

Chapter 3

The lands peopled by the Mandingas and Sonequei. The situation and wealth of the country, the characteristics of its various inhabitants, and the rites and ceremonies of each nation.

For greenness and freshness the district has no need to envy the finest lands of Ethiopea, because it possesses springs and full-running rivers, with green woods providing an awning, and it is especially made pleasant by the variety of things throughout the land. For this reason /f.8v/ it is healthy, and lacks nothing to achieve such degree of perfection as one may hope to find in these parts. The land is flat. The temperature is comfortable for the human body and the products necessary for its well-being are present. For its staple foodstuffs, the land has rice, and grain of various sorts; for vegetables, macarras and beans; for other crops, pumpkins, yams, etc; for meat, cows, goats and hens, all of these being cheap and in great quantity; and for drink, wine from the palm, beverages from honey and grain, and wine from Portugal, the latter always available in the ports because of the large amount of trade in them. Its wild beasts are elephant, buffalo, gazelle, deer - though not the normal sort -, antas, tigers, corcas [roe-deer,? misreading for onças, leopards], lions, porcupine and wild boars. Among the smaller animals are civet-cats, various sanchos, tutus and saninhas. Its birds are parrots and catarinetas, which are green, two species of ducks, and gangas which are like cranes. Its snakes include some with two heads, and black ones which cannot bite but vomit a spit which blinds if it touches the eyes; and there are some snakes which can be tamed and are harmless - their skin is covered with different natural designs, and the heathen spare them and tend them with great care, believing them to be rational transformations of the human body. Here the royal lion is found and is called jata. When travellers encounter it, and bow to it in greeting, it pauses to watch; but those who disregard this courtesy do so at their peril.

Because the land is rich it has trade. Ships, sloops and launches come here from various parts. The normal trade is in slaves, cotton and cotton cloth, hides, ivory, and wax. The land has great swarms of bees which the natives ingeniously keep in hives of woven straw hung on trees. Some gold is traded, which comes from the hinterland at the direction of the Mande merchants who make their way to the coast from the provinces and lands of their supreme emperor Mande Mansa. The fruitfulness of the land we are discussing was revealed to Santiago Island in its time of great need, in 1609, when the land came to its aid by providing foodstuffs. These commodities are obtained from the country in exchange

Although they have no respect for their guests when they are at sea, they have much when they are on land. Their goods are regarded as sacred, and if any happen to go missing, when the thief is found he is made to suffer (?). Here in this place where double-dealing and deception are not lacking there is still justice. Justice in these groups is degenerate, ^{f. q. /} yet active and lively in carrying out the peculiar judicial forms they have. Some of the inhabitants are fine horsemen, and in the conduct of their households they are first-rate. The upbringing of children is on the lines normal among the heathen. They are especially interested in agriculture, raising stock such as cows, goats, etc. as mentioned above. They are weavers, excellent blacksmiths, fishermen and wine-tappers. To conclude, this group concedes nothing to the most skilful in Ethiopia in their mode of acquisition of the necessities of life.

Now let us talk about the Sonequei, the native heathen. If we consider them in their original form, we will find that as long as this lasted they had no trace of any observance of the (Moslem) sect. All that they have today in the way of professing (Islam) has come to them from the emigrant blood of the Mandingas, the group selected by the devil as ministers of the poisonous sect, and as its legates and ambassadors throughout Ethiopia, as we shall show later, some of them adopting trade and commerce as a means of spreading the infernal doctrines of the unworthy prophet Mohammed. The Sonequei inhabit various lands in Guinea, and apart from living in their native land, they mix with other wandering nations. Burama Calama was very famous among this people. He lives today, a cripple, in Geiba, a land of great trade, which we shall discuss in its place. The Mandingas tried hard to persuade this savage to profess the sect, telling him many fictitious things about it. The poor wretch was so pestered that he turned against them, and he told them to stop bothering him since he would not conform to the religion of the Prophet when it prohibited as holy a practice as the celebration of the mystery and passion of the Son of God and the consecration of His precious blood; and further, that no-one could trust those who wrote to the contrary. (Little) lacked Burama the light of the Gospel! And according to the information given me about this heathen, because of the great love which he showed for us Portuguese, he also showed considerable affection towards our holy faith. Hence this heathen only practiced idolatry (not Islam), and he believed in sticks and stones and in those other things mentioned (elsewhere) in this account. It is not necessary to detail these at each stage, inasmuch as the superstitious practices are all much the same, and the inquisitive reader can learn about them

and gain a sufficient understanding of them in Part II (of the present work), where these matters are dealt with specifically; whereas in chapters like this one we only mention any practice of the heathen which is unusual, such as the Sonequei practice in relation to their famous idol Manga Jata.

