This guide is intended to help you get started with researching Islamic Law. The selective list of resources is only a sampling of what is available on this topic. Please refer to the additional sources listed throughout the guide for more in-depth coverage of the topic. Islamic law is a reference to primary and secondary sources of law and the methodology used to apply law. Islamic law originates in two major sources, namely divine revelation (wahy) and human reason (aql). This dual identity of Islamic law is reflected in Shariah and fiqh[1]. The former make up the primary sources discussed in part II and the latter is the human understanding and knowledge derived from the primary sources discussed in part III.

Contents

1 Primary Sources of Islamic Law
   1.1 Quran
      - 1.1.1 Online English Translations
      - 1.1.2 Selective list of online translations:
   1.2 Sunnah
      - 1.2.1 Hadith/Qawliyyah
      - 1.2.2 Shi'a Collections
2 Secondary Sources of Islamic Law
   2.1 Tafsir (Interpretation of Quran)
   2.2 Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence)
   2.3 Madhhabs (Schools of Fiqh)
3 General sources on Islam
   3.1 Encyclopedias
   3.2 Periodicals
   3.3 Books
   3.4 Research Guides & Bibliographies & Indexes
4 Footnotes

Primary Sources of Islamic Law

The Arabic term for source in Islamic law is dalil (guide)[2]. There are two primary sources of Islamic law: Quran and Sunnah. Quran and Sunnah make up Shariah (pathway), the source of all principles of Islamic law[3].

Quran

The literal meaning of Quran is that which should be recited, read, or studied and refers to the book
embodies the revelation from Allah to Prophet Muhammad[^4]. There is only one authentic and uniform text of the Quran in Arabic that is in use throughout the Muslim world. The Arabic text is often found in the English translations, some of which are provided below. However, there are many translations and interpretations (discussed later) of the Arabic text. The leading translations in English[^5] are available in print and online:

### Online English Translations

- Shakir, M.H. *The Qur’an*.  
- Pickthall, M. *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*.  
- Irving, T.B. *The Qur’an : the first American version*.  

### Selective list of online translations:

- [http://www.qurandatabase.org/](http://www.qurandatabase.org/)  
- [http://tanzil.info/](http://tanzil.info/)  
- Online Quran Project, [http://community.al-quran.info/](http://community.al-quran.info/)  
- Compared translations, [http://www.islamawakened.com/quran/1/](http://www.islamawakened.com/quran/1/)  

### Sunnah

Sunnah is roughly translated as the traditions and practices of Prophet Muhammad. There are three types of Sunnah. 1) The sayings of the Prophet – Sunnah Qawliyyah/Hadith. 2) The actions of the Prophet – Sunnah Al Filiyya. 3) Sunnah Taqrīriyyah, practices prevailing at the time of the Prophet which he did not oppose or prohibit.

### Hadith/Qawliyyah

Hadith/Qawliyyah are the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. The following sample searches in a library catalog will yield many collections of hadith. Hadith – texts Hadith -- Criticism, interpretation, etc. The six major Hadith collections listed below were collected by Islamic scholars approximately 200 years after Prophet Muhammad's death. These are listed in order of authenticity.

1. Sahih Bukhari, collected by Imam Bukhari (d. 870), includes 7275 hadiths  

2. Sahih Muslim, collected by Muslim b. al-Hajjaj (d. 875), includes 9200  

3. Sunan al-Sughra, collected by al-Nasa’i (d. 915)

4. Sunan Abu Dawood, collected by Abu Dawood (d. 888)


5. Sunan al-Tirmidhi, collected by al-Tirmidhi (d. 892)


6. Sunan ibn Majah, collected by Ibn Majah


**Shi’a Collections**

There are also Shi’a Collections of Hadith. A subject search in a library catalog, such as, WorldCat for Hadith (Shiites) will yield many sources. The prominent Shi’a collections include Twelver collections, Ismaili, and Mu’tazili. These can also be used as search terms to locate relevant collections.

