

THE ORIENTALIST METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF BERNARD LEWIS IN HIS WORKS ON THE ASSASSINS

O ENQUADRAMENTO METODOLÓGICO ORIENTALISTA DE BERNARD LEWIS EM SUAS OBRAS SOBRE OS ASSASSINOS

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Abstract

Orientalist studies on Islam have long constituted a field of intellectual conflict. The interest of Orientalists in Islam was not merely scientific curiosity, but rather a reflection of the West's image of the East, and an attempt either to understand it or to subjugate it within preconceived notions. This interest took multiple forms, ranging from deliberate distortion of Islamic history and questioning its civilization, to more balanced studies that sought epistemic fairness. Yet the impact of these studies went beyond academic boundaries, contributing to the shaping of Western public opinion and influencing political and cultural positions toward Islam and its people. Among the issues that attracted Orientalist attention were Islamic sects, seen as fertile ground for intellectual and political conflicts in Islamic history. The Assassins sect became a tool for attacking Islam itself, as exemplified by the Jewish British-American orientalist Bernard Lewis, who employed history to feed orientalist ideas aimed at undermining the Islamic system from within—not as mere historical events, but as a symbol of chaos and extremism. Given the importance of this subject, the study seeks to clarify the mechanisms of Lewis's orientalist methodology in his writings on the Assassins, and to analyze the orientalist approach he adopted in addressing this issue.

Keywords: Lewis. Assassins. Methodology.

Resumo

Os estudos orientalistas sobre o Islã constituem, há muito tempo, um campo de conflito intelectual. O interesse dos orientalistas pelo Islã não se limitava à curiosidade científica, mas refletia a imagem que o Ocidente tinha do Oriente e representava uma tentativa de compreendê-lo ou de subjugar-lo por meio de noções preconcebidas. Esse interesse assumiu múltiplas formas, variando desde a distorção deliberada da história islâmica e o questionamento de sua civilização até estudos mais equilibrados que buscavam a imparcialidade epistêmica. No entanto, o impacto desses estudos ultrapassou as fronteiras acadêmicas, contribuindo para a formação da opinião pública ocidental e influenciando posições políticas e culturais em relação ao Islã e seu povo. Entre as questões que atraíram a atenção dos orientalistas estavam as seitas islâmicas, vistas como terreno fértil para conflitos intelectuais e políticos na história islâmica. A seita dos Assassinos tornou-se uma ferramenta para atacar o próprio Islã, como exemplificado pelo orientalista judeu britânico-americano Bernard Lewis, que empregou a história para alimentar ideias orientalistas destinadas a minar o sistema islâmico por dentro — não como meros eventos históricos, mas como um símbolo de caos e extremismismo. Dada a importância deste tema, o estudo busca esclarecer os mecanismos da metodologia orientalista de Lewis em seus escritos sobre os Assassinos e analisar a abordagem orientalista que ele adotou ao tratar dessa questão.



Palavras-chave: Lewis. Assassinos.
Metodologia.

1 INTRODUCTION

Bernard Lewis's vision and definition of the term *Orientalism* clearly reflect his orientalist perspective. This is evident from the views of one researcher who considers Lewis among the most extreme Orientalists in his attempts to avoid using the term *Orientalism*. Lewis argued that the term had become tainted and should be abandoned, proposing alternatives such as *Arabism* or *Occidentalism*. These alternative terms were meant to indicate the study of Arab-Islamic civilization by non-Muslims, since Lewis regarded the word *Orientalist* as a polemical insult. He officially confirmed the exclusion of this term in several conferences held to discuss the matter. From his statements, one can infer a sense of superiority in refusing association with the East or in elevating the West above the East.

As for his historical methodology, although Lewis emphasized the importance of historians adhering to scientific methods in historical writing, free from any form of cultural or religious bias, he did not apply this principle in his own works. One researcher noted that Lewis's criticism of Muslim historians was not merely scientific critique, but carried other aims, including the attempt to distort the Islamic legacy and diminish the value of Muslim historians' contributions. This is evident in his writings on the Assassins, where his treatment of the subject reveals a marked tendency to deviate from the main framework, indulging in digressions imbued with sectarian and religious bias. He repeatedly used sectarian terms such as *Sunni* and *Shi'i* in contexts clearly intended to inflame sectarian tension, rather than to provide objective, neutral analysis.

