

*La princesa de Éboli, Cautiva del rey: Vida de Ana de Mendoza y de la Cerda (1540–1592)*. Helen H. Reed and Trevor J. Dadson.

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Helen H. Reed and Trevor J. Dadson have produced an extensively researched and elegantly written biography of Ana de Mendoza y de la Cerda, Princess of Éboli (1640–92), offering a solid revisionist perspective on an important female historical figure. Divided into the four parts that correspond to the various stages of Ana's life as an heiress, wife, widow, and prisoner, the ten chapters provide fresh perspectives on the Spain of Philip II, making a larger case for the potential rewards of biographical writing. Through Ana's experiences much can be learned, for example, about domestic and international politics, the role of noble patronage in the economic and civic development of local communities, the development of Spanish religious culture at the height of the Reform and Counter-Reformation movements, and the role of early modern Spanish women in the politics of family and state, which in Spain were often undistinguishable from each other.

Born into the powerful Mendoza clan and sole heiress of her parents' inheritance, Ana married Ruy Gómez de Silva, Prince of Éboli, Philip II's influential Portuguese advisor. It was a marriage of convenience, with the bride bringing youth, lineage, and riches, and the groom political power. In spite of the age gap of twenty-five years, the marriage was largely successful. During the early years, Ana became an outstanding figure in the dazzling court of Princess Juana of Austria, Philip's younger sister, and the French queen consort, Isabel of Valois. While Ana's life, in spite of her privilege and position, had not been devoid of heartache and difficulty, the real drama began to unfold after her husband's death in 1573. Perhaps shocked by Ruy's death or perhaps to escape the complicated economic and legal situation of her estates (the authors suggest both scenarios), she sought refuge in the Carmelite convent of Pastrana, founded by Saint Teresa of Ávila under her patronage, precipitating the first set of controversies that became a recurrent theme in her life. The dissolution of the convent, brought about by the surreptitious escape of the nuns from the village, and strict royal orders compelled Ana into taking over the administration of her estates and guardianship of her children. She went on to exercise both duties adeptly, leaving a substantial economic, urban, and

cultural legacy to the village of Pastrana, while advancing the position of her lineage with advantageous marriages for some of her children.

Ana's return to Madrid and subsequent decision not to return to Pastrana gave rise to a new set of problems, which on this occasion had a tragic end. Rumors of Ana's affair with the charismatic royal secretary, Antonio Pérez, was a blow to her reputation. Worse still, it implicated her in the assassination of Juan de Escobedo, the secretary of the king's illegitimate half-brother, Don Juan of Austria. Much has been written about this sordid episode, which also implicated the king in having ordered the murder, ostensibly due to Pérez's false reports regarding Don Juan and the murdered secretary's treasonable activities. Once Philip realized that he had been deceived, Pérez and Ana were both put under arrest in 1579. Ana spent the following ten years imprisoned under various levels of security and saw her juridical rights to administer her children's inheritance curtailed. For almost a decade, she managed to assert some control over her affairs, but Pérez's escape precipitated her complete downfall. Philip imprisoned her under harsh conditions and took away all her rights, without ever charging her with a crime. Ana spent the last twenty-one months of her life as an *emparedada*, a walled-in woman in her ducal palace at Pastrana, accompanied by her youngest daughter, who was forced to suffer her mother's fate through no fault of her own.

The authors adeptly challenge most of the negative myths behind Ana and convincingly establish the injustice of her imprisonment. There are aspects of Ana's behavior, however, that need further disentangling. A body of research on Spanish widows, for example, suggests that her refusal to take over the administration and guardianship of her children was highly atypical. Overall, the impressive amount of research conducted at no less than thirteen different archival repositories and libraries coupled with a mastery of a substantial body of secondary literature make this biography an important piece of scholarship.

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