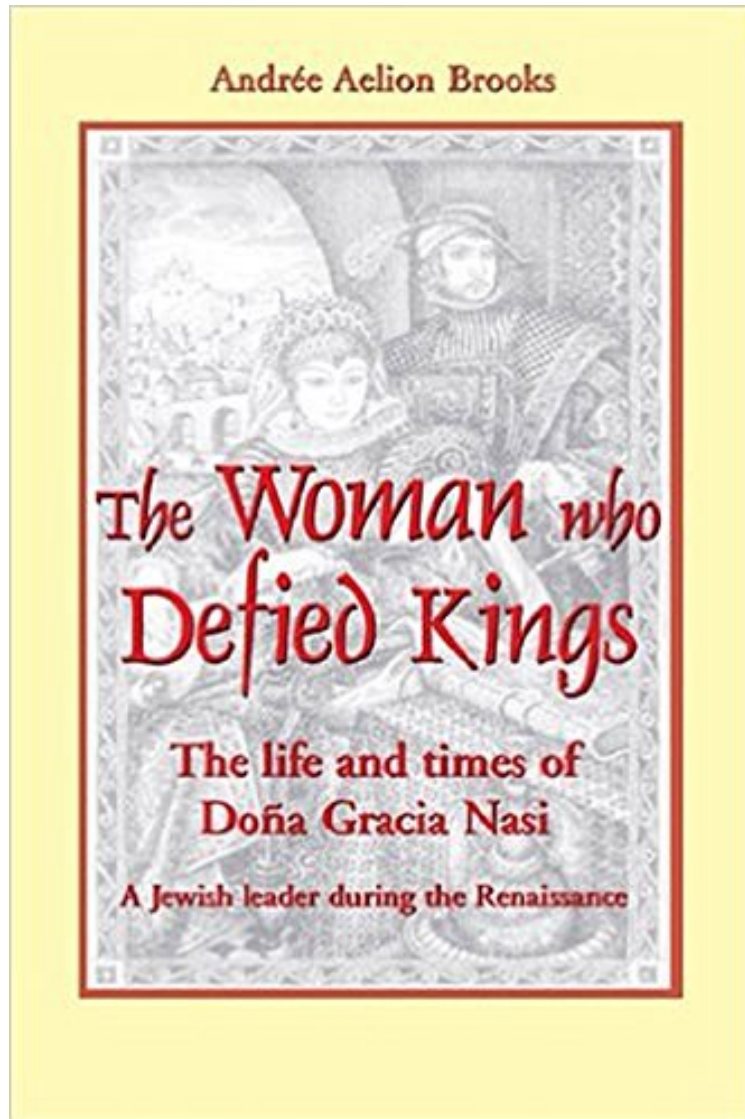


(Get free) The Woman Who Defied Kings: The Life and Times of Dona Gracia Nasi

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Andre Aelion Brooks

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Andre Aelion Brooks : The Woman Who Defied Kings: The Life and Times of Dona Gracia Nasi before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Woman Who Defied Kings: The Life and Times of Dona Gracia Nasi:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Brilliant book By Dassi Imagine my thrilled surprise when I saw a thorough biography written about one of my favorite Jewish heroines, Gracia Nasi. I felt the book was very well-

