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### Of Spies and Assassins

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# **SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL**

This Honors thesis entitled  
**Of Spies and Assassins....**

written by

**Haddon G. Smead**

and submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for completion of  
the Carl Goodson Honors Program  
meets the criteria for acceptance  
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

Dr. Ray Franklin, thesis director

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March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022

### ***AN INTRODUCTION IS IN ORDER.***

There are two figures of history, two distinct organizations of such immense power and mystique, that the mind is drawn into the paradox of simultaneous awe, fear, and inquiry: the Assassins' Order and the *Shinobi*—but what if these two shadow-warriors of old were not so distinct?—what if they shared so many key aspects in common that one might wonder if one were an influence upon one another, or, perhaps, even descended from the other? That is what shall be explored: the potential connection between the Assassins' Order of the Middle-East and the *Shinobi* of Japan. In tracing the potential connections, one must follow the trails of cutthroat daggersmen, bandits and rogues, underground liberation-fronts, and men fabled to disappear into the night as seamlessly as darkness itself.

### ***THE HISTORY OF THE ASSASSINS' ORDER MUST BE WELL-UNDERSTOOD.***

The Assassins' Order of the Medieval Middle-East was a group of religious/political assassins, adhering to the Shia variant of the Islamic faith, which existed before, during, and (arguably) after the time of the Crusades. The *Shinobi* of Japan, also known as, "*Ninja*," were a group of spies and stealth-based operatives of Medieval Japan. Herein shall be listed a basic history of each organization, which shall provide a sufficient background-knowledge to understand the significance of further details. In the course of the general histories of each respective organization, one may see some initial similarities.

### ***THE ETYMOLOGY OF THE WORD, "ASSASSIN," ALONG WITH THE EARLY YEARS AND FOUNDATIONS OF THE ASSASSINS' ORDER, MUST BE DELVED INTO.***

The word, "assassin," actually comes from the Order of Assassins from the Middle-East. There are various reports of the etymology of the word. According to the Discovery documentary, "The Order of Assassins," and the Kings and Generals documentary, "Hashashins: Origins of the Order of Assassins," the name comes from the accusation of the members using the drug

Hashish, a primitive form of marijuana.<sup>1</sup> Arkon Daraul in his book, *Secret Societies: A History*, notes that it could be derived from Arabic for, “guardians of the secrets,” the word, “Assasseen,” having to do with guardians.<sup>2</sup> Bernard Lewis, in his work, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect of Islam*, has noted an account of an envoy for emperor Frederick Barbarossa that describes the Assassins as those, “. . .who in their own vernacular are called *Heysessini*,” and the account written shortly thereafter by William, Archbishop of Tyre, who claims that, “Both our people and the Saracens call them Assissini; we do not know the origin of this name.”<sup>3</sup> This collectively shows various etymologies for the word, but all are, ultimately, tied back to the Order of Assassins, which shall now be described in its basic history.

Hassan-I Sabbah was the founder of the legendary Order of Assassins, a Nizari-Ismaili organization. According to the work, *Secret Societies: A History*, written by Arkon Daraul, the Assassins’ Order was founded out of the Shia sect of the Islamic faith, coming from a previous Shia group founded in Cairo, Egypt, of which Hassan-I Sabbah was a member.<sup>4</sup> In his book, Arkon Daraul also wrote the following:

It must be remembered that the followers of Islam in the seventh century A.D. split into two divisions: the orthodox, who regard Mohammed as the bringer of divine inspiration; and the Shias, who consider that Ali, his successor, the Fourth Imam (leader), was more important. It is with the Shias that we are concerned here. From the beginning of the split in the early days of Islam, the Shias relied for survival upon secrecy, organization, and initiation. Although the minority part in Islam, they believed that they could overcome the majority (and eventually the whole world) by superior organization and power. To

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<sup>1</sup> Discovery. Discovery Plus (Service Providing Material). “The Order of the Assassins.” *Inside Secret Societies*. <https://www.discoveryplus.com/video/inside-secret-societies/the-order-of-assassins>

See also Kings and Generals. YouTube (Service Providing Material). “Hashashins: Origins of the Order of Assassins.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vG8qmlKdRjs>

<sup>2</sup> Arkon Daraul, *Secret Societies: a History*, MJF Books, 1989, New York, U.S.A., 28.

<sup>3</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam*, Oxford University Press, 1967, New York, 2-4.

<sup>4</sup> Daraul, 14.

this end they started a number of societies which practised [*sic*] secret rites in which the personality of Ali was worshiped, and whose rank and file were trained to struggle above all for the accomplishment of world domination. One of the most successful secret societies which the Shias founded was centered around the Abode of Learning in Cairo, which was the training-ground for fanatics who were conditioned by the most cunning methods to believe in a special divine mission. In order to do this, the original democratic Islamic ideas had to be overcome by skilled teachers, acting under the order of the Caliph of the Fatimites [*sic*], who ruled Egypt at the time. Members were enrolled, on the understanding that they were to receive hidden power and timeless wisdom which would enable them to become as important in life as some of the teachers. And the Caliph saw to it that the instructors were no ordinary men. The supreme judge was one of them; another was the commander-in-chief of the army; a third the minister of the Court. There was no lack of applicants. In any country where the highest officials of the realm formed a body of teachers, one would find the same thing.<sup>5</sup>

Daraul also notes that the secret-society used lavish conditions, the best textbooks, and the greatest scientific-instruments available to impress students. They used, “confusion techniques,” which were designed to cast doubt upon all previous knowledge of the initiates; used oaths; and utilized secret signs. The secret-society told students that the imams and the imams only held the keys to secret knowledge and hidden power, taught practices greatly resembling sorcery and/or necromancy, and instructed students in how to influence others using concentration-methods,<sup>6</sup> though this is called into question by others. The secret-society taught debate and destructive argumentation, along with an almost-Pantheistic belief that all humanity, creation, and destruction were part of a whole, not being separate, but that one who realized such could unlock vast power and realize the ability of human-kind. The group also taught that all religion and philosophy were false and that the Imam was the only one to be served.<sup>7</sup> It is also mentioned, later, that, “...Hassan was trained in the Shia art of winning people over by apparent honesty,”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

<sup>6</sup> Perhaps this is something resembling hypnotherapy or some other form of hypnosis?

<sup>7</sup> Daraul, 15-16.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 19.

and such training directed specifically toward influencing would have made him into quite the charismatic and sophisticated operator in manipulation and deceit, beyond any doubt. According to the same work, the organization was marginally effective, if intended to operate as a revolutionary-nexus, though it succeeded greatly if its only role was to prepare individuals for activity. Aside from producing Hassan-I Sabbah, another member of the organization gained control of Baghdad and influenced it in favor of the Fatimid Caliphate, although he was removed by the Ottoman Turks. The Ottoman Empire so discouraged and threatened the Cairo sect that very little more is known of them from that point onward, and it was shut down by Vizier Afdal in the year 1123 A.D., leaving Hassan to reform and reinvigorate a new version of the society.<sup>9</sup>

The Assassins' Order was founded by Hassan-I Sabbah, an Nizari Ismaili teacher who had traveled to Cairo (during the time it was ruled by the Fatimid Caliphate) and returned to spread Ismaili doctrine in lands hostile to the Nizari Ismaili sect of Islam (the Seljuk Empire, which held to the Sunni doctrine and had taken over the lands to which he had returned), setting up a fortress for his Order at Alamut. There, he was reported to have used esoteric religious-indoctrination and training in the art of asymmetric warfare<sup>10</sup> to create a sect of warrior-ascetics who would infiltrate another organization or political entity, assassinate the head of the opposing force, and use this killing to create both utter disarray and internally-based schism, achieving the effect of both eliminating the driving force of the opponent, breaking enemy morale, and dividing the foes amongst themselves—or, at times, almost killing but sparing the opponent and demanding tribute of them, in return for the show of mercy and under the threat of renewed

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>10</sup> Also known as, “guerilla warfare,” centering upon fighting unconventionally in order to gain an advantage over one’s opponents, especially when involving and/or hinging upon stealth, deception, ambush, theft, sabotage, espionage, and/or assassination.

hostilities.<sup>11</sup> It is known that Hassan-I Sabbah was known not only by his true name, but as, “The Old Man of the Mountain,” because he lived upon the isolated mountain-fortress of Alamut, and would, reportedly, drug new initiates. The initiates would awake in a garden filled with good food and beautiful women, would stay the night there, and would awake before Hassan-I Sabbah. They would be told that, if they served him, they would experience such paradise again, in death. It was actually considered a sign of failure and a mark of shame for an assassin to survive a mission, as marked by their waiting to be killed after completing a strike.<sup>12</sup> According to Arkon Daraul in his book *Secret Societies: A History*, Hassan knew that it would not be enough, in all likelihood, to simply tell those he wished to indoctrinate and who he wished to give their lives in his service of a paradise, but to show them a paradise.<sup>13</sup> Daraul goes on to cite Marco Polo, the famous European explorer of the Orient, in describing this garden as being located in a valley and being a place of great luxury, filled with delicious food and wonderfully-aromatic flora, with palaces built across it in a variety of ways and a castle built at the mouth of the valley to guard it and keep out those who were not welcome.<sup>14</sup>

Bernard Lewis, in his work, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect of Islam*, also makes note of an account of an envoy of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa which claimed that the master of the Assassins, “who in their own vernacular are called *Heysseini*,” possessed beautiful locations guarded by, “...very high walls, so that none can enter except by a small and very well-guarded

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<sup>11</sup> Discovery, “The Order of Assassins.” See also Kings and Generals, “Hashashins: Origins of the Order of Assassins.”

<sup>12</sup> Daraul, 20-22. See also Discovery, “The Order of Assassins.” See also Kings and Generals, “Hashashins: Origins of the Order of Assassins.”

