Chapter 13

Reasons for the impact of this army of Manes, its marching order and its ceremonial

Mandimansa gave the bow (of command) to Sampos, whose general was Feraguira, and to Farma, who were Manes of the coast. He gave another bow to Manomassa, who gave it to Fera Messera, who was from the interior. Farma conquered on the sea coast (the ?) Kerefo, Cubes, Cubales, and Apermes: Tora was one of the latter. Feraguira gave all the territory extending from the Kerefos as far as Serra Leoa to Mabete as a dowry, because he gave him his daughter. Mabete was one of the Manes. Ma means 'lady', bate 'the white Guinea garden-egg plant'. His descendants today are those who receive tribute (from) the provinces and countries which the Manes possess. I have dealt with this point first, so as to make reference to the army and to the ruler from whom the generals received their command. I have mentioned Fera Messera for a reason that will appear later. Now I can deal with the subject of the chapter in more detail. The initial reason why this people migrated was, they say, because there was no room for them in their own native land.\(^a\) They left it to seek new lands and to discover new horizons, so that they could expand. (But) whoever is acquainted with this people and knows their courage and their desire to immortalise themselves will affirm that a second reason was their thirst to extend their fame, and without doubt this was what caused them to take up the difficult undertaking of discovering new worlds. Either reason is credible. The starting place for their army, the point at which this people emerged on their march, was the Cape of Good Hope, at 34° South.\(^b\)

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(a) The conquest by the Manes, their lengthy journey, and the labours of this people brought out and revealed the natural valour and noble spirit of all of them, in their determination to extend the fame of their name, but together with this, the greed of their leader.

(b) More or less.
and they conquered as far as 3° North, destroying the Congo and attacking Angola in the time of King Bernard, when Queen Catherine was ruling Portugal. They proceeded to devastate the whole coast and the neighbouring kingdoms, leaving behind them, in residence in the towns, a sufficient number to hold them, with no fear of rebellion on the part of the conquered, since they had killed and eaten the leading citizens and put in their place their young sons. /f.83v/ These, after seeing what had happened to their fathers, were sufficiently instructed in how they should behave in matters of government, and in loyalty (to the Manes).

Wearying of his conquests, Fera Messera ordered a large settlement to be founded in this latitude of 3°. The place was wild and not very fertile, and for this reason the Manes obtained food from certain neighbouring towns and districts. The kings and chief lords of these places, seeing that the army was becoming greedy for loot, decided to put it to siege, siege by hunger, which the native heathen call in their language dor. The most effective course they could find was to sabotage the Manes' agriculture, and to this end they sold them (as seed) rice which had been cooked. The Manes made their farms and planted the seed in the earth, but the response was slight. They were surprised at this novel state of affairs and endeavoured to find the cause. In order to learn the complete truth about what had gone wrong, they seized one native, and threatened to kill him if he did not explain the mysterious events. The black could not keep a secret and told all. The poor heathen recounted what his betters had done - the penalty incurred by those who ignore the words of the Saviour: "The servant knoweth not what his lord doth" (John 15.15). The lords had made a mistake, and this mistake was inevitably the cause of great trouble for them, as will be seen. Fera Messera was incapable of delaying his vengeance. He invented new forms of cruelty to deal out in full to his enemies. He ordered his own bow of bronze, a short one like those seen today in Serra Leoa, to be placed in a public open place; and he had a proclamation made in the name of Messera to the effect that whoever was bold enough to kill and eat his own mother in public view would not only receive great riches and many favours but would also gain the glorious title of commander-in-chief of the conquest from then onwards. For three months, more or less, all hearts in the army, hearts normally so courageous, pondered on an announcement so contrary to the dictates of the law of nature. But a Nero can always be found. Such a man was...
was Farma. He was a vigorous young man of great ambition, and widely recognised as such. He was seized with the desire to obtain the title already he saw himself stepping forward, and in his mind's eye he laid hands on the bow. He was ready to do it and was held back only by his lowly status, which always discourages action. But evil has never lacked tenacity, and so to no small extent it was with Farma. He opened his heart to a man who was a close acquaintance of Fera Messera, stating that as soon as he knew that he had gained the attention of his captain and lord, /f84r/ there would be little delay in the completion of his task. The confidant went away to consider the matter, and told Messera. The latter was so pleased that he renewed the proclamation, declaring that its terms applied to anyone serving in his army, of whatever status or rank. At this period, Faire (who became Farma) was a drummer, a post of consequence in the army which is normally allocated to nobles and those of particular courage, who when they leave this post may as a reward take up the bow. Faire's doubts were dissolved (?). The conclusion of the proclamation meant the end of the life of the savage's mother. He laid hands on the bow, held it up respectfully, and did not know where to put it. He sought out his mother, and killed her in the open place publicly, with all standing around to see the pitiful spectacle. Faire tore out those entrails of his mother which had borne him, and in absolute cruelty cooked that heart which had suffered so much on behalf of the savage. The voracious wolf sliced off those breasts which had lovingly nourished him and amputated the hands which had cared for him. Then on the spot he made a diabolical oath, never to lay the bow down.

