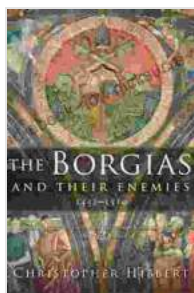


The Borgias and Their Enemies: A Turbulent Chapter in Italian History (1431-1519)

The Borgias, a powerful Italian family from the 15th and 16th centuries, left an indelible mark on European history. Their rise to prominence and their subsequent downfall was marked by a series of dramatic events, political intrigue, and violent conflicts. This article explores the Borgias and their enemies, shedding light on the complex relationships and events that shaped their tumultuous time in power.

The Borgia family originated from the small town of Xàtiva in the Kingdom of Valencia (present-day Spain). Their rise to prominence began with Alfonso Borja, who was elected Pope Callixtus III in 1455. This election marked a significant turning point for the family, as it granted them access to the vast resources and power of the Catholic Church.

Under Pope Callixtus III, the Borgias began to consolidate their power. They used their influence to appoint their relatives to important positions within the Church hierarchy. Rodrigo Borgia, a nephew of Pope Callixtus III, became Archbishop of Valencia in 1456 and later Cardinal in 1468.



The Borgias and Their Enemies, 1431–1519: 1431-1519

by Christopher Hibbert

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In 1492, Rodrigo Borgia was elected Pope Alexander VI. His election was controversial, as he was known for his ambitious and unscrupulous nature. However, he was also a skilled politician and diplomat who managed to secure the support of powerful cardinals.

Pope Alexander VI's reign was marked by a combination of political maneuvering, nepotism, and military conquests. He used his position to advance the interests of his family, appointing his sons Cesare and Giovanni to high-ranking positions within the Church and the papal army.

The Borgias' ambitions extended beyond the Papal States. They sought to expand their territories and establish a powerful dynasty in central Italy. This led to a series of military campaigns, most notably against the Orsini and Colonna families, who were among the Borgias' most powerful enemies.

The Borgias' rise to power and their ambitious policies inevitably made them enemies. They faced opposition from within the Church, as well as from external enemies who resented their growing influence.

Internal Enemies:

- **The Orsini and Colonna families:** These two powerful aristocratic families were traditional rivals of the Borgias. They resented the Borgias' ambitions and sought to limit their power.

- **Cardinal Ascanio Sforza:** A nephew of Duke Ludovico Sforza of Milan, Sforza was a vocal critic of Pope Alexander VI. He accused the Borgias of corruption and nepotism and plotted against their downfall.
- **Girolamo Savonarola:** A Dominican friar and a charismatic preacher, Savonarola denounced the corruption of the Church and the Borgias' rule. He was eventually excommunicated and executed by the Borgias.

External Enemies:

- **The French monarchy:** King Charles VIII of France invaded Italy in 1494, seeking to reclaim the Kingdom of Naples. The Borgias initially allied with the French, but later turned against them, siding with their traditional enemies, the Spanish.
- **The Holy Roman Empire:** Emperor Maximilian I of the Holy Roman Empire was also hostile towards the Borgias. He accused them of supporting the French invasion of Italy and sought to limit their power.
- **The Kingdom of Naples:** The Neapolitan monarchy was a constant threat to the Borgias' ambitions in central Italy. They fought a series of wars against the Borgias, seeking to regain control of their lost territories.

The Borgias' reign came to an end with the death of Pope Alexander VI in 1503. His son, Cesare Borgia, who had been a key figure in the family's military campaigns, was left without a powerful patron.

Cesare Borgia's enemies seized the opportunity to overthrow him. He was captured and imprisoned by the Spanish. He later escaped and fled to

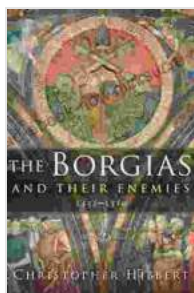
France, where he was killed in battle in 1507.

With the death of Cesare Borgia, the Borgias' power collapsed. They were stripped of their wealth and territories. Their enemies triumphed, and the Borgia dynasty was effectively destroyed.

The Borgias left a lasting impact on Italian history. Their rise and fall was a testament to the power of ambition and the fragility of power. They were skilled politicians and military leaders, but they were also ruthless and unscrupulous. Their legacy is a complex one, a mixture of admiration and condemnation.

The Borgias' story has been told and retold in numerous works of literature, art, and film. They have become iconic figures of the Renaissance, representing the excesses and contradictions of that turbulent era.

The Borgias and their enemies were central figures in one of the most fascinating and tumultuous chapters in Italian history. Their rise to power, their ambitious policies, and their eventual downfall were shaped by a complex web of relationships and events. The Borgias' legacy continues to fascinate and intrigue, shedding light on the darker side of power and the fragility of human ambition.



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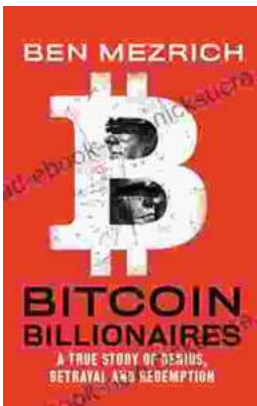
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