore, at the prints of God's mercy, how He gives life to the earth after its death. Indeed, this is the same God who will give life to the dead for He has power over all things."[11]

The fourth major theme of the Qur'an is worship. The Qur'an frequently refers to believers as those who worship and glorify God and remarks that God created humans so that they could worship him in response to his manifestations throughout creation.[12]

The fifth central theme is justice: "You who believe," the Qur'an tells us, "Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to God, even if it is against yourselves, or your parents, or your close relatives, and whether it be (against) rich or poor for God can best protect both. Do not follow your desire to avoid justice. If you distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily God is fully aware of what you do."[13] In another verse, believers are asked to be just in their affairs, even in difficult situations: "You who believe! Stand out firmly for God, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just, that is nearer to piety and be mindful of God. God is fully aware of what you do."[14] Although the Qur'an repeatedly encourages the believer to be a just person who longs to restore justice on earth, it also ties the concept of justice to the idea of resurrection and life after death. The reasoning is that God's justice is partly revealed in this world and will have its complete manifestation in the hereafter. It is also important to point out that while the Qur'an is often presented as a book of law, only around three hundred of its over six thousand verses address legal issues.

The Qur'an in Muslim Living

I spent the summer of 2011 in Egypt. I heard recitations of the Qur'an not only in mosques but also in markets, cafés, and even a cab. The country's soundscape is suffused with the language of the Qur'an. Perhaps the most unique experience I had was in an elevator in a building in Cairo. When I pushed the button to go up or down, a voice came over a speaker and recited the following verse from the

11. Qur'an 30:50.
12. Qur'an 51:56.
13. Qur'an 4:135.
14. Qur'an 5:8.

Qur'an: "Glory be to God who has given us control over this, for we could never have accomplished this by ourselves."[15] This message applies to more than elevators. When Muslims ride on a ship or an animal, they remember God's blessings and contemplate his grace. To embody this qur'anic message in modern life, some Muslim airlines make sure that passengers listen to this prayer before the airplane takes off. Muslims even install this prayer in their cars. When they start the engine, it recites the same verse.

The most common way Muslims have engaged with the Qur'an since its inception is through recitation, whether from memory or readings of the Qur'an. This approach makes the words of God more accessible to believers. Many Muslims memorize the divine words just by listening to daily recitations in Muslim societies. In addition to recounting verses during worship and prayers, observant Muslims engage with the Qur'an during their daily affairs. At funerals, for example, attendees recite particular sections of scripture, usually from "Surat al-Yasin" (chapter 36). Upon hearing that a fellow Muslim has died, Muslims recite the following passage: "We belong to God and to Him we shall return."[16] At weddings, they say, "People, be mindful of your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And be mindful of God, through whom you appeal one another and invoke family relationships. Indeed, God is always watching over you."[17] People in Muslim societies gather often and at various venues simply to enjoy the recitation of the Qur'an.

Muslims, whether they are native Arabic speakers or not, usually memorize some portions of the Qur'an in Arabic, especially the first chapter, "Al-Fatiha." Committing the Qur'an to memory has long been a tradition among Muslims, and today, thousands of qur'anic schools around the world teach children to memorize the entire book. A chain of qur'anic schools in Pakistan, for example, has been giving the certificate of memorization to around 60,000 students annually.[18] In Turkey, more than 150,000 Muslims were certified as *huffaz* between 1970 and 2019.[19]

15. Qur'an 43:13.
16. Qur'an 2:156.
17. Qur'an 4:1.
18. "Pakistan Tops World with Qur'an Huffaz," Darul Ihsan Humanitarian Centre, July 17, 2014, https://darulihsan.com/index.php/news/item/5840-pakistan-tops-world-with-qur'an-huffaz.
19. Ayhan İşcen, "'Türkiye'deki hafız sayısı 150 bini geçti,'" AA.com, May 10, 2019, https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/turkiyedeki-hafiz-sayisi-150-bini-gecti/1603171.

Those who carry the divine words in their hearts enjoy a special respect within the Muslim community. Many are internationally recognized.

The Qur'an has also had a significant effect on Islamic art, especially calligraphy. qur'anic calligraphies adorn not only mosques but also offices, houses, and stores. Major monuments of the Muslim world such as the Taj Mahal in India, the Alhambra in Spain, and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem are also decorated with qur'anic verses. Upon building the Taj Mahal in memory of his beloved deceased wife, Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (d. 1666) inscribed on its walls verses from the Qur'an concerning judgment day, rewards, and heaven. On the southern part of the main gate, the following verses are inscribed: "O you soul at peace, return to your Lord, well pleased and well pleasing unto Him. Join My devotees and enter my Paradise."[20]

The Qur'an has also shaped Muslims' daily language. Arabic terms and phrases such as "In the name of God" (*bismillah*), "God willing" (*inshaallah*), "Praise be to God" (*alhamdulillah*), and "God's peace be upon you" (*assalaamu alaikum*) come from the Qur'an and have become part of a shared Muslim language. Many Muslim names such as Ayaat (signs), Akbar (greatest), Bushra (good news), Huda (guidance), Ibrahim (Abraham), Ihsan (kindness), Iman (faith), Isa (Jesus), Jamil (beautiful), Jannah (paradise), Maryam (Mary), Musa (Moses), Naeem (bliss), Nasr (victory), Qamar (moon), Salam (peace), Saleh (pious), Shakir (thankful), Tayyib (virtuous), and Yunus (Joseph) are all based on the Qur'an.

