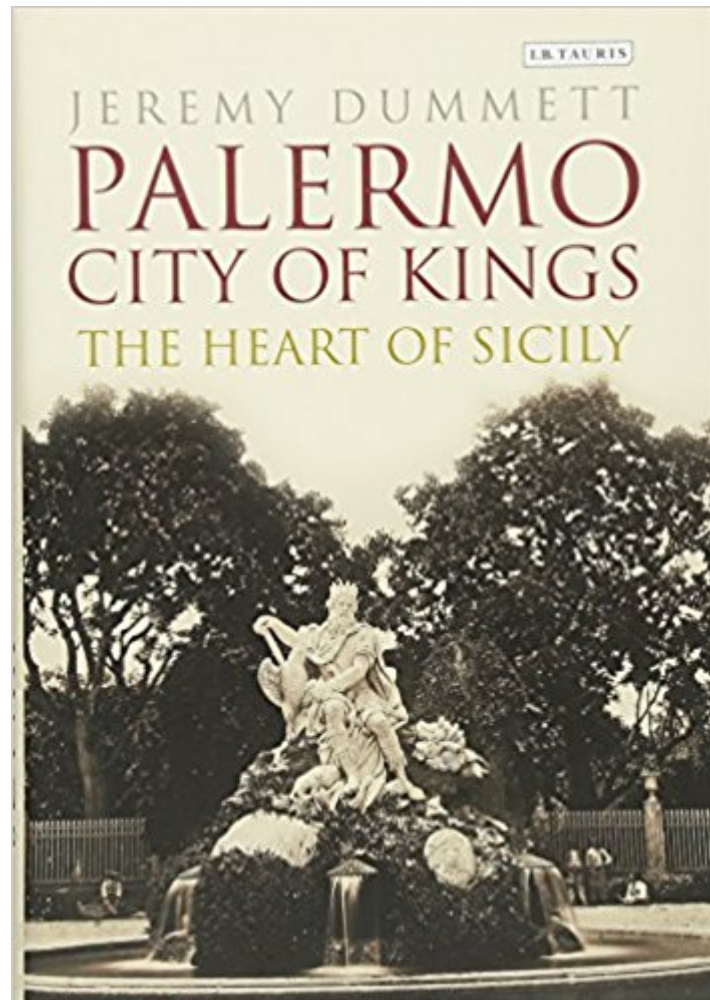


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Palermo, City Of Kings: The Heart Of Sicily



Synopsis

Palermo - the capital of Sicily - is a destination with a difference. The city is a treasure trove of original monuments and works of art, combined with architecture of grand proportions. Yet it also has a grittier side, exemplified by its mafia connections. Jeremy Dummett here provides the first concise history of Palermo, together with a survey of its most important monuments and sites. Palermo became the capital of Sicily under the Arabs in the ninth century. Until this time Syracuse had been the leading city of Sicily. Palermo blossomed under the Arabs and the Normans and the influence of both can be seen in the city today. Later it became the scene of the Sicilian Vespers when the island rose against the French. In 1860 Sicily was freed from the rule of the Spanish Bourbons by Garibaldi and went on to join the newly formed Kingdom of Italy. Many prominent writers have fallen for the city and those that left accounts of their travels include Goethe, Henry Swinburne and Maupassant. Palermo's monuments are striking and unusual, from the Byzantine mosaic of Christ Pantocrator in the Palatine chapel located in the Norman palace, to the sculptures by Giacomo Serpotta in the oratories, the decorative piazzas Pretoria and Quattro Canti, the Arab-Norman style Cathedral and the Norman complex of buildings at Monreale. Palermo has also produced world class writers and artists, including in modern times the writer Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa and painter Renato Guttuso. In addition to being an essential companion for visitors to Palermo, this book can be equally enjoyed as a standalone history of the city and its place at the heart of Sicily.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Jeremy Dummett is an expert on the history of Sicily and author of Syracuse, City of Legends: A Glory of Sicily. He studied history at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he became interested in the history and culture of Italy.

In both this book and Dummett's book about Syracuse, there is much to learn. The information is scholarly but reads easily and is hard to put down. If a novelist tried to write this story, it would be too fantastic to have credibility. Such is the story of Sicily. A fascinating read, Dummett peels back the layers to give an understanding of how Sicily has arrived where it is today. Any visit to Sicily requires constant changing of historical hats - from Greek to Arab to Norman to Spanish, it is all there and Dummett's book helps you get it straight in your mind both for posterity and for your visit.

Having visited Sicily several times and familiar with its (and Italy's) history, I purchased the author's book on Syracuse and then (without having read the first book) this one. I gave Syracuse two stars - its language is trite, its facts suspect and the information of minimal use. I give Palermo (the book) one star. The author copied extensively the historical material from Syracuse, and the information about Palermo (a most intriguing delightful city) not very helpful. For an example of superior writing, I recommend Mary Beard, SPQR, A History of Ancient Rome. Its several descriptions of Sicily before and during the Roman period gave me a much more nuanced understanding of Sicily's early history and its impact on later times. Consider other choices to understand the richness of Sicily's history and people. Salutam e Bona Pasqua!

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