When any one dies it is the common practice for them to carry him through the village on a bier made of pieces of wood like a grating or a ladder in Europe, and they ask him questions. Since the term 'to eat' here means the same as 'to kill', they ask him - who ate him up, or killed him? The devil replies, or those who carry the bier pretend this, by heading (the bier) towards where they consider that the people 'ate him up'. (But) if they pass by the idol, the devil in the dead man replies that Manga Jata killed him. They then remove the clothings and weapons from the dead wretch and place them all near the infernal idol. They give it these goods as a thanks-offering and perform the ceremony on account of the debt they owe to it for having killed this witch. They do not bury him like other men, for they consider supremely evil anyone whom Manga Jata kills, nor do they lament him with great grief. At best they leave the body in the forest for animals to eat.

This land has several kings, the Farins, who correspond to emperors, and have under them lesser kings or chiefs. Among the Farins are Farin Cabo, Farin Brás, and so on, who are like those in the province of the Souzaos, as will be shown later when I refer to that great kingdom. This is enough on the subject of the Farins.

Before tackling the subject of the true legates of Mohammed, I want to discuss a remarkable thing which happened to one of these clerics at Bambaceita, in the land of Borçalo, a town of Bezeres, and to his Koran. Here there is a common school where reading and writing is taught in the way to be described later. To this place there came one of these perverse pilgrims dressed as a poor man, all in rags. It was a time of great drought and all the grain crops had been lost. The members of the parish of infernal Mohammed rushed up to this cursed legate to ask him for help in this very great disaster. As if he had the favours of heaven at his command, he ordered those in need to provide him with a good meal. They came with cuscus, milk, etc. When he had had enough he promised them it would rain. They all laughed and jeered at this madman. He asked for a bowl of water. When they gave him one he walked away gravely, as if pretending to be very holy. He tipped the water over an anthill, making mud, and anointed himself with this, then made a wooden cross and fixed it on the mound, spent the night in shrieking and calling out, and at dawn disappeared. ^(f. 8v) Such a quantity of rain then fell

that the Mandingas boasted and celebrated the deed with great feasting and a great measure of astonishment. But even greater was the surprise of many Portuguese who happened to be there, among them a gentleman of great trustworthiness, who testified to all this and gave me the information. When he asked me to what I attributed this, I answered that it was by divine permission, as daily we experience here in various other matters, in the ordeals by red-hot iron or by 'red water', in replies of the Enemy through idols, those which are genuine, and so on. "I do not doubt it", said the Portuguese, "since as well as this I have also seen other happenings. And the cleric did the same thing in another village, the one he arrived at the morning (he disappeared from the first), and which was suffering the same lack of rain, and there he was venerated and regaled with all the good things of the land. I will not conceal a notable point about these wolves in sheep's clothing, their method of seeking alms. The true Mandinga are all very gentle and companionate, and therefore very charitable. (These people) come to the compounds or houses of the Portuguese, leaning on a spear, and ask for the normal presents, entirely for the love of God: they squat down and ask with extreme courtesy, pouring out words to such an extent that they obtain as much as they seek, as a result of their sheer persistence. What a crafty nation this is ! Thus they gain and complete all they desire.

As for the Mandinga traders, they are more properly called Mande, and they pride themselves on the name, as showing they are natural members of their group (familia) and line, without any alien intermixture. As they are wanderers and true merchants, they are great friends of ours and on all occasions support our interests. They are not mean but generous, and they entertain their guests with care and attention. This punctility, arising from their belonging to a group generally illustrious and of good character, is the normal feature among those of them not poisoned by the admixture of alien blood, as can be shown by (contrary) instances of bad faith, treachery, etc, (among the others). If we consider more clearly the rites and ceremonies of their priests, we see that these priests resemble the bonzos of Japan. They believe that the devil is made like a monkey, as will be seen from what follows; and among their many and various superstitions they believe that he brought to them here the musical organs with which they celebrate their feasts. The notes of the organs are employed as tocsins in war, and they produce a sound so harmonious^{16.111} that it resembles that of tocsins. The

nature of the people can be easily judged by the skill with which they conduct the administration and regulation of their affairs, both public and private. In the education of their children, the normal practice of the majority of them is superior to that of other nations, for as soon as the little ones are capable of learning they teach them their letters. The women are abnormally less than virtuous; and hence they gather the fruit of sensuality which sprouts from and finds its origin in dishonest living.