Quite literally, Muslims elevate the Qur'an whenever there is a chance—for example, by placing their copy on a high shelf. In addition, before reciting from the Qur'an, Muslims usually perform minor ablutions, physically purifying themselves with water.[21]

Interpretations

Muhammad's death left Muslims with the challenge of determining how to accurately interpret the Qur'an. Before the Prophet died, believers would come to him seeking clarification on the sacred words. In their eyes, Muhammad was the living Qur'an. His

20. Qur'an 89:27–30.
21. For the etiquette of approaching the Qur'an, see Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (Cairo: al-Quds, 2012), 1:450–77.

departure from this world left his followers with many questions. How would they understand the scripture without the Prophet's earthly presence? How should they conduct their lives according to the will of God? Naturally, Muslims turned first to the Qur'an for answers. But not everything in the Qur'an was clear. So how should they interpret the ambiguous parts? What did God intend with each verse?

Attempting to answer these questions became the most important mission of Muslim exegetes (*mufassirun*). Scholars of the Qur'an already knew that the ultimate meaning of the divine words was hidden in the mind of God. They believed, therefore, that the interpretations of the qur'anic verses could never be exhausted, since the Qur'an was itself the eternal word of God. This approach generated a great diversity of interpretations, and *mufassirun* often concluded their commentaries with the phrase "God knows best," humbly acknowledging that their understanding of the Qur'an was just one of many.

Two major exegetical categories have emerged: tradition-based commentary (*tafsir bi al-ma'thur*) and independent reasoning–based commentary (*tafsir bi al-ra'y*). Tradition-based commentary is heavily focused on the text. According to this approach, the exegete begins to interpret a verse through other verses in the Qur'an, then looks at the hadith texts, and finally consults the works of the first and second generations of Muslims.[22] Independent reasoning–based commentary broadens the resources available to exegetes' interpretations. In addition to the sources used for the tradition-based commentaries, they also look at the perspectives of later scholars, principles of jurisprudence, and the writings of Muslim theologians. Within these two broad categories, diverse traditions developed: commentaries based on Sunni or Shiite interpretative approaches, theology, law, mysticism, and philosophy. In modern times, in response to the need for qur'anic commentaries that are compatible with and speak to the spirit of the age, modernist, scientific, sociopolitical, feminist, as well as contextualist commentaries have emerged.

Translations

Whether Muslims should accept as sacred text the translation of the Qur'an in any language other than Arabic has been a pressing question since Islam began being

22. Abdullah Saeed, *The Qur'an: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 179.

practiced among non-Arab speakers. When it comes to the translation of the holy text, many compare it to the ways Christians judge different versions of the Bible. However, while Christians regard translations as legitimate and authoritative, Muslims believe that engaging with the Qu'ran in Arabic is always preferable.

Translating the Qur'an into other languages has been a contentious issue among Muslim scholars from the early years of Islam. On the one hand, some claimed that the scripture could not be translated. They based their argument on the orthodox approach—namely, that the Qur'an is miraculous in not only content but also form and that both aspects would be lost in translation. On the other hand, the Qur'an states that it is a divine message for all humanity. Considering that only a small percentage of people could access the Qur'an in Arabic, others argued that it should be more broadly available. Muslim scholars generally agree that the Qur'an is not translatable but has been translated anyway. Thus most scholars regard any translation as an interpretation. This is why one finds so many different versions of the English translation, each with a distinct approach, including orthodox, progressive, Sufi, and feminist translations.

Any discussion of translations of Islamic scripture needs to highlight two important characteristics of the Qur'an. First, Muslim scholars have emphasized that in addition to its content, God also revealed its inimitable (*i'jaz al-Qur'an*) form and structure. The Qur'an itself teaches this lesson. Addressing those who doubt that it is a revelation, for example, the Qur'an points out that "if you are in doubt about what We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a Sura like it; and call upon your supporters other than God if you are truthful."[23] The verse concludes by stating that anyone who tries to do so will fail. Another verse emphasizes the inimitability of the Qur'an: "If the whole of mankind and jinns came together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like of it, even if they backed up each other with help and support."[24] Many major qur'anic exegetes, therefore, dedicated volumes of their commentaries to this feature. Among them are al-Jahiz (d. 868), al-Baqillani (d. 1013), al-Jurjani (d. 1078), al-Razi (d. 1210), and al-Zamakhshari (d. 1144).

Second, reciting the Qur'an *in Arabic* is a key component of Islamic spirituality. To do so is a form of contemplation (*tafakkur*), an act of remembrance (*dhikr*), and a supplication to God (*dua*). Since any translation would lack these aspects of qur'anic spirituality, any translation of the Qur'an technically cannot be received as the "Qur'an."