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 20

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 21

door,” this aiding in knowledge of the paradise-like garden.<sup>15</sup> Certain prospective assassins actually attempted to slay themselves in order to return to this state of paradise, believing, upon waking, that Hassan-I Sabbah had transported them to a spiritual realm, but were later told that only death in the course of fulfilling Hassan’s orders would permit them entrance into the garden of paradise once more.<sup>16</sup> According to legend, Hassan would also purchase unwanted children and train them as assassins willing to give their lives for him<sup>17</sup>. The entire exercise of recruiting young men via moving them into the garden and promising them a paradise in return for a life of service and the sacrifice of that life in the course of the cause was not only a way to attract and keep initiates and to produce highly-motivated assets, but a manner in which the legend of the Assassins’ Order would be generated and spread far and wide, and a method through which the Order would come to be infamous, renowned and feared alike among the hearts of its foes and allies, all at once. Assassins of such dedication to their mission, who would sacrifice their own lives willingly after having completed an objective, even when they might have had an opportunity to flee and to live to fight another day, would, surely, cement itself quite solidly and soberly in the minds of those who witnessed such events firsthand, and the tales of such events would mesmerize and terrify those who heard them.

Another trick Hassan would use against prospective assassins, in order to wow them and to intimidate them alike and to better earn their loyalty and admiration, was one which he, according to Daraul and the Discovery documentary about the Assassins, learned from the book, *Art of Imposture*, written by Abdel-Rahman of Damascus. In the course of this ruse, Hassan

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<sup>15</sup> Lewis, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Daraul, 22.

<sup>17</sup> Daraul, 30.



would have a pit dug and a follower placed therein, only his head being left above the earth, and a platter which fit together in two pieces and which left a hole for the neck was placed around his throat, fresh blood being sprinkled about the plate to give the impression that this was a severed head—next, Hassan would bring the others in, claiming to have brought a dead, decapitated head to life, and making it talk of the wonders of the paradise it experienced in death; after having done such, he would dismiss the others, decapitate the man in the sand, and walk out with his severed head in his hands, as evidence to the others that he had, in fact, the power of necromancy.<sup>18</sup> This was not only a method of recruitment and motivating loyalty, but of instilling fear and terror in the hearts of all who dared oppose the Order...yet some did oppose the Assassins, nonetheless.

The Assassins' Order's first known political assassination, according to Discovery, was a strike on a local ruler named Nizam Al-Mulk, wherein a *fi'da'yin* or *fi'dai*<sup>19</sup> in plain-clothes struck the ruler with a dagger, killing him and, in return, being slain by his entourage.<sup>20</sup> The fact that they were in plain clothes is of importance, due to the fact that the Assassins used a uniform consisting of a white primary-garment and red accessories, such as a hood, a sash, gloves, and boots.<sup>21</sup> The Discovery documentary, "The Order of the Assassins," notes that they were in uniform when on guard-duty for their leader.<sup>22</sup> It would appear that the Assassins went in plain-

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<sup>18</sup> Daraul, 22-23. See also Discovery, "The Order of Assassins." Necromancy is the ability to commune with and/or reanimate the dead.

<sup>19</sup> *Fi'dai* is a word for the most faithful and elite among the Nizari Ismaili: an assassin.

<sup>20</sup> Discovery, "The Order of Assassins."

<sup>21</sup> Daraul, 28.

<sup>22</sup> Discovery, "The Order of Assassins."

clothes to perform assassinations, in-general, and were quite more-so ceremonious behind the walls of the fortresses.

The assassination of Nizam Al-Mulk provides a deeper look not only into the methods and the targeting-system of the Order of Assassins, but a very personal and intimate glimpse into the private history of Hassan-I Sabbah and a very important chapter of his life which helped drive him to create the organization of mythic status, the Order of Assassins. Nizam Al-Mulk was a former schoolmate of Hassan's, as a disciple of renowned Imam Muwafiq, along with the future poet laureate of Persia, Oman Khayyám, and Nizam Al-Mulk once helped Hassan get a job working as a minister of the Persians in fulfillment of a childhood vow, stating later that, "I had made him a minister by my strong and extravagant recommendations. Like his father, however, he proved to be a fraud, hypocrite and a self-seeking villain. He was so clever at dissimulation that he appeared to be pious when he was not, and before long he had somehow completely captured the mind of the Shah." This clearly shows that personal and professional animosity had grown between the two since their presumably-amicable school-days before Egypt and the Order of Assassins;<sup>23</sup> as a matter of fact, Nizam Al-Mulk is reported to have exclaimed once, "By Allah, this man will destroy us all unless he is rendered harmless, though I cannot kill my playmate.", an important quote.<sup>24</sup> This demonstrates keenly that Nizam, while never considering slaying Hassan, had grown increasingly infuriated at him, and, perhaps, even jealous of the favor he held with the sultan, and how he obtained it. Hassan is supposed to have served in a role as a minister<sup>25</sup> and had a grudge against after being exiled for some potential-disservice

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<sup>23</sup> Daraul, 19.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>25</sup> This is not a religious minister, but refers to the old use of the word, as in one who looks after and administers certain of the ruler's affairs.

involving a counting of the empire's costs and revenues. Nizam, known as an honest man, had said it would take a year to count, and Hassan said to Malik Shah<sup>26</sup> that it would take forty days.<sup>27</sup> When the time came for Hassan to read his report to the *shah*, claiming to have done the work by his own hand, it appears that Nizam had managed to introduce discrepancies into the work. Having claimed to have done it all by his own hand, Hassan could not escape responsibility for what was written therein, and it was, apparently, so incredibly egregious that the sultan had him exiled<sup>28</sup>.

It was in this time of pain and exile that Hassan traveled to Egypt to grow in knowledge and strength in a manner in keeping with his Ismaili doctrine and to plot against the sultan and his former friend. In fact, it was recorded by Hassan's personal friend and a future assassin-devotee, Abu-al-Fazal, that Hassan burst out in rage upon his exile that, "If I had two, just two, devotees who would stand by me, then I would cause the downfall of the Turk and that peasant."<sup>29</sup> It certainly does seem convenient that the Assassins' Order later brought down the Persians with the presumed assassination of the sultan<sup>30</sup>. Perhaps Khayyám, another schoolmate of Hassan's (as was previously stated), played a role, especially due to his closeness with the court, as poet laureate? The assassins proceeded to slay Nizam Al-Mulk's son and successor, who was slain by the dagger of one of the *fidai*. The assassins also targeted the son and successor

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<sup>26</sup> Malik Shah was the sultan at the time, the word, "*Shah*," and the word, "*Sultan*," being, roughly, interchangeable.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20. The peasant being referred to is Nizam Al-Mulk, who had risen to his position from the peasantry.

<sup>30</sup> It was supposed, when the sultan was found, that he had been assassinated via poisoning. Daraul, 26.

of the Persian emperor Malik Shah by planting a weapon next to his head in his sleep with a note attached, the note commanding him to cease a siege he was potentially planning against the castle of Alamut, the headquarters of the Assassins' Order—this intimidation was successful, and a mutual agreement was reached.<sup>31</sup> This entire episode of the life of the Old Man of the Mountain shows so much of his character. He was born into a world which despised and persecuted his sect of his faith, and managed to use his connections and charisma to earn a position in that society's upper-echelon, only to be cast down once more by those he once trusted. Combine a life of hiding one's beliefs and convictions, of attempting desperately to blend in, of broken relationships and friendship turned to animosity-fueled betrayal, and of political division and persecution, and it becomes clear that Hassan-I Sabbah was always cast by fate onto a road which, one day, would lead to something in him breaking. It was inevitable that this capable man would go mad, and that he would do all he could to tear that world he so despised and which so despised him apart.

***THE ASSASSINS WERE DEEPLY INVOLVED IN CONFLICT SPANNING THE ANCIENT WORLD.***

The Order of Assassins not only fought against the government of their region, but, also, did not shy away from facing one of the most famous military-forces to enter the Middle-East, the Crusaders of Medieval Europe. One operation of the Assassins' Order was their attack on the renowned ruler Saladin. During a siege in Syria, he awoke to find a dagger plunged next to him with a note threatening his life—the Assassins' Order had resorted to intimidation, rather than assassination, of this leader.<sup>32</sup> This could possibly be because they knew that, if they killed him,

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>32</sup> Discovery, "The Order of Assassins." See also Kings and Generals, "Hashashins: Origins of the Order of Assassins."

rather than cause an internal schism among the ranks, the successor of Saladin would hold great ire against them, using his considerable resources to attack them. The Order of Assassins even engaged the Crusaders, the most note-worthy example of which being the assassination of a Frankish Crusader-lord and future king of Jerusalem, known as Conrad. After having lunch with the Bishop of Beauvais and being accompanied by a small number of guards, Conrad stopped to speak with two Christian monks with which he had become acquainted. When the guards had been lulled into a false sense of security, the two alleged-monks stabbed him, supposedly multiple times in multiple locations, revealing themselves to be assassins, having been sent by their Nizari ruler, Rashid al-Din Sinan. The assassins were, then, slain or captured by Conrad's entourage.<sup>33</sup> The assassination of Conrad was alleged by some to be connected to Richard the Lionheart, due to his opposition to Conrad taking the throne of Jerusalem, whereas others blamed Conrad's killing of a shipwrecked Nizari crew as the cause for the assassination.<sup>34</sup> This was a golden-age for the Syrian branch of the Order, its end being marked by the death of Rashid al-Din Sinan in 1193 A.D.<sup>35</sup> Daraul confirms a version of this story, accounting that the two assassins were even baptized and placed near Conrad, and approached him under the guise of desiring to pray with him and proceeding to stab him repeatedly. The Assassins' Order fought both the Crusaders and the Persians, siding with whichever favored their purposes most. Their leader was referred to in the Crusader writings as, "Sydney," or, "Senex de Monte," the first of which is a literal translation of the Arabic word for, "Ancient," or, "Sage," which was, "Pir."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Kings and Generals, "Hashashins: Origins of the Order of Assassins."

