

Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim

With the Name of God, All-Merciful, Most Merciful

PROPHECIES ABOUT THE ARMIES OF THE BLACK FLAGS OR BANNERS FROM KHURASAN AND THE EAST

Usama Hasan

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1 SUMMARY

1. Several hadiths or traditions in Sunni Muslim sources speak of the appearance of an army carrying black flags or banners from the East, specifically Khurasan (Khorasan), in support of an apocalyptic messianic figure, the Mahdi, at the end of time.
2. Historic Khorasan is largely in modern-day Afghanistan, but parts of it are in modern-day Iran and Turkmenistan.¹ According to another author, Khurasan is a term for a historical region spanning northeastern and eastern Iran and parts of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and northwestern Pakistan.²
3. These traditions are attributed as prophecies to the Prophet Muhammad himself, peace be upon him, thus giving them a powerful resonance in the minds of many devout Muslims who hear them; in particular, modern extremist and terrorist groups regularly quote them.
4. The traditions were first written down around the 3rd/9th century.
5. From the earliest times until today, most Hadith scholars regarded these traditions as fabricated Abbasid propaganda that was never uttered by the Prophet. Some Hadith scholars, ignoring their historical context, accepted them as authentic teachings of the Prophet.
6. During the century-long period of Umayyad rule, the idea of a messianic Mahdi became popular amongst rival Alid and Abbasids (descendants of Ali and Abbas, respectively) and their supporters. Abbasid propaganda in favour of their eventual overthrow of Umayyad rule included many references to the Mahdi, including fabricated hadiths claiming him as an Abbasid in response to the widespread view of him being Alid.
7. The main Abbasid military commander who led the overthrow of the Umayyads in the 2nd/8th century, was from Khorasan, as his name signifies: Abu Muslim al-Khurasani (c. 700-755).³ History records that his armies carried black flags or banners.
8. Based on traditional scrutiny of the hadiths' chains of transmission (*isnads – riwayat*) as well as rational considerations of history (*dirayah*), it is the author's firm conclusion that these hadiths were Abbasid propaganda fabricated 100-150 years after the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and are in no way true Muhammadan prophecies.
9. Contemporary Muslim preachers and activists should acknowledge and explain that these hadiths are at the least doubtful and disputed, if not clear fabrications, especially when they are often misused by contemporary extremist and terrorist groups.

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khorasan> (accessed 9 Sep 2013)

² See Charles Cameron, *Ali Soufan: AQ, Khorasan and the Black Banners*, <http://zenpundit.com/?p=4322>

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abu_Muslim_Khorasani (accessed 9 Sep 2013)

2 Fabricated hadiths: pro- and anti- ‘Abbasid propaganda

There are numerous fabricated (*mawdu’*) hadiths both in favour and against the Abbasid armies from Khurasan that appeared with black flags in the second century of Islam. This illustrates how hadiths were fabricated for use as propaganda by both sides.

2.1 Pro-Abbasid fabrications

- 1- Fabrication in the name of the Prophet: “The Mahdi will be a descendant of my uncle ‘Abbas.” – related by Daraqutni⁴
- 2- Fabrication in the name of the Prophet: “O ‘Abbas! God opened this matter by me and will seal it by a young man from your descendants who will fill the world with justice as it had been filled with tyranny. He is the one who will lead Jesus in prayer.” – related by Khatib Baghdadi in *Tarikh Baghdad* [“The History of Baghdad”]⁵
- 3- Fabrication in the name of the Prophet: “Should I not give you good tidings [O ‘Abbas]? God opened this matter by me and will seal it by your descendant.” – related by Abu Nu’aym in *Hilyah al-Awliya’* [“Adornment of the Saints”]⁶
- 4- Khatib Baghdadi transmitted a fabrication in the name of Ibn Abbas: “When the black flags emerge, bid the Persians well, for our rule [*dawlah*, also meaning ‘state’] will be with them.”⁷
- 5- Fabrication in the name of the Prophet: “O Abbas! When year thirty-five comes, it [the rule] will be for you and your descendants. Amongst them will be the Slayer (al-Saffah), and amongst them will be the One Helped to Victory (al-Mansur), and amongst them will be the Guided One (al-Mahdi).”⁸

