Major Branches and Communities of Interpretation

Ismailis

Recognize Ismail ibn Ja'far (d. 728/786), grandson of the Prophet and descendant of Fatimah bint Ali, to be the 5th Imam. Following his death, the line of Imams included:

- Hassan (d. 1221), Alai al-Din Muhammad (d. 1255), Rukn al-Din al-salaam (d. 1166), Nur al-Din Muhammad (d. 1210), Jalal al-Din Alamut -- al-Hadi, al-Muhtadi, al-Qahir (d. 1162), Hasan ala-dhikrihi al-Mustansir. Recognize the descendants of Nizar ibn Mustansir in the line of Imams.

Zaydis

Recognize Zaydi ibn Ali (d. 740), son of Ali Zayn al-Abidin (d. 713) as the 6th Imam. Subsequently recognize any Husaynid Alids who have been designated and appointed via a clear designation (wasi') as the spiritual and temporal successor of Muhammad. Ali ibn Abi Talib is recognized as the divinely-designated Imam and are prevalent in Iran, Iraq, India, Pakistan, Africa, the Middle East and Western Europe. Other Twelver branches include the Alawis of Syria and the Alevis of Turkey.

Sunni

Recognize the Caliphate as the political successor of Muhammad; recognize the scholars (ulama) as the religious inheritors of Muhammad. Sunni groups adhere to various legal schools including the Hanafi, Hanbali, Shafii, Maliki, and Zahir. The faqhi schools are not technically Sunnis and may be closer to the Kharijis who only recognize the Kharijite Right-Guided Caliphs. Sunnis also adhere to different theological schools including the Hanbali, Hanafi, and Maliki, including but mystical thought.

Imams

Recognize Ali ibn al-Hanafiyyah as the Imam and Mahdi in occultation. Led by a descendant of Ali, the Imam and Mahdi will reappear in the future. The Imam is recognized as the spiritual leader of the Muslims. The Ummah (Muslim Community) and Muhammad is His final Prophet.

Ihmas 'Asharis (Twelvers)

Recognize Musa ibn Ja'far (d. 799 or 803) as the 6th Imam and successor to Ja'far ibn Mutawakkil. Recognize the successors of Musa as the 7th to 12th Imams. Recognize Ismaili Imams up to Imam al-Hakim. Broke with the Fatimid Ismailis after Imam al-Hakim. The 12th Imam has gone into concealment (ghaybah) and it is believed that the Imam will reappear before the Day of Judgment. Most Twelvers follow the authority of the Ayatollahs in seminaries in the Islamic world and are prevalent in Iran, Iraq, India, Pakistan, Africa, the Middle East and Western Europe. Other Twelver branches include the Alawis of Syria and the Alevis of Turkey.

Qutbas

Recognize the scholars (ulama) as the religious inheritors of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib. Believe that al-Hakim and Hamza has gone into concealment and will reappear in the future. Led by a descendant of Ali, the Imam and Mahdi will reappear in the future. Most Twelvers follow the authority of the Ayatollahs in seminaries in the Islamic world and are prevalent in Iran, Iraq, India, Pakistan, Africa, the Middle East and Western Europe. Other Twelver branches include the Alawis of Syria and the Alevis of Turkey.

Druze (Unitarians)

Recognize Druze Imam Imran al-Husayn (d. 1057) as the Imam. Believe that al-Husayn and his son Zaydi ibn Ali (d. 740) were the Imams. The Imam is recognized as the spiritual leader of the Muslims. The Ummah (Muslim Community) and Muhammad is His final Prophet.

Mustali-Tayyibi Ismailis (Bohras)

Recognize Ahmad ibn Mustali as the 8th Imam and Imam of the Bohras. Recognize the son of Imam Mustali as the Imam. Recognize the son of Imam Mustali as the Imam. Recognize the Imam as the spiritual leader of the Muslims. The Ummah (Muslim Community) and Muhammad is His final Prophet.

Nizaris

Recognize the descendants of Fatima bint Ali, the daughter of Imam Ali and Fatimah bint of Muhammad. The Nizari Imams are the descendants of Mustansir ibn Zayd. Recognize Zaydi ibn Ali (d. 740), son of Ali Zayn al-Abidin (d. 713) as the 6th Imam. Subsequently recognize any Husaynid Alids who have been designated and appointed via a clear designation (wasi') as the spiritual and temporal successor of Muhammad. Ali ibn Abi Talib is recognized as the divinely-designated Imam and are prevalent in Iran, Iraq, India, Pakistan, Africa, the Middle East and Western Europe. Other Twelver branches include the Alawis of Syria and the Alevis of Turkey.

Qasimshahi Nizari Ismailis

Recognize Qasim ibn Shams al-Din al-Qasimi as the 10th Imam and Imam of the Qasimshahi Nizari Ismailis. Recognize the descendants of Qasim ibn Shams al-Din al-Qasimi as the Imam of the Qasimshahi Nizari Ismailis. The 21st Imam is the Imam of the Qasimshahi Nizari Ismailis. The Imam is recognized as the spiritual leader of the Muslims. The Ummah (Muslim Community) and Muhammad is His final Prophet.

Muhammadshahi Nizari Ismailis

Recognize Muhammad shah as the 44th Imam and Imam of the Muhammadshahi Nizari Ismailis. The Imam is recognized as the spiritual leader of the Muslims. The Ummah (Muslim Community) and Muhammad is His final Prophet.

The Ummah (Muslim Community)

Affirm that there is no god but God and Muhammad is His final Prophet.