23. Qur'an 2:23.
24. Qur'an 17:88.

The Qur'an in the United States

The journey of the Qur'an to the United States dates from early colonial times. Documents from the 1500s mention Muslim names, and scholars believe around 15 percent of West Africans brought to the United States as slaves were Muslims. Many of these slaves were educated and well versed in both the Arabic language and the Qur'an.[25] These slaves' engagement with Muslim scripture often impressed their masters. Because of the slaves' knowledge about Christianity—its theology and its scriptures—they were able to engage in conversations about theological issues in their encounters with Christians.

Ayuba Suleiman Diallo, also known as Job Ben Solomon, was enslaved around 1730 in the eastern part of today's Senegal and brought to Annapolis, Maryland. His knowledge of the Qur'an and Arabic impressed James Oglethorpe, the founder of Georgia and a member of the British parliament. He bought Job and took him to England. According to his biographer, Thomas Bluett, Job made three copies of the Qur'an from memory.[26] Based on his knowledge of Jesus that he learned from the Qur'an, Job was able to discuss the concept of the Trinity and belief in the virgin birth of Jesus with his sponsors.[27]

The Qur'an is also vividly present in dialogues between Abd al-Rahman Ibrahima and Christians. A Muslim noble and military leader, Abd al-Rahman was brought to the Americas as a slave from today's Guinea. When he was asked to write the Lord's Prayer in Arabic, he wrote the first chapter of the Qur'an, "Al-Fatiha." Like Job Ben Solomon, because of his knowledge of the Qur'an, he was able to engage with Christian scripture and its theology.[28]

25. Carl W. Ernst, *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 18.
26. Edward E. Curtis, *Muslims in America: A Short History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 2.
27. Curtis, 3.
28. Curtis, 9.

The Qur'an played a significant part in the life of Omar bin Sayyid. Omar was brought from West Africa to Charleston, South Carolina, around 1807.[29] In his 1831 autobiography, Omar engages with qur'anic verses and extensively quotes from chapter 67, "Surah al-Mulk."[30] Muslims often memorize this section of the Qur'an, and it is therefore not surprising that Omar knew it by heart. The chapter emphasizes that dominion or power belongs to God, not to humans: "Blessed be He in whose hands is sovereignty; and He has power over everything. He who created death and life, that He may test which of you is best in deed; and He is the Mighty, the Forgiving. He who created the seven heavens one above another."[31] As a slave, believing this qur'anic message helped Omar find comfort and hope.

Lamen Kebe, who was a teacher in West Africa before his enslavement in 1795, told a man named Theodore Dwight about methods of teaching the Qur'an and the meaning of the Arabic words.[32] Thus one of his owners bought him a copy of the Qur'an and an Arabic Bible.[33]

Some qur'anic verses even found their way into antislavery debates. A few decades before the Civil War began, some abolitionists engaged with Islam in order to challenge slavery. An edition of the *New Hampshire Patriot* from 1810, for example, relates a story from Islam:

> A singular instance of forbearance, arising from the powerful influence of religious principles, is recorded in the history of Caliphs. A slave one day during a repast, was so unfortunate as to let fall a dish which he was handing to the Caliph Hassan, who was severely scalded by the accident. The trembling wretch instantly fell on his knees, and quoting the Qur'an, exclaimed: "Paradise is promised to those who restrain their anger." "I am not angry with thee," replied the Caliph, with a meekness as exemplary as it was rare. "And for those who forgive offences," continued the slave. "I forgive thee thine," answered the Caliph. "But above all, for those who return good for evil," adds the slave, "I set thee at liberty," rejoins the Caliph, and "give thee ten dinars."[34]

29. Ala Alryyes, *A Muslim American Slave: The Life of Omar Ibn Said* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 61–63.
30. Curtis, *Muslims in America*, 13.
31. Qur'an 67:1–3.
32. Allan D. Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 121.
33. Alryyes, *Muslim American Slave*, 73.

Verse 134 in chapter 3 of the Qur'an is at the center of this story. It teaches that God loves those who give to charity in ease and in hardship, restrain their anger, and forgive people.[35]

When Thomas Jefferson's library was moved to the Library of Congress in the early 1800s, among his more than six thousand books was a copy of the Qur'an, which currently occupies a shelf in the reading room. Keith Ellison, the first US Muslim elected to Congress from Minnesota, took his oath on Jefferson's copy of the Qur'an.[36]

Today, the Qur'an is still a major influence in the lives of Muslims in the United States. One can find qur'anic schools as well as study circles around the country in which Muslims learn not only to understand and recite the Qur'an but also to memorize it and learn its language. They try to live up to its message in their daily lives as much as they can. However, since not everything is clearly laid out in the Qur'an, Muslims rely on another sacred source, the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, which is the subject of the following chapter.

34. Cited in Peter Manseau, *One Nation, under Gods: A New American History* (New York: Little, Brown, 2015), 236.
35. Qur'an 3:134.
36. "Thomas Jefferson's Copy of the Koran to Be Used in Congressional Swearing-In Ceremony," Library of Congress press release, January 3, 2007, https://www.loc.gov/item/prn-07-001/.