

THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF IRAN

IN EIGHT VOLUMES

Volume 4

THE CAMBRIDGE
HISTORY OF
IRAN

Volume 4

THE PERIOD FROM THE ARAB
INVASION TO THE SALJUQS

edited by

R. N. FRYE

Professor of Iranian, Harvard University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-20093-6 — The Cambridge History of Iran
Edited by R. N. Frye
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo
Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521200936

© Cambridge University Press 1975

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1975
Sixth printing 2010

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN-13 978-0-521-20093-6 hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy
of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is,
or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

BOARD OF EDITORS

SIR HAROLD BAILEY (*Chairman*)
Emeritus Professor of Sanskrit
University of Cambridge

BASIL GRAY (*Vice-Chairman*)
Formerly Keeper of the Oriental Antiquities
British Museum

P. W. AVERY
Lecturer in Persian
University of Cambridge

C. E. BOSWORTH
Professor of Arabic Studies
University of Manchester

J. A. BOYLE
Professor of Persian Studies
University of Manchester

ILYA GERSHEVITCH
Reader in Iranian Studies
University of Cambridge

L. LOCKHART
Pembroke College, Cambridge

SIR MAX MALLOWAN
Emeritus Professor of Western Asiatic Archaeology
University of London

MAHMUD SANATI
Professor of Psychology
University of Tehran

H. S. G. DARKE (*Editorial Secretary*)
Lecturer in Persian
University of Cambridge

CONTENTS

<i>List of plates</i>	<i>page ix</i>
<i>List of maps</i>	x
<i>Preface</i>	xi
I THE ARAB CONQUEST OF IRAN AND ITS AFTERMATH	I
<i>by 'ABD AL-ḤUSAIN ZARRĪNKŪB, Professor, University of Tebrān</i>	
2 THE 'ABBĀSID CALIPHATE IN IRAN	57
<i>by ROY MOTTAHEDEH, Princeton University</i>	
3 THE ṬĀHIRIDS AND ṢAFFĀRIDS	90
<i>by C. E. BOSWORTH, Professor of Arabic Studies, University of Manchester</i>	
4 THE SĀMĀNIDS	136
<i>by R. N. FRYE, Professor of Iranian, Harvard University</i>	
5 THE EARLY GHAZNAVIDS	162
<i>by C. E. BOSWORTH</i>	
6 THE MINOR DYNASTIES OF NORTHERN IRAN	198
<i>by W. MADELUNG, Professor of Islamic History, University of Chicago</i>	
7 IRAN UNDER THE BŪYIDS	250
<i>by HERIBERT BUSSE, Professor, Christian Albrechts University, Kiel</i>	
8 TRIBES, CITIES AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION	305
<i>by CLAUDE CAHEN, Professor, University of Paris IV</i>	
9 THE VISUAL ARTS	329
<i>by OLEG GRABAR, Professor of Fine Arts, Harvard University</i>	
10 NUMISMATICS	364
<i>by G. C. MILES, Consultant, American Numismatic Society</i>	
11 THE EXACT SCIENCES	378
<i>by E. S. KENNEDY, Professor of Mathematics, The American University of Beirut</i>	
12 LIFE SCIENCES, ALCHEMY AND MEDICINE	396
<i>by S. H. NASR, Professor of Philosophy, University of Tebrān; Chancellor, Aryamehr University</i>	

CONTENTS

13	(a) PHILOSOPHY AND COSMOLOGY	<i>page</i> 419
	<i>by</i> S. H. NASR	
	(b) ŠŪFISM	442
	<i>by</i> S. H. NASR	
14	THE RELIGIOUS SCIENCES	464
	<i>by</i> S. H. NASR <i>and</i> M. MUTAHHARI, <i>Professor of Islamic Philosophy, University of Tebrān</i>	
15	SECTS AND HERESIES	481
	<i>by</i> B. S. AMORETTI, <i>Rome University</i>	
16	NĀṢIR-I KHUSRAU AND IRANIAN ISMĀ‘ĪLISM	520
	<i>by</i> HENRY CORBIN, <i>Directeur d’Études, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris</i>	
17	ZOROASTRIAN LITERATURE AFTER THE MUSLIM CONQUEST	543
	<i>by the late</i> J. DE MENASCE, O.P.	
18	ARABIC LITERATURE IN IRAN	566
	<i>by</i> VICTOR DANNER, <i>Indiana University</i>	
19	THE RISE OF THE NEW PERSIAN LANGUAGE	595
	<i>by</i> G. LAZARD, <i>Professor, University of Paris III</i>	
20	(a) THE “RUBĀ‘Ī” IN EARLY PERSIAN LITERATURE	633
	<i>by</i> L. P. ELWELL-SUTTON, <i>Edinburgh University</i>	
	(b) ‘UMAR KHAYYĀM: ASTRONOMER, MATHEMATICIAN AND POET	658
	<i>by</i> J. A. BOYLE, <i>Professor of Persian Studies, University of Manchester</i>	
	<i>Bibliography</i>	665
	<i>Index</i>	699

