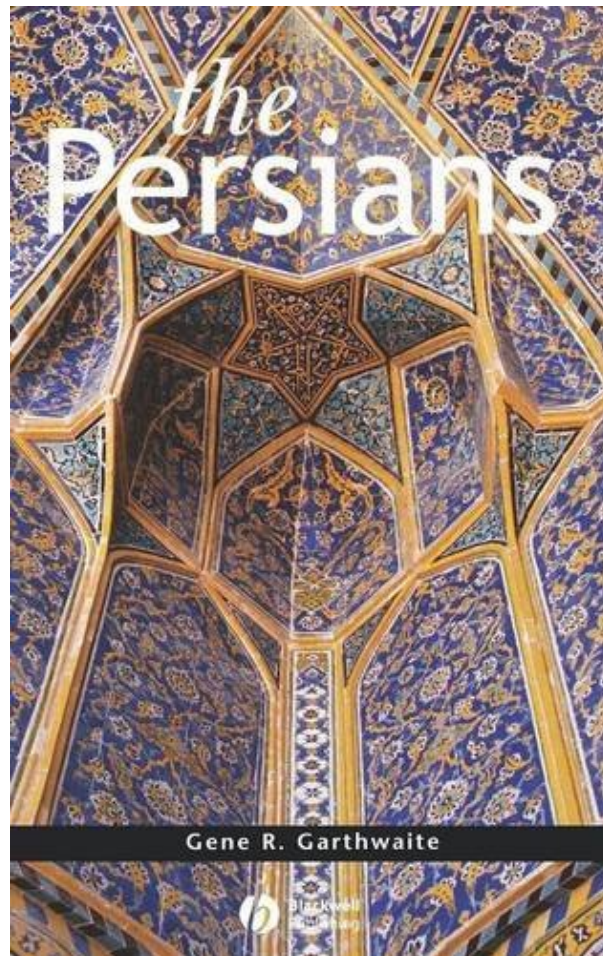
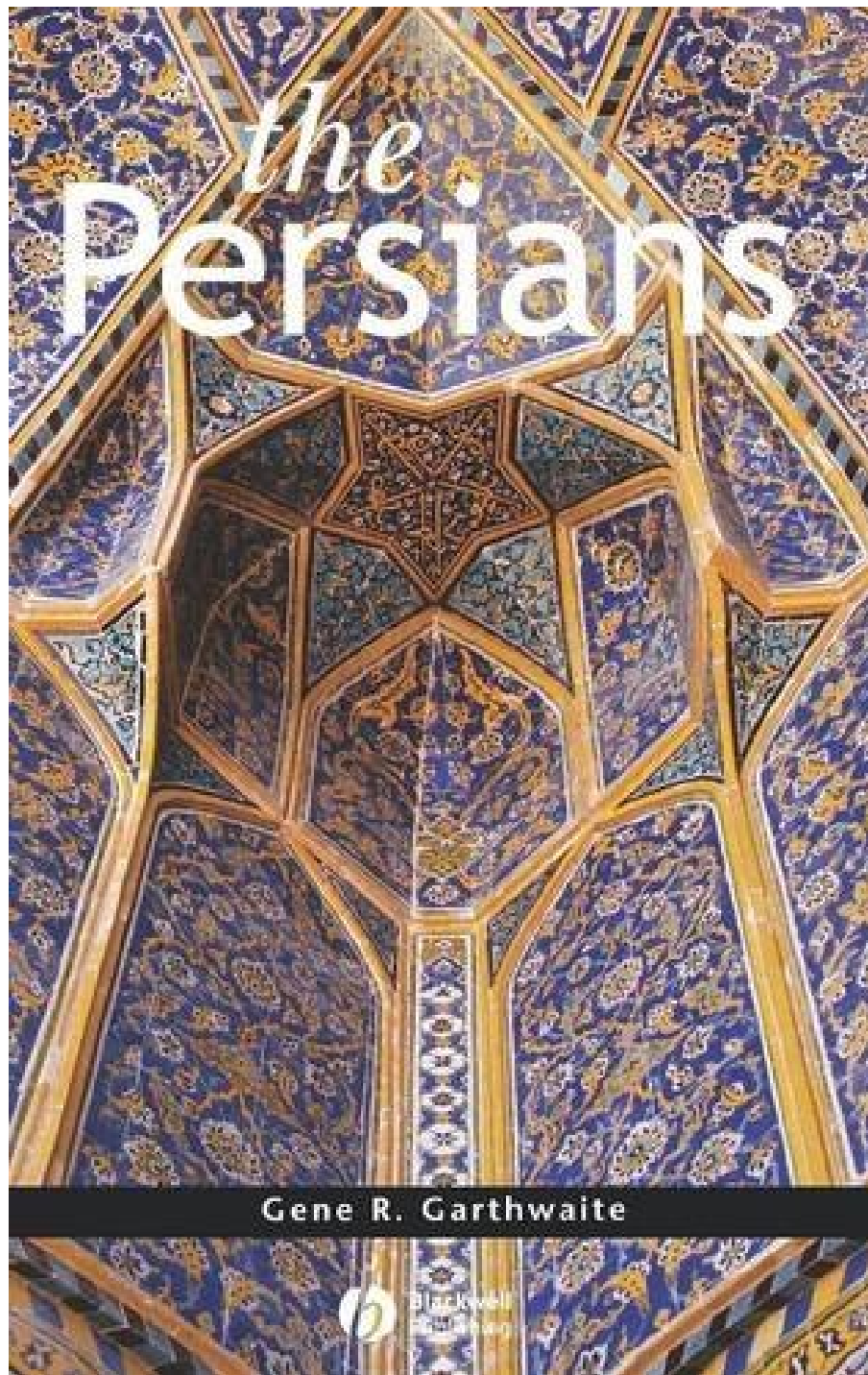


