

Lenda da Caldeira de Pêro Botelho

Um pequeno conto moral, a castigar um temperamento sulfuroso. O silêncio é o que recebe de volta Pêro Botelho sempre que implora «Tirem-me daqui! Tirem-me daqui!», lá do fundo da gruta das Furnas, na ilha de São Miguel, para onde estará remetido desde há tempos imemoriais.

Homem de deplorável feito, tinha o hábito, como os demais habitantes da região, de cozer vimes e milho nas caldeiras vulcânicas de água fervente. Numa delas, da qual exala forte cheiro a enxofre, era mais comum, porém, o uso das lamas na cura de diversas doenças, como o reumatismo.

Diz-se que, certo dia, ao ir buscar a balsâmica matéria, Pêro Botelho escorregou e deixou-se cair caldeira adentro. Ainda esboçou um pedido de ajuda, mas ninguém o terá ouvido. E também nunca mais foi visto. O único sinal de vida seria o do tal clamor por um hipotético resgate.

Ou, bem vistas as coisas, até sucederia um pouco mais. É que, se alguém se abeirasse da cálida cavidade e chamassem por ele, receberia como resposta um bafejo fumarento de pedras, cinzas e lama. Para além da mais ou menos recorrente súplica, Pêro Botelho respondia de forma intempestiva a qualquer tentativa de com ele entabular um diálogo, mesmo que bem-humorado. E quando crianças e adultos arremessavam pedras para o interior da caldeira, dizendo «Dá um espirro, Pêro Botelho!», elas eram expelidas de volta. Por isso, sempre que alguém se aproximava da caverna para ir buscar a terapêutica lama, ficava assustado com o que de lá pudesse vir. A partir de então, os moradores de Povoação passaram a chamar de Caldeira de Pêro Botelho ao orifício fumegante.

Lenda de Nossa Senhora da Nazaré

A salvação *in extremis* é aquilo com que, muitas vezes, se sonha em momentos de grande aflição. Ou algo a que, em tais circunstâncias, se dirigem as preces dos mais crentes. E foi o que valeu a D. Fuas Roupinho num certo dia de nevoeiro. A 14 de setembro de 1182, o alcaide-mor do castelo de Porto de Mós andava à caça, quando encontrou o que parecia ser um veado. Entusiasmado com a perspetiva de uma boa rês, desencadeou uma fogosa perseguição. De tão compenetrado na tarefa, apenas se deu conta de que se encontrava no alto de uma falésia quando a queda parecia inevitável. Mas, no último instante, o seu cavalo susteve-se nas patas traseiras, que ali ficaram gravadas desde então. A imagem da presa, que seria afinal a do demônio, evanescera-se.

A D. Fuas Roupinho valera a intervenção salvífica instantânea de Nossa Senhora da Nazaré, após a ela ter apelado em súplica. A imagem da Santa estava escondida um pouco mais abaixo, numa pequena gruta localizada no promontório. Aliviado por tão providente intervenção, o cavaleiro apeou-se, desceu à sacra cavidade, ajoelhou-se e rezou em agradecimento. Pouco depois, mandou erguer uma pequena igreja no alto da arriba, a Ermida da Memória, onde colocou essa imagem.

A relíquia já era, à data, muito antiga. Segundo se dizia, teria sido executada por São José, na original povoação da Nazaré, na Palestina. Alguns séculos depois, teria sido transferida para a Península Ibérica, para um mosteiro perto de Mérida. Ali ficou até à invasão árabe de 711. Tentando protegê-la, o rei godo D. Rodrigo e o monge Frei Romano decidem levá-la consigo na direção da costa atlântica. A tal gruta no alto da falésia foi o local escolhido. E ali ficou até ao milagre que salvou Fuas Roupinho, transitando então para a ermida evocativa que ele mandou erigir, logo em 1182.



Samuel Alemão

The Legend of Pêro Botelho's Caldera

A little moral tale, recounting the punishment for a sulphurous temper. Silence is what Pêro Botelho gets back in return whenever he begs "Get me out of here! Get me out of here!", from the bottom of the Furnas cave, on the island of São Miguel, where he has been trapped since immemorial time. A man of deplorable character, he had the habit, like the other inhabitants of the region, of boiling wicker and corn in volcanic calderas of boiling water. In one of them, which exudes a strong smell of sulphur, it was more common, however, to use its mud to cure various diseases, such as rheumatism. It is said that, one day, when going there to find the balsamic material, Pêro Botelho lost his footing and fell into the caldera. He attempted an appeal for help, but no one would have heard him. And he was never seen again. The only sign of life would be the cry for a hypothetical rescue. Or, all things considered, a little more. For if anyone were to approach the warm cavity and call out to him, they would receive a smoky puff of stones, ashes and mud in response. In addition to the more or less recurrent plea, Pêro Botelho would respond in an ill-tempered manner to any attempt to engage in dialogue, even when kind-hearted. And when children and adults threw stones into the caldera, saying "Give us a sneeze, Pêro Botelho!", they would be expelled back out at them. So, whenever anyone approached the cave to find the therapeutic mud, they were always scared of what might come from there. From then on, the residents of Povoação began to call the smoking orifice Caldeira de Pêro Botelho, or Pêro Botelho's Caldera.