Based on this, the researcher devoted attention to studying this issue and analyzing the orientalist methodology Lewis employed in his treatment of the Assassins, through a content analysis of his book *The New Ismaili Da'wa – The Assassins*. The study concluded with a set of methodological mechanisms derived from two main axes, which form the foundation of this research.

2 FIRST: HIS HISTORICAL METHOD

2.1 Second: his methodological strategy in handling the historical text

First: His Historical Method It is important at the outset to define the concept of methodology before delving into the details of this topic. According to one definition, methodology is the science concerned with studying the foundations of constructing curricula, the mechanisms of selecting, applying, developing, and critiquing them, and then reformulating them. Methodology also deals with examining the general principles, assumptions, and frameworks that govern those curricula. In this sense, methodology serves as a link between the epistemological model and the curricula as tools and methods used to reach the truth.

The historical method is considered one of the most prominent scientific research approaches that received wide attention in Orientalist studies. Orientalists relied on its principles and procedures in analyzing heritage. This method is used to study heritage by tracing its phenomena and interpreting them by returning to their roots, while identifying the changes and developments that occurred over time, in addition to analyzing the factors and causes that contributed to shaping its current form. This is achieved through employing evidence derived from documents, heritage records, and manuscripts, and logically connecting them in order to reach objective conclusions about Arab and Islamic heritage.

The historical method is also regarded as one of the critical approaches that depends on theoretical conceptualization and textual analysis. This means that the critic identifies a set of theories and their philosophical foundations, condenses them into hypotheses, data, or assumptions, and then proceeds to verify those theoretical conceptions through textual analysis to extract a set of results. In other words, the critical method is the cornerstone and foundation of any conscious critical process, as it seeks to uncover the characteristics of the text in a way that brings the recipient closer to its meaning. The critical method has its own mechanisms and procedures upon which it is built, and it does not deviate from their framework, deriving from them its specificity and essence. Accordingly, effective critical awareness requires working within approaches dictated by the nature of the texts.

Based on this, the study revealed a variety of historical methods that Lewis adopted in his classification of the Assassins. His vision of history involves an awareness of the importance of adhering to critical methodology in research and historical writing, even if he did not fully commit to it. Nevertheless, he was intelligent and skillful in his treatment of issues related to Islamic heritage in general, and the Nizari Ismailis—the Assassins—in particular, following in this context a set of diverse historical methods, which were represented as follows:

2.1.1 Comparative approach

Comparison is not a defined field or a subject of study, but rather a method of research and analysis, as the comparative method is one of the most important and deepest methods of historical scientific criticism in the interpretation of social phenomena, and comparison in general is a spontaneous activity and a natural trend inherent in human thinking, and it means balancing and comparing between two or more in order to determine the similarities and differences between them ⁽¹⁾The comparison should not focus on the study of a single incident in an abstract manner without linking it to the changes and circumstances surrounding it, but should be based on the comparison between the similarities and differences between two or more incidents⁽²⁾.

The study revealed in Lewis's writing that he relied remarkably on the method of comparison, as this method was remarkably manifested in his analysis of novels, texts, and various sources, until it became a basic method in his analysis, scrutinizing the transmitted narratives and discussing them in comparison with other sources and novels, following solid critical foundations, and not only comparative criticism, but also proceeded to analyze the logical and realistic reasons and factors behind those novels, and he did not hesitate to compare his own resources in order to highlight the disparity and difference in reliability and narrative.

For example, he included many concepts related to Hashishism and its origins, comparing their transmissions, as his sources varied between reports by monks and

⁽¹⁾Latad et al., *Scientific Research Methodology and Techniques*, 125, 126;

⁽²⁾Al-Mahmoudi, *Methods of Scientific Research*, 77.

bishops or European and Orientalist historians⁽³⁾, commenting (4) on the inadequacy of the texts and narratives of the historians of the Crusades in giving a clear and correct concept of Hashishism influenced by religious fanaticism. He also questioned the statements of some such as William al-Souri in his narration about the existence of communication and alliance between the Sheikh of the Mountain and the King of Jerusalem in comparison with Islamic sources⁽⁵⁾, although the latter showed some fallacies in clarifying this concept due to its ideological difference and hostility to this sect, but it is more acceptable, closer and more understanding, as it is rooted in the same religion and is closer to it spatially and with direct contact with it, and even emanated from one of the Islamic sects.