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Daraul, 27-29.

One of the most famous incidents of the Assassins and the Crusaders joining forces against the Persians is written in Daraul's account of the Assassins:

Sultan Sanjar of Persia, in spite of several expeditions against the Viper's Nest, as Alamut was now being called, could do little about him. Ambassadors on each side were slain; a notable religious leader was captured by the Assassins, given a mock trial and flung into a furnace. The Grand Master at this time seldom put on the field more than two thousand men at a time: but it must be remembered that they were killers acting under an iron discipline, and more than a match for any organized army that they might ever have to face. Now the Order began to spread in Syria, where the continued contact with the Crusaders was established. The warriors of the Cross were in fairly effective control of an area extending from the Egyptian border to Armenia in the north. Bahram, a Persian leader of the Assassin cult from Astrabad, gained control of a mighty fortress in Syria, in the region known as the Valley of Demons (Wadi-el-Jan), and from there spread out from one fort to another. The Grand Prior Bahram now moved to an even more substantial fortified place, Massyat. Bahram's successor, Ismail the Lash-Bearer, planted a trained devotee on the saintly Vizier of Baghdad, into whose confidence he worked his way to such an extent that this Assassin, now called the 'Father of Trust', was actually made Grand Judge of Baghdad. The Crusaders had by now been about thirty years in the Holy Land, and the Assassins decided that they could usefully form an alliance with them aimed against Baghdad. A secret treaty was therefore made between the Grand Master and Baldwin II, King of Jerusalem, whereby the Ismaili Grand Judge would have opened the gates of Baghdad treacherously to the Crusaders, if the fortified city of Tyre were handed over to the Assassins for their part in the transaction. Something went wrong. The judge had ordered an underling to open the city's gates. This servant had told the military commander of Damascus, who lost no time in killing the man, the Vizier and six thousand people believed to be secret Assassins within the city. The Damascus garrison fell upon the Crusaders and beat them back in a thunderstorm which the Christian warriors attributed to divine anger at their unworthy pact, and the Assassins as an attempt by the powers of Nature to allow the Crusaders into the city under its cover.<sup>37</sup>

Another text, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam*, written by Bernard Lewis, contains this section of high-importance, which displays just how strongly the Crusaders feared and hated the Assassins, this passage also displaying certain of the Assassins reported methods of operation:

In the year 1332, when King Philip VI of France was contemplating a new crusade to recapture the lost Holy Places of Christendom, a German priest called Brocardus composed a treatise offering the king guidance and advice for the conduct of this enterprise. Brocardus, who had spent some time in Armenia, devoted an important part of his treatise to the peculiar hazards of such an expedition into the East, and the precautions needed to guard against them. Among these dangers, said, Brocardus, 'I name the

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 30-31.

Assassins, who are to be cursed and fled. They 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. Since indeed I have not seen them, but know this of them only by repute or by true writings, I cannot reveal more, nor give fuller information. I cannot show how to recognize them by their customs or any other signs, for in these things they are unknown to me as to others also; nor can I show how to apprehend them by their name, for so execrable is their profession, and so abominated by all, that they conceal their own names as much as they can. I therefore know only one single remedy for the safeguarding and protection of the king, that in all the royal household, for whatever service, however small or brief or mean, none should be admitted, save those whose country, place, lineage, condition and person are certainly, fully and clearly known.<sup>38</sup>

Lewis takes note of the English historian Matthew of Paris's claim that the Old Man of the Mountain (the leader of the Assassins) had attempted to negotiate with the English and the French to form an alliance against the Mongol Empire and that St. Louis had gifts and missions exchanged with the Old Man of the Mountain when leading a crusade. This Old Man of the Mountain does not seem to have been Hassan, due to chronological issues, this appearing to be more akin to a passed-down title.<sup>39</sup> Clearly, the Assassins were not overly concerned with particular loyalty or trustworthiness toward any organization outside of their own, and would fight alongside and work with any organization they felt best served their own wellbeing and socio-economic goals at the time. Whereas the Assassins' Order faced down the Crusaders, or worked alongside them, with various degrees of success, a new force would arise which would see what many consider to be their bane, their absolute and unequivocal doom.

It was in the thirteenth century that the Order's fatal failure occurred. The Assassins' Order sent forty assassins to the Mongol capitol of Karakorum to assassinate Mongke Khan, the ruler of the Mongol Empire, descended from Genghis Khan and planning to invade the Middle-

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<sup>38</sup> Lewis, 1-2.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 5.

East. According to some sources, the actual number of assassins sent to assassinate the Khan was much larger, reputedly being four-hundred. The assassins, however numerous, failed, and the wrath of the greatest force the world had ever known was unleashed not only upon the Middle-East, but, also, upon the mountain-strongholds of the Assassins' Order, in an attempt to eradicate them.<sup>40</sup> Another version of the tale describes the Mongols and the Nizari Ismaili Order of Assassins as having moderate, if not shaky, relations at the onset of Mongol activity in the Middle-East, but of Ogedei's successor, Guyuk, dismissing only the ambassadors of the Nizari Ismaili when Middle-Eastern ambassadors came bearing gifts, later proclaiming that two out of every ten units of reinforcements sent to Persia would be required to be used in the taming of wild and rebellious regions, all of this after becoming concerned that the Assassins would become a threat to his rule. Monke Khan, then, continued this policy, striking out against the mountain-strongholds of the Assassins' Order, killing the final Nizari imam, Khursha, who was taken to the Khangai Mountains and slain after the surrender of Alamut—following this, the walls of fortresses, the libraries, and thousands of civilians were all destroyed. The final fortress of the Assassins, the castle of Girdkuh, fell in December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1270,<sup>41</sup> the Assassins being hunted down and being thought to have been utterly annihilated. It was believed, for quite some time, that that was the end of the Order of Assassins...but it is speculated that the Order has survived, even unto the modern day.

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<sup>40</sup> Discovery, "The Order of Assassins."

<sup>41</sup> Kings and Generals, "Hashashins: Origins of the Order of Assassins."



***THE ASSASSINS HAVE SURVIVED, IN SOME FORM OR ANOTHER, INTO MODERNITY:***

The Assassins' Order is not necessarily famed for its survivability. In fact, it sent many assassins to their willing deaths, and prided itself upon its suicidal tendencies. This is not an organization that one might, initially, expect to last for as long as they did, even by traditional historical-reckoning. With that being said, however, there are reports and theories that the Assassins' Order has survived unto the modern day, and is still thriving, albeit, perhaps, in not as violent a form and methodology as they originally undertook. The Nizari Ismaili are still alive and well in Portugal, according to both Daraul and the Kings and Generals documentary on the Hashashins. Due to the time of writing, Daraul list the leader of the Nizari Ismaili as being Aga Khan, and, as a more modern source, the documentary by Kings and Generals list the current leader as being Aga Khan IV, their 49<sup>th</sup> *imam*.<sup>42</sup> One thing is indisputable about the Assassins: they were a fearsome force upon this earth, and, in the words of Daraul, "Hassan...ruled an invisible empire as great and as fearsome as any man before—or since.", and left his mark upon the world as we know it, for better or for worse.<sup>43</sup>

***THE HISTORY OF THE SHINOBI (THE NINJA) MUST BE WELL-UNDERSTOOD.***

Having more than sufficiently described a basic history of the Order of Assassins, a basic history of the *Shinobi* shall follow. The author of this thesis has experienced great difficulty in acquiring reputable and relevant sources dealing in the specifics of the history of the *Shinobi*, though having found a documentary provided by Discovery which is part of the series, "Unsolved History," titled, "Secret History of the Ninja"; a book by the famous *ninja*-researcher Antony Cummins titled, *In Search of the Ninja*; and a book by Greg Roza titled, *Warriors Around the*

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<sup>42</sup> Daraul, 13. See also Kings and Generals, "Hashashins: Origins of the Order of Assassins."

<sup>43</sup> Daraul, 27.

*World: Ninjas*. In, “Secret History of the Ninja,” it is explicitly stated that the *Ninja*, the *Shinobi*, left, “...scarce historical records and lived outside traditional Japanese-culture. Secret societies of any sort are, probably, the most difficult topic that any researcher could choose,” the last sentence being a shift away from the narrator and being a quote from Dr. Stephen Turnbull, a historian. This is despite Japan’s being one of history’s most literate nations, full of records, especially those held by individual families.<sup>44</sup>

The *Shinobi*, retrospectively referred to in the modern-day as *Ninja*, were individuals in feudal Japan who were known for their reconnaissance skills and vast stealth-capabilities: whereas the *Shinobi* themselves may not have been seen often, it is not difficult to detect the impressive impact they have made upon Japanese history, modern popular-culture, and the idea of stealth-operatives and special-forces in the minds of modern man. The *Shinobi* were a very potent aspect of conflict in Japan for four-hundred years, are reported to have their origins in Iga Ueno, Japan, where they occupied the mountains and studied, “...the art of stealth, the way of invisibility,” that attribute which is most commonly associated with the *Shinobi*.<sup>45</sup> There is an ancient legend which dates the origins of the *Ninja*, the *Shinobi*, to the eleventh century, when a Chinese monk who had come to Japan met a *ronin samurai*, a warrior without a master, in the mountains of Iga Ueno and taught him a new form of combat which oriented around stealth and espionage. This *samurai* became the first *Shinobi*, according to the legend.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Discovery. YouTube (Service Providing Material). “Secret History of the Ninja.” *Unsolved History*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59fCZ249wwQ>

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

Whereas this is merely a legend, and cannot be confirmed or denied with absolute certainty or verification via historical record, it is both highly-interesting and well-deserving of being recorded herein this research as a possible origin for the *Shinobi*. Thus far, the first historically-verifiable records of the *Shinobi*, the *Ninja*, occurred much later in history, during the late fourteenth-century.<sup>47</sup> According to renowned *ninja*-researcher Antony Cummins, in his work, *In Search of the Ninja*, there is evidence drawn from the *Seigenin* version of the *Taiheiki* war-manual that implies that the word for *Shinobi* was commonly-recognized in the early thirteenth-century, this being significantly earlier than the claim to which Roza adheres.<sup>48</sup>

According to Roza, some evidence, especially the similarities between Chinese war-works such as, “The Art of War,” especially the sections relating most to spies and information-warfare, are highly-similar to the tactics of the *Shinobi*, implying some level of origins or influence in China.<sup>49</sup> This would apply to any year within the potential range of *Shinobi* origin-dates, due to the enduring nature of such Chinese war-manuals. Roza is sure to note that the birthplace of the *Shinobi*, the *Ninja*, was, “...a wild, rocky area near Kyoto. This area was made up of the provinces of Iga (now part of Mie Prefecture) and Koka (now part of Shiga Prefecture). This rugged country became a hiding place for criminals and soldiers who had lost in battle. It was here that ninjutsu had its beginning,”<sup>50</sup> thus further establishing and broadening the region in which the *Shinobi* originated, as opposed to the slightly-more-so myopic focus upon Iga, as appears to be told in the legend. There are stories of Chinese soldiers fleeing to Japan, to those

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<sup>47</sup> Greg Rosa, *Warriors Around the World: Ninjas*, Britannica Educational Publishing, 2016(?), 9.