⁴ Albani, *Silsilah al-Ahadith al-Da’ifah*, 4th ed., al-Maktab al-Islami, Beirut/Damascus, 1398, vol. 1 p. 108, no. 80

⁵ Albani, *Silsilah al-Ahadith al-Da’ifah*, 4th ed., al-Maktab al-Islami, Beirut/Damascus, 1398, vol. 1 p. 109, no. 81

⁶ Albani, *Silsilah al-Ahadith al-Da’ifah*, 4th ed., al-Maktab al-Islami, Beirut/Damascus, 1398, vol. 1 pp. 109-110, no. 82

⁷ Shawkani, *al-Fawa’id al-Majmu’ah fi l-Ahadith al-Mawdu’ah* [Collected Insights about Fabricated Traditions], Book of Praiseworthy Qualities, Chapter: Virtues of the Four Caliphs, the Prophet’s Household and the Rest of the Companions, Generally and Specifically, may God be pleased with them, and Virtues of Other People – hadith no. 1010,

http://library.islamweb.net/hadith/display_hbook.php?indexstartno=0&hflag=1&pid=530423&bk_no=1015&startno=167

⁸ Shawkani, *al-Fawa’id al-Majmu’ah fi l-Ahadith al-Mawdu’ah* [Collected Insights about Fabricated Traditions], Book of Praiseworthy Qualities, Chapter: Virtues of the Four Caliphs, the Prophet’s Household and the Rest of the Companions, Generally and Specifically, may God be pleased with them, and Virtues of Other People – hadith no. 1015,

http://library.islamweb.net/hadith/display_hbook.php?indexstartno=0&hflag=1&pid=530423&bk_no=1015&startno=172 This is a very clear fabrication, since the three titles mentioned were adopted by the first three Abbasid caliphs.

2.2 Anti-Abbasid fabrications

- 1- Fabrication in the name of the Prophet: “The flags of the descendants of Abbas have come from Khurasan, signifying the death of Islam. Whoever marches under their banner will not benefit from my intercession on the Day of Resurrection.”⁹
- 2- Fabrication in the name of the Prophet: “When the black flags appear from the east: their beginning is strife, their middle period is killing, their end period is misguidance.”¹⁰
- 3- Fabrication in the name of the Prophet: “Woe to my nation from the descendants of Abbas! ... Their destruction will be at the hands of one of her household [the Umayyads],” pointing to Umm Habiba [daughter of Abu Sufyan and sister of Mu’awiya]¹¹

⁹ Shawkani, *al-Fawa'id al-Majmu'ah fi l-Ahadith al-Mawdu'ah* [Collected Insights about Fabricated Traditions], Book of Praiseworthy Qualities, Chapter: Virtues of the Four Caliphs, the Prophet's Household and the Rest of the Companions, Generally and Specifically, may God be pleased with them, and Virtues of Other People – hadith no. 1009,

http://library.islamweb.net/hadith/display_hbook.php?indexstartno=0&hflag=1&pid=530423&bk_no=1015&startno=166

¹⁰ Shawkani, *al-Fawa'id al-Majmu'ah fi l-Ahadith al-Mawdu'ah* [Collected Insights about Fabricated Traditions], Book of Praiseworthy Qualities, Chapter: Virtues of the Four Caliphs, the Prophet's Household and the Rest of the Companions, Generally and Specifically, may God be pleased with them, and Virtues of Other People – hadith no. 1011,

http://library.islamweb.net/hadith/display_hbook.php?indexstartno=0&hflag=1&pid=530423&bk_no=1015&startno=168

¹¹ Shawkani, *al-Fawa'id al-Majmu'ah fi l-Ahadith al-Mawdu'ah* [Collected Insights about Fabricated Traditions], Book of Praiseworthy Qualities, Chapter: Virtues of the Four Caliphs, the Prophet's Household and the Rest of the Companions, Generally and Specifically, may God be pleased with them, and Virtues of Other People – hadith no. 1014,

http://library.islamweb.net/hadith/display_hbook.php?indexstartno=0&hflag=1&pid=530423&bk_no=1015&startno=171