For example, he praised the methodology of the Austrian Orientalist Joseph von Hammer in his informational use of the assassin squad in comparison with other groups such as the Daoists, the Jositists, the Enlightened and Freemasonry, and considered them an early model for the revolutionary secret societies that later emerged in Europe, citing the conditions of the European political environment at the time.⁽⁶⁾ On the other hand, his eclecticism came with an orientalist dimension in his portrayal of the assassins that is closer to violence and terrorism, an image that influenced Western representations later on, to the point that some European groups imitated it, according to him.

As part of his series of comparative approaches, he followed a political and sectarian comparison of the rulers of Alamut, starting with al-Hasan ibn al-Sabah, whose political project was of an expansionist nature, based on the strategy of assassinations as a means to achieve his ideological and political goals. ⁽⁷⁾ As for Jalal al-Din, he adopted a different approach from his predecessor, as he redefined the policy of the assassins by opening up to historically hostile forces such as the Abbasid Caliphate, and this transformation is an expression of his awareness of the need to reposition the group within the system of regional alliances, in light of the rapid geopolitical changes ^{(8)...}, while during the era of Aladdin, internal and external factors contributed to the reshaping of the

⁽³⁾New Ismaili Da'wa, 11-16, 22.

⁽⁴⁾New Ismaili Da'wa, 11-15.

⁽⁵⁾The New Ismaili Da'wa, 16;

⁽⁶⁾Lewis, The New Ismaili Da'wah, 24-25.

⁽⁷⁾Lewis, The New Ismaili Da'wa, 57-76.

⁽⁸⁾Lewis, The New Ismaili Da'wa, 93-94.

power structure within the group, as his young age allowed those close to him to influence decisions, which led to a kind of regression in the The centralization of power, and the fracture that afflicted the Khwarezmian state as a result of the Mongol invasion created a political vacuum that the group invested in to strengthen its presence in the region, and it is noted that Aladdin pursued an unstable foreign policy between tension and alliance with the surrounding⁽⁹⁾ powers, while Rukn al-Din's policy was characterized by an attempt to establish a new type of regional relations represented by rapprochement with his neighbors who were rulers, as well as seeking to build strategic relations with the Mongols, but this openness did not achieve its desired results. It even led to its dramatic end at the hands of its supposed allies⁽¹⁰⁾.

On the doctrinal level, he referred to the⁽¹¹⁾ reticence of al-Hasan ibn al-Sabah al-Hafez in his close association with the Ismaili school of thought, with some intellectual differences that reflected a local diligence in the interpretation of the texts, on the other hand, al-Hasan ibn Muhammad represented an extreme situation within the⁽¹²⁾ Hashashi system, as he adopted a doctrine of a nihilistic and atheistic nature, which was translated by the declaration of the resurrection in a symbolic break with the traditional religious time. Jalal al-Din led a radical break with the group's ideological heritage, when he announced his conversion to the Sunni sect, and this transformation was accompanied by a violent symbolic practice, represented in the burning of the writings of the former rulers, cursing them, and disowning them, in a kind of "cognitive revolution" within the intellectual structure of the assassins⁽¹³⁾.

His Orientalist audacity was also evident in his unequal comparison, in which he relied on the words of one of the travelers, Marco Polo, when he compared the leader of the assassins to the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, claiming that the leader resorted to deceiving his followers with illusions related to paradise in order to gain their loyalty, just as he falsely claimed that the Prophet Muhammad PBUH did the same thing, and this is evident from the text of his statement (**and he used to tell them stories about Paradise,**

⁽⁹⁾Lewis, *The New Ismaili Da'wa*, 98-102.

⁽¹⁰⁾Lewis, *The New Ismaili Da'wa*, 103-110.

⁽¹¹⁾Lewis, *The New Ismaili Da'wa*, 52-55, 77-78.

⁽¹²⁾Lewis, *The New Ismaili Da'wah*, 87-90.

⁽¹³⁾Lewis, *The New Ismaili Da'wa*, 93-95.

just as Muhammad (PBUH) used to do it, and they believe in him just as Muslims believed in Muhammad (PBUH...) ⁽¹⁴⁾.

Thus, we reach the conclusion that he built his comparative approach according to the evaluation foundations of the texts and narrations transmitted by discussing and analyzing them, expressing his opinion on acceptance and rejection and explaining causality according to his Orientalist vision.

2.1.2 Inferential method

This approach is based on collecting evidence and general facts, then classifying and organizing them in a systematic way, in order to derive the required partial truth, starting from a philosophical mental basis, and focusing on what can be, to finally reach conclusions of a mental and philosophical nature, in other words, it is a method that moves from the faculties to the details, where the researcher starts from the general principles or facts and ends with specific details and judgments ⁽¹⁵⁾.

