Chapter 2

About the character of the heathen that live in this Province, so various in name and language.

Given that the name of this entire Province comes from the name of the territory under discussion, let us now deal in the first instance with its heathen population, and after that, with the immediately neighbouring heathen. Both are so (firmly-rooted in their homeland and possess such ancient traditions) that we know nothing about their origins, other than their presence here since antiquity. All of them (have a way of life so characteristic of the land) that we have no reason to believe or state that they sprang from some migratory nation. Those who live in the Serra itself are called Bangues, taking their name from its river (sic) because Bangue means 'native or inhabitant of the rock'. The river that circles the Serra on the South takes its name from the people: the better informed and older inhabitants call it Rio Bangue, that is, 'river which girdles a rock or range of hills'. The area of the Serra is inhabited by this nation of savages, and in its flatter and grassy parts, which are extensive in the South, there exists even today at least one village which has never been discovered, and which the military power of the Manes has not yet reached. From there the natives at times make their way along a most secret path or trail, in order to find out what is happening in another village, which is built beside the watering-place of the Serra, and is called Pinto, because foreigners paint (Port. pintar) and carve their names on its rocks and trees. The present ruler (of Pinto) is Camalatesgo, who is descended from a native family there. The fearful respect these savages have for the conquering (Manes) has made them so careful and cunning that, in order to conceal the path to their secret villages, they walk it backwards, thus imitating the ruse attributed in Livy's History to Cacus when he stole the oxen. Since they lack the commercial intercourse which the inhabitants of Pinto have only too frequently with all sorts of foreigners, we believe that they wear nothing but the skins of the animals they hunt, which abound in the Serra.

(a) See Chapter 15, 'On the Manes'.
(b) Or all or some of them walk over the rocks in order to leave no foot-prints.
The Cabatas used to live on the South East side of the Rio de Mitombo. The Calus come immediately after them: these are the kind of people who used to live not only /f.54r/ in the Serra but also in the neighbouring country which today belongs to Ferabure. Then comes the previously mentioned kingdom of Mitombo, whose inhabitants are Temenes and all natives, (as well as) Baranas, Chinquinas, Subos, Fegnes, Coras, Randacosas, Kerife, Songoles, and Bias. Finally there is another country which only survives in part, this is the land of the Sapes or Casses, who are today ruled and governed by King Farma's mother's brother. Bordering the Casses are the Safragos Limbas. These people, though lacking culture, are more suited to hear the Gospel, since they are so strict in the observance of their matrimonial contracts that they generally pay full respect to (prohibitions on) union between blood-relations. Hence, because they are so strict in this matter, relatives do not live in the same house, in order to avoid opportunities for cases, and for this reason they have special quarters for any guests who are related to them. They so greatly detest those who eat human flesh that they consider them the only savages: they avoid normal communication with them and they treat them with discourtesy and contempt. Their land is almost wholly mountainous, but very rich. They say there are carbuncles there, since flashing lights are seen at night. The ivory tusks which are available there are in such quantities, and so thick, that no one is capable of carrying them away.

The Limbas are great stock-farmers, breeding goats, cows and poultry. They are astute and clever, and inclined to be warlike, hence their villages have underground places, in which they live with all the necessities of life when besieged. This is how they have preserved their independence (and avoided conquest by) the Mani.