Now let us discuss how this malignant spawn regulate their ceremonies in relation to the profession of the Mohammedan sect, allowing first that there are different ranks among the clerics. The highest are the alemanes, who correspond to the rank of bishop or archbishop among us. In the second place follow the fodigues, who correspond to our vicar-generals or ordinaries. In the third place are mozes or bexeris, who are like priests among us. The homeland of this malediction of heaven is the widest and most spacious country in our Ethiopia, since it is befitting that here in this lower world the greater part should belong to evil. For the wicked usually gain their ends, the Lord denying success to the more virtuous souls and those worthier in His eyes : this was the case with Abel the just, since He slackened the reins of life over the infamous Cain to as great an extent as He pulled them in over that saintly young man, in order to comfort His martyrs and those who, although scattered across the wilderness as Cain was, yet know how to preserve themselves in purity and innocence of life during this His second draft of the prime law. The religious practice (of the Mohammedan sect) extends a great number of leagues into the interior. As well as drinking the milk of the accursed sect, these people serve it out to various nations to which they are its ambassadors; to which end they equip themselves with merchandise so that the commodities of the false Prophet can accompany these goods and enter into foreign kingdoms. Some of these people are fine horsemen. Wherever they care to make their home they help the kings in these lands with their (war-)medicines; and when it seems appropriate to them, they also accompany them. But rogues as they are, they (sometimes) excuse themselves by spinning the yarn to these lords that it would be more useful if they devoted themselves, as long as the wars lasted, to praying to the infernal Prophet to favour the kings' soldiers; and the kings, who are much influenced by what they dream, agree to all that is proposed to them, and either go (to war without them) or send(generals). Hence they are /f.11v/ much respected and receive fine presents from kings of

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this sort, even territories to settle in, if this is what suits them. But since they prefer the role of apostles for the diabolic sect and reap more reward from that, they do not stay long in one place.

They have mosques; and the bozes or bexerins^(a) establish schools to teach reading and writing in Arabic letters, which they use in their amulets, since these cursed reliquaries consist of certain precepts in this script. The task of the bexerins is to educate boys who will afterwards serve as clerics of the sect. They learn the same way as we do, by writing out copies of exercises, in daytime by normal light, at night by firelight. It is astonishing to see the number of fires round which they sit to read and repeat their lessons, which they do in such shrill voices that it upsets one to be within sight (and sound) of these infernal disciples. They demand alms day and night and live on them. The alemane keeps the Koran and he alone is permitted to enter into Mecca House. His office is to declare (the teachings of) the sect, and he lives in the kingdom which seems to him best fitted for the preservation and continuance of life and the one from which he can most easily send the ordinary or whichever of the lesser clerics he thinks best to visit the lands and villages under his jurisdiction. The hierarchy of clerics is not greatly developed since the alemanes are over them all, whether prelates and rectors or clerics. The title itself is not a fitting one since they have the most power. The alemane is much respected when he comes to a village : they kiss his robes and feet. He is very rich and therefore gives large alms out of love on Allah.

(a) The standing of the mozés among the infidels. Sertua, son of Farma, had smallpox. He came to hate Mapira, his mother. He told a moze of his state of mind. He immediately said to him : "This hatred is killing you, confess it to your mother and be reconciled with her." He did this. The mother wept as she heard her son. Before the sick man became completely better, the moze persuaded him to make cramene, so that he could take from him a fine shirt when he made an offering of anything that was his during the cramene. Sertua was scandalized and believed that these clerics are self-seeking, as indeed they are. A Portuguese jested with this moze. He lifted up a dish which the moze thought was impossible to do and had wagered could not be done, so the Portuguese won the bet.

It is the general custom of these alemanes to make annual visitations. Apart from those who regularly accompany them, some clerics from the seminary of the sect go with them. When they reach a village, the first thing they do is to announce the day on which they will begin lessons from the Koran. When this is known, many people arrive and assemble in the open space of the village, into which the cleric comes with great show. Then he has some fine mats spread out. From his embroidered purse he draws out the infernal legend written on parchments, which he unrolls over the mats, and he performs his ceremonial practice, standing upright and raising his hands and eyes to heaven, and after staying like this for a moment, as if in contemplation, he prostrates himself on the ground in front of the infernal 'bulls'. The people immediately make great reverential gestures towards these. When these are completed, he stands up and in a loud voice tells them to give ^{f. 12/}all thanks to God and His great Prophet for having had them brought together in order to pardon their great sins, and he makes various other declarations in praise of the devil. After this he praises the teaching of the parchments as he seeks to hold the attention of the people, and they comply in this to such an extent that though the cleric spends more than two hours reading and expounding part of the Scriptures, no-one speaks or sleeps or stirs, and in the large audience no-one takes his eyes off the cleric. The devil so draws these mozes and other fanatical adherents of the sect to the false Prophet that, although (Mecca) House is far away, this does not prevent them from visiting it, and they go there on pilgrimage through foreign lands in which they act as preachers of hell. From here they bring amulets as various as the uses to which they are put, with the relics inside being equally various. Some amulets are used on robes, others on shields, some go round the neck, others on the arm, and so on; but in each case the whole object is enamelled with these abominations.