<sup>48</sup> Antony Cummins, *In Search of the Ninja*, The History Press, 2013, Great Britain, 22.

<sup>49</sup> Roza, 9 and 11.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

same regions, teaching ancient tactics of warfare which were passed on generationally in that region of Japan, until reports of the *Shinobi* became more common in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These later centuries were known as the Warring States period of Japan (the Sengoku period).<sup>51</sup> Concerning the legendary home-region of the *Shinobi*, the *Shinobi* being based in the mountains of Iga Ueno provided cover and concealment, so that they could practice their art in secret, and *ninjutsu*, the way of the *Ninja*, spread therein, gaining more traction. The *Shinobi* governed themselves and protected themselves against outside attack, since Japan was, at the time, composed of individual, feudal states which frequently warred against one another for dominance<sup>52</sup>. Some of these feudal states would pay the *Shinobi* for information, using them as spies to be used against those they desired to defeat.<sup>53</sup> According to *ninjutsu* blackbelt Stephen Hayes in the Discovery documentary, “Secret History of the *Ninja*,” the activities the *Shinobi* would have been engaging in were not at all typical of Japanese behavior in war, and were highly unusual.<sup>54</sup> This made them not only stand out, but made them sought after as highly-valuable, highly-efficient, highly-effective assets in armed conflicts. The *Shinobi* were, by their very nature, tricksters and deceivers, who would use deception and fear-tactics to their advantage. They would design their homes with hidden compartments and/or secret passages to hide in during night-raids upon their lands by local leaders, and would trick the enemy into believing that they were invisible and/or had the power of disappearing. Another method was that the *Shinobi* would use a metallic band which was worn around the palm and which had protruding

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Discovery, “Secret History of the *Ninja*.”

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

claws around the portion of the band which laid upon the inside of the palm. This device was known as a *Shuko*, or a climbing-claw, and would be used to climb castle walls and/or to dispatch guards at the top. The user would have the appearance of being unarmed to the guards, and would seem to have the ability to climb walls and savagely claw men with their bare-hands. Ruses, ploys, and implements such as these gave rise to the legend that the *Shinobi* possessed supernatural powers.<sup>55</sup>

***THE SHINOBI WERE ADEPT IN BOTH STEALTH AND COMBAT, ALIKE.***

According to Stephen Hayes, a *ninjutsu* blackbelt who featured in the documentary, is a member of the blackbelt hall-of-fame, and is said to have, “pioneered the introduction of *ninjutsu* to the Western world,” the *Shinobi* was using a new combat-system which viewed the human being as a model of how the natural world functions.<sup>56</sup> This system held that the human being, rather than using an overly-formalized and overt method of combat, could take on something much more primal and instinctual, in essence. *Ninja* and *ninjutsu* are terms applied to the person and methods of the legendary Japanese figure in modern retrospect, the original term for the person being *Shinobi*, this turning later into *Shinobi No Mono*. Being translated, *Shinobi No Mono* is, “a man of perseverance and stealth,” and the art was known as *shinobi no jutsu*, which, being translated, means, “skills of stealth and perseverance.”<sup>57</sup> This terminology provides a glimpse into the mentality of the combat-and-operational-system the *Shinobi* would have used in the course of his or her duties.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Roza, 6 and 9.

This primeval method of viewing conflict would aid the *Shinobi* vastly and would provide a tactical advantage over the *Samurai*, who fought in accordance with what was deemed more honorable conduct. This honorable conduct consisted of facing the opponent and opening in one-on-one, fair combat, battling one another until one fighter was dead and the other victorious.<sup>58</sup> According to Stephen Hayes, the goal of the *Ninja* would have been quite a separate goal indeed, the *Ninja* considering it victory to avoid capture and to flee without being able to be implicated or tracked. This philosophy was in direct contradiction to that of the *samurai*.<sup>59</sup> In *Warriors Around the World: Ninjas*, Greg Rosa states, “Ninjutsu certainly encompasses martial arts skills, but it involves much more. At its core, ninjutsu was the art of espionage. In fact, many ninja manuals taught that ninjas should flee from fights. It was often more important for them to return to their leaders with information rather than engage an enemy in battle,” this showing the nature of the *Shinobi* as one who fought when necessary, preferring subterfuge.<sup>60</sup>

Despite the *Shinobi*'s focus upon stealth and espionage, rather than open-battle and assassination, they did have to engage in combat on occasion, and the samurai was both an opposite of and a great threat to the *Shinobi*. The samurai served the warlords of Japan as an, “elite fighting-class,” and served the same function as did knights in Medieval-European civilization, and were masters of the way of the sword.<sup>61</sup> The *Shinobi* would have attempted to outwit the samurai, relying upon stealth, trickery, and/or the unexpected to overcome an

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<sup>58</sup> Discovery, “Secret History of the Ninja.”

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Rosa, 20.

<sup>61</sup> Discovery, “Secret History of the Ninja.”

opponent relying strictly upon direct and open force.<sup>62</sup> The Discovery documentary about the *Ninja*, the *Shinobi*, demonstrated a *Shinobi* being overcome in combat by a samurai and throwing sand in the samurai's face, clearly affecting the opponent's eyes. This is a prime example of the asymmetric-warfare values of the *Shinobi*, an extension of their overall philosophy of war applied to one-against-one combat.

Stephen Hayes comments that difficulty might have arisen for the samurai when facing the *Shinobi* due to the *Shinobi*'s unorthodox fighting-style, which involved different implements and martial-arts style. This involved different positions and movements, which a samurai might not have been familiar with and, thusly, might not be able to properly assess and address in combat. According to Stephen Hayes and Dr. Turnbull, examples could include walking silently with specialized movement and bodily-weight-distribution; throwing poisoned iron-filings into the eyes; using a *Shuko* to scale walls and catch downward sword-strikes; and using concealable/portable weapons developed from agricultural implements, such as the sickle-and-chain, and avoiding carrying too much weighty gear while infiltrating a castle. The latter among these was, possibly, to assassinate a high-profile target.<sup>63</sup> Turnbull states that a martial-arts system had been developed around the sickle, to the point that it could, potentially, be used as well as a sword, and the documentary goes on to state that the *Shinobi* might use the sickle with a chain attached to a ball-weight to battle a samurai and to keep them, "off-guard," with this unconventional weapon which the samurai, "had never seen before," in combat. Dr. Turnbull goes on to say, "...the first time a samurai saw a *Ninja* wielding a chain, he must have thought, 'This is very strange: what do I do with it?', and so the *Ninja* had him at his mercy," it being

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

revealed thereafter that the *Shinobi* had developed a ball-and-chain which was more, “compact,” and that, “It could overpower a swordsman in close-quarters,” which Hayes claims could possibly provide the *Shinobi* with, “...an instant knockout,” against the samurai.<sup>64</sup> The *Ninja* is reported by some to have used a sword that was shorter and, “more maneuverable,” than that of the samurai, Hayes claiming that the samurai sword was longer because it was designed for battlefield use, in all likelihood being an outdoors-weapon. Hayes then demonstrated how the shorter sword could overcome the longer with techniques emphasizing deception, body-mechanics, and flow of movement.<sup>65</sup>

It is stated that, “Unlike the samurai, the *Ninja* also trained women in the combat-arts,” not having any qualms about teaching females their martial-arts,<sup>66</sup> and the work, *Warriors Around the World: Ninjas*, by Roza, recounts the account in the *Bansenshukai*<sup>67</sup> about the only record of a specific female *Shinobi* who was more adept than any other *Shinobi*, male or female, of the time, and notes that there is record of, “...how to use women and children to create fake families, perhaps for use in hostage situations. This often turned out badly for the fake family,”<sup>68</sup> further cementing the lack of concern over the gender of initiates among the *Shinobi*. According to Dr. Stephen Turnbull, “In terms of taking the simple hand-held weapon to its perfection—I think that’s where the *Ninja* get a great deal of credit,” and the philosophy of the *Shinobi*, “...had to be, ‘kill or be killed.’” and would have been quite against the way samurai attempted to

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> The Book of the Ninja

<sup>68</sup> Roza, 15



handle situations.<sup>69</sup> While the *Shinobi* did not focus upon assassination, as was previously stated, they did serve as assassins on certain occasions, and were, often, utilized as, "...scouts, arsonists, thieves, soldiers, and to a lesser extent assassins," also claiming that they were used as saboteurs, and that they were, "...an official, although secretive, position in many Japanese armies."<sup>70</sup> All of this supports the fact that the *Shinobi* would have been men and women capable of great violence and having a need to be knowledgeable of it, even though direct violence, itself, might not have been their preferred specialty.