researched. For example, it discusses the mysterious figure of David Rubeni who pops up in Jewish history texts. Based on linguistic usage of the time, the author makes a strong case for Rubeni having been an Ethiopian Jew. Light is shed expansively and objectively on the difficult relationship between Gracia and her younger sister, Brianda. Also, the medallion often labelled as a profile of Gracia is actually of her niece who shares the same name. Though the author covers the subject in detail, even the most complicated parts read as pleasantly as a novel. The descriptions of how Gracia held on to her Jewish identity during the Inquisition are impressive and inspiring. Throughout all her personal trials and business challenges, she never forgot her people and maintained a courageous generosity toward them at all times. There were only two aspects that bothered me: 1) Lack of pictures. There are some, but I would've liked to have seen more graphics of 15th/16th century Spain, Turkey, etc. and the kind of dress, utensils, homes, synagogues, churches, etc. to get more of a sense of those times. 2) The author tries to spice things up by indicating love affairs even where there is no evidence for them. Regardless of the time Gracia spent as a young widow running a business empire and saving fellow Jews with her late husband's brother (who married Brianda), there isn't a shred of evidence that she ever had a relationship with him or with anyone else during her widowhood. To me, this is a cheap trick to make the reading more exciting, something that's done a lot nowadays. For example, the author mentions that Gracia's niece was pseudo-married to a cousin and rumors were spread that the marriage was consummated - both actions taken in order to save the niece's life, something the author herself states was a common ploy in those times. But then, the author implies that they actually had this one-night stand. Since the male cousin would likely not dishonor a close female cousin this way, and since he would know that the girl (following the set marriage pattern of the family) would likely be married off to his own brother (as she certainly was at a later date), it is illogical and even insulting to assume that they would've had this fling. Given the close and respectful family ties, it is clear that they would've done nothing dishonorable to each other or to their family members. But overall, I did love the book, and I highly recommend it.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The research that went into this book was phenomenal. ...By Claudia Brilliant The research that went into this book was phenomenal. This book shed light on a part of history that is little taught in standard education but so important to understanding what social forces were in play during the Renaissance. It was interesting to see how conflicts we consider modern were big issues then as well. Doa Gracia Nasi is a fascinating person. Her life and times were tumultuous and worthy of more study.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Running with it By Yechezkel A lot of research went in to this fascinating book but there is a lot of speculation as well.

The Woman Who Defied Kings is the first modern, comprehensive biography of Doa Gracia Nasi, an outstanding Jewish international banker during the Renaissance. A courageous leader, she used her wealth and connections to operate an underground railroad that saved hundreds of her fellow Spanish and Portuguese conversos (Jews who had been forced to convert to Catholicism) from the horrors of the Inquisition. Born in Lisbon in 1510, she later moved onto Antwerp, Venice, and Ferrara where she was constantly negotiating with kings and emperors for better conditions for her people. Doa Gracia Nasi helped lead a boycott of the Italian port of Ancona in retaliation for the burning of 23 of her people by the Inquisition - an outrageous act in an era when Jews were more accustomed to appeasement. Finally settling in Constantinople, she persuaded Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent to grant her a long-term lease on the Tiberias region of Palestine, where she spearheaded one of the earliest attempts to start an independent state for Jews in Isr'l. Doa Gracia Nasi is equally important to history because she shatters the stereotype of how women, especially Jewish women, conducted their lives during the Renaissance period. Some historians have called her the most important Jewish woman since Biblical times.

From Publishers Weekly In an assiduously researched biography of a 16th-century Jewish woman who managed a powerful business empire, Brooks, an associate fellow at Yale, has illuminated a mostly forgotten corner of history. Famed during her lifetime both in the Sephardic Jewish community for her unstinting philanthropy and in the wider world of the Muslim Ottoman Empire, where she fled to escape the Inquisition, Beatrice de Luna Mendes, better known as Doa Gracia Nasi (1510-1569), was a woman of formidable business acumen, personal courage, outstanding altruism and devotion to the Jewish religion, which, as a Catholic converso, she practiced in secret. Widowed early, Doa Gracia managed both the complex financial affairs of her late husband's merchant empire and its secret activities. The latter included huge bribes to the Church and (never repaid) loans to several monarchs, as well as an underground escape route that rescued thousands of conversos from the Inquisition's fury in Spain, Portugal and Italy. Despite their financial power, the Mendes family were forced by the Inquisition into quick moves and narrow escapes from Lisbon to Antwerp to Venice and Ferrara, back to Venice and then to Constantinople. Brooks's research, which involved previously unavailable documents in 13 languages and seven countries, effectively details 16th-century social, religious and economic conditions, especially as they affected the Jewish community. Her overeager attempt to lionize her subject, however, sometimes results in fulsome, even strident prose. Yet even if Doa Gracia is not a feminist heroine, as Brooks suggests, this saga of her life and times is a significant contribution to Jewish history during the Renaissance. Photos. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. "An excellent read ! The story of Dona

Garcia is riveting. She would be a hero in any age and a role model for women today." --Fayne Erickson, publisher, Ms. Magazine
From the Publisher*FINALIST FOR THE 2002-03 JEWISH BOOK AWARD