Now let us speak of their rites and the superstitions underlying their ceremonial. Their fast lasts one month, beginning at the new moon and concluding with it. During this period they take nothing all day. But after sun-set they grind milho and make a drink from it, which they drink as they eat cuscus, meat and the other foods they have; and before cock-crow they make milho porridge with milk, to give them more strength for their fasting. They draw their [blank] in this period, and they say their prayers at night in a certain place selected as being most suitable for this purpose. They make a tabanca of timber which they fix in order to keep the place cooler. In the middle they

In the middle they build a little hut to hold three or four persons. To sum up, they choose the spot for the opportunity it gives them to hold these ceremonies, which are carried on throughout their Lenten season. This finishes when the new moon appears, and they greet it with great feasting. They celebrate their Easter with music and banqueting, and all assemble in a great crowd with the alemanes, fodigues and mozés. In the morning they go to make their sala, and have a great procession near a tree selected for this purpose, called mantaba. There they make their sacrifice. The bexeris carry their ^{of wood or metal} filled with water to purify themselves before entering the place of ^(f. 12v) the ceremony. The alemane washes his feet, mouth, face and top of his head, and the bexeris wash their feet too. When these lavations are completed, a bexerim of higher rank approaches the entrance of the enclosure around around the mantaba and begins to call out, "Allah, Allah", and the name of the prophet Mohammed. Then the lesser bexeris enter, always preceded by three of the others, but there are sometimes too many of them for all to enter. When they come near the oratory, they squat down one by one and tidy the spot, then taking some of the earth or sand, begin by scrubbing their arms, from the neck to the elbow, and after that their faces. Facing to the East, they first stretch out their arms in front of their eyes, and with the palms turned upward, invoke God and Mohammed. When this ceremony is over, they sit down and kiss the ground thrice, and each time all those present rise upright when the leaders do. After the sala they ask God and his Mohammed to deliver them from the world and from those enemies who are unknown to them or from whom they cannot deliver themselves.

Kings attend these salas, accompanied by many horsemen if they have them, otherwise by people on foot; and if the enclosure will hold them, they perform their salas within it. Afterwards they have great festivities and race their horses, and when the king returns to his house, those who accompanied him take their leave and depart for their villages. These bexeris are very refined and punctilious in entertaining their guests, more so than the kings themselves.

When any of these clerics dies, after making prayers of commendation over him they take him to the forest and inter him without his body touching the earth. They celebrate the obsequies with the normal lamentations. Three or four of the Jews whom we have mentioned earlier come to the obsequies in order to play drums.^(a) Many people attend in their finery, wearing the best clothes they have, for this is the proper time to wear them. The women who come from afar make a particular cry by putting their hand across their mouth, and this as a sign of sorrow for the passing of one of Mohammed's clerics. On arrival, they cover themselves completely with their clothes, and they wail with lowered heads. Dishes of cuscus, grain and rice are brought, and the person who leads the lamentations presents a great feast, after which the guests take their leave. Enough has been said about these rites.

Now let us finish the subject of this chapter. Let us discuss the estuary (of River Gambia). It is about four leagues across to Cape St Mary, which consists of high red cliffs./f.13/ On the point to the NE of the bar stands a village in which there lives one of the alcaides who receives presents from those who come here to trade. This port of call, or rather the present which is handed over to the kings, especially in the ports of the Mandingas, provides the key to everything else. It acts like a royal safe-conduct in the avoidance of great evils and the conduct of good or bad relationships. In the time of King D. Manuel, a fort was begun at the entrance to the river, the ruins of which still stand today; and he had a silver key made, to symbolise what we have just said about the port, that it is the real gate to commerce with this nation. This great river penetrates more than 150 leagues inland, and until the time of King Sebastian a caravel was sent there annually with great ceremony, in order to fetch the treasure-chest (?), and it carried trade-goods as far as Cantor and was loaded with gold, ivory and wax. In those days this trade was restricted, but it is now open and general. As the land is vast, the river extends into the hinterland for very many leagues to the NE and East, apart from making twists and turns in other

(a) Their sign of mourning is to shave only their beard. They eat, etc, just like the other heathen.

directions. To the SE this great multitude of savages stretches through the interior to meet the Casangas, to whose emperor some of the Mandingas are still tributary.