He was treated by Messera with all the caresses and gifts the latter could bestow, and then as a token of his affection and a reward he gave him one of his best-loved wives, who was pregnant, declaring she would be a companion for his journey during his conquests. 'If she bears a son - as in fact happened, the son being Sambalette the Cruel, already mentioned - you will give him all the lands you gain, and will recognise him as your king and supreme lord. If she bears a daughter, you will divide the lands between all your children, passing on to them the duty of paying tribute'. It is generally held that he further gave him, as a controlling influence (?), his own sons Bofio and Bere Bere, in order to satisfy any doubts he felt about his Faire, for no-one can
have confidence in a servile heart. Their presence did not last long, since in the war which Farma had with his captain Sacena, one of them died paralysed, and the other died from poison.

Now I want to explain how it was that Faire advanced himself to the extent that he gained a name as famous as that of the general Farma Mane, a name already indicated; and that he became as remote from those of inferior status as any general born to the rank, and unlike one born of common stock. And in turn we shall speak about the real reasons why Messera remained (in Go)a. As for Faire's (new) name, Xere Ira, father of Bogo, King of the Casses, took one of his 'Faire', that is, a linguist or cassane in the native tongue, /f.84v/ and made him King of the Cubas, giving him with the kingdom the name of 'Messera' as a token of authority.

Faire's lord, (the original Messera), carried away with anger, gave his Faire the name of Farma, Mande Mansa's first general and the companion of Feraguira, thus compensating the more pointedly for the injury because it came from the other general. Fera Messera was Mandè Mansa's general in Gorée. After making his conquests, and since he felt old and very weary, Fera Messera gave his Faire the bow of command, as a reward for the good services he had received from him, and awarded him the advance guard in the hinterland. To Mareco, father of Fatema, he gave the sea-coast. In keeping with the dispositions and plans of Messera, the army of savages came marching on, under the command of two generals.

Now let us discuss the second point of the chapter, the military order and ceremony of the army. These were exactly the same as in Messera's army, or to put it more pointedly, in the devil's army, the military standard being an image of his people and the standard-bearer a virgin savage youth. The youth carried the wooden idol which was a cubit in height, and covered all over with amulets and war-medicines. The savages had so much confidence in these devilish inventions that there was not one of them who dared to fight without them: for they believed that they afforded absolute security of life, as duly mentioned earlier. The infernal idol hung from the neck of the standard-bearer in a halter, and he supported it and carried it with the utmost respect and reverence. With this cursed reliquary and without swaying to either side, this officer led the great horde of savages. This multitude from hell marched on in this fashion, destroying all it could. Not one savage turned back nor even looked round, out of fear of the captain who followed at the rear during these conquests, with his
strap made from booz fish. This is his lance (?), so that these captains are more executioners than (military affairs), etc; and thus the soldiers suffer. What it would have been to see the destruction wrought in that town which had been the cause of Messera's new strategy! How completely they carried out the oath they had taken to be the burial ground of their enemies! The battle was the most terrible and frightening that could be imagined. (See, ) now they clash and break down the stockades! Bows were pulled, arrows shot, spears thrown, all so fiercely that in a short time not a stone was left standing. And first they terrified /f.85/ the enemy, by throwing over the walls the bones and skulls and sections of flesh of those they had conquered on the way and in weaker towns, where they had spared neither father nor son. The wolves hungry for vengeance had swallowed them up. So much for the military order and ceremony of the army.

Now let us speak of the order they kept when the conquests were over. But let us begin with what they did immediately before a conquest, acting without ritual or superstitious practice, for though this has already been touched upon, now is the proper place for it.

When the army reached a district, if the town did not surrender they established a camp for all sections of the army: this was the normal practice. (Next) they seized the gates of the town; (c) and when the natives saw what they were doing, they (normally) surrendered at once. Such persons the captains treated with all humanity. But those who delayed surrender had to do the same in the end, submitting not freely but being forced to do so. The captains smiled, and they ordered the king, the officers of his council, and the judges to come to them. When they arrived, they immediately stripped off their smocks and stretched themselves out on the ground. As a token of subjection, the Manes placed a foot on the neck of each, and they put the king in stocks or chains. They ordered his oldest son to come with all his father's gold and precious possessions and as much as possible of his goods. Then in front of the prince his father was beheaded. The Manes established the prince as king, and handed over to him the officers and judges of the dead man. At this point, they made a speech to him about the attention and exactitude that obedience to higher rulers called for; - and his observance of this obedience was

(c) A method of securing the conquered lands against attempted rebellions.
greatly aided by the cruel spectacle they had carried out as a
warning, while if he fell short in anything they promised him rewards
for those deeds of of his which merited them. Furthermore, for
greater security they left in their forts a sufficient number of their
own men to frustrate any disturbance or uprising. The generals went on
their way with so little fear or expectation of rebellion that they
left behind their own sons, real or putative, as was explained when
funerals were discussed.

The fathers entrusted their sons with the obedience of the new
kings, whom they threatened with severe penalties if they failed to
carry out their obligations in any respect. Nor were the sons to fail
to treat the kings and lords with all respect and delicacy, as their
fathers requested them, saying that they should pay attention to them
as if they were actually their sons and as if the kings were the
higher rulers of their lands. The Manes took away as soldiers /f.85v/
those who were the most powerful and vigorous. The ones who remained
were always those with the least capacity for ill-doing, since the
Manes had made a meal of anyone who had improved himself. Such people
have normally few cares, while the rich man can never be at ease.
Hence the saying in the Gospel about the rich man: 'Soul, thou has much
goods laid up!', etc. (Luke 12.19). So much for the second matter of
the chapter. I omit many other slighter happenings which followed
these conquests, since they are not as relevant for this work, which
only deals with the more substantial matters and those in which there
is more that is worthy of comment.