



Ancient Syria: A Three Thousand Year History

By Trevor Bryce

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Ancient Syria: A Three Thousand Year History By Trevor Bryce

Syria has long been one of the most trouble-prone and politically volatile regions of the Near and Middle Eastern world. This book looks back beyond the troubles of the present to tell the 3000-year story of what came before: the peoples, cities, and kingdoms that arose, flourished, declined, and disappeared in the lands that now constitute Syria, from the time of the region's earliest written records in the third millennium BC, right through to the reign of the Roman emperor Diocletian in the early 4th century AD.

Across the centuries, from the Bronze Age to Imperial Rome, we encounter a vast array of characters and civilizations, enlivening, enriching, and besmirching the annals of Syrian history: Hittite and Assyrian Great Kings; Egyptian pharaohs; Amorite robber-barons; the biblically notorious Nebuchadnezzar; Persia's Cyrus the Great and Macedon's Alexander the Great; the rulers of the Seleucid empire; and an assortment of Rome's most distinguished and most infamous emperors. All swept across the plains of Syria at some point in her long history. All contributed, in one way or another, to Syria's special, distinctive character, as they imposed themselves upon it, fought one another within it, or pillaged their way through it.

But this is not just a history of invasion and oppression. Syria had great rulers of her own, native-born Syrian luminaries, sometimes appearing as local champions who sought to liberate their lands from foreign despots, sometimes as cunning, self-seeking manipulators of squabbles between their overlords. They culminate with Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, whose life provides a fitting grand finale to the first three millennia of this ancient civilization. And yet the long story of Syria does not end with the mysterious fate of Queen Zenobia. The conclusion looks forward to the Muslim conquest in the 7th century AD: in many ways the opening chapter in the equally complex and often troubled history of modern Syria.

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Review

"Bryce has outdone himself; a marvellous achievement. Reads as smoothly as a novel, but packed as full of facts as an encyclopedia. Bryce weaves together the threads of disparate cultures and centuries of civilization, creating the very fabric of history itself..." --Eric H. Cline, author of *Biblical Archaeology: A Very Short Introduction*

About the Author

Trevor Bryce is an Honorary Research Consultant in the University of Queensland, and an Emeritus Professor of the University of New England, Australia, where he was Professor of Classics and Ancient History. He is also a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities and has been awarded an Australian Centenary medal for services to History.

Although trained as a Classicist, primarily in Latin language and literature, most of his research has been conducted in the field of Near Eastern history and civilization, with some emphasis also on the links between the Classical and Near Eastern worlds. He is the author of numerous books and articles on Near Eastern history, including most recently *The World of the Neo-Hittite Kingdoms*.

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