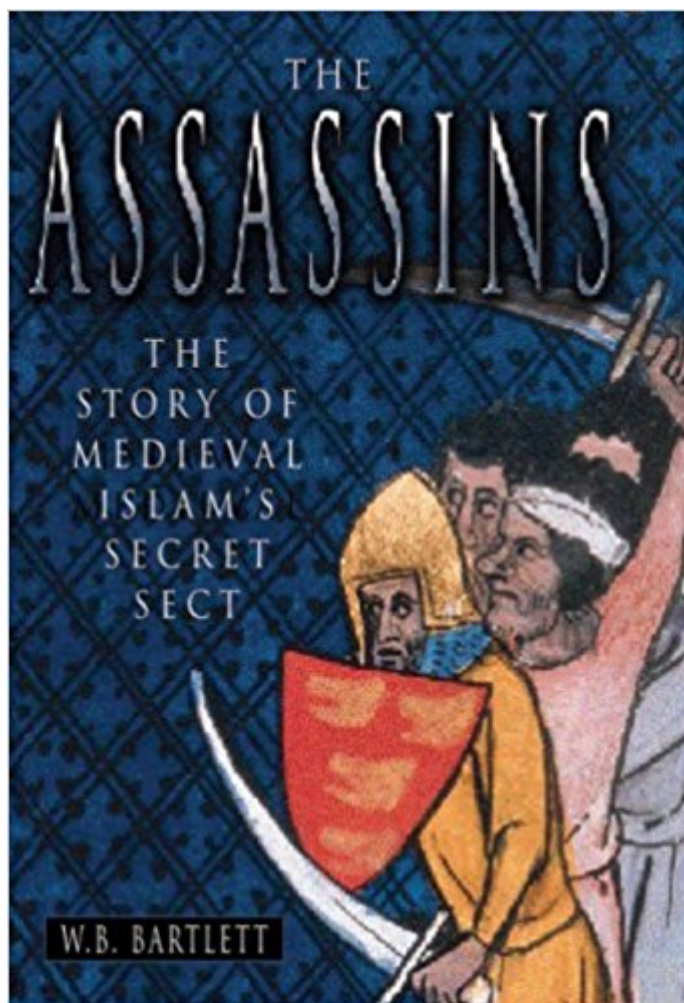


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The Assassins: The Story Of Medieval Islam's Secret Sect



Synopsis

The so-called "Assassins"—men who had no fear of death and were trained to kill—are one of the most spectacular legends of medieval history. Since the tales of Marco Polo and others, the myths surrounding them have been fantastically embellished and the truth has become ever more obscure. Bartlett's popular history deftly traces the origins of the sect out of the schisms within the early Islamic religion and examines the impact of Hasan-i-Sabbah, its founder, and Sinan—the legendary "Old Man of the Mountain." Following the group over the next two centuries, this book includes its clash with the crusaders, its near destruction at the hands of the Mongols, and its subsequent history. Finally, we discover how the myths surrounding the Assassins have developed over time, and why indeed they continue to have such an impact on the popular imagination.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"More to Lewis's story than one of terror and bloodshed . . . a fascinating glimpse into an extraordinary and unsettling world." — Kirkus Reviews UK "An excellent work of popular history geared to general readers, but scholars will appreciate both the accuracy and insight Bartlett displays." — Booklist on *An Ungodly War*

W. B. Bartlett is a medieval historian whose other titles include *The Crusades*, *God Wills It!*, *Islam's War Against the Crusaders*, *The Last Crusade*, *The Road to Armageddon*, and *An Ungodly War*.

One of the most amazing books, not only on the Nizaris (Assassins), but also on the changes in the balance of power in the middle east.

When I originally bought this I was hoping for something more refreshing than the book by Lewis on the Assassins however on reading the preface and finding out that one of the first things the author does is pay homage to Lewis (Is this some kind of prerequisite to getting your book published these days?) I didn't hold out much hope. If you have the Lewis book on the assassins then you almost certainly don't need to buy this one. A number of things let me down with this book not least on checking the bibliography at the back and finding largely the standard Western translations of a few of Ibn Athir's books, Juwayni and Ibn Munqidh. The book covers the well trodden ground in the history of the Assassins, largely from an entirely western perspective. The first encounters from a Western crusader to the early history of the Ismailis in Egypt and the split causing the Nizari sect. The establishment of their castles in Persia and Syria and the various assassinations that took place leading up to their eventual fall and spread into India. Unfortunately this book offers nothing new. There is no study of the Ismaili philosophy, nothing on what happened to the religious beliefs of the Nizaris or the Ismailis beyond the Mongol invasion. Nothing on the all too obvious links with the Kizilbashi in North East Iran and East Turkey or the Alevi groups in Syria and Turkey or even their possible influence on Sufism through the Bektashi order. In short nothing. If you really want to read something of substance about this group you may want to try the Institute of Ismaili Studies. This and the book of Bernard Lewis is nothing more than coffee table sensationalism.

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