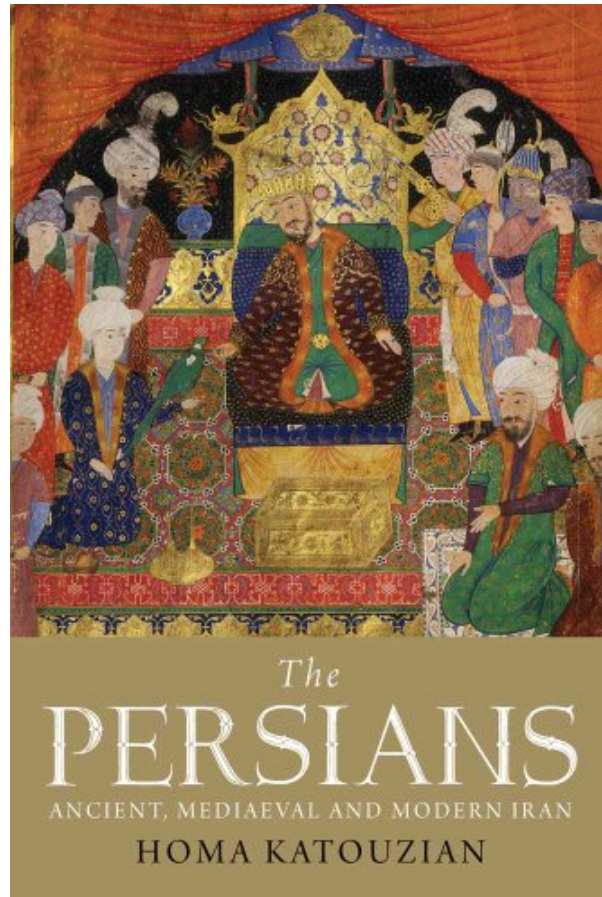
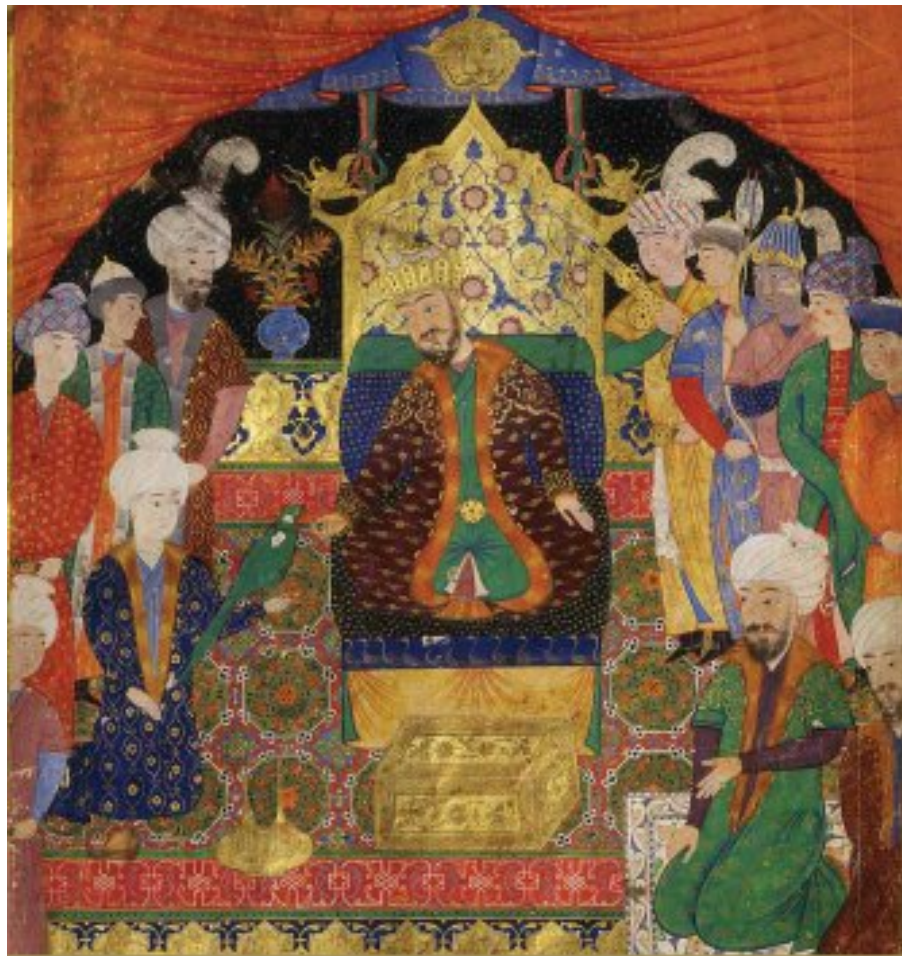


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## Review

"'Maybe the broadest and best overview available in English of a country which we need urgently to understand better. It should be required holiday reading in the Foreign Office, and maybe the White House too.' Stephen Howe, The Independent 'Katouzian is a convincing analyst of Iranian history.' Robert Carver, The Tablet"

## About the Author

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In recent years, Iran has gained attention mostly for negative reasons—its authoritarian religious government, disputed nuclear program, and controversial role in the Middle East—but there is much more to the story of this ancient land than can be gleaned from the news. This authoritative and comprehensive history of Iran, written by Homa Katouzian, an acclaimed expert, covers the entire history of the area from the ancient Persian Empire to today's Iranian state.