The deductive method was one of the methodological pillars that Lewis was keen to employ in his study and classification of the assassin squad, as he presented a number of data, facts and evidence in general, and then drew conclusions based on logical deduction, revealing the dimensions of his orientalist vision and the nature of his analytical approach to the subject.

He argued that Lewis relied on his deduction of time differences, as Lewis argued that the account that al-Hasan ibn al-Sabah, Omar Khayyam and Nizam al-Mulk were study fellows did not stand up to historical scrutiny. The differences in the dates of their deaths made their meeting at the same time illogical. Lewis considered the tale told by Edward Fitzgerald⁽¹⁶⁾ to be merely a myth, a view shared by a number of contemporary scholars.

In Lewis's deductive analysis of the phenomenon of assassinations, he focused on understanding it as a historical phenomenon of political assassination through an evolutionary and cultural perspective, highlighting how assassination was not a modern

⁽¹⁴⁾The New Ismaili Da'wa, 18.

⁽¹⁵⁾Latad et al., Scientific Research Methodology and Techniques, 120.

⁽¹⁶⁾The New Ismaili Da'wah, 54.

invention or limited to a specific category such as "assassins", but rather a political behavior rooted in human history, an expression of power struggles and political transitions. Lewis said that the association of assassins with assassination was only a cultural stigma in European languages, but he looks at the phenomenon deeper as part of the religious and political heritage, where assassination was a tool used by groups to bring about political or religious change, whether for personal or ideological motives, as he confirmed the development of this practice over time, from being an individual act justified by revenge or conflict, to becoming a religious ritual and a value system as in the case of assassins, which reflects a shift in the meaning of assassination from a mere means to an action Takssi bears the symbolism of sacrifice and redemption, and therefore his analysis confirms that political assassination is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, in which political factors interfere⁽¹⁷⁾.

In adopting his deductive method, he proceeded from a preconceived hypothesis or research question centered on the development of Western interest in the Ismailis, using qualitative sources such as manuscripts and reports of Russian scholars, with the aim of reaching broader conclusions related to the changing academic view of Ismailism. His analysis was based on documentary data and historical events from which he derived cultural and epistemological dimensions, most notably the significance of the existence of coded and secret texts in the Ismaili heritage, in this regard Lewis pointed out that at the beginning of the twentieth century Western researchers obtained rare Ismaili manuscripts that first appeared in Syria, and then a large batch came from Yemen, as about sixty manuscripts were transferred in 1321 AH / 1903 AD to the Ambrosiana Library in Milan, Italy. In the same vein, the interest of Russian scholars in the Ismailis began to escalate after the discovery of their presence within the territory of the Russian Empire, and an official report was issued about them in 1320 AH/1902 AD, and manuscripts from Central Asia were collected, which were later deposited in the Asian Museum, and these documents formed a primary source that helped to open new horizons for the study of Ismaili thought and its historical transformations⁽¹⁸⁾.

⁽¹⁷⁾The New Ismaili Da'wah, 143-146.

⁽¹⁸⁾The New Ismaili Da'wa, 30-31.

One of his inferential evidences was his vision of the image that was formed around Ismailism, especially the myth of the gardens of heaven, which was the result of exaggerations by their opponents, rather than proven facts based on a deductive and critical reading of historical sources ⁽¹⁹⁾.

2.1.3 Inductive approach

This approach is concerned with extrapolating the parts to infer facts that are universal to the whole, considering that what applies to the part applies to the whole, as its essence is based on the transition from the parts to the faculties or from the private to the public, and derives the elements of its construction from extrapolating the facts, relying on prediction and interpretation on the conclusion from the part to the whole ⁽²⁰⁾.

Lewis adopted the inductive approach in interpreting and analyzing his quotations, as he came up with a set of extrapolations related to events and figures related to the assassins, thus laying the theoretical foundations of Orientalism in the study of Islamic sects and sects, and then addressing issues related to the Islamic heritage from this perspective.

For example, Lewis's inductive vision was used to collect data from multiple sources (Iranian books, historical accounts, time differences) to build conclusions about the personality of al-Hasan ibn al-Sabah and his political and intellectual motives, concluding that the accounts in circulation may be closer to myth than to exact history ⁽²¹⁾.

