



Aleppo: The Rise and Fall of Syria's Great Merchant City (20151021)

By Philip Mansel

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Every time gardens welcomed us, we said to them,
Aleppo is our aim and you are merely the route.'

Al-Mutanabbi

Aleppo lies in ruins. Its streets are plunged in darkness, most of its population has fled. But this was once a vibrant world city, where Muslims, Christians and Jews lived and traded together in peace. Few places are as ancient and diverse as Aleppo – one of the oldest, continuously inhabited cities in the world – successively ruled by the Assyrian, Persian, Greek, Roman, Arab, Ottoman and French empires. Under the Ottomans, it became the empire's third largest city, after Constantinople and Cairo. It owed its wealth to its position at the end of the Silk Road, at a crossroads of world trade, where merchants from Venice, Isfahan and Agra gathered in the largest suq in the Middle East. Throughout the region, it was famous for its food and its music. For 400 years British and French consuls and merchants lived in Aleppo; many of their accounts are used here for the first time. In the first history of Aleppo in English, Dr Philip Mansel vividly describes its decline from a pinnacle of cultural and economic power, a poignant testament to a city shattered by Syria's civil war.

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Aleppo: The Rise and Fall of Syria's Great Merchant City (20151021) By Philip Mansel Bibliography

- Rank: #1072939 in eBooks
- Published on: 2016-02-28
- Released on: 2016-02-28
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

Review

"Philip Mansel's remarkable new history...at once accomplished, entertaining and idiosyncratic...endlessly enjoyable. Mansel is a profoundly civilised and civilising historian who has spent many years in the Levant. Elegant and elegiac, Aleppo is a precious monument to a once-splendid city that has been reduced to abject ruin and misery."

(Justin Marozzi, The Spectator)

"A tragic lament... Let us hope that... Aleppo will benefit from this labour of love and fluent scholarship... This book helps to keep alive the colour of the souks, the clamour of the Khans and the songs of the cafes..."

(Barnaby Rogerson, Country Life)

About the Author

Philip Mansel is a historian of France and the Middle East. He has lived in Paris, Beirut and Istanbul, and often visited Aleppo. In 2012 he won the London Library Life in Literature Award, and in 2013 became a Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres. His most recent publication is *The Eagle in Splendour: Inside the Court of Napoleon* (2015). *Aleppo: The Rise and Fall of Syria's Great Merchant City* is his third book on cosmopolitan cities of the Middle East, after *Constantinople: City of the World's Desire* (1995), on Istanbul, and *Levant: Splendour and Catastrophe on the Mediterranean* (2010), on Smyrna, Alexandria and Beirut.

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