Two other races of heathen live in these districts. The Boulons take their name from (that of) the land itself, and we know of no other etymology: some of them, called Belo, are natives. The remainder are called Sivi, because they originated from Sivi where Mabangoma or Casses was (located): this is the proper Sape-land. The variety of names indicates the diversity (of peoples...
Before discussing the character (of the heathen), let us deal with the matter of language. There are as many languages as races or nations, each people having its own language, so that the Bangue man speaks Bangue, the Calu Calu, the Sape Sape, etc. But since all of the kingdoms are close neighbours, the language most commonly used today is the native Temene language. This language is learned by the more curious foreigners in order to facilitate their life in these parts. It turns out to be different from all other languages because the nouns do not decline and the verbs do not conjugate. Hence, there is no plural form, and in order to indicate the plural, that is, to speak of more than one, we find it generally necessary to add adverbs. These also serve as nouns; and in this way the verb is also a noun. As an example: for 'to whip' Temene says sapeco, but the noun 'whip' is sape. Thus, the verb serves as all (the parts of speech). For 'to eat', the Sape says gri, and 'food' is gri or sanac. Equally lacking are present and past tenses, indeed any tense at all. As an example: for 'to kill' Temene says crif, and this verb serves (in the same form) for all tenses, so that for the past tense it is necessary to add an adverb, apon crif perem. For this reason, just as the heathen lack the true faith in the Christian mode, so also they lack the words (in their languages) which would enable them to be taught the faith adequately. Here is an instance. In order to catechize it is necessary to refer to the Holy Trinity, but this cannot be done (literally) in the native language because it is too limited to express deep mysteries. Therefore, in order to teach the faith, to express its doctrines in the native language, and to hear confessions, it is necessary to learn the language. As I

(c) It is very important to have lessons in the language and become acquainted with it, in order to hear confessions, to take the sacrament and to spread the faith: knowledge of the language on the part of the clergy produces many good returns, such as love of the Gospel by the heathen when they see that we can declare it in their own tongue. This is why St. Matthew wrote in the Syriac or Hebrew language. Those already converted are not silent about their sins when they attend confessions, they confess with more humility and with less fear of being found out, etc.
eventually discovered, native interpreters, unlike Timothy who interpreted for St. Paul, never express what they are translating sufficiently exactly. Furthermore, even the best interpreters here are not capable of explaining what the priests wish them to say, because they time after time misunderstand terms (in Portuguese). Being uneducated, they are ignorant concerning the figures of speech, especially metaphors, which have to be so much employed here; and hence they always say less than the minister of the Gospel intended. For this reason, the first thing to be acquired (by a missionary) is a knowledge of the language, so that he may fully achieve the aim of his evangelical ministry.

Having made this point, let us deal now with the character of the heathen. Nothing tells us more about the benignity of a country than the character of its people, whether good or bad. All the people in this Province are black. Very young children are very pretty; before they grow up their facial features are thoroughly pleasing, but when their faces widen they become less handsome. The faces of most of them are well-proportioned; their eyes are of medium size; but tending to the large; their noses, although generally flattened, nevertheless possess a reasonable shape, and there is no lack of those to whom nature has given slender noses; their mouth and beard are well shaped, and some (beards) are astonishingly full. An example of this is the beard of a gentleman who is the brother of the governor of Serra Leoa: /f.55r/ on the day of his baptism he it, and solemnized it, drawing the attention of all because it covered his whole chest. Almost all of them file their teeth, only for the reason that they think it improves their appearance, and they remove their front ones in order to drink the antidote against poison. Their bodies are strong and bear up well when they have to endure hard labour or hunger. They suffer great hunger for they regularly lack the staple foods. Some of them, as soon as they harvest their crops, use them up at various wake-parties, though they ought to keep a supply for the season (of hunger), together with other edibles. However they meet their needs with mangrove-fruits, with guzanos – which are worms that live in trees near the sea; they damage boats, doing the same at sea as bagabaga (termites) do on land – and with other wild fruits which the country produces; and they also make use of the 'eye' (the green shoots) of the youngest palm-trees, which they call apono. During this season (of hunger), fishermen keep idleness away,
making fish-traps with which they cover the narrower creeks, roofs in the sea, and small bays, and taking large numbers of different kinds of fish. They sell a good proportion to obtain rice and any other staple foodstuff available, and thus meet their needs. Wine-growers undertake this task (of fishing) more frequently, because they not only need to obtain food but are also less busy (with their regular occupation) at this time of year.

