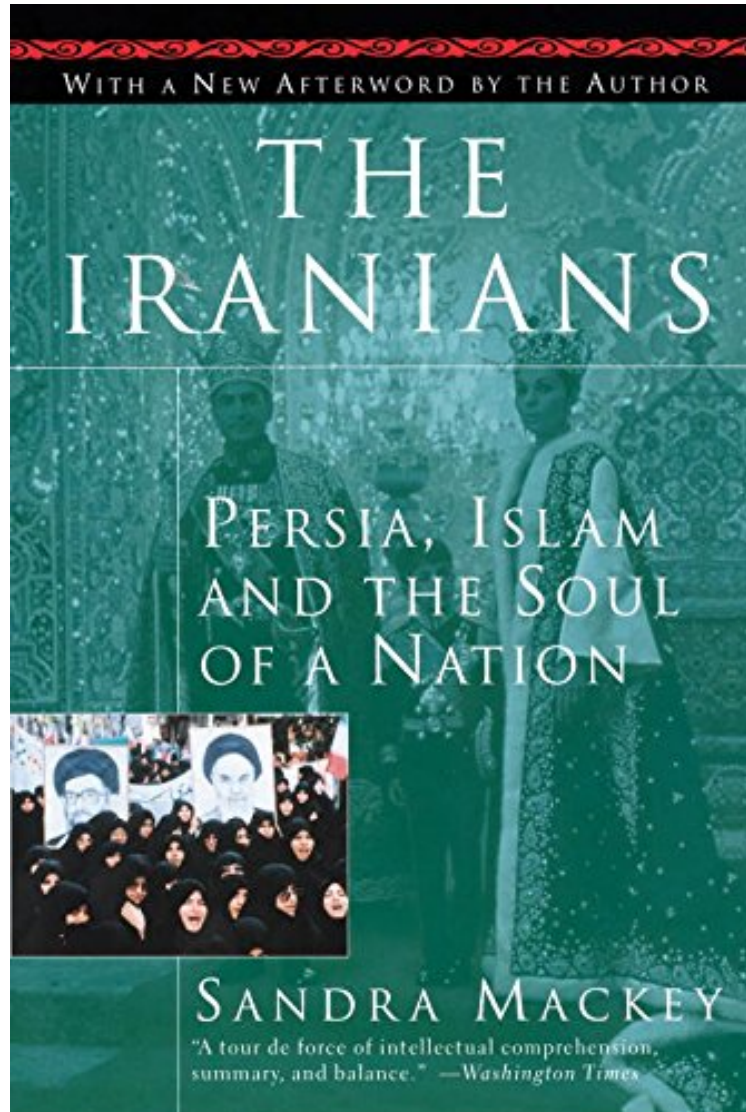


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The Iranians: Persia, Islam and the Soul of a Nation

Sandra Mackey, Scott Harrop

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Sandra Mackey, Scott Harrop : The Iranians: Persia, Islam and the Soul of a Nation before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Iranians: Persia, Islam and the Soul of a Nation:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. So fascinating yet manicBy John WagnerThis book is filled with an immense amount of historical information in regards to Iran and the country's history. I find Iranian history fascinating on its own. Sandra Mackey has written the most unorganized and poorly structured book I have ever picked up. It jumps around so much that it makes it very difficult for the reader to gain a clear understanding of the history and

influential personalities mentioned. If you have to read this for class and a research paper or test is required, I don't see it possible to not spend hours flipping back and forth from the index to marked page. I would find this book incredibly enjoyable if it were better structured. There is no doubt in my mind that she is an expert on middle eastern studies, but the book really does read terribly. Could have been so great. The history of Iran is an amazing story on its own. 9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Excellent Survey of Persian History By Dave in Los Alamitos I thought "The Iranians" was informative, fact-filled, and fair. Sandra Mackey clearly knows Iran and writes with a lot of authority. Overall, the book provided exactly what I wanted: a balanced and very valuable summary of the history and culture of Iran. "The Iranians" approaches its subject primarily by means of historical narrative. From Zoroaster to Xerxes and Khomeini to Khatami, the account is mainly factual and descriptive. However, Mackey also intersperses her own personal experiences in Iran, and she is not timid about drawing conclusions or stating opinions. For example, she describes with equal candor the follies of the British, the Americans, and yes, the Iranians themselves. This is sure to offend some people, as any 400-page summary of one of the world's great civilizations inevitably will. My one major complaint about "The Iranians" is that it could have been edited better. The writing is generally very good, and the book is filled with relevant facts and perceptive observations. But it is choppy and repetitive at times. A second edition would be great, slimmed by 50 pages, and with maps that tie better to the text! Living in southern California, it's been interesting to get to know some of the many Persian emigres here. They hold contradictory views on many subjects, except when it comes to the uniqueness and historical importance of their country. I know a few things about the world's other major civilizations, and I'm old enough to remember clearly the hostage crisis at the U.S. embassy. But I knew very little else about Iran, and was looking for a good one-volume introduction. I started with Elaine Sciolino's book "Persian Mirrors." This is an excellent description of Iranians as people, and of life in the Islamic Republic. Sciolino is quite a story-teller, and she clearly likes Iranians, without fawning. Yet though she often refers to events in Iranian history, "Persian Mirrors" cannot really stand as history itself. So I felt I needed another book to fill in the background. "The Iranians" does just that. The two books were quite complementary. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Excellent reading for anyone who wishes to have a better ... By FPExcellent reading for anyone who wishes to have a better understanding of Iran, its history, how it evolved into the nation it is today, and the battle between Shia and Sunni. Well documented and beautifully written. I highly recommend it.

