



Assassins Movement

Image of Persian Terrorism in Islamic History

The Assassin movement is one of the most dangerous destructive movements in Islamic history. They are an esoteric sect that emerged from the mantle of Persian thought and was associated with the Ubaidi state, known as the Fatimids, even if it separated therefrom after a period of association therewith. They mastered secret terrorism and the Assassins became among the extremists of that thought.

That secret sect that terrorized the world for decades was founded by Al-Hassan Al-Sabah. Historical sources agree that he was born in Persia around the year (1037 AD) and died in Persia as well around (1124 AD). His beginnings were ordinary and do not indicate his transformation into a terrorist leader. He began with interest in science and philosophy. It was said that he was related to the famous Persian poet Omar Khayyam, except that Al-Sabah was the leader of the most important secret terrorist group that sheltered in high castles, from which the followers used to descend to carry out terrorist assassinations, which spread terror in the hearts of people. One of the key scholars of the Assassins' history and ideas, the American orientalist Bernard Lewis, describes this group, saying: "Ismaili Assassins were truly the first terrorists who were able to adapt terrorism to achieve their political goals".

Historical sources tell us how Al-Hassan Al-Sabah recruited his followers, who were called the fedayeen, to undertake terrorist operations. He selected them at a relatively young age because it is easier to control them intellectually and religiously. Meanwhile, the young age of the "volunteer" helps him to undergo arduous military training. They were also taught different languages that would allow them to infiltrate the targeted sites as if they are from among their peoples. All facilitates their carrying out their terrorist operations.

It is said that they were controlling those young men psychologically and morally through doses of narcotics, entering them into lush gardens, so they would imagine that they were in heaven, after which they persuade them to carry out terrorist operations, promising them that if they were killed, they would go to that paradise they witnessed. Some believe that the said drug, which was commonly used among them, was hashish, and that is the reason behind naming them "Al-Hashasheen" in Arabic.

The truth is that this terrorist group was a source of terror for both the East and West. German pastor Pro Cardus describes the Assassins, saying: "The Assassins, whom man should curse and avoid, sell themselves and are thirst for human blood. They kill innocents for money and have no regard for life or survival. They change their appearance like devils that turn into angels".



In a report sent to Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, dating back to the year (1175 AD), the Assassins are described as "mountain dwellers who eat pork, which is prohibited by Islamic law, and perform all prohibitions". On Islamic side, some refer to the Persian influence in the emergence of the Assassins and other esotericist groups.

Abdullah Annan also emphasizes the Persian influence on the Assassin's call, saying: "Assassin's preachers moved first of all in Persia, as we should not forget that Persia was like that from the beginning", stressing that the Persian national movement relied on the revolutionary call and its momentum to destroy the Abbasid state.

The Assassins were keen to show the general public that they were "worshippers of the night and knights of the day". They talked a lot about the piety and virtue of their followers. Some researchers believe that the Assassins have been indicating that image of themselves in order to hide their truth, especially the affairs of their preachers and leaders. From this point, some refer to the state of extreme contradiction in the affairs of this odd, secretive sect. While Assassins' advocates impose a state of piety and devotion on their followers, we find the opposite in the elite of that sect: "The seniors of the sect are far from that. To them, religion was nothing but a method. They did not believe in any of Islam's teachings and believed that all means are legitimate in order to achieve the worldly goals they aspired to. Their slogan was that there is no truth in existence and every matter is permissible".

In fact, considering what the Assassins committed in terms of assassinations and terrorism, it is evident that the dagger emblem carried thereby has turned into a source of terror in the world, until their name has entered European languages under the name the "Assassin", as a synonym to terrorism. Bernard Lewis says: "It was not until the thirteenth century that the word Assassin entered European usage in various forms in this sense; i.e., professional killer".

In the Islamic East, the Assassins turned into a pickaxe for the destruction of Islamic countries. Perhaps the best evidence for that is that they succeeded in assassinating two of the Abbasid caliphs. They also tried to assassinate Sultan Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi twice. Even common people were not spared from their terror. They spread terror and fear everywhere by blocking roads and attacking neighboring villages. They also seized people's money and belongings. Trade convoys passing by their castles were subjected to repeated attacks, until it was rumored that if a man was late to return to his home, his family believed that he had fallen into the hands of the Assassins and they would start to accept condolences. Pilgrims' convoys were not exceptional. In the year (1105 AD), pilgrims' caravans gathered in Transoxiana, Khurasan and India and arrived to Nishapur. The Assassins attacked these convoys, killed a lot of them and seized their money and luggage, where scholars, imams and ascetics were among those victims.


Terrified the world, adopted the teachings of extreme Persian nationalism and sponsored hired killers


Undertaking an assessment of these movements, or talking about the impact of that terrorism on Islamic world, and whether the terrorism of the Assassins succeeded in the end, we find the opinions of trusted historians that confirm their failure. Annan points out that this movement tried to "destroy the first teachings of Islam" and attempted to tear "the unity of Islam from the beginning", but they ultimately failed.

Bernard Lewis also confirms the failure of their terror, saying: "Ismaili Assassins failed miserably and ultimately as they were not able to overthrow the established order. They even did not succeed in controlling a single large city. Even their possessions, which were guarded by castles, were no more than small principalities that were soon invaded".

References:

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