3 Weak hadiths about the black flags or banners from Khurasan

[Below, I use the following notation for hadith isnads: == denotes a strong mode of transmission, such as *haddathana* [he narrated to us] or *akhbarana* [he informed us], whilst – denotes a weak mode such as ‘*an* or “on the authority of”]

- 1- Sunan Ibn Majah, *Kitab al-Fitan* (Book of Tribulations), Chapter: Emergence of the Mahdi (Guided One), Hadith no. 4082¹²

Ibn Majah == ‘Uthman b. Abi Shaybah == Mu’awiyah b. Hisham == ‘Ali b. Salih – Yazid b. Abi Ziyad – Ibrahim [al-Nakh’i] – ‘Alqamah – ‘Abdullah [b. Mas’ud], who said:

Whilst we were with the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, some young men of Banu Hashim arrived. When the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, saw them his eyes flooded with tears and his colour changed. I asked, “Why do we continue to see something undesirable in your face?” He replied, “Truly, we the People of the House:¹³ God has chosen the Hereafter for us over this world. The people of my house will face calamity, dispersal and exile after me until a group of people come from the east with black banners. They will ask for goodness [i.e. authority] but will not be granted it, so they will fight and achieve victory. They will then be given what they asked for [i.e. authority] but will not accept it until they assign it to a man of my house who will fill the earth with justice as others had filled it with tyranny. Whoever amongst you is alive at the time should go to them, even if he has to crawl over snow.”

Albani declares this hadith to be weak.¹⁴ Sindi, the commentator on this hadith, states:

Ibn Kathir said that this indicates the kingdom of the Banu ‘Abbas [Abbasids]. However, this is precluded by his saying, “He will fill it with justice,” clearly referring to the promised Mahdi, which is why the author included this hadith in this chapter, and God knows best what is correct.

[Haythami states] in *al-Zawa’id*, “Its chain of narration is weak because of the weakness of Yazid b. Abi Ziyad of Kufa, although he was not alone in narrating it from Ibrahim, for Hakim has related it in *al-Mustadrak* via ‘Umar b. Qays – Hakam – Ibrahim.”

[End of quote from Sindi]

¹² <http://hadith.al-islam.com/Page.aspx?pageid=192&BookID=35&TOCID=1534>

¹³ *Ahl al-Bayt*: a phrase referring to the Prophet’s immediate family and descendants

¹⁴ Ibn Majah, *Sunan*, ed. Albani & Mashhur Hasan Salman, Maktabah al-Ma’arif, Riyadh, 1417 H, hadith no. 4082. According to Shawkani (hadith no. 1013), a very similar hadith is transmitted by Hakim and Abu I-Shaykh, and includes the addition describing the flags or banners as “flags of guidance.”

http://library.islamweb.net/hadith/display_hbook.php?indexstartno=0&hflag=1&pid=530423&bk_no=1015&startno=170

- 2- Sunan Ibn Majah, *Kitab al-Fitan* (Book of Tribulations), Chapter: Emergence of the Mahdi (Guided One), Hadith no. 4084¹⁵

Ibn Majah === Muhammad b. Yahya and Ahmad b. Yusuf === 'Abd al-Razzaq [al-San'ani] --- Sufyan al-Thawri --- Khalid al-Hadhdha' --- Abu Qilabah --- Abu Asma' al-Rahbi --- Thawban, who said:

The Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, said, "Three people, each of them the son of a caliph, will fight over your treasure. It will go to none of them. Then, the black flags will appear from the east: they will kill you with a slaughter not meted out (or faced) by any people." He then mentioned something that I do not remember. Then he said, "When you see him [their leader], pledge allegiance to him, even if you have to crawl over snow, for he is the vicegerent (caliph of God), the Guided One [al-Mahdi]."

Sindi, the commentator on this hadith, says:

"Over your treasure," i.e. "over your kingdom." Ibn Kathir said, "The apparent meaning of the treasure mentioned is that it is the treasure of the Ka'bah."

