

# OPINIONS ABOUT ASPECTS OF

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# ancient iran

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## COSMOLOGY, MYTHOLOGY, HISTORY

*Ancient Iran: Cosmology, Mythology, History* reflects three stages in the creation of Iranian civilization. Iranian cosmology, explained in the *Avesta*, especially in the *Bundahishn*, is a cosmology of the mind, populated by thought-beings. Iranian mythology is populated by hero-saints with impeccable foresight. As Abu al-Qasim Firdowsi explains in his *Shahname*, their pursuit of truth leads to the appearance of the Prophet Zoroaster. Iranian monarchs, especially the early Sassanids, implemented the dictates of Zoroaster. The just society ruled by Khosrau I drew on the contributions of the cosmic thought-beings, the mythical hero-saints, and real-life monarchs like Cyrus II the Great, Darius I, and Ardashir I.

Since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, European scholars and recently American scholars have studied aspects of ancient Iran in great detail and, at times, with incredible insight. None of those studies, however, presents a single narrative that connects aspects of Iran's past together in the way that *Ancient Iran: Cosmology, Mythology, History* does. Bashiri's innovative approach to both Firdowsi's use of the *farr* and to Iran's relationship with Egypt, during the Achaemenid era, is noteworthy. The accessibility of his work to scholars, students, and the public at large is commendable.

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Dr. Bashiri analyzes the facts about ancient Iran without prejudice. For instance, wherever the ancient civilization of Egypt proves more progressive, he acknowledges the superiority. The most important and thought-provoking aspect of his research is his assessment of events, an assessment that is at once innovative and groundbreaking. He clearly shows that after Iran's domination of Egypt was complete and Iranian Kings ruled Egypt, some of the Iranian monarchs were numbered among the great and beloved pharaohs of Egypt. They were accepted by the populace and were revered as sons of *Ra*. He also finds certain resemblances among the tombs of the pharaohs in the Valley of the Kings and the cliff tombs of Darius I and the other kings of Iran buried at *Naqsh-e Rostam*. His work adds yet another dimension to the study of ancient Iran.

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As a scholar with an eye to historical accuracy, Iraj Bashiri analyzes mythological and historical documents and shows that, in ancient times, according to the *Shahname*, Iran and Turan had not been two distinct countries with separate languages and races; but rather, they had been a part of a united Aryan domain, a domain that in Islamic times is referred to as *Ma Wara' al-Nahr*. One of the meritorious aspects of his analysis lies in the fact that he is not given to any particular national or religious inclination; rather, he outlines the facts as Firdowsi states them and allows the reader the opportunity to draw his own conclusions. He does what is expected of a fair and judicious author.