



# A History of Iran: Empire of the Mind

By Michael Axworthy

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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 narrates 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.

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## **Editorial Review**

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The peoples of the Iranian plateau have a written history of at least 2,500 years. The Persian Empire extended from Egypt to northern India, and the influence of the Persian language, literature, and architectural styles is still evident across western and central Asia. Unfortunately, most Americans view Iran today through the prism of staged anti-American demonstrations and the rantings of their current president. Axworthy, Honorary Fellow at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Exeter in England, has provided a valuable counterpoint to those distorted impressions. He has written a compact but still inclusive narrative account that conveys both the diversity and richness of the various empires and cultural forces that have shaped the Iranian people. He offers fascinating insights into the political developments in the Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sassanid empires, and his efforts to illustrate how Iranians adopted Islam while resisting the "Arabization" of their culture is provocative. This is an excellent examination of the forging of a people who are poised to, once again, play a prominent role in world affairs.

--Jay Freeman

Review

"Prospect"

"His account of modern Iranian politics and culture is more gripping than most novels.... Consistently intelligent, notably up to date and lucidly written."

About the Author

**Michael Axworthy** teaches at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Exeter (UK). The author of *The Sword of Persia*, Axworthy publishes widely in the field of Iranian history. He lives in Cornwall, England.

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