"Then, the black flags will appear": Ibn Kathir said, "These [armies with] black flags are not the ones that Abu Muslim of Khurasan brought, by which he toppled the Umayyad state. Rather, they are other black flags that will accompany the Mahdi, whose appearance is one of the Conditions of the Hour [i.e. Signs of the end of the world and the Day of Judgment]."

[Haythami states] in *al-Zawa'id*, "Its chain of narration is sound; its narrators are reliable. Al-Hakim narrated it in *al-Mustadrak* and said: It is authentic (*sahih*) according to the conditions of the two shaykhs [i.e. Bukhari and Muslim]."

[End of quote from Sindi]

- 3- Sunan al-Tirmidhi, *Kitab al-Fitan* (Book of Tribulations), Hadith no. 2269¹⁶

Tirmidhi == Qutaybah === Rishdin b. Sa'd --- Yunus --- Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri --- Qabisah b. Dhu'ayb --- Abu Hurayrah, who said:

The Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, said, "From Khurasan will emerge black flags: nothing will repulse them until they are planted in Jerusalem." This is a strange (*gharib*) hadith.

Thus, Imam Tirmidhi declared it to be a weak hadith by describing it only as *gharib* ("strange", having links as narrow as one narrator in its chain). Albani also declared its chain

¹⁵ <http://hadith.al-islam.com/Page.aspx?pageid=192&TOCID=1534&BookID=35&PID=7508>

¹⁶ Tirmidhi, *Sunan*, ed. Albani & Mashhur Hasan Salman, Maktabah al-Ma'arif, Riyadh, 1417 H, hadith no. 2269; <http://hadith.al-islam.com/Page.aspx?pageid=192&TOCID=1532&BookID=37&PID=4328>

of narration (*isnad*) to be weak (*da'if*). Mubarakpuri, in his commentary on Tirmidhi, confirms that the black flags refer to military banners at the heads of armies. He also elaborates on Tirmidhi's statement, "This is a strange (*gharib*) hadith" as follows:

"In its chain is Rishdin b. Sa'd, who is weak. In the chain of the hadith of Thawban in Musnad Ahmad [i.e. the hadith of Ibn Mas'ud, below] there is Shurayk b. Abdullah the Qadi, whose memory declined after he took the position of judge in Kufah. It also contains Ali b. Zayd, who would appear to be Ibn Jud'an, and there is some talk about him."

3.1 Shawkani's brief analysis¹⁷

Al-Azadi related from Ibn Mas'ud from the Prophet, "When the black flags come from Khurasan, go to them, for truly amongst them is the caliph of God, the Mahdi."

Ibn al-Jawzi said, "It has no basis," and mentioned it amongst the fabricated traditions.

Ibn Hajar said in *al-Qawl al-Musaddad* [*fi l-Dhabb 'an Musnad al-Imam Ahmad*, The Accurate Word in Defence of the Musnad of the Imam Ahmad], "Ibn al-Jawzi was not correct, for Ahmad has transmitted it via 'Ali bin Zayd bin Jud'an who is weak but was not an intentional liar such that the hadith should be classified as fabricated when he alone narrates it. How more so, then, when his narration has been supported via a different route? This has been transmitted by Ahmad and by Bayhaqi in *Dala'il* [*al-Nubuwwa*, Indications of Prophethood] from the hadith of Abu Hurayra from the Prophet, 'Black flags will come from Khurasan, that will not be stopped until they are planted in Jerusalem.' In its chain of narration is Rishdin bin Sa'd, who is weak."

3.2 Albani's analysis of this hadith¹⁸

In another narration of this hadith: "When you see that the black flags have come out of Khurasan, go to them even if you have to crawl ..." to the end of the hadith.¹⁹ These narrations were transmitted by Ahmad, Ibn Majah and Hakim.

