

QIZILBASH OF AFGHANISTAN

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QUICK FACTS

People Name: Qizilbash

People Cluster: Azerbaijani

Language: Dari

Primary Religion: Islam 100%

Population: 287,000

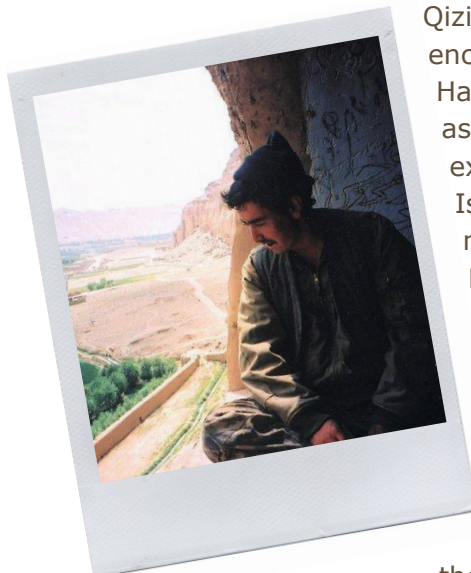
PRAYER POINTS

Pray that God would give the Qizilbash dreams and visions of Jesus.

Ask God to raise up linguists to translate the Scriptures into Dari.

Pray for God to raise up workers from among the Afghani believers to go and minister to the Qizilbash.

Pray for open doors into the lives of these Qizilbash in order that believers might suddenly find opportunities to share with them the truth of Jesus.



ABOUT THE PEOPLE

Qizilbash, or Kizilbash, is Turkish for "Red Heads" and is a name given to a wide variety of extremist Shi'ite militant groups who helped found the Safavid Dynasty of Iran. The name "Red Heads" is derived from their distinct headwear with twelve points (indicating their adherence to the twelve Ithnā ashari Imams). The origin of the "Qizilbash movement" - a name given by their Sunni Ottoman foes and later adopted as their name as a mark of pride - can be dated from middle of the 15th century, when their spiritual grandmaster (shaykh) Haydar, the head of the Safawiyya Sufi order, organized his followers into a body of militant troops.



Theories have been put forward by scholars to connect the Qizilbash to certain religious groups and secret societies throughout history, like the Mazdaki movement in the Sassanid Empire, or the radical Persian Khurrami sect who were also known as "Muhammira" because of their practice of wearing red headgear and fighting for their religious beliefs. It has also been speculated that the group had its origins among the mystical Ismaili Assassin sect. However, most historians dispute this, as no influence of Ismaili beliefs is obvious in Qizilbash practices.

Qizilbash tribes adhered to heterodox Shi'a doctrines encouraged by early Safawiyyah sheikhs, specifically sheikh Haydar and his son, Ismail. They regarded their rulers as divine figures, and would thus be classified as ghulat, extremists, by orthodox Ithnā ashari Shias. It is clear that Ismail I was presenting himself to his Qizilbash followers not as a representative of the Hidden Imam, but as the Hidden Imam himself and even claiming divinity for himself. The Qizilbash would go into battle without armor, confident that no harm would befall them, while adding "Ismā'il waliyyu'llāh" to the Islamic Shahada.

The influence of the Kizilbash in the government created resentment among the ruling Pashtun clans, especially after the Qizilbash openly allied themselves with the British during the First Anglo-Afghan War (1838-1842). During Abdur Rahman Khan's massacre of the Shi'ite

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minorities in Afghanistan, the Qizilbash were declared “enemies of the state” and were persecuted and hunted by the government and by the Sunni majority.

LIFE

Some described the Qizilbash of Kabul in the beginning of the 19th century as “a colony of Turks,” who spoke “Persian and, among themselves, Turkish.” Described as learned, affluent, and influential, they appear to have abandoned their native Turkish language in favor of Persian and became “Persianized Turks.”

Qizilbash in Afghanistan live in urban areas, such as Kabul, Herat or Qandahar, as well as in certain villages in Hazarajat. They are descendants of the troops left behind by Nadir Shah during his “Indian campaign” in 1738. Afghanistan’s Qizilbash held important posts in government offices in the past, and today they engage in trade or are craftsmen. Since the creation of the nation of Afghanistan, they constitute an important and politically influential element of society. They are Persian-speaking Shi’ite Muslims and are usually linked to the Farsiwans and Tajiks of the country.

Not much is known about the daily lives of these people. Since there are so few Gospel resources in their language and no known believers, much prayer is needed for these people in order for them to hear the Good News of Jesus.



WAYS TO HELP

Since many of the Qizilbash are involved in trades and crafts, those who could market those skills to a wider audience might provide help for these people.

English teachers could find many opportunities in this country to help the people.

Would you be willing to be among the FIRST to engage these people with the hope of the Gospel? Would you be willing to lead a team? Contact us today to find out more - we need people to visit the Qizilbash and find other great ways to bring new teams to live among them for the sake of the Kingdom.

CONTACT

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(800) 462-8436
www.frontiers.org