Furthermore, Lewis based his analysis of the permanence and strength of the Assassins on an inductive approach based on tracing the geographical and field data contained in the reports of European travelers, especially those that documented the natural sites of the Assassins' castles such as Alamut Castle, and through collecting and analyzing these reports, Lewis came to the conclusion that the rugged geographical nature – of high mountains, deep valleys and difficult passages – constituted a natural defensive immunity that contributed to the survival of this group despite political challenges. Thus, Lewis attributes the steadfastness of the assassins not only to ideological factors, but also

⁽¹⁹⁾New Ismaili Da'wa, 19.

⁽²⁰⁾Latad et al., *Scientific Research Methodology and Techniques*, 120;

⁽²¹⁾New Ismaili Da'wa, 54.

to the spatial dimension as a decisive element in the interpretation of their historical reality⁽²²⁾, and he emphasizes this in a place where Lewis also points out that the Ismailis chose ⁽²³⁾ difficult mountainous areas to expand their influence, most notably the area between Khuzestan and Fars, which combined suitable conditions: rugged terrain, a grieving population and a strong Shi'ite tradition.

In an investigation of Lewis's extrapolation of the history of Syria in the eleventh century, he pointed out that sectarian pluralism and political division formed a structural feature of the region, which made it vulnerable to external intellectual and military penetrations, such as the penetration of the Ismaili da'wa and the influence of the Turkmen and Seljuks. In 488 AH / 1095 AD, Lewis suggested that this internal division with its religious and political aspects was not just a transient situation but a recurring historical pattern in the Islamic Levant, which often led to the loss of central control and the opening of the way for chaos and foreign interference⁽²⁴⁾.

2.1.4 Restoration approach

It is part of the general historical method, and it is intended to perform a basic cognitive function to retrieve historical events in a scientific way to reveal their smallest details in order to ensure their authenticity and understand their circumstances. ⁽²⁵⁾

Lewis's vision reflects a systematic character based on retrieval and historical analysis, as he sought to trace the facts, events and personalities associated with the Assassins Movement, showing their impact on the formation of European consciousness, he addressed the prevailing perceptions in Western culture about the Assassins, reviewing the presence of this concept in European literature, through the symbols and connotations that writers and poets employed in their works derived from the image of the Assassins⁽²⁶⁾. Lewis also noted the political dimension of their influence, explaining how some

⁽²²⁾The New Ismaili Da'wah, 26-27.

⁽²³⁾The New Ismaili Da'wa, 60.

⁽²⁴⁾New Ismaili Da'wa, 114, 115

⁽²⁵⁾Latad et al., Scientific Research Methodology and Techniques, 124.

⁽²⁶⁾The New Ismaili Da'wa, 15.

European secret societies were inspired by the methods of assassination and clandestine organization and used them in their practices during the Middle Ages⁽²⁷⁾.

One of the evidences of his retrospective approach is his return to previous historical events and stages of the Ismailis in Syria, starting from the beginnings of their activity in (497 AH/1103 AD) through the various stages of their attempts in (507 AH/1113 AD), (525 AH/1130 AD), and then (526 AH/1131 AD) by tracing these events historically and chronologically Showing how Ismaili strategies of controlling forts and using assassinations as a means of achieving their goals evolved, and according to this approach, Louis Bareconstructed and analyzed historical facts to understand the evolution of the phenomenon over time by looking back step by step to the past to explain the present or the final results reached by the Ismaili community in Syria⁽²⁸⁾.

Among the cases that he dealt with with analysis and explanation of the causes and reasons for recovering their facts and events is related to the decline of the influence of the assassins in Aleppo after the death of Prince Radwan in (507 AH/1113 AD), who was their protector, especially after a failed assassination incident in (505 AH/1111 AD) that provoked popular protests. His son Alp Arslan tried to support them by giving them a castle, but the Seljuk Sultan Muhammad issued a warning that led to a coup d'état of public opinion, so Ibn Badi led a general crackdown (507 AH/113 AD) in which their leaders were executed and about 200 people were killed or imprisoned, while the rest fled, however, Lewis believes that the leadership of Abu Tahir al-Sayegh was influential, as the Assassins were able to establish local support networks, attract extremists from areas such as the Sumac Plain, the islands, and the country of Bani Alim, and linked their cells to the Alamut Castle in Iran In 508 AH / 1114 AD, they carried out a surprise attack on the fortress of Shizar, which they captured before they were eliminated⁽²⁹⁾.

Based on the above, we can deduce Lewis's methodology in retrieval as follows:

1. **Linking the Present and the Past:** Analyzes contemporary phenomena through their historical roots, highlighting the continuity of certain political and religious patterns.