PLATES

Between pages 352 and 353

- 1 Dāmghān mosque (Photograph by courtesy of the Imperial Iranian Embassy, London).
- 2 General view of Dāmghān mosque (Photograph by Antony Hutt).
- 3 General view of Nāyīn mosque (Photograph by Antony Hutt).
- 4 Stucco decoration: Nāyīn mosque (Photograph by courtesy of the Imperial Iranian Embassy, London).
- 5 Gunbad-i Qābūs (Photograph by courtesy of the Imperial Iranian Embassy, London).
- 6 Bukhārā, Sāmānid mausoleum, exterior.
- 7 Tīm, ‘Arab-atā, exterior.
- 8 Bukhārā, Sāmānid mausoleum, interior.
- 9 Tīm, ‘Arab-atā, interior.
- 10 Yazd, Davāzdah Imām squinch.
- 11 Nāshāpūr, stucco niche (Metropolitan Museum of Art. Museum Excavations 1937 and Rogers Fund).
- 12 General view of Ribāṭ-i Malik.
- 13 Stucco panel from Nīshāpūr (Metropolitan Museum of Art).
- 14 Nīshāpūr plate with inscription (The Brooklyn Museum, New York. L59.3.2).
- 15 Nīshāpūr plate, floriated Kufic (William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art, Atkins Museum of Fine Arts, Kansas City. 54.80).
- 16 Nīshāpūr bowl (Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. 57.24).
- 17 Nīshāpūr plate with figures (Metropolitan Museum of Art).
- 18 Gold ewer (Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. 43.1).
- 19 Bronze aquamanile (Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin).
- 20 Būyid silk, compound tabby weave (The Cleveland Museum of Art. Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund).

PLATES

- 21 (colour) Painted stucco panel from Nishāpūr (Metropolitan Museum of Art. Museum Excavations 1939).
 22 (colour) Nishāpūr bowl (Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. 57.24).
 23 (colour) Western Iranian ceramic (Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin).
 24 (colour) St Josse silk (Courtesy of Le Musée du Louvre).

Between pages 376 and 377

- 25–9 Coins.

MAPS

1	Iran under the ‘Abbāsids	<i>page</i> 60
2	The Ṣaffārid empire	93
3	The Sāmānid kingdom	139
4	The early Ghaznavid empire	167
5	Āzarbāijān	201
6	The Caspian provinces	203

PREFACE

The period of Iran's history from the Arab conquests to the Saljuq expansion is very difficult to separate from the general history of the Islamic oecumene. Since the overwhelming majority of the sources are in Arabic, and more concerned with general Islamic affairs than with Iran, the story of the transition of Iran from a Zoroastrian land to an Islamic one is not easy to reconstruct. Under Islam, for the first time since the Achaemenids, all Iranians, including those of Central Asia and on the frontiers of India, became united under one rule. The Persian language was spread in the East, beyond the borders of the Sāsānian Empire, by the conquering armies of Islam, and Persian became the *lingua franca* of the eastern caliphate. The New Persian language written in the Arabic script, and with numerous Arabic words in it, became a marvellous instrument of poetry and literature, similar to the English language, which developed from a simple Anglo-Saxon tongue to one enriched by Latin and French usages after the Norman conquest. Although Firdausī with his *Shāh-nāma* commonly has been proclaimed the founder of New Persian literature, in another sense he was the preserver of the old Persian style of the Sāsānians, not only in epic content, but also in the simplicity of his language without Arabic words. He not only feared the loss of old traditions in Iran, in the face of massive conversions to Islam by his time, but he also sought to preserve the very language which was threatened by permanent change from the use of Arabic, as the language of Islam *par excellence*. Even poetry in Persian had been adapted to Arabic models, and the synonymy of the words "Arab" and "Islam" questioned the very identity of Iranians. This threat was not only evaded by the Iranians, but they gave a new direction to Islam.

