

EL OTRO ULTRAMAR. CRÓNICA DE UN JESUITA EN CHINA. RELACIÓN DEL PADRE ADRIANO DE LAS CORTES DEL VIAJE NAUFRAGIO EN CHAUCHEO DE LA GRAN CHINA

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The Journey and Shipwreck of Adriano de las Cortes, a 17th-century Spanish Jesuit missionary, is a unique testimony to Hispanic-Chinese interactions during the late Ming period. The edition prepared by José Luis Caño Ortigosa and Fabio Yuchung Lee, recently published, represents the recovery of the original text, now annotated and contextualized. Previous editions of this work were based on a 19th-century copy preserved in the British Library. Thus, this volume stands as the first modern and complete edition, including the full series of original drawings from the manuscript housed at the Hispanic Society of America (New York), accompanied by an extensive introductory study that addresses both the historical context and the editorial aspects of the work. However, this valuable analysis also raises questions and debates regarding the nature and scope of the text.

The life and work of Adriano de las Cortes must be understood within the context of the geopolitical, economic, and cultural instability that characterized the South China Sea from the 16th to the 17th century—though this is not the place to delve into such details. However, this background may help explain why the author adopts a somewhat somber tone when discussing certain aspects of Chinese culture, possibly influenced by specific events of those decades. These include the failed attempts of Limahon to seize Manila, the frustrated Spanish projects to conquer the Celestial Empire, the inability to establish a trading post in El Pinal similar to Portuguese Macao, and the reluctance of the Ming authorities to allow Christian preaching and evangelization among the Chinese population.

It is worth highlighting that Journey and Shipwreck, in addition to being a unique account that describes various anthropological aspects of Ming culture in a region of China forbidden to Westerners, also provides a detailed chronicle of China's institutional, military, judicial, and educational structures at the time. In these descriptions, de las Cortes engag-

es in comparative assessments, evaluating areas where he perceived Europe to be either superior or inferior, but without the usual Eurocentric bias found in other contemporary chroniclers.

The original manuscript preserved in New York, studied for the first time by the authors, maintains the same three-part structure as the later copy in London. That is, 32 initial chapters, now properly transcribed with archaic terms modernized for smoother reading, followed by a section containing illustrations with their explanations. This section is particularly significant in this edition, as it not only includes all the illustrations but also presents the originals. These were created by Chinese artists and reflect the aesthetic preferences and techniques of Ming painting—unlike other editions, which only feature a few low-quality 19th-century copies of limited artistic interest. Additionally, the volume includes the complete appendix of Adriano de las Cortes's work, titled *On the Light of the Holy Gospel and Christianity in Great China*, along with his final *Lao Deus*. This allows scholars to confirm, for the first time, that the author completed his work, countering the erroneous conclusions of previous editions, which were based on an incomplete copy. Consequently, this edition stands out for its scholarly rigor, offering an integral version that allows for a broader understanding of the narrative.

Thus, the edition by Caño Ortigosa and Lee contributes to the academic discussion on *Journey and Shipwreck*, while also presenting points of divergence from previous studies, such as Pascale Girard's contemporary article, which rejects the idea that the New York manuscript is a draft of the London text or the original version of the account. However, upon examining both documents and performing a simple paleographic analysis, it becomes quite evident that the New York manuscript is much closer in time and authorship to the original draft, both in terms of the writer, the scribes, and the illustrators involved.

Ultimately, the book by Caño Ortigosa and Lee is a significant contribution to studies on Hispanic-Sinic relations and the history of Jesuit missionaries in Asia. Although, unlike other works of its time, it was never published and widely circulated, it has now become an essential text for historians and sinologists studying that period and region. Additionally, its value extends to philologists due to its original narrative style, which associates text with images—an innovative narrative technique. This crucial aspect of the work was lost in previous editions, which included only a minimal selection of images in poor-quality reproductions.

In conclusion, the edition of *Journey and Shipwreck* prepared by Caño Ortigosa and Lee rescues a little-known source that had not yet received an edition presenting it in a complete and comprehensible manner. Moreover, the modernization of the text's readability remains faithful to its essence, making it accessible not only to specialists but also to curious modern readers. Ultimately, this edition is not just a contribution to historical studies but also a reminder of the importance of recovering and reinterpreting sources that, though seemingly minor, contain fragmented yet fundamental perspectives on places and eras rarely explored by Western historiography. Since these perspectives are Western, they have remained distant from Eastern historiography as well. This work thus helps broaden, merge, and refine the ways in which sources, events, methodologies, and historiographical approaches interact in constructing a more complete historical narrative. In fact, with this publication, another piece is added to the historiography of the period, inviting the academic community to continue exploring the paths Adriano de las Cortes traversed with his pen and critical vision.

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