

## Muslims in the Middle East

My understanding re. Sunni and Shia

Political rather vs. Spiritual differences concerning leadership following death of Mohammed

Sunni - from the Counselors of Mohammed - essence of the teaching of Mohammed

Shia from Ali, a relative of Mohammed - believed he was the "Natural leader" of Islam following Mohammed - tend to be more Conservative, e.g., flagellation

Both share main articles of faith and are considered by most to be "Brethren in faith"

Many do not identify themselves as one or the other

Now Some Spiritual differences

1. Sunnis
  - a. 85% world wide
  - b. do not believe in hereditary and/or privileged of class of leaders
2. Shia Muslims
  - a. believe the Imam is sinless and infallible
  - b. Shia reject any teachings or traditions developed from the counselors of Mohammed - this impacts all aspects of the faith - prayer, fasting - pilgrimage etc.
  - c. Primarily in Iran and Iraq

Current Populations

1. Most Middle Eastern countries are primarily Sunni
2. Afghanistan
  - 80% are Sunni - Mainly Pashtu
  - Taliban are Sunni - from Madras schools in Pakistan
3. Saudi Arabia is primarily Sunni but of the Wahhabi persuasion
  - Wahhabi - born in Saudi Arabia in the 18<sup>th</sup> Cent.
  - Quite Conservative - taught return to the original practices of Islam
4. Egypt - primarily Sunni
5. Iraq 35% are Sunnis as was Sadam Husain
  - 60+% Shia kept at bay by Sadam - then worked the people
  - Clerics Ali Sustani and Sadir - Shia - now in Iran
6. Pakistan, Sunni majority with minority very active Shia
7. Iraq, and Iran are primarily Shia