Chapter 12

About the government of the heathen, the elevation of their king, and their war medicines.

The domestic customs of this people are those normal among the natives; they have borrowed almost all of them from the natives. (But) their public affairs are conducted in part in a different way. They have their own form of procedure in legal causes, and their own councillors (or judges) who are normally those who are the oldest and who are governors of settlements. In either civil or criminal cases, the party is cited, and sometimes comes in custody before the court, which is composed of funcos. The case is conducted verbally before the king, and he decides the justice or injustice of the plea viva voce. If he has to give sentence, officers see to its being carried out. The symbol of his judicial power is a bunch of straw shaped like a brush and fixed to the head of a wooden pole; this is carried by an officer. When he reaches the village where he is going, he conceals the symbol. He orders the Council to assemble, the Council being composed of all the leading persons. The man accused is arrested, and proceeded against according to the established procedure, in the way described when the government of the natives was discussed.

Succession to the throne is on the lines usually followed by the Manes, although the Manes have no right or title here other than by conquest. The elevation of a new king follows this procedure. He is summoned, if away. When he reaches the town of the principal king, he retires into a house. The consultation begins concerning the new king, with the lesser kings and chief nobles (present). After taking a vote, a proclamation is made to the effect that the notables have agreed to raise him to the throne, to crown him and to present him with the royal insignia. He is brought out of the house and is publicly presented by a chief, who holds this office, with the royal insignia: a shield which belonged to the dead king, his bow and quiver. Then he is shown, by his chief, the drums and trumpets. He is dressed in a fine smock, and given a bandolier with his scimitar and binte, an instrument of execution, and then the royal crown, which is a cap. Finally, he receives a military baton, which corresponds to the sceptre as already stated: this is a token of regard and safe-conduct for all those in their lands to whom kings give it. This was the way in which Farna, King of the Logos, was enthroned. Dressed in a brocade smock, his cap is made of nachul (raffia), worked in a thousand colours, and underneath this, which is his crown, he wears his own cap. After being presented with his insignia, /f.81v/ the
king takes his bow, and walks back and forward in front of all present. (for a short period) Borea: drums and trumpets are sounded. There is great festivity and cheering. But he orders them all to be silent. If he is an important king, he stands and addresses all his people, and asks them if they want him as their leader. They reply that they do. Then he says that he will act justly. When the ceremony is over, banquets follow, with expressions of gratitude to the new king. The participants make their farewells and return to their villages. I am not speaking here of the procedure of succession when it is by right of inheritance—though this is the normal system among the natives. As regards the political system and other customary practices, these are the same (for the Manes as for the natives), as already stated.

Now let us discuss their war-medicines, which are many and have different uses, as we will see. The devil has taught these heathen about certain powders and herbs, etc., which they call 'medicines'. For a king to give these to his son is to give him the right (of succession) to his lands. With these monkey-tricks, the Manes have deceived the natives for many long years. They make up these mixtures, and afterwards place them in a cloth hanging from the hairs of an elephant's tail, together with twenty-one little bells. If a rat or another small animal or the wind makes one bell ring, however little, they say that this is an indication of a forthcoming war: hence, they call these war-medicines. When an elephant or buffalo is killed, they take the hide from its head, they cut a root of melila and the bark from the root of poulam (cotton tree), and they add oil to all these, and roast them. This makes a powder, which they place in a small bag made of camazel skin, and they carry it on their wrist like a bracelet. Each ingredient is a symbol of power and might: the elephant, the buffalo and the cotton tree. They say that the elephant makes way for no-one; and so they believe that it will be the same with them, because the powder is made from elephant hide; since hides can defend elephants from death, it will not fail to give the same benefit to whoever has them. Similarly, the tall cotton trees cannot be cut down by matchets, (hence, its bark protects man from matchet-strokes in war).

The devil has further revealed to them a herb which has such natural power that where this is, there can be no hostilities or outbreak of war. But those who carry this herb will conquer all their enemies by its power, since they will be seized with fear. So that the Enemy can induce them to believe further in this false medicine, he teaches them to pray as they make it. They go into the forest and gather the herb, and with it in their hand they say as follows: "O Lord, you who created this herb
and gave it the power that those who carried it cannot be defeated but emerge victorious; grant, O Lord, that this may be the case with me". 
[f.82/ Then they chew it, and sprinkle it over an elephant's tail or a horse's tail. This medicine and other medicine has enabled them, with the Lord's permission, to make such great conquests; this is what they say.