⁽²⁷⁾New Ismaili Da'wa, 20, 21 and 22.

⁽²⁸⁾New Ismaili Da'wa, 115, 116.

⁽²⁹⁾New Ismaili Da'wa, 119, 120.

2. **Highlighting the effectiveness of fringe organizations** : Shows how movements such as the Assassins have been able to influence despite their apparent weakness, through unconventional methods such as assassinations and community infiltration.
3. **Focus on the sectarian and political environment** : Re-reading past events from the perspective of social and political structure, to explain the success or failure of movements.
4. **Societal Reaction Analysis**: Documents how shifts such as the death of Prince Radwan or public pressure have influenced the shift in the balance of power.
5. **Studied chronology** : It uses a precise chronology to link events and analyze their development, such as the events of (505 AH/1111 AD), (507 AH/113 AD), (508 AH/1114 AD).

2.2 Second: his methodology in dealing with the historical text

The study revealed the mechanisms and methods that Lewis followed in dealing with historical texts and narratives, which were mainly based on hermeneutics as a method to understand the underlying meanings, as well as probing the depths of beginnings and the origins of things, while adopting repetition and digression as means of expanding the cognitive horizon. Through this combination of interpretation and investigation, the study reached the identification of these methods through a set of axes that focused on the following points:

2.2.1 Interpretation

Historical interpretation is the treatment of the text as a scientific subject that is universally read by employing various sciences such as linguistics and anthropology, and by analyzing its discourse and its elements in an analysis that relies on statistics, distribution and classification.⁽³⁰⁾

⁽³⁰⁾Abji, Historical Interpretation, 125.

His hermeneutic methodology is aimed at monitoring some concepts and giving a definitive statement to some words and terms, and his intention is to investigate the real meaning behind these words, which often carry several synonyms, such as the term Rafiq, which has been stopped at the methods of its use among the Ismailis themselves ⁽³¹⁾.

2.2.2 *Spotting the first things*

Lewis's methodology is based on investigating and tracing the first roots of scientific studies, whether in the study of Ismailism or its groups of Hashishiya, following the development and academic additions to them, some of which have often generated many digressions, which we will discuss in the following point.

2.2.3 *Digression*

Digression in history refers to a methodological and narrative phenomenon that appears in many historical writings, represented in the author's transition from a major topic to a secondary one, for the purpose of clarification, or just for the sake of elaboration, i.e., deviating from the main axis of the historical event or topic to side or subsidiary topics, whether political, intellectual, religious, or social, that may not be directly related to the event studied ⁽³²⁾.

This is what we note in the book *The New Ismaili Da'wah – The HashYeshiyya*, where Lewis turned to a complex analysis of the Shiite sects, delving into the details of their origin, branching and creed, to the extent that the text seemed to deviate from its path towards constructing a sectarian anthropology rather than a concentrated study of the Assassins' sect.

Lewis devotes long pages to the history of Ismailism not as an introductory framework, but as an explanatory approach that enables the Western reader – in particular – to understand the theological and political roots that formed the intellectual background of the Assassins, and here the digression is understood not as a distraction but as an

⁽³¹⁾New Ismaili Da'wa, 52.

⁽³²⁾Depp, *The Diversion Problem*, 66.

attempt at comprehensive framing, which is in line with Lewis's broader project to understand Islam not only as a religion but as a historical presence and a mental world (33).

Interestingly, Lewis stopped at the linguistic and symbolic interpretations of the word "assassins" in a digression that may seem purely linguistic, but behind it hides a linguistic-cultural approach aimed at dismantling the stereotype that has taken root in European memory of these people from the Crusades to modern Romantic literature⁽³⁴⁾.

Although this approach involves systematic boldness, the over-expansion without a direct analytical link to the main axis may be understood as a kind of Orientalist digression, which aims to construct a comprehensive picture of the East, even at the expense of academic focus⁽³⁵⁾.

In summary, these digressions were not random or arbitrary, but rather part of the Louisian-Orientalist approach, which seeks to uncover the civilizational pattern behind the phenomenon, rather than merely analyzing it in its limited context.

Despite the methodological nature that Lewis seems to have tried to follow in his classification of the Assassins' Squad, his work was not without scientific gaps, which sometimes took on a deliberate and directed character, and this characteristic is not unique to him alone, but also stands out among a number of orientalists when dealing with the issues of Islamic history. He also addressed sensitive topics, such as the question of the caliphate and the resulting ideological, political and social divisions, in a manner that provoked sectarianism, including explicit abuses of the Prophet's personality in various places⁽³⁶⁾.

