

Oriente Conquistado A Jesu Christo

KONKANAPURANA



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This may seem as a continuation of the series we just concluded in the second half of last year on the Christian missionaries in India. Well, it is not; it is about a book that documents the beginning of the 'christianisation' of Old Conquests in Goa. The book 'Oriente Conquistado A Jesu Christo pelos Padres da Companhia de Jesu Da Provincia De Goa' (East Conquered for Jesus Christ by the Priests of the Society of Jesus of the Province of Goa) by Fr. Francisco de Sousa, a Jesuit himself, was published in Lisbon in 1710. One may say that it is likely to be partisan. Yes, it is partisan in perception; the author has written what he considered to be the right thing true to his beliefs. But he has stated the bare facts without distortion; it is up to us to deem his beliefs right or wrong. Let us accept that there is a difference between what is true and what is right. If we are looking for bare facts of the conversion process in Goa, probably there cannot be a better source. What is to be appreciated is that Fr. de Sousa has not minced words or hidden facts

just because they may look ugly or may be used against the Jesuits. It is in this spirit that I am presenting Oriente Conquistado. I feel that this is in the spirit of the faith that Fr. de Sousa and his 'companheiros' sought to propagate, even if we hold their means of its propagation wrong.

The book is divided into two volumes; the first volume covers the time period 1542 to 1552; and the second volume the period 1564 to 1574; it is the second volume which is of greater interest to us. Therefore, we go straight to volume 2, page 68. I shall quote verbatim the relevant passage and then comment on it if necessary.

Immediately in the next year, that is 1567, there was a total destruction of temples of Salcete. And it happened in this way. Diogo Rodrigues 'of the fort', and not Diogo Fernandes as many authors claim. Young and valiant was the captain of the fort of Rachol, and also the chaplain of the fort and the parish priest of the villages assigned to Fr. Luis Goes, who must have succeeded Fr. Pero Colasso.

One day, the Captain called the villagers of Loutolim, the village half a league away from the fort. As they did not obey his orders, he asked them what he should do. They replied that he should burn the houses in the village. The captain replied that he would rather burn the house of the devil. And gave orders to burn the main temple of Loutolim. The panic that the burning of the temple created among the people is unbelievable. Since they could not avenge the incident in any way, they ran to Goa (Old Goa) to complain against the Captain to His Majesty, seeking justice.

The Captain, Diogo Rodrigues, was ordered to restore the burnt temple at his own cost. The Captain retorted that it was against the law of God to raise a temple to a pagan God. And that he would not risk making good the loss in any other way, in case the villagers have any right to the property dedicated to the devil. The timber from the temples converted into the royal treasury.

ORIENTE CONQUISTADO

A JESU CHRISTO

PELOS PADRES

DA COMPANHIA DE JESUS da Provincia de Goa.

PRIMEYRA PARTE,

Na qual se contém os primeyros vinte, e dous annos desta Provincia,

ORDENADA

Pelo P. FRANCISCO DE SOUSA Religiofo da mesma Companhia

DE

JESUS.

LISBOA,

Na Officina de VALENTIM DA COSTA DESLANDES, Impressor de Sua Magestade.

M DCCX.

Com todas as licenças necessarias.

were supported. India women living in temples are called bailadeiras (nautch girls). Often they are widows, who refuse to burn themselves on the pyre of their husbands, and whose families refuse to look after them; and therefore have to fend for themselves.

Here rests Diogo Rodrigues, 'of the Fort', the Captain of this fort, who destroyed the temples of this land. Died on 21st April 1577."

Fr. Luis de Goes wished to take this scandalous situation from the gaze of the new Christians. And he requested Captain Diogo Rodrigues to make a beginning with Mardol (Verna). As more temples were demolished, the houses of bailadeiras too were razed to the ground and idols were reduced to ashes and the temple water tanks profaned; leaving intact only the temple at the request of Fr. Luis de Goes who was moved by the 'majesty' of the temple architecture and the 'frescura' (pleasantness) of the site. And suggested that it be consecrated to the Purest Conception of Queen of Angels, so that the Immaculate Virgin may be venerated where once so many young women were sacrificed at the feet of the Venus of Salcete. And it was for this very reason that Fr. Goes' petition was rejected and the temple was ordered to be destroyed. Fr. Goes paid for his exhausting efforts heavily; for soon he fell sick and was moved to St. Paul's College to breathe his last among his brothers. After receiving all the sacraments, he requested that his head be turned towards the wall where hung a picture of Virgin Mary, whose great devotee he had been all his life. Here he was bathed in singular joy. Perhaps he received consolation from Our Lady in his last moments. He was 63 when he was received in India, had been a Jesuit for eight years, and he died on July 25, 1567.

If the justice in Goa condemned Diogo Rodrigues for demolishing a temple, the king Dom Sebastião rewarded his good servant with a gift of property in the very land of the demolished temples and was buried in the main chapel of the Church of Our Lady of Snows in Rachol; and ordered the following plaque to be installed over his tomb: "Here rests Diogo Rodrigues, 'of the Fort', the Captain of this fort, who destroyed the temples of this land. Died on 21st April 1577."

Because someone curious might ask, how were there were so many temples in such a small place; it should be noted that the temples here are small poorly built hermitages with the idol in the middle on an open altar, or to put it in a better say, on a platform of earth. However, the most elegant of them was dedicated to a woman called Mhalsadevi, who was worshipped in the Mardol neighborhood of Verna village (atop a hill), in which a large number of women



Our Lady of Snows Church, Rachol