



Catherine de Medici: Renaissance Queen of France

Leonie Frieda

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The bestselling revisionist biography of one of the great women of the 16th century Orphaned in infancy, Catherine de Medici was the sole legitimate heiress to the Medici family fortune. Married at fourteen to the future Henri II of France, she was constantly humiliated by his influential mistress Diane de Poitiers. When her husband died as a result of a duelling accident in Paris, Catherine was made queen regent during the short reign of her eldest son (married to Mary Queen of Scots and like many of her children he died young). When her second son became king she was the power behind the throne. She nursed dynastic ambitions, but was continually drawn into political and religious intrigues between Catholics and Protestants that plagued France for much of the later part of her life. It had always been said that she was implicated in the notorious Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre, together with the king and her third son who succeeded to the throne in 1574, but was murdered. Her political influence waned, but she survived long enough to ensure the succession of her son-in-law who had married her daughter Margaret.

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