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The Persians is a succinct narrative of Iranian history from the time of Cyrus the Great in 558 BC to the present day. The book traces events from the rise of the Persian empire, through competition with Rome and conquest by the Arabs, through to the re-establishment of a Persian state in the sixteenth century, and finally the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the establishment of the current Islamic Republic.

For each period, the author utilizes the most recent scholarship in order to examine Iran's political, social, and cultural history. He presents this history within an analytical framework which focuses on rulership as the central theme of identity for Iranians. He also considers the part played in Iranian identity by land, political culture, religion, and the arts.

About the Author

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- Focuses on rulership as a central theme in Iranian identity.
- Also shows how land, language and literature relate to Iranian identity.

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solid presentation

By DaLaoHu

This is the second book I have read in the Peoples of Asia series, (the first being The Tibetans), and in general I have been impressed by the evenhanded scholarship that goes into these volumes.

In this book, the author attempts to portray the history the Persian people, (now known as the Iranians), from their own point of view, and through their own historical/archaeological archives. Unfortunately, from my point of view, there seems to be not much available from the period I was most interested in, which was the ancient period from the Elamites through the Parthians, and so the author is forced to rely heavily, too heavily in my opinion, on the monumental inscriptions of the great kings. In fact, the Elamites are given such short shrift that they barely touch the surface. Still, it was nice to see the wars against Greece put into the opposite perspective from what we are accustomed to, that from the Persian point of view they were probably nothing more than irritants, and most likely had no lasting effect on the course of the empire. Just as the later Roman defeats at the hands of the Parthians were really only irritants on their side, and had little lasting effect on the course of the Roman empire. East was East and West was West and their major spheres of influence were quite distinct. The Persians are not so much a Middle Eastern people as an Asian people.

The surprise from this book was the way the text showed up so many gaps in my knowledge of modern Iran, and then proceeded to fill them in. If you are interested in a brief account of just how the Islamic Revolution unfolded, of just how the ulema originally became so powerfully entrenched in the Iranian bureaucracy, and of just how both of the Pahlavi shahs (who in spite of their shortcomings, did display tendencies toward modernization) so overplayed their hands that they eventually became despised by both the left and the right, this book would be a great place to start. And in contrast to the impression you might receive from the Western press, this book also establishes how even today the Iranians are deeply divided amongst themselves over just which direction they want their country to take.

This volume packs a wealth of information into a small yet readable space.

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In times like these we need to reacquaint ourselves with those who hate us. This book is reasonable, intelligent, enlightening, educating, truthful, unbiased, and necessary. It helps to get a handle on an area that will be in our daily news for years to come and to point a gentle finger at those who had a hand in making it the way it is today.

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