

Louis XIV: For or Against: Philip Mansel

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Aldeburgh Jubilee Hall

Louis was a man in pursuit of glory, a king devoted to dynastic aggrandisement and a leader bent on national expansion. He is also an argument. How did he create a stable monarchy, with himself at the centre, controlling the unruly nobility (which had rebelled against all his predecessors)? How did he avoid a civil war (unlike England)? Was he master or servant of his court? How did he pay for his wars? Did he leave France bankrupt and why did he revoke the Edict of Nantes which seems in hindsight to be a catastrophic own goal? How bad was life for Frenchmen at the time? He left France larger and better defended than he found it, but also diminished by the rise, partly provoked by his own actions, of Britain, Prussia, Austria and Piedmont. He was one of the greatest of all patrons of the arts, with an astonishing range, from painting to dance. His greatest work of art, and most personal legacy, was Versailles itself.

Philip Mansel will be talking about these and other questions raised in his book *King of the World: The Life of Louis XIV*. Philip Mansel is a historian of courts and cities, and of France and the Ottoman Empire. His first book, *Louis XVIII*, was published in 1981 and this - together with subsequent works such as *The Court of France 1789-1830* (1989), *Paris Between Empires 1814-1852* (2001) - established him as a specialist on the French monarchy. Seven of his books have been translated into French.



Philip Mansel's books include *Constantinople: City of the World's Desire* (1995); *Levant* (2010), on Smyrna, Alexandria and Beirut; *Aleppo* (2016); and *King of the World: the life of Louis XIV* (2019), whose agents scoured the Ottoman Empire for antiquities, manuscripts and rare plants. He is a founding committee member of the Society for Court Studies www.courtstudies.org and the Levantine Heritage Foundation www.levantineheritage.com
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