



# CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF IRAN

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**CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF IRAN**, a survey of the history and historical geography of the land which is present-day Iran, as well as other territories inhabited by peoples of Iranian descent, from prehistoric times up to the present in seven volumes (vol. III being a double volume), of which the first volume was published in 1968 and the last in 1989 (Figure 1).

The idea of a survey of the history and cultural achievements of Iran was conceived in 1959 by Arthur J. Arberry, professor of Arabic at Cambridge University, and Qods Nakha'i (Naqa'ī), then Persian ambassador in London. The idea owed its fulfillment to a generous subsidy offered by the National Iranian Oil Company (25,000 pounds sterling). After the exhaustion of the foundation fund, additional subvention was granted by the Foundation for Iranian Studies, Washington D.C. (volume II), The Yarshaters' Fund, Columbia University (volumes VI and VII), and Prince Abounasr Azod (Abū Naṣr 'Azod; volume VII).

The Cambridge University Press agreed to publish the survey, which was to be known as *The Cambridge History of Iran* and would take its place beside *The Cambridge Ancient History* and other Cambridge histories, and Arberry invited a number of distinguished scholars to join him in forming a board of editors. The first meeting was held in January 1961. The following have served as members of the board from its inception until the present: A. J. Arberry (1961-69; chairman), Sir Harold Bailey (1961-; chairman 1970-), Ann K. S. Lambton (1961-70), R. Levy (1961-66), Robert C. Zaehner (1961-67), Basil Gray (1961-89, vice chairman), Peter W. Avery (1961-; editorial secretary 1961-69),



Isa Sadiq (ʿĪsā Ṣadīq; 1963-69), Sayyid Hasan Taqizadeh (Sayyed Ḥasan Taqīzāda; 1963-69), Laurence Lockhart (1964-75), John Andrew Boyle (1967-78), Sir Max Mallowan (1970-78), C. Edmund Bosworth (1970-), Ilya Gershevitch (1970-), Hubert S. G. Darke (1970-; editorial secretary), Mahmoud Sana'i (Maḥmūd Ṣanā'ī; 1972-85), and William B. Fisher (1979-84). Professor Sana'i was the official liaison between the editorial board and the scientific centers of Iran.

The series was planned to be not simply a political history of Iran but to survey the culture which has flourished in the Iranian region and this culture's contribution to the civilization of the world. All aspects of the religious, philosophical, economic, scientific, and artistic elements in Iranian civilization have been studied, but with some emphasis on the geographical and ecological factors that have contributed to its special character.

Volume I, "The Land of Iran," was edited by W. B. Fisher (professor of geography, University of Durham) and published in 1968. The complex relationship between terrain and people is the major theme of this volume. It sets the stage for the human events that follow, being devoted to geography, anthropology, economic life, and flora and fauna. It delineates the pattern of physical and climatic features of the area that have determined the fate of the Iranian people, for good or for bad.

Volume II, "The Median and Achaemenian Periods," was edited by I. Gershevitch (reader in Iranian studies, University of Cambridge) and published in 1985. It describes the formation in the 6th century b.c. of the earliest multi-national empire in history, that of the Achaemenids, its administration, its confrontation with Greece, and its eventual dissolution under the impact of Alexander's conquest of Iran in 331 b.c. The sources for this period are diverse, both archeological and literary (chiefly Babylonian, Elamite, Egyptian, and Greek, but also in Iranian languages: Old Persian and Avestan), and are all exploited in chapters on art and architecture, history, calendar systems, weights and measures, religion, and the eastern Iranian world as reflected in the Avesta.

Volume III in two parts, "The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods," was edited by Ehsan Yarshater (professor of Iranian studies, Columbia University, New York) and published in 1983. It covers the complex period, extending for almost 1,000 years, from the death of Alexander in 323 b.c. to the advent of



Islam in a.d. the 7th century. There are chapters on political history, Iran's interaction with neighboring societies, and of Iran's mythical and legendary history, committed to writing in Sasanian times, as well as the institutional, administrative, legal, numismatic, linguistic and literary aspects of the period, and of Iranian settlements outside the geographical boundaries of Iran and Afghanistan.

Volume IV, "From the Arab invasion to the Saljuqs," was edited by Richard N. Frye (professor of Iranian studies, Harvard University) and published in 1975. It provides a comprehensive survey of the formative centuries of Islam in Iran. After dealing with the 'Abbasid caliphate, it goes on to describe the rise of the independent Iranian dynasties, such as the Taherids, Saffarids, Samanids, the early Ghaznavids, and the Buyids. There are chapters on the visual arts, numismatics, the exact sciences, philosophy, language, and literature.

Volume V, "The Saljuq and Mongol Periods," was edited by J. A. Boyle (professor of Persian studies, University of Manchester) and published in 1968. It covers the rise of the Saljuqs in the 5th/11th century, their decline in the 6th/12th century, the Mongol invasion in the 7th/13th century, and the establishment of a Mongol régime that dominated the Middle East for more than a century. It contains chapters on administration, religion, literature, the visual arts, and the exact sciences.

Volume VI, "The Timurid and Safavid Periods," was edited by L. Lockhart and Peter Jackson (lecturer in history, University of Keele) and published in 1986. It covers the history of Iran from the collapse of the Il-khanid empire (ca. 736/1335) to the second quarter of the 12th/18th century, a period in which Iran emerged as a "nation-state" and Shi'ism acquired the definitive hold on the country that it has maintained ever since. In addition to chapters on commercial and economic contacts with Europe, which became prominent from the 10th/16th century, the volume contains chapters on social and economic history, the arts and architecture, the exact sciences, religion, philosophy, and literature.

Volume VII, "From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic," has been edited by P. W. Avery (lecturer in Persian, University of Cambridge), Gavin R. G. Hambly (professor of history, The University of Texas at Dallas), and Charles P. Melville (Lecturer in Islamic Studies, University of Cambridge) and is to be published in 1990. The political framework of the period from the Afghan invasion of Iran and the sack of Isfahan in 1135/1722 to the fall of the Pahlavis and the



establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1357 Š./1978-79 is explored in chapters on the Afsharids, the Zands, the Qajars, and the Pahlavis. In addition there are chapters on foreign relations, the tribes, European economic penetration, the oil industry, religion, popular entertainment, the press and literature, and the visual arts.

Numerous reviews of *Cambridge History of Iran* have appeared, of which a few are listed here:

Volume I: F. R. C. Bagley, in *Der Islam* 47, 1971, pp. 332-42.

K. Butzer, in *American Anthropologist* 72/1, 1970, pp. 172-74.

Volume II: I. Steblin-Kamenskij, in *BSOAS* 50, 1987, pp. 146-47.

W. Hinz, in *Historische Zeitschrift* 242, 1986, pp. 648-51.

J. Wiesehöfer, in *Gnomon* 59, 1987, pp. 313-16.

Volume III: D. O. Morgan, in *History* 69/226, 1984, p. 272.

E. M. Yamanchi, in *American Historical Review* 89, 1984, pp. 1055-56.

J. R. Hinnells, in *JRAS*, 1984, pp. 282-84.

Volume IV: H. Algar, in *JAOS* 100/2, 1980, pp. 143-44.

Volume V: K. A. Luther, in *JAOS* 90/4, 1970, pp. 572-77.

F. R. C. Bagley, in *Der Islam* 47, 1971, pp. 332-42.

ʿA. Zarrīnkūb, in *MDAT* 17/1, 1348 Š./1969, pp. 1-54.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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