Chapter 16

The arrival of the Manes in East India and how their army was routed

Desire for the precious stones and other valuables of the East induced this barbarian army to make its way in that direction also. Devastating all as they went along, they reached Mombasa, the most important fortress belonging to the crown of Portugal, after the fortress of Mozambique. They did great evil there, and ate a great number of Moors and Kaffirs. They were on the point of taking the fortress, and if the Lord had not protected it, this would without doubt have led to the East also suffering under the harsh rule of these savages. After God, it was due to the singular prudence of Admiral Tomé de Sousa Coutinho. He had been sent by the viceroy with a great fleet of pinnaces and galleys against the Turks, who with five ships had come from the Straits of Suez and passed through the Red Sea, down the coast of Arabia. Arriving by chance at Mombasa, he not only plundered the enemy, but seized the city from the Moors. With the aid of the King of Melindi, our great friend, since it was he who treated D. Vasco da Gama with all the marks of affection when he was in course of discovering India, as the Histories tell, with his help and with the help of his Mosungulos, the Portuguese attacked the Manes or Zimbos, this being the name the Manes passed themselves off under during this journey. The Manes gained no advantage this time from their war-medicines, from their archery, from their rattan shields, which are so large that they cover the whole body, or from their eating of human flesh which inspired terror in more cowardly hearts.

All these advantages were as nothing to the courageous spirit of our Portuguese soldiers. They marched on the savages, they hurled themselves on them. The blood of the enemy ran in streams. Some were mortally wounded, others fell dead on the spot. So that they might be turned into complete cowards, and to mock their savage grimaces, they were anointed with their own blood, and their own flesh was pressed against their teeth, that flesh which was more savage than the flesh of Hyrcanian tigers. Such was the ruin of the wretched Zimbos in this place. Thus there fell on them the hand of the Most Powerful: all of the 200,000 who had held the fortress were killed by the Portuguese soldiers. The fortress again became part of the patrimony of the kings of Portugal.

Now that I have mentioned the Mosungulos, I shall explain what sort of people they are. All Kaffir-land is subject to the King of Melindi. When the Mosungulos are young, they wear very strong helmets made of clay: they sleep with them on their heads, and they anoint their bodies with the same clay. The superstition of this people is striking. If they kill a man in
battle, and wish to be promoted to knighthood by their commanders, they cut off the dead man's genital organ and swallow it, and then vomit up before their commanders. The commanders strike them on their helmet with a sword, and in this way promote them; and they enjoy the most esteem in the army. They dry out the penis, and display it in all the ceremonies associated with their promotion, and in their marriage ceremonies, so that it is virtually the mark and insignia of their knighthood. When they die, it goes with them. Such are the Mosungulos. /f.91/