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Cesare Borgia

Cesare Borgia (September 13, 1475 – March 12, 1507), Duke of Valentinois, was an Italian *condottiero*, nobleman, politician, and cardinal, whose fight for power was a major inspiration for *The Prince* by Machiavelli, who was his adviser. He was the illegitimate son of Pope Alexander VI (r. 1492–1503) (Rodrigo Borgia) and his long-term mistress Vannozza dei Cattanei. He was the brother of Lucrezia Borgia; Giovanni Borgia (Juan), Duke of Gandia; and Gioffre Borgia (Jofré in Valencian), Prince of Squillace. He was half-brother to Don Pedro Luis de Borja (1460–88) and Girolama de Borja, children of unknown mothers.



Cesare Borgia

Quotes

- *Aut Caesar, aut nihil.*
 - Either Caesar or nothing.
 - He had these words inscribed on his sword. Reported in John Leslie Garner, *Caesar Borgia: A Study of the Renaissance* (1912) p. 309
- Your brother, Cesar de Borgia, Elect of Valencia
 - Signature of Cesare's letter to Piero de'Medici, showing the good relations prevailing between them and Cesare's full consciousness of the importance of his position (August, 1492), as quoted by Rafael Sabatini, 'The Life of Cesare Borgia', Chapter IV: Borgia Alliances
- However much Rome may be in the habit of speaking and writing, for my own part, I shall give these libellers a lesson in good manners.
 - Cesare to his father, Pope Alexander VI, (November, 1501), as quoted by Rafael Sabatini, 'The Life of Cesare Borgia', Chapter XI: The Letter to Silvio Savelli.
- To all our Lieutenants, Castellains, Captains, Condottieri, Officers, Soldiers and Subjects, to whom these presents may be known, we commit and command that to

our Most Excellent and Most Beloved Private Architect and General Engineer Leonardo Vinci, bearer of the same, and who has our Commission to survey the holds and fortresses of our States, in order that according to their exigencies and his judgment we may equip them, they are to give free pass, exempt from all public toll to himself and his company, and friendly reception; and to allow him to see, measure and estimate all he may wish. And to this effect they shall order men on his requisition and lend him all the help, assistance and favours he may request, it being our wish that for all works to be done in our Dominions any engineer be compelled to consult him and to conform to his opinion ; and to this may none presume to act in opposition, if it be his pleasure not to incur our indignation.

- Vellum folded as letter describing Leonardo da Vinci as Borgia's Military Engineer, bears the seal of Cesare as Duke and the seal of Alessandro Borgia on the back (July 1502). (The vellum was recently made available to the public by the Duchess Josephine Melzi d'Eril Barbo) Source: <http://www.oldandsold.com/articles11/italy-35.shtml>
- Most Illustrious and most Excellent Lady, our very dear Sister,- Confident of the circumstance that there can be no more efficacious and salutary medicine for the indisposition from which you are at present suffering than the announcement of good and happy news, we advise you that at this very moment we have received sure tidings of the capture of Camerino. We beg that you will do honour to this message by an immediate improvement, and inform us of it, because, tormented as we are to know you so ill, nothing, not even this felicitous event, can suffice to afford us pleasure. We beg you also kindly to convey the present to the Illustrious Lord Don Alfonso, your husband and our beloved Brother-in-law, to whom we are not writing to-day.
 - Cesare's letter to Lucrezia (July 1502), as quoted by Rafael Sabatini, 'The Life of Cesare Borgia', Chapter XIII: Urbino and Camerino.
- A matter which would be easily accomplished, as the best men of that State have already offered themselves to me.
 - Cesare threatening Vitelli that he will deprive him of his state, of Citta di Castello, if he is disobedient. (July 1502), as quoted by Rafael Sabatini, 'The Life of Cesare Borgia', Chapter XIV: The Revolt of the Condottieri
- [I] had not forgotten the way to reconquer it [Urbino].
 - Cesare to Machiavelli, after the loss of Urbino (October 1502), as quoted by Rafael Sabatini, 'The Life of Cesare Borgia', Chapter XV: Machiavelli's Legation
- The constellations this year seem unfavourable to rebels."
 - Cesare to Machiavelli (October 1502), as quoted by Rafael Sabatini, 'The Life of Cesare Borgia', Chapter XV: Machiavelli's Legation
- Diet of bankrupts... To-day, Messer Paolo is to visit me, and to-morrow there will be the cardinal; and thus they think to befool me, at their pleasure. But I, on my side, am only dallying with them. I listen to all they have to say and bide my own time.
 - Cesare to Machiavelli about his contempt for the Orsini (October 1502), as quoted by Rafael Sabatini, 'The Life of Cesare Borgia', Chapter XV:

