



## Edge of Empires: A History of Georgia

By Donald Rayfield

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### Edge of Empires: A History of Georgia By Donald Rayfield

Georgia is the most Western-looking state in today's Near or Middle East and, despite having one of the longest, most turbulent histories in the Christian or Near Eastern world, no proper history of the country has been written for decades. Donald Rayfield redresses this balance in Edge of Empires: A History of Georgia, focusing not merely on the post-Soviet era, but on the whole of its history, accessing a mass of new material from the country's recently opened archives.

The book begins with the first intimations of the existence of Georgians in ancient Anatolia and ends with today's volatile President Saakashvili. It deals not only with the country's internal politics, but with its complex struggles with the empires which have tried to control, fragment or even exterminate the country. All world history – Xenophon's Greeks, the Arabs, the invading Turks, the Crusades, Chingiz Khan and Timur Lang, the Persian empire, the Russian empire, Soviet totalitarianism – is reflected in Georgia's history.

Donald Rayfield describes Georgia's swings between disintegration and unity, making full use of primary sources, many not available before in English. He examines the history of a country which, though small, stands at a crossroads between Russia and the Muslim world, between Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and is a dramatic example of state-building and, also, of tragic political mistakes.

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#### Review

“Donald Rayfield’s *Edge of Empires* is a wonderful history of Georgia, lifting the lid on that country’s torrid, rambunctious past (and present). Impeccably researched, limpidly written and full of insight.”

(William Boyd, *Books of the Year, The Guardian*)

“Donald Rayfield’s panoramic *Edge of Empires* is an impressive work that helps us understand why this south Caucasus nation of 6.4m people lodged in a hostile and unstable neighbourhood looks so longingly to the West. . . . *Edge of Empires* is the most wide-ranging and reliable history of Georgia one is likely to find for many years to come.”

(Tony Barber, *Financial Times*)

“[An] ambitious and comprehensive history of a complex country. . . . Mr. Rayfield’s powerful theme is of brief periods of prosperity and security, ended by invasion, conquest, looting and despoliation.”

(*The Economist*)

“The most comprehensive and up-to-date history of Georgia available in English. This tour de force explains why the small south Caucasus nation looks longingly to the west. A work of consummate erudition from Britain’s foremost expert on Georgian history and literature.”

(“Books of the Year,” *Financial Times*)

“Rayfield offers the most comprehensive and detailed survey history of the country of Georgia to date. . . . An excellent and indispensable reference for libraries, studies, researchers, and general readers. Essential.”

(*Choice*)

#### 2013 Outstanding Academic Title

(*Choice magazine*)

#### About the Author

**Donald Rayfield** is professor emeritus of Russian and Georgian in the Department of Russian, Queen Mary, University of London. He is the author of *Stalin and His Hangmen: The Tyrant and Those Who Killed for Him*.

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