

## Comparison of Sunni and Shia Islam

	Sunnah	Shia (or Shi'ah)
adherents called	Sunnis	Shiites, Shi'i
meaning of name	"well-trodden path" or "tradition"	"party" or "partisans" of Ali
current adherents	940 million	120 million
percentage of total Muslims	90%	10%
primary locations	most Muslim countries	Iran, Iraq, Yemen
subjects	none, but four major schools of Muslim law are recognized	Ithna 'Ashariyah (Twelvers; the largest), Isma'iliyah and Zaydiyah
origins	c. 632 CE; theology developed especially in 10th cent.	c. 632-650 CE; killing of Ali's son Husayn in 680 CE is major event
did Muhammad designate a successor?	no	yes
true successor of the Prophet	Abu Bakr, father of the Prophet's favoured wife, 'A'ishah (elected by people of Medina)	'Ali ibn Abi Talib, husband of the Prophet's daughter Fatimah (designated by the Prophet)
qualifications for ruler of Islam	tribe of the Prophet (Quraysh); later, any qualified ruler	family of the Prophet
current leaders	imams	mujtahids
identity of imams	human leaders	infallible manifestations of God and perfect interpreters of the Qur'an
the "hidden imam"	doctrine rejected	works through mujtahids to interpret Qur'an; will return at the end of time
religious authority other than the Qu'ran	ijma' (consensus) of the Muslim community	infallible imams
concealing faith for self-protection (taqiya)	affirmed under certain circumstances	emphasized
temporary marriage (mut'ah)	practiced in the Prophet's time, but now rejected	still practiced
holy cities	<u>Mecca</u> , <u>Medina</u>	<u>Mecca</u> , <u>Medina</u> , <u>Najaf</u> , <u>Karbala</u>
major holidays	<u>Eid al-Adha</u> , <u>Eid al-Fitr</u>	<u>Eid al-Adha</u> , <u>Eid al-Fitr</u> , <u>Ashura</u>