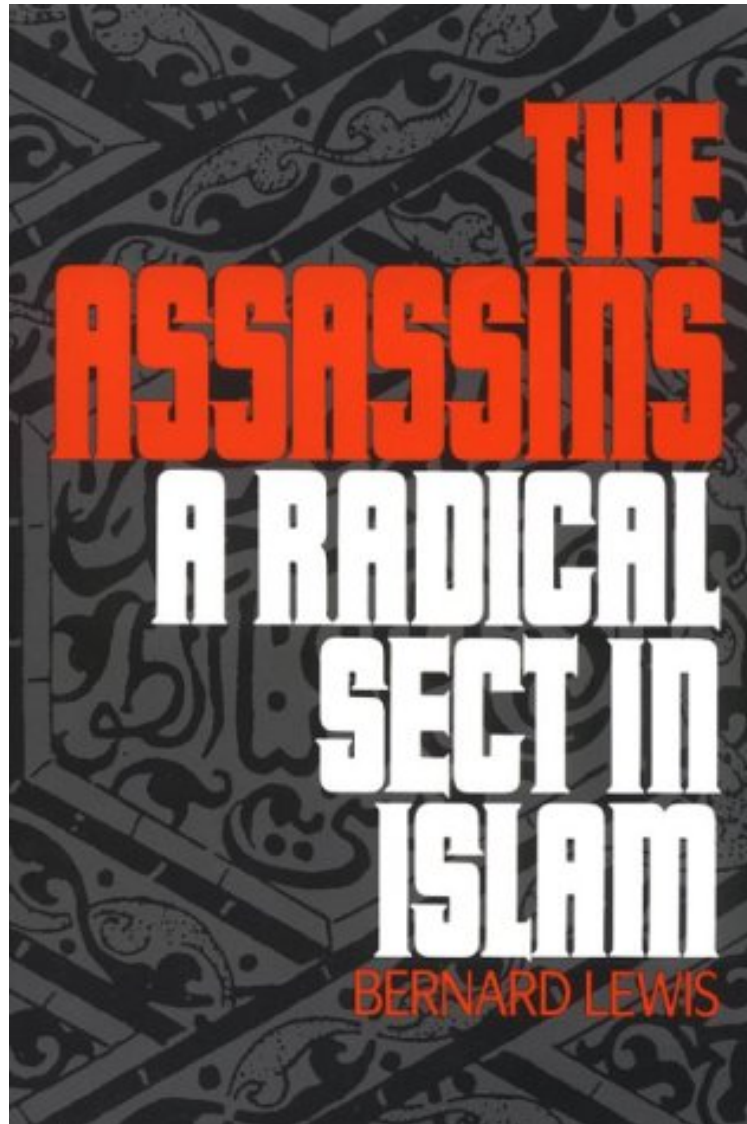


[Free pdf] The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam

The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam

Bernard Lewis

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Bernard Lewis : The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy CustomerGreat book by Bernard Lewis.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. InformativeBy marina ErgasInformative but not as interesting as other books by the same author3 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Excellent Short HistoryBy David SouthworthBernard Lewis has a long history of providing excellent reviews of major themes of Islam to Western readers. This is another such example.Lewis produced this volume in 1967. His trademarks in scholarship, including a

focus on primary sources and a deep knowledge of the language and history of the region, allows him to create a vivid picture of the religious sect in Muslim history, weeding out the myths that have surrounded the Assassins since the 11th century. The Assassins were a radical offshoot of Shiite Islam called Ismailis. While never a conquering or crusading force, they were at various times able to influence and direct events, mainly out of fear and trepidation they caused in the various rulers around them. Their main objective was overturning the existing Sunni regimes, and they did so through radical fanaticism of their followers and a deep belief in the traditions of sacrifice and martyrdom in Shiite beliefs. Lewis has produced a tidy little volume that is well worth the afternoon it takes to read this book. I highly recommend it.

The Assassins is the most comprehensive, readable, and authoritative account of history's first terrorists. A fanatical sect of Islam, first mentioned in accounts of the Crusades, the Assassins were the first group to make planned, systematic use of murder as a political weapon. According to Medieval historians, and to such famous travelers as Marco Polo, the Assassins lived in the Levant Mountains and were ruled by a mysterious "Old Man of the Mountain" who housed his followers in a paradisaical castle and sent them on murderous expeditions to visit rival princes and later imams. One of "the hazards of the East," this group struck fear in the hearts of Crusaders and mainstream Muslims in and around Phoenicia, where tales abounded of princes felled in the night by Assassin daggers and of the Old Man's secret powers over his followers. (The name "assassin" comes from the Arabic "hashish," the narcotic effects of which were already known to Medieval Muslims.) According to Brocardus, a 14th-century German priest, "The Assassins...sell themselves, are thirsty for human blood, kill the innocent for a price, and care nothing for either life or salvation. Like the devil, they transfigure themselves into angels of light, by imitating the gestures, garments, languages, customs and acts of various nations and peoples; thus, hidden in sheep's clothing, they suffer death as soon as they are recognized." In *The Assassins*, Bernard Lewis traces the history of this radical Islamic sect from the 13th century to the modern day. He studies the teachings of both the Assassins and their parent sect, the Ismailis, the spread of their ideas, and their continued influence on Muslim thought. He also traces the etymology of the word "assassin," which today is a common noun meaning one who kills by stealth or treachery, whose victim is a public figure, and whose motive is fanaticism or greed. Particularly insightful in light of the recent rise of Muslim fundamentalism, this readable, factual account of the group that lent its name to politically motivated murder places recent events in historical perspective and sheds new light on the fanatic mind.

"An interesting text, and I am pleased that it is available in an affordable format."--J.C. Robutson, Washington University
"Traces with an easy, almost conversational scholarship the emergence, triumph, and sudden demise of the Ismaili faith."--The New Yorker
"Learned, lucid, and elegant."--The Economist
"A very informative, interesting and thorough book."--Dhirendra Vajpey, University of Northern Iowa
"Excellent accuracy...Professor Lewis has succeeded with his usual carefulness, probity, and skill."--Times Literary Supplement (London)
About the Author
About the Author: Bernard Lewis is Director of the Annenberg Institute, Philadelphia, and Professor Emeritus of Near Eastern Studies and long-term member of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton University. He is the author of *The Jews of Islam*, *Arabs in History*, and many other books about the Middle East.