### ***A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SHINOBI REVEALS MUCH, CONCERNING THEIR NATURE.***

According to the Discover documentary about the *Shinobi*, the *Shinobi* disappeared from Japanese society over 140 years ago, but were an organized force in Japanese society. At one point, Dr. Turnbull is reviewing family-documents discovered by a Japanese man who found in them a contract which claimed that his great-grandfather was a *Ninja*, a *Shinobi*, and shows that the man's great-grandfather had, "signed on the dotted-line," so to speak, that he would never reveal what it was that he did in the service of his warlord, which, according to Dr. Turnbull, "...shows quite a considerable organization behind the operation," and shows the *Ninja* to have been a formal, official-business-natured, semi-off-the-record type of stealth-operative. Their stealthy nature extends even to the contract itself, which lists no detailed record of what was to transpire in the mission.<sup>71</sup> Dr. Turnbull states, "Here, we have people who are utterly devoted to

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<sup>69</sup> Discovery, "Secret History of the Ninja."

<sup>70</sup> Roza, 6, 7, and 13.

<sup>71</sup> Discovery, "Secret History of the Ninja."

their calling: they are the experts—they are the elite—and, like special-forces nowadays, failure is just not taken into account,” emphasizing the elite nature of these ancient spies.<sup>72</sup>

The *Shinobi* were very powerful assets, and potent threats against any they were sent against, due to their abilities as spies and their prowess. Many Japanese shoguns attempted to eliminate them, in order to rid themselves of the massive security-threat the *Shinobi* were proving themselves to be.<sup>73</sup> In 1683, Tokugawa Ieyasu rose to power in Japan, and decided to employ the *Shinobi*, rather than continually attempting to battle and destroy them, using them as his personal bodyguard: they would, sometimes, be disguised in plain-clothes, sometimes as palace-gardeners to maintain secrecy, when serving him. Using the spy-networks of the *Ninja*, Tokugawa Ieyasu’s government was able to restore stability to Japan once more, the *Shinobi* vanishing into the peace they had helped restore to their land.<sup>74</sup>

***A CONNECTION BETWEEN THE ASSASSINS’ ORDER AND THE SHINOBI IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE, FOR A GREAT HOST OF REASONS.***

The possibility of a connection between the two organizations of the Order of Assassins and the *Shinobi* of Japan, whereas outlandish-seeming at the onset, is warranted for several reasons.

First, there are very strong similarities between the methods and practices of the Assassins’ Order and the *Shinobi*; second, there are geo-political facts which make it theoretically-possible that the Assassins’ Order could have had more extensive operations in the Far-East than modernity is certain of; third, there are cultural factors which would heavily support the idea of the Assassins’ Order having, potentially, influenced the later *Shinobi*, either directly or indirectly; and, fourth, there are historical organizations of a similar nature which spring up

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

throughout the East which bear similarities to the Assassins' Order beyond the *Shinobi* of Japan, and historical events which suggest that the Assassins' Order might have had a hand in the matter—to what degree, if at all, however, cannot be claimed with any certainty. All of these factors warrant the study of a connection between these two organizations and make the connection between them and other organizations more plausible. It is entirely possible that a connection between the Assassins' Order and the *Shinobi* exists, and that these two organizations are more similar than might first meet the eye.

***THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE ASSASSINS' ORDER AND THE SHINOBI ARE STARTLING, TO SAY THE LEAST.***

Having a basic understanding of both the Order of Assassins and the *Shinobi*, the similarities between them may be further highlighted and drawn upon with full effect. The most shocking similarity between the Assassins' Order and the *Shinobi* is their similarity of methods. The Discovery documentary, “The Order of Assassins,” in the series, “Inside Secret Societies,” even refers to the Assassins as being, “*Ninja*-like,” and as resembling modern special-forces in certain manners.<sup>75</sup> The other Discovery documentary titled, “Secret History of the *Ninja*,” also refers to the *Shinobi* as being highly-similar to the modern special-forces of the world's armies.<sup>76</sup>

Both the Assassins' Order and the *Shinobi* are known to have been as secretive as possible in the course of their operations and to have been masters of their respective crafts in a time wherein fighting from the shadows, spying, assassination, and fleeing or hiding were considered shameful and/or dishonorable methods. In other words, both organizations were masters of asymmetric warfare of one kind or another, and both used similar types of asymmetric

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<sup>75</sup> Discovery, “The Order of Assassins.”

<sup>76</sup> Discovery, “Secret History of the *Ninja*.”

warfare to gain advantage over a far more numerous and far more well-equipped foe. Each organization utilized highly-trained, highly-skilled, and high-quality troops. Both utilized stealth and deceit to a high degree and/or as a foundation of their methodology. The Assassins and the *Shinobi* focused upon disrupting the enemy for their own gain, rather than directly facing a foe on the field of battle. Such tactics, while profitable and highly-effective, would not have been standard military-doctrine of the locations and times wherein each, respectively, dwelt, and these organizations would have been viewed, in all likelihood, as collections of cowards, outcasts, and dishonorable men. Dr. Stephen Turnbull, in referencing the *Ninja*, the *Shinobi*, stated, “If you could destroy the enemy by sowing confusion in his ranks, by finding information out that he didn’t want you to know, or even by assassinating the general while he was in his carousel, then you’d won the battle just as surely as if you’d sent thousands of men to fight each other on a bloody field.” The documentary went on to state that, as a result of this power the *Shinobi* had to topple enemies without a formal army and with comparatively-few resources, many of the Japanese shoguns attempted to annihilate them.<sup>77</sup> This is frighteningly-similar to the philosophy and methodology of the Assassin’s Order.

There are more details about the Assassins’ Order and the *Shinobi* which are shocking in similarity, however: from the Discovery documentary in the series, “Unsolved History,” titled, “Secret History of the Ninja,” much can be learned about the *Ninja*, and much is revealed about their methods which is highly-similar to those of the Order of Assassins. Whereas the traditional view of the *Shinobi* as being a black-clad assassin in the moonlight is a matter of historical debate and speculation, and even though comparatively-few records of the *Shinobi* actually assassinating their foes exist, the *Shinobi* did not shy away from combat and attempting to gain

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

the upper-hand over their foes using stealth, plain-clothes operations, and unconventional weaponry and tactics, these later methods probably being more common than the more traditional view of the *Shinobi*. Roza stated, “They became shadowy figures in black clothing and masks, flourishing exotic weapons and killing silently. While these stories are rooted in historical facts, they don’t give a complete perspective of one of history’s more mysterious warriors,”<sup>78</sup> this highlighting the different focus between popular depiction and factual knowledge. In fact, the *Shinobi*, much akin to the Assassins, relied more upon deception and plain-clothes than they did upon more traditional and immediate views of stealth and warfare—the assassination of Conrad comes to mind. This is a startling similarity between the two organizations: these are two groups who, both during a time when warring with deception, stealth, and trickery would have been viewed as dishonorable and shameful, did exactly that. They completely and utterly violated the conventions of their societies by refusing to use formal armies and one-on-one, open combat. They preferred to target specific individuals and/or installations with single men or small teams, slipping through enemy defenses in plain-clothes and using masterful deception to reach their target. The Assassins trained their men in various languages, dress, and customs of various peoples and occupations to blend in and impersonate.<sup>79</sup> Lewis notes the message of an envoy for Emperor Frederick Barbarossa which states that the children of the land under the master of the Assassins were taught multiple languages in the service of assassination,<sup>80</sup> this being very similar to the *Shinobi* method of impersonating gardeners and undergoing missions in plain-clothes, posing as an ordinary Japanese civilian. The

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<sup>78</sup> Roza, 8.

<sup>79</sup> Daraul, 28.

<sup>80</sup> Lewis, 3.

only real difference between these two in operational-method is that the *Shinobi* seemed primarily focused upon collecting information, violence being, ideally, avoided, whereas the Assassins were primarily focused upon achieving highly-targeted bloodshed of specific individuals who stood against their cause. For the Assassins, information was a secondary matter, more-so-than-not a means to the end goal of ruthless violence.

The similarity between these methods and the fact that relatively few organizations throughout ancient and Medieval history have used such methods to gain such astronomical degrees of power and influence cannot be ignored. These are almost-identical combat-tactics in their main points, only certain comparatively-minor details and the end-goal being differentiated from one another to any considerable degree. Both the *Shinobi* and the Assassins' Order faced a highly-segmented and splintered enemy: the Assassins struggled against a plethora of warlords in the wake of the dissolution of the Persian state,<sup>81</sup> and the *Shinobi* faced a cornucopia of shoguns ruling Japanese micro-states in a war-torn land of civil unrest and political rivalry for domination.<sup>82</sup> This is another similarity of importance: these two organizations, largely, dealt with a multitude of comparatively-small enemies, both sharing a divide-and-conquer outlook upon war. Whereas they may or may not have actually been the dividing force, they certainly did not fail to capitalize upon such divisions. The Order of Assassins' mode of operation was to found their training-centers—which Hassan supposedly based upon the Abode of Learning and Egyptian Ismailism, which he had learned in Cairo, Egypt—and headquarters high in the mountain-fortresses,<sup>83</sup> detailed by an envoy for Emperor Frederick Barbarossa as being, "...in

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<sup>81</sup> Discovery, "The Order of Assassins."

<sup>82</sup> Discovery, "Secret History of the Ninja."

