



THE MEN OF THE DOURO AT WORSHIP

Descending the river was no mean feat, and the captains and crews faced constant danger. Rapids, waterfalls, rocks and deep pools could spell doom, and shipwrecks were common.

Along the banks of the river, the most treacherous points were marked by painted or sculpted images of the Virgin Mary, as if invoking divine protection for passing boats. The best known are the Senhora da Boa Viagem (Our Lady of the Safe Journey) and Our Lady of Cardia. The sailors and boatmen instinctively fell silent as they approached these areas, entrusting their fate to the Virgin Mary.

Offerings of thanksgiving were often made by those who had survived the dangers of the river.

Model of the shrine to Our Lady of Cardia
(Penha Longa, Marco de Canaveses)
Papier mâché and acrylic ink

This place of worship sits in a rocky crag overlooking the river Douro, on its northern bank, and consists of a vertical panel shielded by an outcrop, featuring painted religious images. This panel is mentioned in documents dating back to the early 18th century.

Author: João Sá (Vila Nova de Gaia)

Model of the image of Our Lady of the Safe Journey (Barrô, Resende)
Papier mâché and acrylic ink

According to legend, a group of boatmen from Barrô saw an image of the Virgin Mary floating on the flooded river. They collected her, named her Nossa Senhora da Boa Viagem (Our Lady of the Safe Journey) and placed her in a niche in the cliff face at Piores, securing her with a lock so she would not be swept away by the floods.

When the rabelo boats reached this perilous point in their journey, crews would throw their berets in the air and pray to the Virgin for protection.

In thanks for the protection provided, the boatmen of Barrô would take the image down from the cliff top every August, place it on a float and carry it in the procession that takes place on the 15th of the month, during the Festival of Saint Mary of Barrô, which is still celebrated to this day.

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