

The mayhem at Cuncolim

TENSING RODRIGUES

The story of the mayhem in Cuncolim continues.

"At the same time, they wounded and threw Bro. Francisco Aranha down a low ditch. He received a severe blow on the neck, and he was thrown into a rice-strawn meadow; but he was not fully dead. The third victim was Father Pero Berno, who was hit with a knife; they gouged out his eyes with a spear, cut off half of his right ear, and cut off his private parts, which they put in his mouth with barbaric insult. He fell next to Bro. Francisco Aranha, at the foot of the fence, in the floodplain. He was followed by Father Afonso Pacheco, who was struck by a spear, and crossing his arms, and his eyes raised to Heaven. They gave him a slash across the throat, and he died." [de Sousa, 1710: 'Oriente Conquistado A Jesu Christopelos Padres da Companhia de Jesu Da Provincia De Goa', Part 2, p. 191]

"The last to die was Fr. Antonio Francisco who lost his life to pagan swords. They gave him a slash on the head with which he died immediately. Bro. Francisco Aranha got up from the place where they had wounded him, and when he was seen by a shepherd who went to warn the people of the village, the idolaters came and, taking him with great fanfare and shouting, dragged him twice around the temple. Then they made him stand in front of the idol on one foot, as the Moors do when they want to torment a criminal. While he was in this position, they ordered him to bow down to the temple. To which the holy brother replied: "Am I as holy as you, who worship bread and stones?" Enraged by this answer, they threw him to the ground and made him a target for their bullets; and at each shot they said to him: "Now you build a Church and raise a Cross." Finally, when he was almost dead, the women and children with sharp sticks and spears fell upon him, and after they had finished killing him, they anointed the idol with his blood."

"They also killed two Brahmin boys with the priests, our domestic servants, one from Cuncolim, by the name of Domingos, because he had been making fun of the temples, when the priests had torn them down. The other boy was called Afonso, and he must have been the godson of Father Afonso. This boy was said to be a native of Margao, or of Verna, belonging to the family Costas Jeremias, who still survive today in Margao with a number of descendants."

"They also killed the Receiver Francisco Rodriguez, Bramhan, very zealous and honourable. On the same occasion died Paulo da Costa, a bramhan resident of Rachol, of much virtue, and purity of confidence. He had a particular devotion to reading the lives and struggles of the Holy Martyrs, the lessons of which brought

many tears, and he wanted to die for the Catholic faith. The gentiles wanted to forgive Attorney Gonçalo Rodríguez, a Portuguese, but driven by some motive, either crueler, or more cautious, they decided to take his life, so that the faith, or the news of its success will not spread. The other Portuguese, Domingos de Aguiar escaped due to the influence of a gentle friend, who hid him. Almost at the same time, when this was happening in the palm groves of Salcete, the new Fathers and Brothers were in the rectory of S. Paulo de Goa, attending a discourse on the forty Martyrs of Brasil, who on the same day had died for the faith, in front of the Island of Palmas."

"The Gentiles had their confabulations over the bodies of the five Fathers and Brothers and consulted the

temple. For them it was garbage, which they threw into a pit, which, due to the cold winter weather, had a lot of water and covered them with tree branches, so as not to be discovered by the Portuguese. The Father Vicars of Salcete soon found out about the operation from the other families, who escaped; and the Provincial Father Ruy Vicente, who left Goa [Old Goa] at noon accompanied by thirty Fathers."

"By sunset all of them arrived in Margão, four leagues away from Goa [Old Goa], and then, through the Captain of the fortress of Rachol Gomezeanes de Figueyredo, they sent to ask for the bodies of the Fathers from the gentiles of Cuncolim, who, as they were still like scavenging tigers, lashing out at the blood of the priests, did not want to hand them over in any way. There

were many messengers coming and going between them. And finally, the Captain sent a message to them, that he would look for them, and take them by force of arms. The father Provincial had already gathered with companions at Rachol, when they gave him the good news that the missing bodies were coming along the way. They were covered in shrouds, and they arrived at midnight. They were taken to the main church of Our Lady of Neves, which served as the church for our college as well." [de Sousa, 1710: 'Oriente Conquistado A Jesu Christopelos Padres da Companhia de Jesu Da Provincia De Goa', Part 2, p. 194]

"Count Viceroy was very saddened by the death of the fathers. So was the envoy of the Moghul king, who happened to be in Goa on his way to Portugal the following January with Fr. Antonio de Monserrate, to congratulate King Dom Filipe on the new additions to his kingdom."

"There was a great uproar among citizens who wanted to avenge the death of the Fathers and others. After beating the drum through the streets of Goa [Old Goa], the entire city was ready to march, and some offered to defray the expenses of the expedition. But it was not necessary to form an army to punish the idolators, because the Captain of Rachol Gomezeanes de Figueyredo took the 10 heads [chieftains] of the rebels into his hands, and after speaking with them behind closed walls of a bulwark which he erected in the village of Assolna, he killed them, except one who jumped over the bastion, and fled. Oral history talks about how one of the chiefs Calgo Naik, jumped in the nearby river Sal and swam to safety and thus lived to tell the tale. Many others of the culprits died in exile in the lands of Adilkhan. Cuncolim, with the most restless villages, was handed over to the Royal Crown. The pit where the Fathers were thrown, was made into a well, and they erected two crossed arches on top of it which was later consecrated as the Church of Our Lady of Martyrs."

PIC CREDIT: SANJEEV V. SARDESAI



The Cuncolim Chieftains' Memorial

KONKANAPURANA



Tensing Rodrigues is engaged in research on Konkani language and people