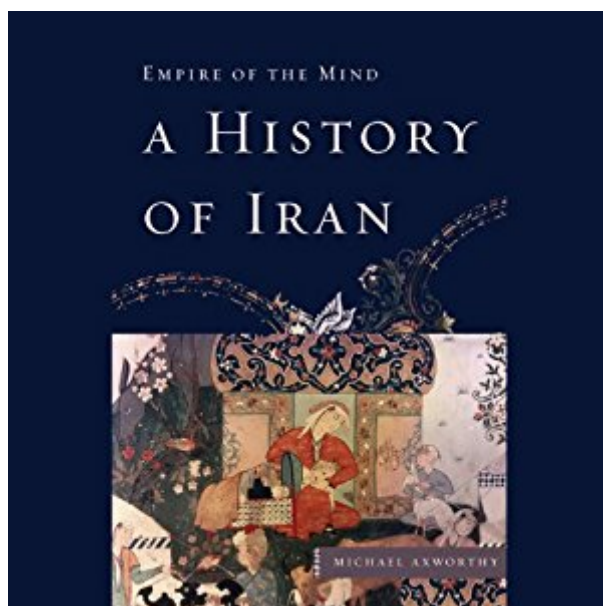


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# A History Of Iran: Empire Of The Mind



## 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

This book can be considered a starting point for any newcomer to Iranian history. It is, without a doubt, a major contribution to the popular history genre. While Iran/Persia is one of the great empires, Axworthy implies that it is also an empire of the mind, a virtual empire that transcends the western concept of the geopolitical state. The book follows Iran's chronological history from pre-Achaemenid times to the present. It is well researched and has extensive footnotes and references allowing the reader to delve into details of any event or subject. Yet, it is eminently readable and has the tone of a lively and informative lecture rather than an erudite tome. The book binds all the varied elements of Iranian culture (a multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic,

multi-religion mélange of peoples) into a single story line. It provides a factual, but simplified, picture of a multiplicity of societies who consider themselves Iranian regardless of the proclivity of their present governments. The reader is forced to re-evaluate the common notions of Iran as a homogeneous entity and recognize it as a hodgepodge of different groups who are bound by a common belief in the uniqueness of their civilization, culture and history. Perhaps the greatest contribution of the book is the portrayal of Iranian minorities. It is no small feat to trace their histories in the Iranian context. Yet, as Axworthy implies, it is their historical contributions and continued existence that make Iranian culture unique. It would be a sad day if any government forced uniformity on such a great and diverse culture. The book does not cover everything (that would require an encyclopedia) but it misses some points.

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