Legend of the Miracle of Our Lady of Nazaré

Salvation in extremis is what is often dreamt of in times of great distress. Or something to which, under such circumstances, the prayers of the most faithful are addressed. And that's what helped Dom Fuas Roupinho on a certain foggy day. On 14 September 1182, the Captain-General of the Porto de Mós castle was hunting, when he sighted what appeared to be a deer. Excited at the prospect of good meat, he launched into fiery pursuit. So invested was he in the task that he only realised that he was on top of a cliff when the fall seemed all but inevitable. At the last moment however, his horse stood on its hind legs, which have been engraved there ever since. The image of the prey, which would ultimately turn out to be the devil, had vanished.

Dom Fuas Roupinho was rescued through the instant intervening salvation of Our Lady of Nazaré after having appealed to her in supplication. The image of the saint was hidden a little further down, in a small grotto located on the headland. Relieved by such a provident intervention, the knight dismounted, descended into the sacred hollow, fell to his knees and prayed in gratitude. Shortly afterwards he ordered the construction of a small church at the top of the cliff, the Chapel of the Memory (Ermida da Memória), where he placed this image.

The relic was already very old at the time. It was said to have been made by Saint Joseph, in the original village of Nazareth, in Palestine. A few centuries later, it would have been transferred to the Iberian Peninsula, to a monastery near Mérida. There it remained until the Arab invasion of 711. Trying to protect it, the Gothic King Rodrigo and the monk Frei Romano decided to take her with them towards the Atlantic coast. The grotto at the top of the cliff was the chosen location. And there it stayed until the miracle that saved Roupinho. After remaining in the evocative chapel that he had erected in 1182, in 1377 the image was moved to a new sanctuary that King Fernando I had decided to build and which would be rebuilt in the 17th century. It is there that, even today, the image of Our Lady is venerated. And it is from there that worship of Our Lady of Nazaré spread throughout the destinations of the Portuguese maritime explorers, thanks to her popularity among the peoples of the sea.

Legend of Machim

There is no historical evidence to prove it, but for a long time the narration of the facts that led to the discovery of the island of Madeira has had a much more poetic version than the usual description of the arrival of Tristão Vaz Teixeira and João Gonçalves Zarco, in 1419. According to the tale, it was the young Englishman Robert Machim, along with his beloved Anne of Arfet and some companions, who were the first to land there in 1377.

Robert, a man of modest condition, frequented the court of King Edward III (1312-1377). It was there that he met the aristocrat Anne of Arfet, with whom he would fall in love. Their desire for marriage, however, was at odds with that of Anne's relatives, who considered her only within the reach of a suitor from the nobility. This opposition led Robert Machim to decide to flee with his intended towards France, a country with which England maintained a long military conflict, which would come to be known as the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453). The elopement took place on the eve of Anne's arranged marriage.

On the high seas however, a strong storm blew the couple and the crew off course from their intended destination. After countless days lost at sea, they sighted land with lush vegetation and, once disembarked, began to explore the island, looking for water and food. However, a new storm approached, forcing them to seek refuge among the roots of a massive tree. When the storm subsided, they realised that their boat had not weathered the storm and they had no way of getting out of there. Worse yet, shortly afterwards, weakened by the trip, Anne died.

Robert buried her next to the leafy tree where they had taken shelter, and erected a wooden cross to mark the spot. A week later, broken with grief, he too perished, being buried next to his beloved. As for the remaining crew members, some died, others were eventually captured by Moorish sailors and sold as slaves in North Africa. One of them was eventually rescued and his story reached the ears of the Portuguese, who, when they arrived on the island, years later, came across the cross and an inscription telling the couple's saga. In honour of Machim, they named that region Machico.

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Dados Técnicos / Technical Data

Emissão / Issue
2022 / 05 / 09

Selos / stamps
3 x €0,95 - 3 x 75 000

Blocos / souvenir sheets
Com 2 selos / with 2 stamps
3 x €1,90 - 3 x 20 000

Design
Carla Carreira Ramos

Ilustrações / illustrations
Portugal Continental / Mainland Portugal: Tiago da Silva
Açores / Azores: Jorge Macedo
Madeira: André Caetano

Tradução / translation
Kennis Translations

Agradecimentos / Acknowledgments
Direção Regional da Cultura da Madeira
José Viale Moutinho

Papel / paper - FSC 110 g/m²
Formato / size
Selos / stamps: 40 x 30,6 mm
Blocos / souvenir sheets Madeira / Açores: 130 x 110 mm
Bloco / souvenir sheet Continent / Mainland: 110 x 130 mm
Picotagem / perforation
12 1/4 x 12 Cruz de Cristo / and Cross of Christ
Impressão / printing - offset
Impressor / printer - bpost Philately & Stamps Printing
Folhas / sheets - Com 10 ex. / with 10 copies

Bilhetes-postais / postcards
3 x €0,45

Subscritos de 1.º dia / FDC
C5 - €0,75
C6 - €0,56

Pagela / brochure
€0,85

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Design: MAD Activities
Impressão / printing: Grafisols