One of the researchers began to investigate the methodological errors that appeared in Lewis's writings in Islamic history, which also seemed to be a phenomenon in the subject of our study, which correspond to the following :

- 1. Uncontrolled generalizations:** These are the making of judgments based on a few incidents or incidents, sometimes without any evidence of this⁽³⁷⁾, such as the accounts of the Crusades describing the assassins, which described them as the

⁽³³⁾ The New Ismaili Da'wah, 33-51.

⁽³⁴⁾The New Ismaili Da'wa, 15, 17, 23. 24.

⁽³⁵⁾The New Ismaili Da'wah, 27-30.

⁽³⁶⁾The New Ismaili Da'wah, 33-37.

⁽³⁷⁾Muttabani, Orientalism and Intellectual Trends, 437.

worst of qualities, based on extracts from the letter of the monk Procarodius to the King of France⁽³⁸⁾, and the report of Frederick Barbarossa sent to Egypt and Syria⁽³⁹⁾, and the story of the German historian Arnold of Lübeck in mocking hashish⁽⁴⁰⁾, as well as Marco Polo's novel, which popularized a misconception about assassins and the Garden of Paradise⁽⁴¹⁾.

- 2. Choosing narratives that support a preconceived idea:** ⁽⁴²⁾PBUH⁽⁴³⁾ Lewis's talk on the subject of the Ismailis was full of errors, including that the Prophet⁽⁴⁴⁾ (s) did not leave clear instructions about who would succeed him as the leader and ruler of the Islamic Ummah, and it sparked controversy among Muslims about the best leader to lead the Islamic Ummah, and the description of the Shiites as following a political movement without distinction of religious beliefs and without religious contents, and his description of the Shiites as an extremist movement⁽⁴⁵⁾, the lack of a source for the texts used by Lewis on this subject (the Ismailis).⁽⁴⁶⁾ His reliance on the sources of travelers who gave him a bad idea of this sect as being murdered and atheist, and this is what his book shows without referring to Islamic sources, and one of these examples is the singularity of Marco Polo's novel in describing the Garden of Paradise from the rest of the novels⁽⁴⁷⁾.
- 3. Falsification of history due to ignorance or deliberateness:** ⁽⁴⁸⁾Louis included the novels of the travelers describing the assassins, including the letter of the monk Procarodius to the King of France⁽⁴⁹⁾, the report of Frederick Barbarossa sent to Egypt and Syria⁽⁵⁰⁾, and the story of the German historian Arnold of Lübeck in

⁽³⁸⁾New Ismaili Da'wa, 11-12;

The American Historical Review, Directorium ad Faciendum Passagium Transmarinum, 2 / 104.

⁽³⁹⁾The New Ismaili Da'wa, 13-14; Lübeck, Arnoldi Chronica Slavorum, 274 – 275

⁽⁴⁰⁾New Ismaili Da'wa, 15; Lübeck, Arnoldi Chronica Slavorum, 145 – 146

⁽⁴¹⁾The New Ismaili Da'wa, 18-19; Polo, The Travels of Marco Polo, 1/89-92.

⁽⁴²⁾Mutabqani, Orientalism and Intellectual Trends, 438.

⁽⁴³⁾The New Ismaili Da'wa, 33.

⁽⁴⁴⁾The New Ismaili Da'wa, 34.

⁽⁴⁵⁾New Ismaili Da'wa, 39.

⁽⁴⁶⁾New Ismaili Da'wa, 33-51.

⁽⁴⁷⁾New Ismaili Da'wa, 18-19.

⁽⁴⁸⁾Mutabqani, Orientalism and Intellectual Trends, 438.

⁽⁴⁹⁾New Ismaili Da'wa, 11-12;

The American Historical Review, Directorium ad Faciendum Passagium Transmarinum, 2 / 104.

⁽⁵⁰⁾The New Ismaili Da'wa, 13-14; Lübeck, Arnoldi Chronica Slavorum, 274 – 275

mocking the Hashish⁽⁵¹⁾, as well as the novel of Marco Polo, which popularized a false idea about the assassins and the Garden of Paradise⁽⁵²⁾.