There are also bibliographies on Hadith, see: Brown, Jonathan A.C.. "Hadith". In Oxford Bibliographies Online. 02-Jul-2010. [http://www.oxfordbibliographiesonline.com](http://www.oxfordbibliographiesonline.com).

**Secondary Sources of Islamic Law**

**Tafsir (Interpretation of Quran)**

Tafsir (interpretation of Quran) is the science of interpreting and rendering commentary on the Quran, its exegesis. The sources of commentary on Islam are: 1) the Quran itself because a verse of the Quran is often used to explain another verse; 2) the Hadith. Many of the collections listed above have sections devoted to tafsir; 3) accounts of Sahabah, the companions of the Prophet Muhammad; 4) accounts of Taibun, the generation that had direct contact with the Sahabah. A few of the prominent Tafsirs are listed below. A search in a library catalog for Tafsir will yield many others.

Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence)

Fiqh is the process of deducing and applying Shariah principles. Fiqh is also the collective body of laws deduced from Shariah. Ijtihad (literally striving or exertion) is the process of making a legal decision by independent or original interpretation of the legal sources, the Quran and the Sunnah. Ijtihad is embodied in the works of jurists of various schools of thought. Fiqh and ijtihad are not to be equated with divine revelation and, therefore, they are considered secondary to Quran and Sunnah. There are several methodologies of fiqh, listed below, recognized by Islamic jurists and ijtihad occurs in a variety of forms. A subject search in a library catalog for fiqh, Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic law will yield many general collections. More specific sources discussing the methodologies below can be found by searching these terms: ijma, qiyas, istihsan, istihab, urf.

- Ijma (general consensus of opinion from among the companions of Muhammad or the learned scholars)
- Qiyas (analogical reasoning/deduction)
- Istihsan (juristic preference to ensure equity/public interest)
- Istihab (presumption of continuity)
- Urf (local custom)

Madhhab (Schools of Fiqh)

The nineteen schools of fiqh madhhab that developed during the first four centuries of Islam has condensed to five of which four are sunni and one shia. The sunni schools are: Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'I, Hanbali and the shia school is Jafari.

General sources on Islam

Encyclopedias

There are many encyclopedia sets on Islam and Islamic law. Below is a selective list. A subject search in a library catalog for Islamic law – Encyclopedias and Islam -Encyclopedias should retrieve a list of the collections available in the library. Additionally, browsing the collection under the Hicks/Schiller call number, Islam 000, in Pegasus will retrieve several of these sets. There are also encyclopedias dedicated to subjects within Islam/Islamic law, a few of these are listed below as well.

- The Cambridge History of Islam in four volumes from the complete Cambridge Histories Online.
  - The Cambridge History of Islam Vol. 2A: The Indian sub-continent, South-East Asia, Africa

Periodicals

This is a selective list of periodicals. A subject search in a library catalog for Islamic law – Periodicals will also retrieve a list of periodicals. Another option to locate articles is to search an index. Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals has several Islamic journals indexed. For further information on locating articles, please refer to our research guide, Finding Books and Articles on International and Foreign Law.

- Islamic law and society (online). Islamic law and society (print). Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–.
- Journal of Islamic and comparative law. Nigeria: Centre of Islamic Legal Studies, Faculty of Law, Ahmadu Bello University, 1967–.
- UCLA journal of Islamic and Near Eastern law. Los Angeles: UCLA School of Law, 2002–.
- Journal of law and society. Peshawar: Legal Research Centre, Faculty of Law, University of Peshawar, 1982–.

Books

A search in Pegasus by Hicks/Schiller call# Islam will retrieve a list of the materials in our collection. Another search in Pegasus by subject, Islam, will also retrieve relevant materials. Browsing the subject headings under Islam will help narrow down this list. For more detailed information on finding books, please refer to our research guide, Finding Books and Articles on International and Foreign Law.

Research Guides & Bibliographies & Indexes

- Columbia Religious Studies Subject Guide.
- Amissah, Ralph. Lex Mercatoria. Islamic and International law.

Footnotes

4. Id., at 11.

Retrieved from "http://library.law.columbia.edu/guides/Islamic_law_research_guide"