Islam was rescued from a narrow bedouin outlook and bedouin mores primarily by the Iranians, who showed that Islam, both as a religion and, primarily, as a culture, need not be bound solely to the Arabic language and Arab norms of behaviour. Instead Islam was to become a universal religion and culture open to all people. This, I believe, was a fundamental contribution of the Iranians to Islam. By Iranians, I mean Soghdians, Bactrians, and other Iranians, ancestors of the present Kurds, Baluchis and Afghans, as well as the Persians, who were joined together under the roof of Islam. Although almost all

PREFACE

Iranians had become Muslims by the time of the creation of the Saljuq Empire, nonetheless they preserved their old Iranian heritage, such that even today the chief holiday in Iran is ancient *navrūz*, “new year’s day”. This continuity is unequalled elsewhere in the Near East, where in Egypt for example, two great changes erased the memory of the pharaohs from the minds of the inhabitants: first Christianity and then Islam. In Iran Christianity had little influence and Islam was adapted to Iranian customs. So Iran, in a sense, provided the history, albeit an epic, of pre-Islamic times for Islam. After all, the Arabs conquered the entire Sāsānian Empire, where they found full-scale, imperial models for the management of the new caliphate, whereas only provinces of the Byzantine Empire were overrun by the Arabs.

One of the main themes of this book is the process of conversion, how people changed from one religion to another. This process differed considerably from place to place and many monographs should be written before a general picture can be presented. Nonetheless, throughout various chapters in this volume the conversion process is mentioned. The first conversions took place in the cities and towns where Arab garrisons were settled, more in the east on the frontiers of the *dār al-ḥarb*, “the abode of war”, than in western Iran. In the east the Sāsānian name for the Arabs became a synonym of “Muslim”, such that even today we have Tajiks in Soviet Central Asia who are Iranians, but who carry the ancient designation for “Arab”, because they were converted to the religion of the Arab conquerors and were identified with them. It was not until the end of the eighth and especially the ninth century of our era that Muslim missionaries made extensive conversion in the countryside. By the ninth century, except in areas of Fārs province and pockets of non-Muslims elsewhere, the Islamic religion became everywhere predominant even in the countryside. This process must be kept in mind when reading the present volume.

It must be strongly emphasized that this volume is only the history of Iran under Islam, and is not intended to repeat the *Cambridge History of Islam*; yet, as mentioned, it has proved very difficult to separate the two. Some readers will undoubtedly point out that much which occurred in Damascus under the Umayyads, for example, had repercussions in *Khurāsān*. This is true, but the emphasis of our volume is upon local conditions, even though the sources in this regard are very sparse.

Nonetheless, it is hoped that the reader will find here the information he may want in regard to this period. If omissions have been made, the

PREFACE

editor can only take refuge in the Islamic remark that what is presented is in part and not all. Indeed, it would have been impossible to cover the many details of the history of the period, as well as all aspects of culture and civilization. Perhaps one should remember that history can hardly be what Leopold von Ranke decreed, a report of what really happened, nor even what people thought had happened, but rather history is what people believe should have happened. For history at the least is a people's attempt to justify their past for posterity, even if the record be at times rough or even sordid. In the case of Iran after the Arab conquests the record is brilliant as well as fascinating. It was in this period that the foundations were laid for the flourishing of Persian poetry and the arts, so characteristic of Iran after the Mongol conquest. It is hoped that the present book will provide the reader with a record of these formative centuries of Islam in Iran.

Most of the time of an editor is spent on trying to standardize names and to be consistent, an almost impossible task. On the whole, the rules adopted for Volumes 1 and 5 of the *Cambridge History of Iran* have been followed in Volume 4. Naturally, certain transcriptions were changed, since the sources for Volume 4 are overwhelmingly in Arabic rather than in the Persian language. Certain practices, such as italics for the first occurrence of a foreign name and roman type for later appearances, may startle but surely not confuse the reader. Certain names have been spelled in their common English forms while others have been transcribed in their Arabic or Persian forms. In these instances the indulgence of the reader is sought with a passing reference to Emerson's dictum that "a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds".

It remains to thank deeply all persons who worked upon this volume to make it ready for the final printing. Without the unflinching help of Hubert Darke, the Editorial Secretary of the entire series, this volume would not have appeared. Likewise Peter Burbidge of the Cambridge University Press gave encouragement and help unstinting. Richard Hollick, and others at the Press, patiently had to endure an editor's failings and certainly their help made this book possible. The hospitality of King's College and of Peter Avery made my frequent visits to Cambridge a great pleasure. My peregrinations between Shīrāz and Cambridge, Massachusetts, at times cast a shadow over the progress of the book, and in the end I hope that, in spite of shortcomings, it will prove of use to many readers.

Cambridge, Massachusetts, March 1974

RICHARD N. FRYE