



# Land of the Turquoise Mountains: Journeys Across Iran

*Cyrus Massoudi*

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## **Land of the Turquoise Mountains: Journeys Across Iran** Cyrus Massoudi

For Cyrus Massoudi, a young Britishborn Iranian, the country his parents were forced to flee thirty years ago was a place wholly unknown to him. Wanting to make sense of his roots and piece together the divided, divisive and deeply contradictory puzzle that is contemporary Iran, he embarked on a series of journeys that spanned hundreds of miles and thousands of years through the many ebbs and flows of Iranian history. From the border with Turkey to that of Turkmenistan, from the Caspian basin down to the Persian Gulf, his journeys took him from the mythological first kings of Iran, to the Elamite kingdom, the eras of Cyrus and Darius, the glory of the Sasanians, the shock of the Islamic Arab conquests and the later Mongols, Safavids and on to Khomeini, Ahmadinejad and beyond.

Rich portrayals of Sufis and ageing aristocrats, smugglers and underground rock bands are all woven together with history, religion and mythology to form a unique portrait of contemporary Iranian society. And, like a fragile thread running through the heart of the narrative lies Massoudi's poignant personal quest; his struggle echoing that of Iran itself, as it fights to forge a cohesive modern identity. With its tensions of young against old, reformists against reactionaries and the computer against the Qur'an, it is a battle with global implications for a future that is poised so precariously between promise and ruin.

Land of the Turquoise Mountains reveals a world beyond the propaganda-driven, mediafuelled image of fractious, flag-burning fundamentalism, and provides a compelling glimpse both into the heart of a deeply misunderstood nation and into what it is to seek out and discover one's heritage.

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