WITH A NEW AFTERWORD BY THE AUTHORTHroughout its long and complex history, Iran has struggled with two warring identitiesone evolving from the values, social organization, and arts of ancient Persia, the other from Islam. By examining the relationship between these two identities, *The Iranians* explains how the revolution of 1979 came about, why the Islamic Republic has failed, and how Iran today is on the brink of chaos. In this defining portrait of a troubled nation and the forces that shape it, Iranian history and religion become accessible to the nonspecialist. Combining impeccable scholarship with the human insight of firsthand observations, *The Iranians* provides vital understanding of this unique and pivotal nation.

.com *The Iranians* chronicles the history of the Iranian people, from the "glory days" of Persia to the overthrow of Mohammed Reza Shah and the rise of the Ayatollah Khomeini. Through many centuries, Islamic Iran fell repeatedly to invaders--Turks, Mongols, Afghans, Russians, and the British--only to spring back and reassert its cultural and spiritual autonomy while absorbing elements of other civilizations. But after the 1950s, rapid modernization disturbed every facet of Iranian life. Mackey shows how Iran's pendulum swung from nationalism to monarchism to rigid Shia fundamentalism, while also offering harsh judgment of Western attitudes and policies toward Iran. From Publishers Weekly In an engrossing blend of history and reportage, Middle East expert Mackey (*The Saudis*) portrays a proud, anxious people caught between two interlocking traditions competing for the nation's soul. On the one hand, there is the legacy of ancient Persia, which brought forth Zoroastrianism with its belief in a supreme God, a philosophy of tolerance and justice, and magnificent art; and on the other, there is the predominant Shiite Muslim religion, which mirrors Persian nonconformity in its schismatic break with Sunni orthodoxy, but which also galvanizes the masses with calls for an egalitarian society, retribution against the West and strict adherence to Islamic moral code. Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi, in her analysis, abandoned Islamic traditions and, wrapping himself in the cloak of kingship, pushed a shallow resurrection of the glories of ancient Persia. His fall in 1979 left the U.S. adrift in the crucial Persian Gulf; and contemporary Iran, with its ongoing military buildup, its opposition to the Israel-Arab peace process and its refusal to lift the death edict for Salman Rushdie, reinforces deep-rooted authoritarian traditions. Nevertheless, Mackey strongly urges the U.S. to replace its policy of isolation and embargo with reconciliation toward President Hashemi Rafsanjani and the moderate pragmatists he supposedly represents. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Mackey, a Middle East specialist and journalist whose previous books include *Passion and Politics: The Turbulent World of the Arabs* (LJ 11/1/92), has produced a treasure trove of information on Iranian civilization from Cyrus the Great to the present. Throughout this turbulent history of invasions and conquerors, the Persian soul, with its foundations in the Zoroastrian concept of justice overlaid with Shia Islam, has steadfastly endured. Since many Westerners had little familiarity with Iran until the overthrow of the Shah in 1979, this very

readable book provides a perspective on what led up to those events, what is happening in Iran today, and how the current situation is likely to affect the future of Iran and its relationship with the West. The West needs to understand Iran, and this work makes great headway in that direction: it is comprehensive but also discusses Persian history and religion in depth, thereby making it useful to the specialist and nonspecialist alike. Highly recommended for all libraries. ?Ruth K. Baacke, Whatcom Cty. Lib. Sys., Bellingham, Wash. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.