

Both
Eastern and
Western

An Intellectual History of
Iranian Modernity

AFSHIN MATIN-ASGARI

Both Eastern and Western

Since the Iranian revolution of 1979, many observers of Iran have seen the country caught between its “Eastern” or Islamic history and “Western” modernity, between religion and secularity. As a result, intellectual histories of modern Iran have become subsumed by this narrative. Here, Afshin Matin-Asgari proposes a revisionist work of intellectual history, challenging many of the dominant paradigms in Iranian and Middle Eastern historiography and offering a new narration. In charting the intellectual construction of Iranian modernity during the twentieth century, Matin-Asgari focuses on broad patterns of influential ideas and their relation to each other. More than all previous studies, he analyses these intellectual trends in their global context, showing how Iranian modernity has been shaped by at least a century of intense interaction with global ideologies. Turning many prevailing narratives on their heads, the author concludes that modern Iran can be seen, culturally and intellectually, as both Eastern and Western.

AFSHIN MATIN-ASGARI is Outstanding Professor of Middle East history at California State University, Los Angeles. He was born in Iran and completed his Ph.D. in Middle East history at University of California, Los Angeles. He was active in the international movement of Iranian students during the 1970s and took part in the 1978–1979 Iranian Revolution. He is the author of *Iranian Student Opposition to the Shah* (2002), which has been translated into Persian and published in Iran. Matin-Asgari has authored more than twenty articles and book chapters on twentieth-century Iranian political and intellectual history.