

# KHURRAMITES – “WHITE RAIMENTS”

Dr. Kersey Antia, May 19, 2019

From what Narsakhi reports about the “White Raiments,” who are also described similarly by Patricia Crone, it becomes apparent they were not Zoroastrians (*The History of Bukhara*, translated by R.N. Frye, Marcus Weimer Publishers, Princeton, 2007). Narsakhi describes them as the followers of Muqanna', a native of Merv. A bleacher at first, “he studied conjuring, the art of incantations, and talismans.” He “pretended to prophesy. Mahdi ibn Mansur killed him in the year 783 A.D.” He told his followers: “I am your lord and lord of all the world.” He continued: “I call myself by whatever name I wish. I am the one who showed myself to people as Adam, then in the form of Noah, also in the form of Abraham, Moses, then in the guise of Jesus, Muhammad the prophet, in the guise of Abu Muslim and now in the guise which you see” (p. 87-88). Apparently, therefore, there is no clear trace of Zoroastrian elements in his belief system. However, his followers “became numerous and the Muslims were impotent before them.” Finally the Calif Mehdi “himself came to Nishapur to put down that uprising (of the “White Raiments”). He feared that there was a danger that Islam would be lost and the religion of Muqanna' would spread throughout the entire world. Muqanna' invited the Turks and permitted them (to take) the life and possessions of the Muslims. Many troops came from Turkistan in the hope of plunder. They pillaged the districts and carried the women and children of Muslims into captivity and killed (others).” “A group of the “White Raiments” who were followers of Muqanna' went to the village called Numijkat. At night they entered the mosque and killed the muezzin and fifteen people. Then they killed all of the people of the village. There was a man of Bukharara who was one of the leaders of the followers of Muqanna'.” His name Hakin (ibn) Ahmad, sounds very Arabic. Narsakhi also informs us: “In Merv there was an Arab called 'Abdallah ibn' Amr, who joined Muqanna' and gave him his daughter as a wife. Everywhere he induced people to follow Muqanna' <curse him>. He turned many people from the road (of truth). In Kesh and its suburbs they were (especially numerous.” They killed their Arab Amir. “In Sughd most of the villages accepted the faith of Muqanna'. Many of the villages of Bukhara turned to infidelity and made manifest their infidelity. This evil increased and the afflictions on the Muslims became severe. They (the infidels) attacked caravans, pillaged villages, and caused much devastation” (p. 87-90). In an ensuing battle near the village of Narshakh, however, the White Raiments were defeated and “asked for amnesty. They said, “We have become Muslims.” Peace was made with them, and a peace treaty

was written. When the Muslims had withdrawn, the (White Raiments) broke the treaty. They again severed the highways and killed Muslims. They brought into the fortress of Narshakh the unripened ears of grain (of the Muslims), and the position of the Muslims became critical.

The Caliph Mahal “sent his prime minister, Jibra’l to fight Muqanna’. The Arabs “fought continuously for four months morning and evening. The “White Raiments” were victorious every day and the Muslims were helpless. They sought for a ruse.” They dug a tunnel to the wall of the fortress and “filled it full of fire wood and poured oil in it. They set fire to it so the pillars (they had set up) “would burn and the walls of the fortress would collapse,” and when they did, “the Muslims wielded their swords and killed many people. The remainder asked for a truce and they concluded an agreement on the same conditions they had made at first.” When the Arabs killed their leader, Hakim, by treachery, the “White Raiments again waged a battle. “The struggle was more obstinate than before. They fought fiercely and finally a second time they suffered defeat.”