- 4. Simplifying historical facts until they lose their value⁽⁵³⁾** : Lewis says that the Prophet Muhammad never PBUH claimed to be more than a mortal man, and what distinguishes him from others is that he was the Messenger of God and the bearer of His words, but he himself is not a god, nor is he immortal, and in any case he did not leave clear instructions about who would succeed him as the leader of the Islamic group and the ruler of the emerging Islamic state.⁽⁵⁴⁾ Lewis argues that the assassin movement had four basic features: (1) It represented a profound threat to the existing political, social, and religious order. (2) They were not isolated, but part of revolutionary Mahdist movements that broke out from time to time. (3) Al-Hasan ibn al-Sabah succeeded in transforming popular anger and ambiguous desires into an unparalleled disciplined doctrine and organization. (4) The movement ended in failure, as it did not control major cities, and its castles turned into small emirates that disappeared over time, so that its followers became a mere sectarian minority⁽⁵⁵⁾.
- 5. Neglect and distortion of historical facts⁽⁵⁶⁾**: One of these proofs is the lack of a source for the texts used by Lewis on the subject of the Ismailis⁽⁵⁷⁾. Also, the image of the assassins is distorted through the use of the accounts of the Crusades and the Sunni anti-sectarian narratives to which we have referred previously
- 6. Focus on the economic factor⁽⁵⁸⁾** : Focus on the expansion of the Assassins and their control over castles, including the far north of Iran, the Alamut Fortress and its adjacent areas, the province of Quhistan, Rudbar, the fortress of Jardkouh and the fortress of Shah Dez⁽⁵⁹⁾. Lewis also referred to a series of Russian studies on

⁽⁵¹⁾New Ismaili Da'wa, 15; Lübeck, Arnoldi Chronica Slavorum, 145 – 146

⁽⁵²⁾The New Ismaili Da'wa, 18-19; Polo, The Travels of Marco Polo, 1/89-92.

⁽⁵³⁾Mutabqani, Orientalism and Intellectual Trends, 439.

⁽⁵⁴⁾New Ismaili Da'wa, 33.

⁽⁵⁵⁾New Ismaili Da'wa, 158-159.

⁽⁵⁶⁾Mutabqani, Orientalism and Intellectual Trends, 439.

⁽⁵⁷⁾New Ismaili Da'wa, 33-51.

⁽⁵⁸⁾Mutababani, Orientalism and Intellectual Trends, 444.

⁽⁵⁹⁾The New Ismaili Da'wa, 55-60, 65.

the true meaning of the Assassins' movement, with the main focus on the economic aspect⁽⁶⁰⁾.

7 Intolerance of a political doctrine (Zionism) ⁽⁶¹⁾. Lewis relied on travelers and an external agenda, including officers and orientalists who believed in the colonization of the East, and Jewish clerics, historians, and orientalists ⁽⁶²⁾.

3 CONCLUSION AND RESEARCH RESULTS

- 1) Lewis's methodology was selective, especially in dealing with issues related to Islamic history, and this is evident in the comparative study between the content of his book (The New Ismaili Dawa - Hashishiya), and the narratives transmitted by Islamic heritage books and sources about the history and beliefs of the Assassins.
- 2) Lewis relied on myths, superstitions, historians of the Crusades and travelers in the subject of describing assassins and ignoring the sources of the Islamic heritage, which gave his approach a single-source character that contradicts the foundations of scientific documentation, in addition to that he praised Orientalist studies in many cases, despite pointing out the shortcomings of their vision, especially in standing on the ideological side because they did not use the sources of the Islamic heritage, which presented an incomplete vision in this aspect, but he accepted their narratives without criticism and as an Orientalist, he showed his inclination In taking away from the Orientalists for their purpose in harming Islam and its doctrines.
- 3) As one of the most prominent orientalists of the twentieth century, Lewis represented the path that attempted to provide a historical and intellectual interpretation of the assassins, governed by the context of Orientalist thought, which carries within it political and cultural dimensions beyond neutral scientific research.

⁽⁶⁰⁾The New Ismaili Da'wa, 156-158.

⁽⁶¹⁾Mutabqani, Orientalism and Intellectual Trends, 446.

⁽⁶²⁾The New Ismaili Da'wah, 26, 27, 28.

- 4) Despite the diversity of sources in Lewis's book on assassins, including Western travelers, Crusader historians, Orientalists, Arabs, and Persians, he relied on the hostility of these sources to the Assassins in conveying their news.
- 5) He adopted methods and means that appear to be methodological on the face of it, whether by deduction or extrapolation and other historical methodological tools, but his aims and objectives carried a systematic Orientalist dimension according to his racist vision.

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All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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