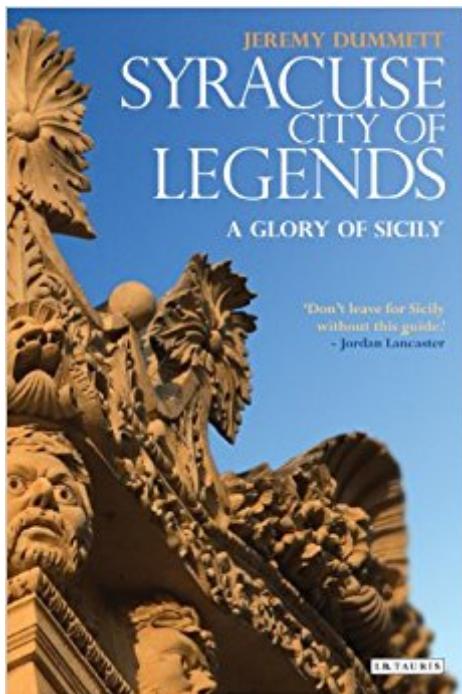


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Syracuse, City Of Legends: A Glory Of Sicily



Synopsis

Dubbed 'the greatest Greek city and the most beautiful of them all' by Cicero, Syracuse also boasts the richest history of anywhere in Sicily. *Syracuse, City of Legends* - the first modern historical guide to the city - explores Syracuse's place within the island and the wider Mediterranean and reveals why it continues to captivate visitors today, more than two and a half millennia after its foundation. For more than 1600 years, from its settlement by Greeks in 733 BC, Syracuse was the leading city in Sicily and at times one of the most powerful in the world. As a Greek city-state it competed with Athens and Carthage and was for a while an important ally of Rome. When Sicily became Rome's first province, Syracuse was the island's capital and was an important centre for early Christianity. Under Byzantine rule, the Emperor Constans II even moved his court to Syracuse for five years. Capture by the Arabs in 878 AD marked the end of ancient Syracuse but the city continued to evolve and during the Spanish era Caravaggio created one of his masterpieces, *The Burial of Santa Lucia*, in the city. After a devastating earthquake in 1693, a major rebuilding programme gave the city the characteristic Baroque appearance it retains today. Over its long and colourful life, Syracuse has been home to many creative figures, including Archimedes, the greatest mathematician of the ancient world, as well as host to Plato, Scipio Africanus, conqueror of Hannibal, and Caravaggio, who have all contributed to the rich history and atmosphere of this beguiling and distinctive Sicilian city.

Generously illustrated, *Syracuse, City of Legends* also offers detailed descriptions of the principal monuments from each period in the city's life, explaining their physical location as well as their historical context. This vivid and engaging history weaves together the history, architecture and archaeology of Syracuse and will be an invaluable companion for anyone visiting the city as well as a compelling introduction to its ancient and modern history.

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Customer Reviews

I expected far more of this book than the author delivered. The history is skimpy, and the writing is maudlin. I started reading closely and then skipped through to the end. Numerous statements presented as fact when they are conventional simplifications. Syracuse deserves better.

I am a published author and realize how much work Mr. Dummett must have put into this book. For the last three years, I have done extensive research for a novel that included both the historical and modern Syracuse. I have full access to the libraries at UC Berkeley and Stanford University, as well as online sources, and can say that I have not found a book about Syracuse, in English, nearly as good as this one. I also made a research trip to Syracuse. I wish I had had this book both for background research and for my trip. But even late in the game, I read it with pleasure. Highly recommended.

As someone who not only loved Siracusa (modern name for Syracuse) when I visited Sicily a couple of years ago and also as the author of a forthcoming book set in ancient Syracuse, I have long searched for more information about this wonderful and underrated city. This book is what I had been searching for. I can recommend it not only to those who plan to visit Sicily but also to anyone interested in the history of the Mediterranean civilizations. Well written and carefully researched.

Everything you want to know about this ancient city

Excellent book that gets the balance between being a travel guide and a detailed account of Sicily's long history, about right. The book inspires one to go an experience the special charms of this city.

Very informative and well written. Not overly dry or long for a history book. I learned so much about the most interesting history of Syracuse. To me, it is a must for anyone going to Syracuse, and if you are by passing Syracuse on your trip it Sicily, this will make you want to go there.

The book quotes a lot of ancient sources, which is good, but there is not much interpretation of them. A better overview of Syracuse's ancient history is given in Finley's 'Ancient Sicily to the Arab Conquest'. There is not much on the post ancient history of Syracuse, not sure if this is because there is an absence of sources or if the sources are in Italian.

Syracuse is a fabulous city; it is one of those places that alter one's vision forever. You might have simplistic notions of architectural purity, say, and when you pass through the baroque facade of the Duomo expecting a pastiche, a Greek temple overwhelmed by the accretions of millennia, you yourself are overwhelmed- by this profound simplicity and beauty. It is also driven home to you how history plays more than a subliminal role in architectural appreciation. You think of the Arabs slaughtering the Syracusans who took refuge in the Duomo, and realize that when this happened, in the ninth century, the building was almost 1,400 years old. The event thus seems relatively recent; indeed the sense of immediacy is almost frightening. The whole island of Ortigia breathes this spirit of a past that still exists. I have read many books about Syracuse, and I enjoyed this one; it is certainly more than a traveler's guide. I would like to add to Mr. Dummett's suggested reading list, however. He mentions Mary Renault's The Mask of Apollo, but not Peter Vansittart's A Choice of Murder or Tom Holt's The Walled Orchard, both of which are extremely well-written. The only negative thing I have to say is that his use of commas is a bit disconcerting, in that it sometimes misplaces modifiers so that I had to reread sentences. I know that Americans and Brits tend to use commas differently, but here's a case where I don't think our difference is just a matter of style; I really think that American usage makes for a smoother read.

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