Now let us say something about the source of the ingredients. They obtain all of them from a certain Mane woman, descendant of the Mabete family, about which I will be speaking below. She lives, with other women, in a large town in the province and original kingdom of Mandimansa. No men live there, although each woman has her own man who comes to her at fixed times. When he arrives, he waits, and she sends for him and keeps him with her for a certain number of days, after which she sends him away, accompanying him as far as the place allowed by the rules of her own society. If a husband arrives or departs during daylight hours, he is veiled so that no women there should recognise the husband of another. These women spin and sew. They have little rice, but large quantities of different kinds of vegetables. Those who provide for them are only peasants, and only one of these may approach this lady. He is like a head porter, or like a personal ambassador freshly arrived from other parts. A person who has come there to procure medicine (a) from the lady first speaks about it in the village which lies a good stone's throw away from the larger and privileged settlement. The porter makes his way to this place and to the house of the herbalist, and reports that a certain man has come to obtain such and such a medicine. Then he sends it to the man, after having received the payment.

(a) This woman offers and makes the medicines, after first invoking the favour of the idol.
I have stated that there are various war-medicines. Some are waili medicines, which make such a noise that a commander who uses them in war makes those who intend to oppose him have cowardly hearts. Another kind are wind medicines, which make an arrow fly with speed to wound the enemy. Another kind provide an enchantment, so that when a commander prepares for battle and discusses with his men, the enemy do not hear the sound of his drums: this medicine is put in the ear. Siti is the medicine most commonly used by the Manes. They take a cow’s tail, roll it up, and apply to it a certain herb, then they name the most courageous persons in the village which they wish to capture; and all of them come to surrender. Then there is the celebrated medicine Keke. On a fire made of certain herbs they heat a small iron bar, and they place it in the ground. If those who are making the war are going to be defeated, the iron will not penetrate the ground, nor will it enter it however hard it is hit but will leap out. But if they are going to gain the victory, the opposite happens and it penetrates immediately. When the battle comes, the arrows (of the enemy) fall around this iron, without hurting anyone.

The medicine core is famous. It consists of tails of elephants, dogs, antelopes, and cows, placed in a piece of iron like a manacle and bound by an iron chain called Julgo. When they decide to carry out the ceremony,

(b) They wear this around them. A man who carried the medicine and boasted that his life was safe, lost his life when his head was cut off, at the time he most trusted the medicine.

(c) Others carry a wrought-iron bracelet, and when they lose anything they ask the bracelet to find what has been lost, as we ask St. Anthony. A Portuguese lost a black woman, then found her. As he despised their invocations and hellish oracles he mentioned the matter (of the loss) to his host. (He said:) "You will find her soon, have confidence in your oracle." The Portuguese replied: "I have already found her, so that you may understand that God alone gives and God alone takes away."
colla and the blood of dogs and hens are sprinkled on it, and many eggs are broken over it. They have such faith in these sorts of things that they believe that if they have them they have help and remedy for all their necessities. And so if they want rain they address this medicine, soaking the animal tails in water and raising a cry towards heaven. They do the same if they want the sun, or health, etc. And if the devil does not reply, they say that their medicines have done him harm, and responsibility falls on their (medicine) woman, for each king keeps his own who is called the King's Medicine-woman. These women enjoy such privileges, and their husbands are so jealous, that while they hold this office, they may not accept or receive anything (direct) from the hands of a male native. If any man tries to give them anything, they must put it on the ground, from which the wretched woman picks it up and takes it. Nevertheless, they can accept anything from another woman, for they say that a female, who does not make war, cannot spoil medicines or harm adversaries. Only these women can eat with the king any kind of meat or bird, except a cock.

I shall conclude the chapter by describing the nebrina medicine. A village is approached by those bent on war. A fog then arises which prevents one man seeing another, and hence, God willing, the attackers have the victory. (But) this did not happen to Messera or Gaspar Bure, the chief of Pogomo, however much he believed in this medicine. The enemy whom these savages attacked were few in number, but the medicine was no help at all to him. When they heard the sound of the attack, the defenders rushed up so fiercely that poor Bure, in order to save his life from the hands of the Calus, fled with such haste that he lost even his shirt.

The vessels in which they mix these potions are made of the horns of animals. No one can claim to be a grandee if he does not own a fine, and elaborately twisted ram's horn. These are the infernal reliquaries of all the kinds of Manes, who arrived with these goods; and the native heathen when they received them paid for them with the money of idolatry, which the Manes themselves did not see in such a light because they are a warrior people who are more interested in the art of war. But today in this Province it is all one. /f.83/