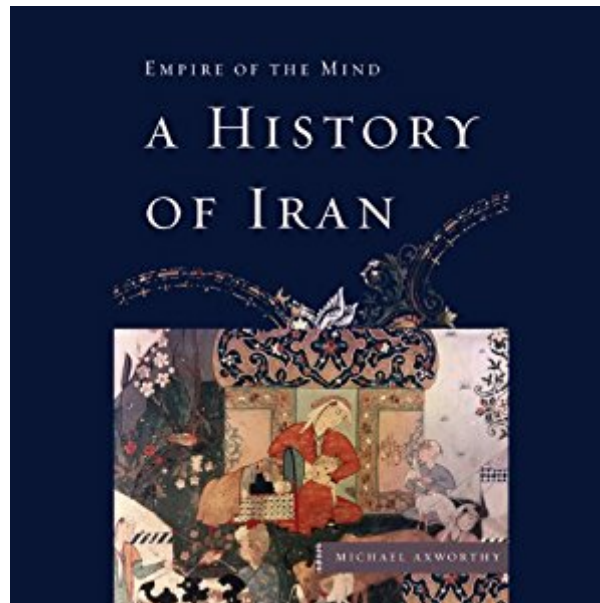




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# A History Of Iran: Empire Of The Mind



## Synopsis

Although frequently vilified, Iran is a nation of great intellectual variety and depth, and one of the oldest continuing civilizations in the world. Its political impact has been tremendous, not only on its neighbors in the Middle East but also throughout the world. From the time of the prophet Zoroaster, to the powerful ancient Persian Empires, to the revolution of 1979, the hostage crisis, and the current standoff over Iran's nuclear ambitions, Michael Axworthy vividly depicts the nation's rich history. He explains clearly and carefully both the complex succession of dynasties that ruled ancient Iran and the surprising ethnic diversity of the modern country, held together by a common culture. With Iran again the focus of the world's attention, A History of Iran is an essential guide to understanding this volatile nation.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Another reader thought my first comment was a JOKE! so let me qualify that, people from the west pronounce this country's name like "eye-Ran" and they refer to us as "eye-ranians" which makes us cringe everytime we hear this botched pronunciation. Rarely does a westerner say it the proper way and for that they're not to blame, but the first scholars/diplomats who interacted with the west, for lack of knowledge and ignorance of the English language and its phonetics. Had it been printed as "Earon" in history books, then most would be saying it the right way. I thought for benefit of 's scholars and readers, they might appreciate to learn and practice saying 'Earon', and Earonians when they refer to us. I should also add that the author is clearly a well educated scholar who wrote this without any influence from an entity of interest and his recount of the history is impartial and

accurate. In fact, I found this text to be more truthful than many of the history text books which we were forced to memorize as children growing up through elementary and high schools in Earon, which was due to the fact that powers to be at the time wanted to influence and brain wash a whole generation. Also as mentioned by another reader, don't anticipate any stories from the 20th century as the focus of this book is on the earlier dynasties who ruled the vast PERSIAN empire whose borders stretched into significant portion of the continent of ASIA.

A nice, easy to read, sweeping narrative of the History of Iran from ancient history to the present. Covers most if not all major events of the history of Iran , with dates, names of rulers etc., typical of what you would find in a good introduction. I especially enjoyed the sections on poetry and the author's attempt to convey a rather interesting cultural identity of Iran I previously had not known of. Perfect read for beginners or anyone remotely interested/curious about the history of Iran. I would have liked to see a bit more detail overall , however, I would recommend this book to introduce yourself to the history of Iran and to build a solid foundation upon which to further your studies with additional books ,which conveniently enough, the author provides at the end of the book a plethora of further readings.

This is the first book I have read exclusively about Iranian history and felt it provided a clear, fair and brief overview of the region's history up to modern times. As a student of Islamic studies I wish the author spent more time explaining some of the difference between Sunnah and Shi'a, in fact that this section of the book was a little too brief and thus did not lay adequate background for the rest of the book after the Islamic conquest and leading up to the revolution. I also felt the description of the origins of Shi'sim to be a bit too simplistic and shallow in this book. All other content is 5 star.

This is an excellent exposition of Iranian history surveying the nation's history through the age of empire from the times of Cyrus the Great to the present government led by the Islamic Republic. One of the first things that will surprise you about this book is how extensive but yet quickly you will be able to move through the time periods of Persian history. The book starts by describing Persia from the first true Persian Dynasty, the Achaemenid dynasty, followed by the Seleucid, Parthian, Sassanid, Umayyad, Abassid, Saffavid, Qajar, and Phavali dynasties. The chapters are linked together by stories and important historical developments in each era and transistions smoothly by describing the fall and the rise of the subsequent powers. In addition, the author dedicated an extensive chapter to the accomplishment of Persian poets including works of Rumi, Saadi, Hafez,

and Iraqi. It is most interesting to understand the role of poetry and its development in Persian history. The symbolism of the poetic works corresponds to subjects such as love, power, war, and life. However, I find the ones involving love most perplexing and the usage of the term "wine" as the metaphor for love. The symbolic, which are mostly subliminal, of these poems are truly influential. So if you are someone who wants to thumb through a well composed survey of Iran's history, culture, and people this book is definitely the right one for you. It is always breathtaking to see how civilizations can influence each other in the most subtle manner and thus have profound effects just as how people may influence each other.

This overview of Iran's history is well-written, with a good balance between political and cultural history. Given the extremely long period of time covered it is necessarily somewhat cursory, but it does a good job of showing the continuity of Iranian identity through the successive invasion of Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Mongols, and modern Western powers. There are a few things missing that I would have liked to have seen. The maps are few, small and perfunctory. There are no illustrations "sandwiched in," which would have been especially helpful to supplement the discussion of Persian architecture. And, in histories of this type, it is nice to have a chronology included. The author does in one instance seem to go off on a strange tangent. After pointing out how a Persian prophet, Mani, was for a time followed by one of the West's most influential thinkers (a quite appropriate point to make), the author then spends two entire pages lamenting that Augustine then foisted Manichaeism on the Western Church(!). He is entitled to his opinion, of course, but it's an odd excursion in a book on Iran. That aside, I would certainly recommend the book. Along with Hourani's history of the Arab peoples and Kinross's book on the Ottoman Empire, it constitutes an important and even-handed account of the rise of Islamic civilization, a subject that should certainly be better known.

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