

Kioko Koiso, *Mar, Medo e Morte: aspectos psicológicos dos naufragos na História Trágico-Marítima, nos testemunhos inéditos e noutras fontes*, 2 vols., Cascais, Patrimonia, 2004, 705p., ISBN 972-744-061-4

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The accounts of shipwrecks that are now known to us as the “Tragic History of the Sea” (*História Trágico-Marítima*), to use the term first coined by Bernardo Gomes de Brito, the author of the famous 18th-century compilation, have led to the production of an abundant critical bibliography, as is recognized by the author of the two volumes of the work reviewed here. It is worth noting that many of these works have been produced by foreign specialists, including such crucial names for research in this area as Charles R. Boxer and Giulia Lanciani. They gave high praise regarding the originality of these reports in the context of European literature and were also responsible for offering distinct critical approaches to the subject that have usefully revealed the great wealth of this textual corpus.

This “foreign” view of the question has now been joined by that of Kioko Koiso, who presents a highly detailed compilation of sources, while at the same time seeking to reconstruct the psychological conditions that encouraged the writing of these reports and determined their central semantic directions. No less important is the profound admiration that the author feels for the Portuguese navigators and the conditions under which they lived (and died) in the course of the many ups and downs of their maritime adventures. As she says in the preface, more than the exploits of such people, what interests her is “the hidden part of the History” (19). This ambition is evident in the various central threads of her research and reflection, resulting in a highly productive cross-disciplinary approach. But the inevitable consequence of there being such a wide range of different aims set out in her plan for the work is that the results of her research are somewhat partial in nature. This is something that the author is fully aware of when she announces in her conclusions the need for new studies to be produced on the subject, a task in which she is, in fact, already engaged. This does not in any way detract from the interest and the opportune nature of the research she has compiled in these two volumes, in particular the exhaustive survey that she makes of manuscript sources that allow her to gather together and quote previously unpublished information.

Corresponding to the two parts into which the plan of the work is divided, we find two different contributions in this compilation, deriving from two distinct avenues of previous research. The first part examines the philological and editorial questions of the various lessons provided by the reports of shipwrecks and their different editions. Beginning with the *História Trágico-Marítima* of Bernardo Gomes de Brito, which brings together 12 reports divided into two volumes, the author once again takes up the debate about the pseudo-3rd volume comprising yet another six reports. In keeping with the work of Boxer, she includes these reports in the corpus of her reflections, also referring to the various compilations found in Portuguese libraries and archives. Recognizing that few studies have so far been made about the unpublished documentation, the author dedicates a chapter to the comparison of seven manuscripts of accounts of shipwrecks and their published versions, whose variants she identifies and analyzes. In an appendix, she includes the annotated transcription of five manuscripts, which occupies a substantial part of the 2nd volume, to which she also adds an inventory of the editions, sources and translations of the 18 reports of shipwrecks. Although she includes here a great deal of information drawn from the research of Boxer (1957,

1979) and Lanciani (1997, 2002), as well as from the work of Moniz (1995), who had already compiled these data in his PhD thesis (albeit only in relation to the 12 reports of Brito's edition), we must emphasize the great effort of synthesis contained in the inventory presented by Koiso, who furthermore adds supplementary information resulting from her own research. This aspect of Koiso's work represents a valuable contribution that brings us ever closer to the greatly desired complete critical edition of the *História Trágico-Marítima*.

The other important aspect of this work is the attention paid to the cultural and literary history of that time, which is already to be noted in the final chapter of Part 1, dedicated to the analysis of the shipwreck of the great galleon São João relating the ordeals and misadventures of Manuel de Sousa Sepúlveda and his wife. This is a narrative that became a paradigm of the genre and was published on numerous occasions before it finally appeared in the first volume of Brito's edition. By comparing the different versions (including those in manuscript form), the author succeeds in identifying the way in which the text was successively manipulated in order to create a *pathos* aimed directly at the readers and transforming this episode into a *topos* that was a recurrent feature in literature and other arts up until the contemporary period.

Part 2 is marked by her analysis of the various psychological aspects associated with shipwrecks (the sea, fear, death). We are provided with a reconstruction of the conditions experienced by sailors during the sea voyages of that time (the route, the discomforts on board, victuals, clothing, periods when there was a lull in the wind, the shortage of water), with the author using the letters of the Jesuit priests as her main source of information. Life on board—which the author insisted on experiencing herself in order to be able to better understand the difficulties of navigation—configures the sea voyage as representing a space and time in which the various threats can be developed that, from the very outset, determine the psychological context in which seafarers are forced to live. Shipwrecks, the various causes of which are evoked through reference to earlier studies, are a permanent threat that generates fear and explains the religious tenor of these reports.

Having established this context, the author returns to the corpus of the shipwrecks and analyzes in detail the representation of fear, death and religiousness. It is not a question of reviving these psychological aspects but rather of interpreting the reports and surveying a series of themes and motifs that determine the literary quality of these texts. In this sense, the author draws closer to the works of Lanciani (1979, 1992, 1997) by suggesting a narrative model that moves seamlessly from the tragic history of the sea to the tragic history of the land. The arrangement of the sequences, from the moment of setting sail to the crossing of the ocean, exacerbates the inevitable onset of a catastrophe in which the shipwreck is merely the end of one cycle and the beginning of another, almost always bringing greater suffering and other dangers. The narrative is constructed in the form of a spiral of setbacks and improvements that reach their climax in the shipwreck, but it also passes through so many other stages of hope and distress, of which the report itself is, after all, the manifestation of the end of the tragedy. This whole atmosphere serves to represent the divine punishment that is brought to bear on the human sins, most notably envy, expressed in the constant references to the excessive cargo. The author mentions this dimension of religiousness, but the reports really need to be placed to some extent within the context of the spirit of the Counter Reformation, which was the setting in which they were written, just as an analysis also needs to be made of their 18th-century appropriation through a special fondness for tragedy, which was responsible for the configuration of the theme and motifs of the shipwreck in Portuguese culture.

In the conclusions to her work, Koiso promises to continue her research into the variants of the reports of shipwrecks, and from the results that she presents us with here we have every reason to believe that these efforts may well shed light on a whole host of other black holes that still persist in the current state of research into this subject. It should, however, be stressed that the publication reviewed here provides us with immediate access to a corpus that has not previously been published, paving the way for the development of new and more complete studies about this rare textual heritage.