Machiavelli's Legation

- *senza segno d'alterazione alcuna*
- Without any sign of alteration.
 - Cesare, in reply to Machiavelli, on not having a reputation similar to that of other lords (December 1502) as quoted by Rafael Sabatini, 'The Life of Cesare Borgia', Chapter XVI: Ramiro De Lorqua
- There is no city, country-side, or castle, nor any place in all Romagna, nor officer or minister of the duke's, who does not know of these abuses; and, amongst others, the famine of wheat occasioned by the traffic which he held against our express prohibition, sending out such quantities as would abundantly have sufficed for the people and the army.
 - Cesare's publication on the corrupt practices of Ramiro de Lorqua (December 1502) as quoted by Rafael Sabatini, 'The Life of Cesare Borgia', Chapter XVI: Ramiro De Lorqua
- Ah! Falso ribaldo!
 - Cesare grabs Vitelli as they shake hands and says this (December 1502), as quoted by Edoardo Alvisi, 'Cesare Borgia, Duke of Romagna', Section 358, 1878.
- This is what I wanted to tell Monsignor di Volterra [Soderini] when he came to Urbino, but I could not entrust him with the secret. Now that my opportunity has come, I have known very well how to make use of it, and I have done a great service to your masters.
 - Cesare to Machiavelli, after telling him why he ordered his men to attack the soldiers of Vitelli and Orsini (December 1502) as quoted by Rafael Sabatini, 'The Life of Cesare Borgia', Chapter XVII: The Beautiful Stratagem
- This government of yours does not please me, and I cannot trust it; you must change it and give me a pledge that you will observe everything you promised; otherwise you will soon realize that I do not want to live this way; and I will not ...my friend ...my enemy.
 - as quoted by Roberto Ridolfi, 'The Life of Niccolo Machiavelli', page 74.

Quotes about Cesare Borgia

- The object of his campaign has not been to tyrannise, but to extirpate tyrants.
 - The Duke Valentino's Envoy (July 1502), as quoted by Rafael Sabatini, 'The Life of Cesare Borgia', Chapter XIII: Urbino and Camerino.
 - Clive Foss, *The Tyrants: 2500 Years of Absolute Power and Corruption*, London: Quercus Publishing, 2006, ISBN 1905204965, p. 71
- The princes of the Italian Renaissance routinely used intrigue, treachery, and murder to further their aims. The most notorious among them were the Borgias,



whose despotic rule of church and state made a lasting impression. Their leader, Pope Alexander VI, was a greedy and lecherous reprobate. His daughter Lucrezia gained an undeserved reputation for poisoning and incest, and her cold-blooded brother Cesare stopped at nothing to gain and increase power. Together, they terrorized Rome and expanded its domain. Their enterprise collapsed when Alexander VI died, possibly by poisoning.

- Clive Foss, *The Tyrants: 2,500 Years of Absolute Power and Corruption* (2006), p. 72
- Saturday evening the Duke Valentino arrived here, having come by estafette; His gracious majesty very cheerfully greeted and embraced him and conducted him to the Castle, where he gave him the room nearest to his own, he himself speeding supper and ordering several courses, and that evening three or four times he went to the room even in his nightshirt when he was going to bed. And he insisted on giving the Duke his own shirts and gowns and clothes to wear, the Duke Valentino not having as many waggons as he has horses. In one word, one could not do more for a son or a brother.
 - Description of Cesare staying with the King of France. Source: http://www.archive.org/stream/bookofitaly00piccuoft/bookofitaly00piccuoft_djvu.txt
- The rather more dubious side of Nietzsche's 'evolutionism' is his glorification of the warrior -- particularly when, as an exemplification of the warrior-hero, he chooses an archetypal 'spoilt brat' like Cesare Borgia.
 - Colin Wilson in *Rudolf Steiner: The Man and His Vision* , p. 87
- What cruelties were not the result of his? Who could count all his crimes?
 - Frederick II of Prussia, Anti-Machiavel Chapter VII

See also

- Guiliano della Rovere (Pope Julius II)
- Pope Alexander VI

External links

-  Encyclopedic article on Cesare Borgia on Wikipedia
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