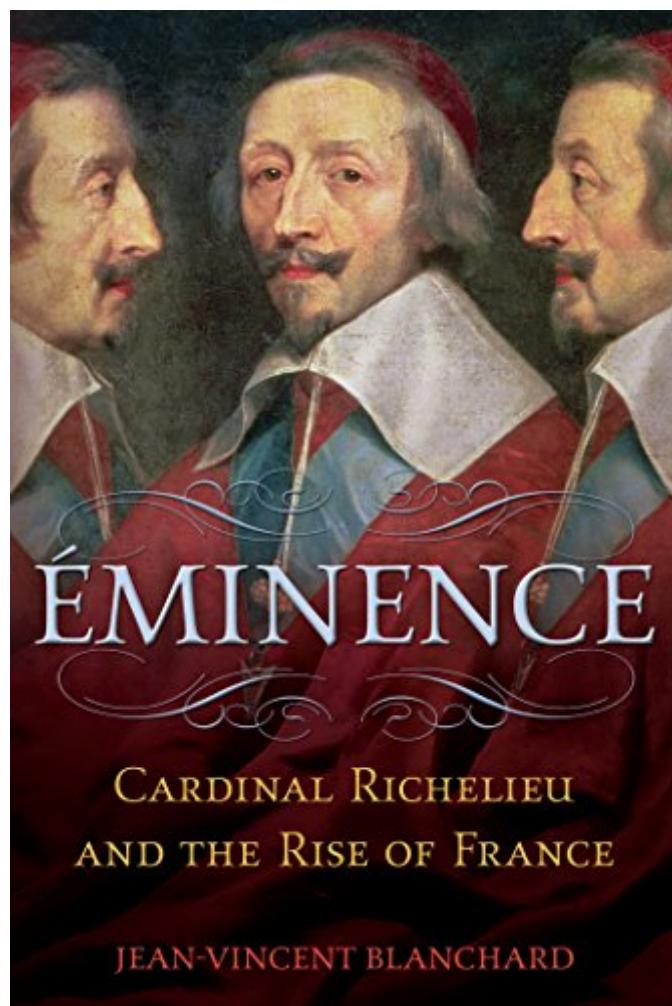


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Ã‰minence: Cardinal Richelieu And The Rise Of France



Synopsis

Chief minister to King Louis XIII, Cardinal Richelieu was the architect of a new France in the seventeenth century, and the force behind the nation's rise as a European power. Among the first statesmen to clearly understand the necessity of a balance of powers, he was one of the early realist politicians, practicing in the wake of Niccolò Machiavelli. Truly larger than life, he has captured the imagination of generations, both through his own story and through his portrayal as a ruthless political mastermind in Alexandre Dumas's classic *The Three Musketeers*. Forging a nation-state amid the swirl of unruly, grasping nobles, widespread corruption, wars of religion, and an ambitious Habsburg empire, Richelieu's hands were always full. Serving his fickle monarch, he mastered the politics of absolute power. Jean-Vincent Blanchard's rich and insightful new biography brings Richelieu fully to life in all his complexity. At times cruel and ruthless, Richelieu was always devoted to creating a lasting central authority vested in the power of monarchy, a power essential to France's position on the European stage for the next two centuries. Richelieu's careful understanding of politics as spectacle speaks to contemporary readers; much of what he accomplished was promoted strategically through his great passion for theater and literature, and through the romance of power. *Minence* offers a rich portrait of a fascinating man and his era, and gives us a keener understanding of the dark arts of politics.

Book Information

File Size: 2722 KB

Print Length: 320 pages

Publisher: Bloomsbury USA; 1 edition (September 20, 2011)

Publication Date: September 20, 2011

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B005IQ2DQU

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #478,385 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #106

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Customer Reviews

What could be more interesting than the true life and times of the great Cardinal Richelieu? The author does capture some of the interesting elements of the Cardinal's life, and makes it clear how dependent his power was from the king, which is a profoundly different form the popular myth that surrounds the cardinal. However the structure of the book breaks the narrative too frequently, so the Richelieu participation on military matters get profoundly shortened, and incredibly even his role in foreign policy while frequently mentioned is rarely placed in context of relevance or strategy. As a result we have a more detailed view of Richelieu's relationship with the king than his impact in European and French politics. While those elements are present in the book they are not well presented and seem not to be the center of the book's attention. As a result I was a bit frustrated with a book I expected to love, and I can't imagine who is his target audience. Those without any knowledge of background won't be able to understand much, and those with some familiarity with the era will find the lack of focus on the larger stage frustrating.

But it isn't. Largely because the author provides little or no historical context in which to place events. This book is a series of catastrophes one piled upon the other, told breathlessly, and, seemingly, chronologically even though in some cases the events last for years. All the time, the subtext is missing. The reader is left with the impression that Richelieu is okay, Louis XIII is a bit of a dolt, Marie de Medici is evil incarnate, and the Dauphin a tool of everyone and everything including his own sense of entitlement. Is it really that simple? With a context this book could have been great.

This biography falls into the trap of merely reporting events - "this happened, and this happened, and the THIS happened". It utterly failed to draw but the broadest character sketches of the Cardinal or Louis, the Queens... I mean you really have to work HARD to make all this history boring, but the author achieves this throughout the book. I can only suggest you avoid this book at all costs. Bleh.

Excellent book, very informative.

A smart, unbiased treatment of one of most misunderstood people in French history. Indeed it

presents amazing insights into Louis XIII and his court, especially his mother Marie de Medici. A must read for those interested in 16th century history.

This is a decent biography of Cardinal Richelieu but like some history books it is tough reading at times. You probably shouldn't read this unless you are into history or want to know about the Cardinal. If you're looking for some light reading you should look elsewhere.

I always enjoy biographies of people call have a less savory reputation. The book was written well. I wish that the book when into more depth of his psychology.

Not the best narrative of the Cardinal's life, this concentrates too much on his military exploits and spends too little time on his fascinating personality. Nevertheless, it is a good account of what Richelieu had to do to survive in Louis XII's court.

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