After a child is weaned, it lives in complete freedom. As it grows up, it develops various aptitudes, and no native is found without at least one. (Some become) hunters, of elephants, buffalo, gazelle and other kinds of animals, and then they possess bows and arrows, and spears, made of iron and like ours, being long and a hand wide. (Others become) hunters of smaller game, or fishermen with nets and fish-traps. They are a delightful people. However, what is surprising, apart from the fact that they are not yet contaminated by the filthy vice of S-dom, is that they are keen-witted and sound in judgment.

One could say a good deal about their intelligence. It is shown by the ease with which they learn and (the rapidity) with which they acquire perfect knowledge and understanding of anything they set their minds to. This gift is common to all of them. If the adults do not bring to us their doubts on the subject of the Gospel this is because they do not apply their minds to this matter. Nor, to be truthful, are they interested in the Gospel other than as a momentary and material comfort: they make use of if /f.55v/ and claim to be Christians in order to share our food and to acquire our friendship and protection. There is and could be no other (response, from them) since they model their life solely on the example of the lives of their ancestors. (d) Such people are those among whom ignorance prevails, deliberate ignorance, as the Prophet in the Psalm says: 'They do not wish to hear, lest they should be required to reform'. The only verb they know is 'to take'; the verb 'to repay' does not occur to them. Another point about them is that though they recognise the validity of our religion, they despise it more than the heathen (? normally) do, as I shall recount in due course. Because of their ability and intelligence, some of them have the

(d) See chapters 5 and 25.
gift of artistic imagination, and they carve in wood images of their dead, which they call cerof, and various other figurines which are found all over their boats. The variety of their handicrafts is due to their artistry. Their mats are woven in many very beautiful colours. (They make) _buche_, which we use as beds here, out of _nachul_, a very soft kind of straw drawn out; _tofos_ or large bags, which can be used to hold brevies, or surplises and other garments, some of the bags being larger than others; _tagarras_, large wooden dishes in different sizes, of unusual and pleasing design, which are here used at table; spoons made of ivory, beautiful finished, the handles carved in entertaining shapes, such as the heads of birds or their _cerofis_ (idols), all done with such perfection that it has to be seen to be believed; _betes_ or _rachons_, which are round and are used as low seats, and are made in curious shapes to resemble lizards and other small creatures. In sum, (all these show that) they are, in their own way, skilled at handicrafts.

I will refer here to a man amongst them who lacks hands. He can climb a palmtree, cut _palmnuts_, make oars for canoes—which are like shovels but more concave and with the handle wider—and make fishing nets. This deformed man is so skillful at fishing that he amazed me when I walked along the beach at Tasso with him, and I saw him laden with fish which he lifted from the stake with his mouth. Another man in the same kingdom has his face flattened, but though blind he greets those he meets and recognises many people; he climbs up palm trees to cut _chaveo_ (palmnuts), and trades with merchants in the products of the country, cola, rice, etc. When the servants of a Portuguese once met him, they ran away because he seemed to them a monster. Some say that where the tear-ducts of each eye should be, he has a hole the size of a pepper-grain, and that he sees through these. He himself says that he sees through his mouth.

(e) This black has only stumps, no fingers, and he controls the _balse_, which is the rope with which they climb up the palmtree, by putting them _sic_ in his mouth.
They are extremely proud, and equally touchy if ill-treated. If you call them thieves or witches, they are greatly insulted since these two offences are regarded here as beyond forgiveness. They will not put up with the least slight on their own honour or the honour of their kith and kin, honour being something they hold in great esteem since it is the only (virtue) they understand. They dissipate and conceal their passions when they cannot give them free rein. They are only controlled by cowardice and by fear of ill fame, (that, for instance, which would arise if) they lost guests whom they held in high esteem. If it were not for the checks (on their temper), we might hear of deeds committed by these people even today which would spread terror. Sooner or later (outbursts) are bound to occur. Generally, (however,) they are very mild in manner. Their tears, when shed honestly, would melt the stoniest hearts. Their mildness leads them to give a kindly welcome to foreign guests such as the Portuguese. They respect the Portuguese more than foreigners of any other (European) nation, because of the benefits of their commerce, and especially because the Portuguese come annually to trade in their commonest product, one which only they know how to produce, cola. This trade always brings them more than does the trade with other foreigners, who only take from them ivory and rice, as will be explained later. (f) In conversation among themselves, and with all kinds of foreigners, they are courteous. This is more or less characteristic of the people of the hinterland. They are humbler than those from the coast, some of whom, as a result of commerce with Portuguese riff-raff and other depraved people, have become (as untrustworthy as) Indian lascars. Such are the