Now let us say something about the Cassangas, etc. To proceed rapidly and follow the model of a nautical guide, let us reveal what exists in the districts extending as far as Cabo Roxo. A river separates the Mandingas from the heathen we call Cassangas, whose emperor is superior to kings and ^{to} the neighbouring Suzes. I called him 'emperor' because as well as being king of his own subjects he possesses the higher title in relation to (his rule over) the Banhus. This empire acquired a king called Massatamba who was the family head and progenitor of the rulers who reign today. Massatamba was the best friend the Portuguese nation has had in these parts. If he took a boat full of goods he was most strict in paying the owners. Since he was so attached to us, he used to be greatly pleased when he was called the brother-in-arms of the King of Portugal. Further along the seaboard is the coast of the Banhu heathen, which stretches as far as a creek from which a single tide carries one to Cacheu. From Cape St. Mary the coast runs South to Cabo Roxo, another lair /f.13v/ and coastal strongpoint of pirates. There they lie in wait for ships of all kinds, whether from Iberia or from the rivers, in order to attack them and seize great loot. One cannot fail to note the laxity in this matter on the part of the contractors for these rivers. So many thousands of cruzados are received by them from His Majesty, or are kept back from him, ^(a) without their building the coastal patrol ships for which the money is intended. Regular large losses result from this, losses greater than need be, and affecting not only those involved but also the Crown revenue. Experts assert that these losses could be easily avoided if the lapse was corrected or if in the public interest the contractors proposed (other measures) to his Majesty, as they should. Cabo Roxo lies in $11 \frac{2}{3}^{\circ}$, and Cape St Mary, 18 leagues to the windward, in $12 \frac{2}{3}^{\circ}$. All the heathen here (whom I shall not discuss as they have little trade with our people, such having been the case up to the present day on the part of Falupos and Arriatas) are mortal enemies of all kinds

(a) Otherwise their 'farms', as they call their Guinea very contemptuously. Others call it table-silver more fitting for Epicurius.

of white men. If our ships touch their shores they plunder the goods and make the white crew their prisoners, and they sell them in those places where they normally trade for cows, goats, dogs, iron-bars and various cloths. The only thing these braves will have nothing to do with, is wine from Portugal, which they believe is the blood of their own people and hence will not drink.

It is pitiful to relate what white men suffer when captives among these savages. They immediately strip them, leaving only the meanest garments on their bodies. Although the captives are given plenty to eat by their masters this is because of the gain the latter hope to make by selling them, gain which, however slight, will repay the host for his food. They are treated by the heathen as if they were lunatics, and a couple of hundred children follow them around. This happened to a Benedictine monk who, together with a captain, fell into their hands. The savages took his robe and thus made it difficult for him to work in Cacheu. The fertility of their lands and the industry of the people, which result in there being no lack of the various foodstuffs found in Guinea, are the reasons for this hostility. They have rice, funde, milho, and earth-crops, and they raise large quantities of cows and goats and consequently have much milk and butter.

All of them are skilled at fishing, and at wine-tapping, there being plenty of palm-trees on which to exercise their skill. They are notable farmers, so successful that the abundance of products has corrupted their natural ambition. For only the person who does not live among a sufficiency of what is needful for him learns to seek out the Good, or at least what he thinks to be good. This can be seen with regard to many of the heathen in this Ethiopia who without doubt were greater tyrants than the Falupos and Arriatas when they lived in the same fortunate state. I could demonstrate this by various examples /f.14/ relating to many different peoples who, if they wish to cultivate our friendship, do so only out of self-interest, because in this way they can obtain a supply of whatever goods they lack. Since all of these goods abound with the Felupos, the Lord has worked well on them so that their cruel nature is tempered in such a way that they serve as agents of divine justice, in relation to those who by His secret judgements fall into his hands. Their lives are always spared, since He does not chose to pass over the reins of life to these savages to the point where they might tighten them with their own hands, a decision he reserves for Himself. We see this daily, so that however rough and yokelish the heathen are, they never do harm (to this extent) to any captive in their power. If sometimes on the contrary it does happen (that whites are killed by blacks) this occurs at sea. There, in order to safeguard themselves when seizing goods, the heathen first kill those who are least on their guard, as happened in 1612.