Ibn al-Jawzi included the hadith in his collection of fabricated (*mawdu'*) hadiths; Dhahabi said that it was rejected (*munkar*). Imam Ahmad's *isnad* includes 'Ali b. Zayd b. Jud'an: Ahmad, Ibn Hajar, Munawi and others agreed that he is a weak narrator. Ibn Hajar said

¹⁷ Shawkani, *al-Fawa'id al-Majmu'ah fi l-Ahadith al-Mawdu'ah* [Collected Insights about Fabricated Traditions], Book of Praiseworthy Qualities, Chapter: Virtues of the Four Caliphs, the Prophet's Household and the Rest of the Companions, Generally and Specifically, may God be pleased with them, and Virtues of Other People – Mention of Mu'awiya, hadith no. 1012
http://library.islamweb.net/hadith/display_hbook.php?indexstartno=0&hflag=1&pid=530423&bk_no=1015&startno=169

¹⁸ Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani, *Silsilah al-Ahadith al-Da'ifah wa l-Mawdu'ah wa atharuha l-sayyi' fi l-ummah*, al-Maktab al-Islami, Beirut/Damascus, 4th ed., 1398 H, vol. 1, hadith no. 85, pp. 119-121

¹⁹ This narration is also mentioned by al-'Ajluni, *Kashf al-Khafa'*, no. 241 – where he simply says, "Related by Ahmad and Hakim on the authority of Thawban."

about Ibn al-Jawzi's judgment, "He is not correct, because none of the narrators is accused of lying." Albani agrees with Dhahabi that the hadith is rejected (*munkar*).

Ibn al-Jawzi's isnad for this hadith is via 'Amr b. Qays --- Hasan --- Abu 'Ubaydah --- 'Abdullah [b. Mas'ud] --- the Prophet (pbuh). Ibn al-Jawzi stated, "This has no basis: 'Amr is nothing, and did not hear hadiths from Hasan; Hasan did not hear hadiths from Abu 'Ubaydah.'" Albani adds, "And Abu 'Ubaydah did not hear hadiths from his father, Ibn Mas'ud ... Haythami said in al-Zawa'id (249/2), 'Its chain is authentic; the narrators are reliable.' Hakim said, 'It is authentic according to the conditions of the two shaykhs [Bukhari and Muslim].' Dhahabi agreed with Hakim, although he said in the *Mizan* [*al-l'tidal*] that the hadith is rejected (*munkar*); the latter is correct. Those who authenticated this hadith overlooked its subtle defect, which is the '*an'anah* (ambiguous mode of reporting) of Abu Qilabah – he was known to conceal some of his authorities (*tadlis*), as is quoted from Dhahabi and others."

Albani goes on to say, "However, the hadith is correct in meaning apart from the statement, '... for amongst them is the vicegerent of God [*khalifat Allah*], the Mahdi,' for it has been transmitted by Ibn Majah (2/517) via 'Alqamah from Ibn Mas'ud from the Prophet (pbuh), similarly to Thawban's second narration. Its chain of narration is good (*hasan*), and does not include the phrase 'vicegerent of God [*khalifat Allah*]'."

3.2.1 [Ibn Taymiyya on the allegedly blasphemous nature of the term, "caliph of God"]

Albani continues:

This addition, 'vicegerent of God [*khalifat Allah*],' does not have an established route of narration, nor a supporting one. Thus it is rejected (*munkar* – a weak narration that contradicts authentic ones) as follows from Dhahabi's statement quoted earlier. Part of its abhorrence is that it is not permissible in religion to refer to someone as 'vicegerent of God' [*khalifat Allah*] because that implies a shortcoming and incapacity that does not befit God the Exalted. The Shaykh of Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, may God Exalted have mercy upon him, explained this in his Fatwas (2/461):

'Some mistaken commentators, such as Ibn Arabi, thought that the vicegerent [the function of *khalifah* attributed to Adam in Qur'an 2:30] is a vicegerent on behalf of God, like God's deputy. But God Exalted cannot have a vicegerent, and that is why when they said to Abu Bakr, "O caliph (vicegerent) of God!" he replied, "I am not the caliph (vicegerent) of God, but the caliph (vicegerent) of the Messenger of God – that is sufficient for me."²⁰ Rather, it is He, may He be glorified, Who is the vicegerent of others: the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, prayed, "Dear God! You are the Companion during a journey, and the vicegerent amongst family. Dear God, please accompany us during our journey and deputise for us amongst our families!" This is because God is the Living, Ever-Present Witness, Guardian, Self-Subsisting, Observer, Safeguarder, Independent of the Worlds, needing no

