Chapter 17

The state of the Province after the conquest, and how the members of the Society of Jesus entered the Province

At the end of a journey lasting ten years, for the conquest took this length of time, the soldiers, tired by their long march, chose this Serra to settle in and to lead the way of life which this group still maintains after 75 years of continuing peace, during which they have adopted in entirety the customs of the natives. They trade with all kinds of foreigners, acquiring basins, cloth of different kinds, beads (a) and salt - their own being limited - and the merchants take away cola, which is very valuable, ivory and the other rare and scarce goods which, as I have said, this country produces. For it is fertile out of malice, its most common product, which is available at the expense of finer goods of altogether greater value, that is, the human soul.

The world, the flesh, and the devil, the first with its falsehood, the second with its vileness, the third with its idolatry, have made this place a hell on earth. The Society of Jesus found the Province in the state in the year of Our Lord 1605. Having disembarked at its chief port, which today we call the Port of St. Michael, the Society began there and then to direct the earliest rays of divine illumination and the splendour of the Gospel faith so that they aroused the interest of the savage king Here the glorious Archangel, in honour of his true master, and as if replying the honour given to himself when his angelic name was given to the port in which the holy Society had first landed its heavenly merchandise, went into battle with the licentious Goliath, the prince of darkness. The ambassadors of heaven (sc. Barreira) had great confidence that all these kingdoms would respond with great and very joyful acceptance of the living and true faith in view of the very certain and almost infallible signs of its progress. The apostle counted among these the very fervent desires of Bure, which he was able to attribute to the happy progress of the religion of the Saviour. These were his hopes, based on these early and important foundations /f.91v/. The Lord showed himself liberal towards Bure, this being the name of the tyrant. The Divine Spirit touched him with very great power and impelling vehemence, to as great an extent as the padre could incite, so that he displayed extraordinary fervour which astonished the

(a) Precious stones from the East, alaqueca and brandil. And cosouro which the heathen use in their gewsgaws, hanging it from their necks, and from their hair and beards, as Old Farma used to do.
Apostle. Now the king did away with idolatry, now with sins of the flesh, now with everything which offended the dictates of natural and divine law, and all this without his being even a catechumen. He appeared true master of both laws, his fervour being more by nature than by grace. But in his fervour he did not recognise so easily that it was necessary to have first much divine illumination and much experience of the character and inclinations of the heathen. I do not wish to go further into the inner secrets of this (?) man) since one can easily deduce them from what has been said about the good and bad inclinations throughout this Man-E Province.

A short time after the padre's arrival at the port, the whole Province already shared the fragrance of his virtues. The news of the Apostle's fortunate arrival was spread not only by public report but also by his holy life and heavenly teaching. The savage perceived the odour, he followed it with great astonishment, he saw the saintly pilgrim, he listened to him, and the harmony of his divine words so touched him and appealed to him that he was completely overcome. What need be said of the signs of spiritual happiness manifested by the savage when he saw a portrait of the Saviour's mother? The padre brought her as his prisoner in the best sense, as a sure guide and explorer of the roughland and wastes of infidelity, confident that she would open doors and take possession, to provide for the adoration of the true God. The signs were so multiplied in all the kingdoms that the savage, after being penetrated by the deep force of holy inspiration, did not know where to receive the divine ambassador or when he would be bathed in the holy waters (of baptism), as he himself said. He did not wish to lose the happy opportunity, while recognising himself unworthy of such a good. Already people had begun to plead (to the padre) and the king made himself the chief of these. Already he said to himself, "Who has sent the padre to my lands? Who made him stay in my ports first? I must go to him: I will beg him to cure me". Holy words, yet I do not know whether, here in Ethiopia and in view of its character, they came from the Holy Spirit or from that famous idol which is surrounded by the ignorant in serras and at courts, that is, self-interest, so artful (a deceiver). /f.92/ So spoke Bure, who, even if he was deceiving the padre, could not conceal his most secret thoughts from that Lord who is the true overseer of all such and the divine miner (who penetrates the depths) of our souls. Whatever a man may say, however he may behave, to whatever extent he pretends to be holy, even if he disguises himself to the maximum of his ability, the curtain which he employs to hide his true image cannot possibly cover it so completely that it prevents the All-Powerful from drawing it aside whenever He wishes.
I have digressed here so that those who have a taste for such things can learn the true nature of this Janus. His intentions being such as only Heaven could discover, he decided, when kneeling before the true God, to consider Him as his father and lord, and to turn his back on the errors of idolatry. Bure kept his calculations to himself. The pilot raised the anchor; but the ambassador arrived, and the king begged for holy baptism. The padre considered it a heavenly manifestation and welcomed it with great joy. The king came himself and declared his change of heart. If he had revealed both (?) faces he would have benefited more from the change. In the end the man did not gain what can only come from the divine court of judgment. The padre deferred to him entirely, believing that in this place had been won the first victories over hell, by the intervention of the Queen of Angels, and that here there had been planted the roots of the first divine mustard-grain of our faith. The holy traveller was not deceived, for when strength of arms did not issue forth from Bure's frail tower, it doubtless did from other towers of greater power. What extremes of devotion the savage carried out after receiving holy baptism! What speeches he made exalting our holy religion! He spoke of the Lord's miracles, he recognised the sacred Gospel as the masterpiece of the centuries. He was turned from Bure into Philip, which means 'the warlike one, the warrior'.

(b) He defied labours, hunger, thirst, torture; and he promised so much that it seemed that his one aim in life could never be other than to serve Christ Jesus. Faced by this testimony, who would not have believed it? The padre rendered thanks to the All-Highest for revealing so much of Himself to an idolater. He decided to instruct him in the mysteries of the faith. This success the apostle considered the most refreshing reward that the country could offer him in the course of such a pilgrimage. /†.92*/

(b) Philip the warrior, or the horse-lover.