<sup>83</sup> Daraul, 25.

the mountains and...well-nigh impregnable, for they withdraw into well-fortified castles.”<sup>84</sup> The *Shinobi*, likewise, were based in the mountains, particularly those of Iga, Japan.<sup>85</sup> This is of great importance. Whereas mountain-fortresses and abodes on high-ground were militarily-advantageous to all, and would be ideal and sought after by many, they were of particular importance to the Assassins and the *Shinobi*. Such fortresses were locations in which organizations with incredibly scarce resources and vastly-inferior manpower, when compared with their foes, could hold out against many more men which were much better equipped and vastly-superiorly supported from the outside. These were prime real-estate locations for small contingents of men to hold out against massive armies which might march against them, and the Assassins and the *Shinobi* both used the mountains and their inaccessibility to hide from and/or take shelter from their local governments and surrounding rivals, who would surely have slain them if they took up residence in the open. The abodes of both the Assassins’ Order and of the *Shinobi* clans are both evidence of a highly-similar train of thought, philosophy of warfare, and methodology for staying alive to carry on the fight and ensure the continuity of their organizations.

The *Shinobi* and the Assassins also showed similarities in combat. The Assassins had no focus upon fighting fairly or openly. It is abundantly clear, historically, that the Assassins used, as their primary weapon, the double-edged dagger,<sup>86</sup> and the Assassins would train their *fidai* in how to use that dagger, in where and when to slip the blade into the body of their target; it is,

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<sup>84</sup> Lewis, 3. “They,” in this portion of the text, refers to the Assassins.

<sup>85</sup>Discovery, “Secret History of the Ninja.”

<sup>86</sup> Discovery, “The Order of Assassins.”

also, clear that they would have, in some cases, poisoned these daggers.<sup>87</sup> Similarly, the *Shinobi* would have used weapons that were portable and concealable, also cutting down on the amount of weight they were carrying on a mission, and could have utilized poison on their weapons. The throwing of poisoned iron-filings into enemies eyes also occurred, on the part of the *Shinobi*.<sup>88</sup>

The *Shinobi* bear great resemblance to the Assassins not only in their general philosophy of and approach to warfare from an asymmetrical standpoint, their tactics, their combative-tendencies, their attacks on divided enemies, and their selection of mountainous domains which are largely-inaccessible to others who would do them harm, but they are also similar in their trickery, especially when dealing with tales of supernatural power. Just as Hassan used the garden to make prospective-assassins believe he had transported them to paradise and back and used the talking-head-trick to make them believe that he could conjure the dead, the *Shinobi* used hidden-compartments and/or secret passages to make others believe that they could turn invisible and/or vanish and used implements such as *Shuko* to put their enemies under the perception that the *Shinobi* could climb walls and viciously claw men and catch blades, all with their bare hands.<sup>89</sup>

Daraul notes that the Assassins, upon a word from their master, threw themselves from towers in a suicidal plunge in order to intimidate his guests,<sup>90</sup> and Antony Cummins recalls in his work *In Search of the Ninja* the words of the twenty-fourth volume of the *Taiheiki* war-manual, which records *Shinobi* as climbing to the top of towers to rain arrows down upon their opponents

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<sup>87</sup> Daraul, 26 and 28.

<sup>88</sup> Discovery, "Secret History of the Ninja."

<sup>89</sup> Discovery, "The Secret History of the Ninja."

<sup>90</sup> Daraul, 13.



during a night-raid—upon exhausting their ammunition, they committed suicide from atop the tower.<sup>91</sup> Cummins also recounts a section from the *Taiheiki* war-chronicle which states that the *Shinobi*, or, at the very least, *Shinobi*-like figures, had no expectation of being able to return, alive, from a battle.<sup>92</sup> While the *Shinobi* did not share these suicidal tendencies in all regards, it is clear that, just as the Assassins, their potential forebearers, they gave little for life or death, committing themselves and their wellbeing to the conviction of their duties and the burdens of their cause. The leaders of the Assassins were known as, “grand-masters,”<sup>93</sup> and modern teachers of *ninjutsu*, who are allegedly descended from the fourteenth-and-fifteenth-century *Shinobi*, are referred to by the same title: grand-master.<sup>94</sup> These two organizations are terrifyingly-similar, indeed...perhaps too much so for it to be mere coincidence.

***GEOPOLITICAL RELEVANCE IS ENTIRELY ALIGNED TO A CONNECTION.***

The second consideration when delving into whether or not the *Shinobi* and the Assassins could be related is geopolitical relevance: could the geopolitical situation of the times support the Assassins having an influence upon, if not being the ancestral organization of, the *Shinobi*? It is possible that there is a connection. The Fatimid Empire, by which Hassan-I Sabbah was trained in Egypt via the Abode of Learning, restored previous trade-routes to India,<sup>95</sup> and Daraul makes it abundantly clear that the Assassins had a presence in India.<sup>96</sup> Daraul even recounts the story of

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<sup>91</sup> Cummins, 22.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Discovery, “The Order of the Assassins.”

<sup>94</sup> Roza, 20-21.

<sup>95</sup> Kings and Generals, “Hashashins: Origins of the Order of Assassins.”

<sup>96</sup> Daraul, 33.

an Indian Assassin on the court of a sultan.<sup>97</sup> It is common knowledge that the Roman Silk-Road extended far into Asia, including India and/or nearby regions, and that interconnected trade-routes could have led into Japan, so it would, while being a long and arduous journey, not be at all impossible to undertake.

Another factor relevant this consideration is that the Assassins sent forty or four-hundred *fidai*, depending upon which accounts are to be believed, to assassinate Mongke Khan, being dispatched to the Mongolian capital.<sup>98</sup> It is not far from Mongolia to China, and from China to Korea and Japan—or straightway to Japan, via ship. It is entirely possible that the Assassins could have sent men to Japan, however likely or unlikely this might be. Considering that they sent men to Mongolia, it is not too unlikely that they might have taken an interest in the one place which the Mongols, historically, could never take: after all, as the old proverb says, “The enemy of my enemy is my friend.” In his work, *Secret Societies: A History*, Arkon Daraul makes the following observation about the activities of the Assassins and their movements: “The Syrian branch of the cult grew in power, while the activities of the Eastern Assassins were carried out much more quietly, with missionaries being sent to India, Afghanistan, even the remote Pamir Mountains which straddle China and Russia, where even today adherents of the sect are to be found. Saladin had overcome the other Ismaili branch and original home of Assassinism—Egypt—and restored the true faith to the people of the Nile,” this showing that the Assassins were, in fact, present in Far-East Asia, and had a clearly-stated presence there beyond simply sending a hit-team to assassinate the Khan.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>98</sup> Discovery, “The Order of the Assassins

<sup>99</sup> Daraul, 33.

With the Assassins spread out so far across the globe, it is not unreasonable that they would have either traveled to Japan themselves, that some of their descendants who they had raised in the Assassin tradition would travel there, or that they would have influenced others who would go on to influence or even form the *Shinobi*. It is not only possible, but, perhaps, even likely that the Assassins took an interest in Japan, given that the journey was possible and that they had an interest in Far-Eastern Asia. Daraul claims that, “Ismailis, not all of them recognizing the one chief, reside in places as far apart as Malaya, East Africa and Ceylon. They would not necessarily feel that they are Assassins in the same sense as the extremists who followed the old Sheikhs of the Mountains; but at least some of them revere the descendants of the Lords of Alamut to the extent of deification,” showing that, whereas the cult-reverence for the Old Man of the Mountain and the Lords of Alamut may not be present in every circle, the Ismailis, which the Assassins were, have survived.<sup>100</sup> With the previous reference to their spread into Far-East Asia in the Sino-Russian Pamir Mountains, it may not be all too unlikely that the Assassins spread even further, especially considering that they were instructed to go underground and to hide their true nature until the faith’s time had come again, this order going out to the survivors of the Mongol onslaught against the Assassins.<sup>101</sup> Could it be, perhaps, that even some of the very *fidai* sent to assassinate the Khan, if this is to be believed, survived the encounter, to their shame, having failed as they did? If one attempted to assassinate the most powerful man alive and knew that he was now hunting down both oneself and one’s entire organization of peers, where would one hide, or, at least, attempt to make one’s way to in

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 36

secret?—the one place that powerful man’s empire could never break or dominate, and where he had little to no power...Japan.

***TRADITIONAL LINES AND METHODS OF CULTURAL INFLUENCE ALIGN WELL FOR A CONNECTION TO BE LIKELY.***

The third consideration to make note of in an attempt to determine whether or not there is a connection between the Order of Assassins and the *Shinobi* of Japan is to consider cultural influence. Indian culture has been influenced by Middle-Eastern culture, and vice-versa, particularly through the period of history involving the Mughal Empire: it is common knowledge that these two cultures influence one another, and that India has had a great influence upon China both culturally and especially-religiously, considering that Buddhism originates out of Hinduism and was spread to China via India. It is also common knowledge, and mentioned in the Discovery documentary, “Secret History of the Ninja,” that China was viewed in Japan as a source of knowledge and influenced Japan.<sup>102</sup> Renowned researcher Antony Cummins and Harjit Singh Sagoo, in their work, *The Lost Warfare of India*, have noted that,

Indian martial culture even had an influence upon cultures of other countries, particularly where Hinduism was imported. Hinduism was introduced to Indonesia in the first century and so the four-fold Hindu caste system was also embraced. There, the Kshatriya (warrior caste) are called Kesatria or Satria. China and Japan, like Vedic India, similarly divided society into four classes and they had their equivalent of the Kshatriya class, i.e. Wu Shi and Samurai. Thailand’s traditional combat art, *Muay Thai*, contains fighting techniques and martial dance moves based on Hindu warriors such as Rama, the ancient North Indian warrior prince (protagonist of the *Ramayana*, one of India’s ancient epics) and his humanoid monkey general, Hanuman. These include *Hanuman thayarn* (flying knee kick). There is a style of Malay *Silat* called *Silat Harimau Seri Rama* and it is based on the actions of Rama. The 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> century CE monk, Bodhidharma, is *believed* to have taught Dhyana Buddhism and exercises to the monks of the Shaolin Temple, China, which may possibly have led to the development of Shaolin *Kung fu*, starting with the 18 Hands of the Lohan style. Indian warrior skills reached the Philippines via the ancient Hindu-Buddhist Malay Srivijaya Empire. The *mudras* (hand gestures) and *mantras* (incantations) of Hinduism/Buddhism, which were transmitted to Japan via China have

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<sup>102</sup> Discovery, “Secret History of the Ninja.”

found their way into samurai tradition and are known as *Kuji-in*. The indigenous martial art of Sri Lanka, known as *Angampora* (literally, limb-fighting), belongs to the Sinhalese people and its style is quite similar to Southern Indian *Kalaripayattu* and *Silambam*. Considering the close proximity between southern India and Sri Lanka, there may be a link between these arts. It is thanks to Indian merchants and missionaries that knowledge of Indian spirituality, medicine, martial arts, etc. passed across India's borders and into neighboring nations.<sup>103</sup>

This passage from Cummins and Sagoo demonstrates just how far and how quickly ideas and traditions can pass from one people to another if that people are well-traveled and export their culture and traditions to others. This is something the Assassins had a major interest in doing, especially via missionaries. India having such an influence over other nations and the Assassins having had a presence in India may mean that India was used, whether intentionally or inadvertently, to export Assassin practices, and that those traditions and methods could have been exported through India, at some point or another. This could have been done directly via Assassins traveling through India, via the descendants of Assassins in India, or via Assassin-influenced individuals in India. It should also be noted that this concept not only applies to India, which is an excellent and most-potent example, but to anywhere the Assassins may have found themselves.