²⁰ Related by Ahmad similarly in the *Musnad* (1/10-11)

partner or supporter, and none can intercede before Him except by His permission. A vicegerent or deputy only occurs when the one whose place is taken is non-existent due to death or absence, such that a deputy called a vicegerent is required ... all of these meanings are impossible regarding God the Exalted, and He is absolved of them, for He is the Living, Self-Subsisting, Ever-Present Witness who does not die or become absent ... It is not possible for anyone to deputise for Him or to take His place, for He has no equal or anyone worthy of His name: whoever attributes a deputy or vicegerent to Him is associating a partner with Him.’²¹

3.3 Conclusion

Note that none of the hadith scholars quoted above took the historical record into account, basing their discussions purely on the chains of narrators and thus reaching opposite conclusions, with some authenticating these traditions and others doubting them severely. From the history of the Abbasid armies from the east, specifically Khurasan, led by black banners, it would appear to be obvious that all these supposedly prophetic traditions are in fact fabrications.

²¹ Although Ibn Taymiyya was responding to what he saw as the neo-incarnationist Sufi notions of Ibn Arabi, the same critique has been applied since the 20th century to the over-politicisation of the Qur’anic term “caliph/vicegerent” by the ideologues of political Islam such as Mawdudi and Qutb, cf. Jaafar Sheikh Idris, *IS MAN THE VICEGERENT OF GOD?* Journal of Islamic Studies (1990) 1 (1): 99-110, Oxford

4 Contemporary propaganda about black flags

The use of black flags is an ancient Eastern, Arab and Islamic tradition. Its significance has changed over the centuries. Below is a summary of recent developments.

4.1 The Ottomans

Some people believe that one of the Prophet's original banners, known as the Uqab, was black, that it eventually passed to the Ottomans and that remnants of it are housed at the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul.²²

4.2 Bin Ladin

Usama bin Ladin often signed his name with the location, "Khurasan, Afghanistan" at the end of his messages whilst a guest of the Taliban. His organisation, Al-Qa'ida, also specifically adopted black flags from the 1990s. Reading between the lines, it is obvious that Bin Ladin saw Al-Qa'ida as fulfilling a sacred prophecy, bringing armies led by black flags towards Damascus and Jerusalem, in preparation for the coming of the messianic figure, the Mahdi.

4.3 The Taliban

According to one contemporary writer, "Very interestingly, the Taliban hail from the Pashtun ethnicity and have traditionally used two flags, a white flag with a black *Shahada* (*Kalma*) embossed for their government and diplomatic purposes and a reversal of this i.e. a black flag with a white *Shahada* embossed for their military. These types of black flags are also vividly seen across the tribal Pashtun areas that are now reportedly under the control of Pakistani Taliban."²³

4.4 Harmajdun (Armageddon)

This influential, populist book authored by an Egyptian Azhari sheikh in 2001 quoted some of these fabricated hadiths.²⁴ One in particular that begins, "There will be strife at the death of a caliph ..." was interpreted to refer to the impending death of King Fahd of Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the black flags were taken to refer to the black turbans of the Taliban. The book also claimed to be based on recently-discovered manuscripts of hadith, some of which were said to predict the 1990-1 war between Iraq and the US over Kuwait: the hadiths were said to mention a place called "little Kut" which is the literal meaning of "Kuwait." Although popular amongst the masses, this book was dismissed by serious scholars of hadith and history.