Writing from an Iranian rather than a European perspective, Katouzian integrates the significant cultural and literary history of Iran with its political and social history. Some of the greatest poets of human history wrote in Persian—among them Rumi, Omar Khayyam, and Saadi—and Katouzian discusses and occasionally quotes their work. In his thoughtful analysis of Iranian society, Katouzian argues that the absolute and arbitrary power traditionally enjoyed by Persian/Iranian rulers has resulted in an unstable society where fear and short-term thinking dominate. A magisterial history, this book also serves as an excellent background to the role of Iran in the contemporary world.

- Sales Rank: #781955 in Books
- Published on: 2010-11-30
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- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 1.50" h x 6.10" w x 9.10" l, 1.70 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 448 pages

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## Most helpful customer reviews

16 of 16 people found the following review helpful.

The most scholarly and easy to read book on the long history of Iran

By Very satisfied customer

I am no book critic. I have been reading and enjoying Dr. Katouzian's books for twenty years. This book brings together his vast and scholarly knowledge of 2500 years of Iranian history. No writer has achieved this. The narrative is very fluid and easy to read and understand, despite the sometimes complex subjects. I

could not wait to finish it, so that I could start reading it again.

If you are an Iranian, then you owe it to yourself to read this book. If you have adult children, please encourage them to read it. If you have young children, save this book in a safe place, and let them read it when they grow up.

Finally, if you are interested in modern Iran, his two books about Musaddiq and the Emergence of the Pahlavis are unsurpassed for their quality of research and writing. You can find these and his other works on Amazon.

13 of 14 people found the following review helpful.

Very good, if a bit confusing at times, history of Iran's development

By S. J. Snyder

Prof. Katouzian shows how the Iranian "social DNA" developed over centuries in a way to desire emperors who had a divine favor, similar to China's mandate from heaven, but how that favor in Iran often was more fickle than the Chinese mandate. Problems of succession plagued many dynasties in the past, and can be seen in the post-Khomeini days of today.

So, there's nothing new under the sun today, but it's been a long time developing.

For the period of the last 125 years or so, most likely to interest Americans, this is a good overview. But, before that, the past gets skimmed at many times.

There's little on the glories of the Achaemenids. Nor is there anything beyond the superficial on the founding and development of Zoroastrianism. The one thing new I learned about Iran's religious is that apparently it was NOT Shi'a majority until forcible conversion in a dynasty of the 1600s.

There's some other things missing, speaking of that.

1. A good glossary of religious terms.
2. A two-paged, nicely sized map of the country, or more than one. A geological map would be nice as part of this. So would better mapping of ancient and modern political division.
3. More discussions of Iranians' relations with Turks, over nearly 1,000 years of Turkish slaves passing through on the way to forming various dynasties, plus the Turkic presence fronting different Iranian empires in Transoxania. It's clear that Iran has many Turkish, as well as Arabic, loan words.

Anyway, I don't have further comparison because this is the first in-depth history of Iran I've read.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Excellent overview of Iranian history for a general reader

By Charles Oltorf

This book is an interpretative history of Iran from the Achaemenid empire until today. It is intended for a general reader and not for scholars. The book is prefaced by a chapter in which the author describes his overall analysis of Iranian culture and the impact of history on Iranian psychology. This chapter alone is worth the price of the book. The first two and a half millennia of Iranian history are covered in only 150 pages. Thus Iran's ancient past receives only the most glancing overview. Unfortunately the author seeks to provide a chronology of almost every significant event in this immense period of time and this makes for a somewhat difficult read. I found that I often had difficulty following the course of so many events covered so briefly. The bulk of the book is concentrated on 20th century Iran. Although the author has firm opinions about the individuals who have figured in recent Iranian history, I believe that his treatment is fair. He documents the reasons for his judgements and his analysis is not only quite believable but, in my opinion,

convincing. In particular, I felt that his coverage of the era of Mohammad Mosaddeq as prime minister was well balanced and enlightening. The U.S participation in the coup to overthrow Mosaddeq is so often cited as a justifiable source of hostility toward the U.S. that it was most helpful to understand 1) The basis for Iranian sensitivity regarding western intervention in Iranian affairs and 2) the domestic Iranian circumstances that made Mosaddeq's ouster likely in the first place. Katouzian attributes the 1979 revolution primarily to mismanagement on the part of both Reza Shah and his son, Mohammed Reza Shah. In particular, the unwillingness of either of the two Pahlavis to build toward a constitutional monarchy, insisting instead upon a traditional Iranian autocracy, doomed their regime. In summary, this book seeks to provide an interpretation of the history of Iran that will assist the reader in understanding contemporary Iran. I believe that it is completely successful in this regard. It is a slightly tedious read due to the copious detail it offers but the reward is worth the effort.

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