(f) Their coats-of-arms are fruit trees, all of them, whether kings or lords. There is no room here for the emblems of the gods from Minerva, according to poetic fiction, whereby these being the emblems of the gods were trees that bore no fruit: Apollo, the laurel; Jupiter, the holly oak; Venus, the myrtle; Hercules, the cypress; Neptune, the pine; Juno, the Juniper. These heathen only care for those who have apple-trees and fig-trees, and they have no broadmindedness in this matter.
inhabitants of Pinto, another Porto de Aço here in the Serra, whose watering-place is notorious for (the visits of) all sorts of pirates, who come there to refresh themselves and to make merry over the fat loot they take from Portuguese ships. This has become so common that, to make a change, a novel occurrence for this Province was introduced in 1612, when thirty white men were left here by Captain Lachennais, a Frenchman of Dieppe. They were given shelter and food, and many rich goods were brought to them by all the inhabitants.

They are skilled at collecting from their guests the debts they owe to others. They make them pay up, and then ask (the debtors) for a share of what they have collected. Some of them are so greedy that they buy out the debtor in order to collect the money. Not surprisingly, they boast of acting as intermediaries between their wives and daughters and other men: in this way, they serve any kind of person who will employ them.

They are particularly suspicious, so much so that if we talk (in Portuguese) in front of them, the less suspicious ask us openly what we are talking about, and the more cunning inquire (from others) behind our backs. Some of them, such as the nobles and those who have been brought up among our people, understand Portuguese, and these listen without saying anything, and then act privately (on what they have heard). Hence, it is necessary for anyone here, as long as he has little experience of the land, to keep a guard on his tongue. The tongue, they say, is the key to men, and on it depends good or ill fortune in life. This gives it an ill name, as being responsible for all evil, for St. James says: 'The tongue is all evil'. A mouth which has an evil tongue is worse than the mouth of hell, since the latter only engulfs bad people while the former ruins good and bad. Hence the tongue is all evil, for it makes men blasphemers, perjurors, liars, rebels, murderers, thieves, forgers, heretics, apostates, traitors, etc. All of which is evil. An evil tongue can do all this, and so it is the evil tongue which does most mischief in Guinea and causes destruction. It provides the motive for the poisoning which affects so many daily and kills them little by little. It is the underlying cause of quarrels and divisions.

(g) Involving Jorge Mendes and Barbosa the Bure.
The natives (like to have notice taken of them and) feel it greatly if ignored. They are masters of the art of preparing love-potions and other medicines to carry out wicked designs. They are expert herbalists, the devil revealing to them all medicinal plants and trees. A bezerim told me, an expert in the art, that this evil spirit had taught him all he knew about medicine. (h) They do not live in hope, as already explained in Part One when I was dealing with the Bijago. If you do not help them, you are a liar: they make no allowance. However poor a Portuguese may be, they say he wants for nothing. 'Kill the dead' says the savage: 'it's all their fault'. But to confirm what has been said about keeping promises, I will mention what happened when the conversion of these pagans to Christianity was first attempted. Various official declarations were read out, containing great promises, that ships would come (to Serra Leoa regularly), etc. The heathen did not remember when things went wrong, that the advancement of the faith was the highest interest, but they did remember that no ships came. When the official declarations were not fulfilled, they said 'That's Christians for you!'; and they sold the Portuguese clothing which had been given to them at great expense. This is the way they look at promises here. They do not gamble, indeed they laugh at us when they hear that we have staked and lost a lot of money. It appears that in this respect they imitate the , since they say that to gamble is to covet, and that it is a short step /f.57r/ from coveting to stealing.