The example from Cummins and Sagoo also shows that cultural exchange did impact Japan, and that Japan receiving traditions and practices from other peoples is something that has, definitely, occurred, and that it would not be at all impossible for the Assassins to have influenced it, as far as geopolitical considerations are concerned. Antony Cummins has, as a matter of fact, released a video on YouTube called, "Are NINJA From India?", exploring whether or not the *Shinobi* might have their origins in India, explaining many similarities

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<sup>103</sup> Harjit Sagoo and Antony Cummins, *The Lost Warfare of India: an Illustrated Guide*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016, 12-13.

between Indian and *Shinobi* tactics and beliefs.<sup>104</sup> The Assassins having been present in both India and the Pamir Mountains, which run through Russia and China, means that either they or their descendants bringing their Assassin tradition and knowledge with them could have, over time, been passed from one person to another and so on until the practices, or word of them, at the very least, reached China. From China, this information could easily have reached Japan and influenced the *Shinobi*, if not actually being an integral aspect of their formation and/or methodology. This could very-well be the case if the Assassins did not directly send men to Japan or if their descendants did not directly go there, though the former two are far more likely. This would also fall in line relatively-well with the legend of the Chinese monk training the first *Shinobi* in Iga, Japan, though it having occurred in the eleventh century might be too early. According to the ancient legend, the traveler brought children with him from China, and passed his knowledge of the arts of *ninjutsu* down to two of them—Cummins also notes that, “Separating the ninja from a Chinese ancestry is almost impossible, as much of what the ninja stands for has some connection to Chinese skills in one way or another and as will be shown later in this chapter, the ninja or their skills most likely did originate from the Asian mainland.” This quote shows that it is very likely that the *Shinobi* did, in fact, have some aspect of a Chinese heritage.<sup>105</sup>

Perhaps that heritage goes further than China, deeper into the Asian mainland than has been contemplated previously—back to Alamut, to Assassin forerunners. This method of bringing and training children highly aligns with Hassan-I Sabbah’s method of raising children from a young age to be shadow-warriors. Whereas the Chinese origin-story is only a legend, and

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<sup>104</sup> Samurai and Ninja History (Antony Cummins’s YouTube Channel). YouTube (Service Providing Material). “Are NINJA from India?”. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TtuohaktzrQ>

<sup>105</sup> Cummins, 19.

not verifiable, aspects of this legend might ring true: after all, whereas legends are not always true in every detail, they are, often, at least based upon something. Once again: if the Assassins did not actually travel to Japan themselves to proselytize, flee the Mongol Empire, and/or reestablish as the *Shinobi*, or if their descendants who were raised in the Assassin tradition did not do such, then perhaps it is merely their influence felt upon the *Shinobi*. Though this is a possibility, the similarities do seem far too close and far too isolated to the *Shinobi* for merely word of their tactics or the tactics themselves to have slowly spread across Asia. If any connection is likely, it would appear that it is more likely that close descendants of the Assassins went to Japan and formed the *Shinobi* or influenced those who did: being one or two generations away from the Assassins and having been raised in different cultures, some of the Islamic elements might have faded away, leaving the philosophy, methodology, and tactics of the Assassins in place, but not having the religious zeal of Ismailism and not being quite so death-centered, relinquishing the practices to a role more-so of a spy than an assassin. One piece of evidence which aids in supporting this hypothesis is that Anthony Cummins, in the work *In Search of the Ninja*, recounts the text of the *Taiheiki*, which describes two *Shinobi* leading an armed host to victory over an opposing castle by way of infiltration and deception—however, it is warriors of the region of Iga who are guarding the gate, and it is shown that they are not acquainted with the ways of *shinobi no jutsu*, not trained as *Shinobi*. According to Cummins, this is, “indisputably,” a description of a thirteenth-century operation, and shows that the warriors of Iga were not *Shinobi* yet, but that *Shinobi* did, clearly, exist at that time. This means that the *Shinobi* did not originate in Iga, though Cummins claims that it was there perfected, brought to the fullness of its potential.<sup>106</sup> Could it be that these two *Shinobi* were the proto-*Shinobi*, the

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<sup>106</sup> Cummins, 22-24.

ancestral *Shinobi* of the Iga *Shinobi*, and that they were, perhaps, the biological and/or methodological descendants of the Assassins? Could it be that these two *Shinobi* are the two children trained by the traveler from China in the legend, and could he have been one of the Assassins or a descendant of them? Could they or their Assassin forefathers have come to Japan either in the course of their secret expansion they displayed in the Middle-East, or, possibly, having come once to Japan in the course of escaping the wrath of the Mongol Khans in the one land wherein such foes held no power?

***THERE IS A STRAND OF POTENTIALLY-CONNECTED ORGANIZATIONS THROUGHOUT HISTORY WHICH CHRONOLOGICALLY AND GEOPOLITICALLY ALIGN IN A MANNER SUPPORTING THE LIKELIHOOD OF A CONNECTION.***

The fourth and final matter to consider when contemplating whether or not the Order of Assassins could be connected to the *Shinobi* is that there is a string of other such potentially-seeded organizations between Egypt and Japan which the Assassins could very likely be connected to. First, one should consider the chronology of the Assassins and the *Shinobi*: whereas the *Shinobi* having their origins in the eleventh century would make it highly-unlikely, if not impossible, for them to have their origin connected to either the Assassins' Order or any possible predecessors of the Assassins, according to the book, *Warriors Around the World: Ninjas*, by Greg Roza, thus far, the first historically-verifiable records of the *Shinobi*, the *Ninja*, occurred much later in history, during the late fourteenth-century.<sup>107</sup> Cummins, as was previously mentioned, argues that *Shinobi* are visible as early as the thirteenth-century. Assuming that one starts with the first known, factual references, rather than a legend which could be true or false in various regards, this is a time which would be more than sufficient for the remnants of the Assassins to have founded or provided very early influence upon the *Shinobi*.

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<sup>107</sup> Roza, 9.



It is important to keep in mind that the late fourteenth-century contains what are, thus far, the first known, documented references to the *Shinobi*, as was previously mentioned; however this does not mean that the *Shinobi*, as a secret society or group of secret societies, necessarily have to have originated then. They could have originated earlier, either by a slight margin or by centuries, but these are the earliest to current knowledge, and it must be assumed, for the time-being, that the *Shinobi*'s origins are closer to such a date or, as Cummins has shown, perhaps to the thirteenth-century, than not, while acknowledging the unverifiable possibility of alternative timelines, such as that found in the legend.

Next, one should look into any similar organizations nearby the Assassins or the *Shinobi* to determine whether or not they may be linked to other organizations, besides one another, which could, potentially, yield valuable information. For example, there is some level of circumstantial evidence which links the Egyptian Dagger-Men to the Order of Assassins. In the Holy Scriptures, the Bible, of Christianity, it is recorded that the Apostle Paul is captured and asked if he were a notorious Egyptian who started a revolt, and Josephus records in his work, *Jewish Antiquities*, that this revolt consisted of thirty-thousand followers who were, largely, defeated and scattered, the Egyptian surviving.<sup>108</sup> As a matter of fact, certain translations of Scripture directly refer to this organization as being the Assassins. According to Clinton E. Arnold, in his work, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: John, Acts, Vol. 2*, these men were known as the *Sicarii*, being translated to, "dagger men," and reports that Josephus recorded them as having a method of blending into a crowd engaged in festivities, with small daggers hidden in their clothes. They would then assassinate their target in broad-daylight

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<sup>108</sup> Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*.

before blending back into the crowd, all of this inspiring great fear in their foes.<sup>109</sup> This greatly resembles the methodology of the Assassins' Order, which entailed assassinating their targets in public areas during the hours of daylight, in order to spread terror throughout the ranks of their foes.<sup>110</sup> It is no secret that Hassan-I Sabbah, the founder of the Order of Assassins, spent much of his time, during which he trained and plotted before founding the Order, in Cairo, Egypt, in the Abode of Learning. Perhaps the tactics of the Egyptian Dagger-Men, the *Sicarii*, influenced the Assassins. Perhaps the *Sicarii*, themselves, had some hand in the training of Hassan and/or the founding of the Assassins.