4.5 Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT)

HT adopted a black flag with the Islamic declaration of faith, possibly from its inception. Recently, this has led to confusion between HT flags and ISIS flags.²⁵ On one of HT's public, international discussion forums, there is a lengthy discussion between October 2009 and October 2010 about the

²² See e.g. The Wake-Up Project, *Ukab- banner of our Prophet Muhammad (saas)*, <http://wup-forum.com/ukab-banner-of-our-prophet-muhammad-saas-t12620.html>. See also a YouTube video featuring a supposed still of this banner accompanied by Islamic songs, and tellingly uploaded by "Abu Muslim Khurasani" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rg8XkGzaMcI>

²³ *Black Banners From Khurasan: The Bilad-e-Khurasan in Making*, Research Paper by Bilal Khan, March 30th, 2008 <http://www.grandstrategy.com/2009/06/research-paper-by-bilal-khan-paper-is.html>

²⁴ For an Urdu translation of this book, see <https://archive.org/details/Harmajdoon>

²⁵ See Seth Frantzman, *A SHORT HISTORY OF THE ISLAMIC 'BLACK FLAG' IN JERUSALEM*, 10th August 2014, <http://sethfrantzman.com/2014/08/10/a-short-history-of-the-islamic-black-flag-in-the-holy-land/>

authenticity of the hadiths of the black flags, the coming of the Mahdi and the re-establishment of the caliphate, with a suggestion that the black flags refer to the Taliban.²⁶

4.6 The Boston Bombers

Four months before carrying out the Boston bombings of 2013 along with another suspect, Tamerlan Tsarnaev appears to have “liked” and shared a video on YouTube entitled, *The Emergence of Prophecy: The Black Flags From Khorasan* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJknGtKV34I>).²⁷ This video claims about the hadiths mentioned in it that “majority of scholars say is authentic and others say is weak [sic].”

4.7 The Ahmadiyya

Some of the Ahmadiyya refer these hadiths to their founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, due to his Persian ancestry. One of their writers says, “Black Flag of Khorasan ... Thawban (ra) narrated that the Prophet (sa) said: ‘If you see the black banners emerging from Khurasan (Persia), seek to join their supporters even if creeping, because among them will be caliph Al-Mahdi.’ (Sunan Ibn Majah, Vol. 3, 4084) This flag is the flag of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community today (contrary to popular belief it is not the flag of any Jihadist groups since this flag would be for the followers of the Mahdi).”²⁸

4.8 Contemporary Jihadist groups

In the modern era, black flags with the Islamic declaration of faith have become very popular amongst Jihadist and other Islamist groups. For example: Al-Qaeda, al-Shabab in Somalia, Boko Haram in Nigeria, *Jabhat al-Nusra* in Syria, *al-Tawhid wal-Jihad* in Iraq, Jihadist fighters in Chechnya and of course the self-styled “Islamic State,” formerly “The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria” (ISIS) have all adopted black flags, with white Arabic writing consisting of the basic Islamic declarations of faith (the *shahadatayn*), as their emblems. The extremist but non-Jihadist international group, Hizb al-Tahrir, also employs a black flag with white *shahadatayn*, as its emblem. All these groups occasionally reverse these colours: a black flag for war; a white flag for peace. A white flag with black *shahadatayn* was especially adopted by the Taliban in Afghanistan for peacetime.

ISIS have recently adopted a black flag with white writing: an ancient-looking script for the first shahada, with the second shahada in the form of a seal, based upon the hadiths mentioning the Prophet’s own seal and ring. No-one knows for sure what the script on this seal looked like, but the form adopted by ISIS (and al-Shabab and Boko Haram) has ironically been popularised over the past two decades by populists such as the unscientific Turkish writer, Harun Yahya (Adnan Oktar).

²⁶ See discussion thread, *Black flags In Khorasan*, <http://forum.hizbuttahrir.org/showthread.php?2599-Black-flags-In-Khorasan>

²⁷ For more information, see Adam Serwer, *Did Boston Bombing Suspect Post Al Qaeda Prophecy on YouTube?*, Mother Jones, 19th April 2013, <http://www.motherjones.com/mojo/2013/04/boston-bombing-suspect-posted-video-al-qaeda-prophecy-youtube>

²⁸ *SIGNS OF MIRZA GHULAM AHMAD (AS) AS THE MAHDI AND MESSIAH*, 28th June 2014, <http://mysticscientist.wordpress.com/2014/06/28/signs-of-mirza-ghulam-ahmad-as-as-the-mahdi-and-messiah/>