They are much given to rumour-monging and gossip. Anyone of them will give much to be the first to bring news. As they gather in their rice, sometimes they seem to do the same with all kinds of lies; for they spread news of a thousand wars which have never even been contemplated. When they travel, they wear their poorest clothes.

(h) Cibe , as the devil showed him the medicine to cure Farma the Elder and inspired him to the deed when the herbalist was afraid to attempt it, out of fear of the savage king. See Chapter 5, particularly note .
They say that to give occasion for envy is to invalidate any promise of safe passage. They are generous among themselves, and like to display their generosity, and hence they are poor, since they give away their possessions to their in-laws, parents as well as brothers and sisters, and to the white man. (But) there are a few so mean that they will not give the white man even a cup of water. They do not spit or cough up phlegm when very ill, and yet they have the disgusting habit of eating lice, the dirtiest thing on the head. They normally let their nails grow until they could serve as spoons, and sometimes they use them in order to convey poisons. They place the poison behind their nails and carry it around hidden there, and then let it fall into water or any other drink. (1) They are extremely gluttonous, and to achieve their end are like ants in an ant-heap. They are fond of wine, to an extent which can hardly be exaggerated. Only liquor can turn the son against his father, and brother against brother. Liquor will finish off whatever is attempted in the Serra. With four casks of wine, it could be conquered with the greatest ease— that is, if the people were not so fond of their homes. As for Christianity, what limit could there be on its advance if we distributed wine? They would rush to mass, to confessions, to catechism, to sermons, if they had a drink at each. Wine brings visitors to you, it makes you known, it makes you somebody. If you supply it, it is your best friend. And if you refuse to supply it, it is the worst enemy you can have. You may deny anything else to one of these pagas, but if you deny wine, be on your guard, for you will have lost all. Whereas with wine the most difficult tasks and the most arduous undertakings can be completed, without it anything will go badly and the atmosphere will be like a graveyard. They have a great desire to obtain iron objects. They say that this metal fache boga oni because it is so necessary for the maintenance of human life, for instance, (by its employment) in agriculture.

They have no interest in our ornaments and products, but they value remnants of our cloths, which they use as patches on their shirts, sashes, and hats, patching in various colours, much as do. Nevertheless, they lack the excessive acquisitiveness of certain heathens in the East, since they only value what is truly valuable,

(1) A form of revenge: he eats and crushes it between his teeth in a day (?), etc.
such as gold, which we assume /l.57v/ that some of them hoard. It is not among the more savage peoples that a set of drinking-vessels for birds would be valued at thirteen hundred or so cruzados, which is what the King of Bungo paid; nor would an old and mended pot-holder be worth one thousand four hundred cruzados here. These heathen always look for value.

They show little curiosity about music and instruments of music. However, they have their own guitars made from calabashes, some with only two strings, others more like a harp, all crudely made as one would expect from them. They have bambalous and various drums large and small; and the lords have trumpets. They are enemies of any kind of secret, and a jealous people. Yet they deserve great praise in that they are so strict about theft. Goods may be left in the streets and outside houses, and no-one will take them. Nothing goes missing from the churches. They consider immorality an abominable thing. They similarly detest the shedding of human blood, which they punish severely. Because of these two laws, and because the people are fearful of breaking them, this country is normally peaceful. When there are quarrels among the whites, they say to the Dutchman or the Frenchman, 'Go back to sea and stop fighting on land, where the lords value peace'. This is what happened in Porto de S.Pedro in 1612, following some discord which had been sown by a wicked man. The king settled it, pacifying everyone with a proclamation (worthy) of a true Christian and a friend of ours. A proclamation is also made, if anything disappears, and the man who has taken it puts it down in fear. They practice money-lending for a period, and if the period ends and the borrower does not return what was lent, the lender seeks interest, saying that money should earn money: raca sonco raca 'goods from goods'.

(j) The more 'advanced' among them begin to do this, and the excuse they give for stealing from the whites is that we have no simis, which means the severe punishment which operates among themselves.