Next, with the nearest organization to the Assassins explored, one should look to any similar organizations between the Assassins and the *Shinobi*, both chronologically and geographically, which could bear a strong enough similarity and fall within the proper timelines to support that the Assassins Order may have undergone one or multiple transformations and/or reiterations throughout multiple locations and times, or, at the very least, may have influenced such organizations, on some level, via survivors of the Mongol purge. The Fatimid Caliphate, under which Hassan-I Sabbah trained in the Abode of Learning in Cairo, Egypt, had reconnected older trade-routes into India,<sup>111</sup> and Daraul, later, states that the Assassins later became the *Thugee* Cult of India, using a signal which spoke praise of Ali, a key element of Nizari-Ismaili doctrine.<sup>112</sup> This is something a Hindu killing in the name of Kali, the Hindu goddess of death, would never do. It is unclear whether or not Daraul is making a claim that the *Thugee* were, in fact, a sect of the Assassins posing as Hindus, just as they had once posed as Christian monks, or

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<sup>109</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: John, Acts, Vol. 2.*

<sup>110</sup> Discovery, "The Order of Assassins."

<sup>111</sup> Kings and Generals, "Hashashins: Origins of the Order of Assassins."

<sup>112</sup> Daraul, 36-37.

whether Daraul is claiming that the Assassins, as the result of survivors settling down in India, were slowly—perhaps even generationally—influenced by and/or converted to Hindu culture and turned their Assassin culture to suit the Hindu religion. What is clearly stated is that the Assassins were connect to, possibly even founding, the *Thugee*, as the result of their presence in India.

It is also believed that the Assassins, as was previously mentioned, sent either forty or four hundred of their lethal agents to assassinate the Mongol Khan, and that they failed. Assassins only waited to be slain if they succeeded, as a part of their rite to reach a supposed paradise after death, and would probably not have simply waited to be slain, due to having failed, rather than succeeding. If only one out of forty, or, even more powerfully, out of four-hundred assassins survived the plot, they could flee to Japan, where the Khan had no power. In either case, whether the potential-founders/influencers of the *Shinobi* started off, either themselves or generationally, in India or Mongolia, one thing is abundantly clear: China is not far from either of those locations, and, as was previously stated, the *Shinobi* have been thought by some to have aspects of their origins in China. Whereas it is true that the *Shinobi* could have originated from Assassins fleeing Mongolia, possibly traveling through Korea to reach Japan, it appears slightly more likely that the *Shinobi* would be founded by Assassins who had either made their way to China or, through the process of traveling and settling down and reproducing in various locations, eventually had their descendants make their way into China. Once in China, the descendants would have kept the secret Assassin culture alive, even if not holding the same religious motivations as before, having been influenced by other cultures as they relocated. In either case, regardless of whether or not the Assassins or their descendants are the strongest

possibility of those who might have founded or influenced the *Shinobi*, the Chinese secret-societies provide a strong case for Assassin influence.

Whereas it is true that *The Art of War* had been present far longer than the Assassins' Order, it deals, simply, with spying, and even then only in part, and does not delve into the detailed minutia which the Assassins and the *Shinobi* share in common. It would appear far more likely, both in method of the two organizations and in the chronology of the fall of the Assassins and the first records of the *Shinobi*, that the *Shinobi* originate from the Assassins, due to the extreme nature of their similarities, as opposed to their rather general similarities to the contents of *The Art of War* and the *Arthashastra*, which is an Indian text of a similar nature. Whereas the concept of spies had long existed, either the exact methods of the Assassins or ones of frightening similarity reveal themselves in the work of the *Shinobi*, ones far more specific than the generalities of the other texts would easily allow for.

Given that the Assassins had a presence in the Pamir Mountains in or near China, as was revealed by Daraul<sup>113</sup> and stated previously in this text, and given that the *Shinobi* show signs more specific to the Assassins than what *The Art of War* would readily afford, it is reasonable to begin searching for potential link-organizations in China. One organization which draws immediate attention is the *Tiandihue*, who were shadowy rebels working in secret to overthrow the Manchus. According to the Kings and Generals documentary, "Ancient Origins of the Chinese Triads," the *Tiandihue* are believed to have been the ideological and, possibly, organizational descendants of the Yellow Turban Revolt, one of the secret societies which believed that the emperor had lost the Mandate of Heaven, the allegedly-divine right to rule,

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 33.

through some aspect of poor leadership. Such secret societies attempted to keep one who has the Mandate of Heaven on the throne. The *Tiandihue* took this view toward the Manchu, foreign invaders who conquered China, and desired to return the throne to the Ming, their motto being, “*Overthrow the Ching, restore the Ming.*”, and their methods of operation being that of close-knit mutual-aid societies in hiding from more powerful forces, working in the shadows to stir revolution, and stoking the flames of war through political intrigue, all-the-while communicating with secret hand-signals, passwords, and rituals.<sup>114</sup> These are matters which sound somewhat familiar to both the Assassins and the *Shinobi*, or to one or the other, depending upon the aspect discussed. According to Carl Glick and Hong Sheng-Hwa in the work, *Swords of Silence: Chinese Secret Societies—Past and Present*, the Hung League, who desired to overthrow the Manchu of China, held the motto, “Overthrow the Manchus—Restore the Mings,” which is incredibly similar to that of the *Tiandihue*.<sup>115</sup> It is later revealed that Dr. Sun, who was an integral member of later Chinese revolution against the dynastic system, considered forming an, “Assassin Association,” to battle the Manchu dynasty using meticulous planning and a systematized approach to the battle;<sup>116</sup> as a matter of fact, Glick and Sheng-Hwa claim that, “One branch of the Hung League is ‘The Triad Society.’ Another is the Tien Ti Hui, or, as it is translated, ‘The Society of Heaven and Earth’,” this being a definite connection made between the two societies, further connecting Chinese secret societies.<sup>117</sup> In the work, *Secret Societies in*

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<sup>114</sup> Kings and Generals. YouTube (Service Providing Material). “Ancient Origins of the Chinese Triads.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FqM3hXdXSa4>

<sup>115</sup> Carl Glick and Hong Sheng-Hwa, *Swords of Silence: Chinese Secret Societies—Past and Present*, Whittlesey House and McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1947, New York and London, 5.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 210-211.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

*China*, Jean Chesneaux (translated by Gillian Nettle into English) says, in reference to Chinese secret-societies,

A list of their more important and exotic names in Chinese history would have to include the Red Eyebrow, Copper Horse, White Lotus, Yellow and Red Turbans, Heaven and Earth, Three Dots, Triad, Eight Trigrams, Small Sword, Righteous Harmony, Red Beards, Black Flags, Two Dragons and a Tiger, Elder Brothers, Mutual Progress, not forgetting the notorious Green and Red Band Societies in Shanghai of the 1920's and 1930's, which was then the Chicago of China.<sup>118</sup>

Considering that all of these societies might be connected, multiple of them being listed in the work by Glick and Sheng-Hwa, the Assassins could have, potentially, at the very least, exercised an influence upon all of them, if linked to any one of such organizations. Whereas the *Tiandihue* are believed to have started long after the *Shinobi*, their ancestral organizations from which they came, such as the Yellow Turban Rebellion, are not, the Yellow Turban Rebellion having occurred too early. One is too late and one is too early, but it would not be unlike the Assassins to merge with organizations between the two, organizations which posed some similarity with themselves, or to hide among them. They could have influenced Chinese secret societies and revolutions after the Yellow Turban Revolt, having an influence which traveled past their presence in China, one which continued to the future *Tiandihue* long after the Assassins left for Japan—if none of them or their descendants stayed behind in China, that is. Whereas it is possible that no Chinese secret societies were in any way influenced by the Assassins, who did have a highly-probable presence there, this is highly improbable, due to the Assassins probable metamorphosis into the *Thuggee* in India and their propensity to hide in, meddle in, and influence through other populations, faiths, and political structures. Why would they not jump at the opportunity to infiltrate, influence, and exert power through an organization with a mentality

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<sup>118</sup> Jean Chesneaux, *Secret Societies in China*, The University of Michigan Press, 1971, vii.

similar to their own, with similar goals as their own, these goals being the overthrow of local authorities and the toppling of governments and power-structures? It is not a long distance from China to Japan, China holds great cultural influence over Japan, and it has been rumored in various legends that monks or warriors coming out of China introduced the tactics of the *Shinobi* and were integral to their founding. Could these monks and/or warriors have been survivors in the Assassins, or the descendants of or disciples of the Assassins? This is well within the realm of possibility; and, given the similarity between the tactics of the Assassins' Order, the *Thugee*, the Chinese secret societies, and the *Shinobi* (especially between the Assassins and the *Shinobi*), it seems quite probable, in fact.

***IN CONCLUSION, A CONNECTION BETWEEN THE ORDER OF ASSASSINS AND THE SHINOBI IS HIGHLY-PROBABLE.***

In summary, given the startling level of similarities and the precision of many of those similarities between the Order of Assassins and the *Shinobi*, the geographic regions and trade-routes between the Assassins' Order and the *Shinobi*, the cultural exchange and direction of exchange in the regions between the Assassins' Order and the *Shinobi*, and due to the similar organizations and the chronological alignment between the Assassins' Order and the *Shinobi*, it is extremely-probable that the Order of Assassins and the *Shinobi* of Japan are, in fact, connected, the Assassins' Order, in all likelihood, having some hand in the founding of the *Shinobi*, or, at the very least, having a strong influence upon them in the *Shinobi*'s earlier history. Whereas there is not 100% proof of a connection, there is rarely absolutely-undoubtable proof of any theory, and the evidence is overwhelming: a connection is extremely likely. The Assassins and the *Shinobi* are ancient warriors of mythic repute, and have well-won their place in the annals of history, perhaps being one and the same.

There is more work to be done in uncovering the secrets of the Order of Assassins and the *Shinobi* of Japan. As the original researcher of this topic and the individual who independently began considering this question seriously, the author of this text strongly recommends that researchers search for any proof of a Middle-Eastern or Indian presence in Japan from the eleventh to the fifteenth century. It would be wise to consult the resources of Seinan University in Japan, and their digital database. Whereas a connection is incredibly and startlingly likely, more research must be done to prove the theory beyond dispute.



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