

Chapter II

FIRST STRIDES OF CATHOLICISM IN ORISSA

The arrival of Christian missionaries, who came to live among the Tribals and Dalits with no other motive than to serve God and his people, brought these oppressed groups a ray of hope. This chapter, after providing meagre information available about the beginnings of Christianity in India, will describe the first mission stations established in Orissa during the Portuguese period as well as the 19th-century missionary activities, which vitalised the dormant missionary efforts in India.

Due to the vastness and the complexity of the topic, this study limits itself to some of the salient features of the nineteenth-century Catholic Church. It will consider those Apostolic Briefs and Exhortations, which shaped the missionary character of the Catholic Church in India and are relevant to the missionary activity in Orissa. This chapter will also investigate the despatches of missionaries from newly founded congregations, which not only established 'frontier missions' but also provided old ones with renewed vigour. It is also appropriate to consider the internal organisations relating to the missionary efforts of the two major congregations studied here – the Society of Jesus and the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales. This will form a background for the Ranchi (Chotanagpur) and Visakhapatnam¹ Missions. In conclusion, this chapter will recall the initial efforts of the missionaries in exploring the *terra incognita*.

2.1 Christianity in Orissa up to the 19th Century

According to the time-honoured traditions of South India, the Christian presence in India is almost as old as Christianity itself. Tradition holds that the Apostle St. Thomas landed at Malinkara, a village near Cranganore in Kerala about the year 52 A. D.² There he established seven churches, whose members were commonly known as 'St. Thomas Christians'.³ Then St. Thomas proceeded to the neighbouring country

¹ Till 1947 the city was known under the name Vizagapatam, a name that was widely used by the missionaries in their correspondence with their confreres and relatives in France. After the Independence of India the city was renamed Visakhapatnam. For the sake of uniformity, the name Visakhapatnam is used, except when cited from the text. Cf. *Histoire de la Mission*, AMSFS, 5H4 Inde.

² Leo Kierkels, former Apostolic Delegate in India vents the tradition prevailing in India: "Legend and tradition speak of St. Thomas journeying overland, via Taxila in the north and arriving at Musiris (Cranganore) in the south by sea. The date for the latter event is traditionally placed at 52 A. D., a year or so after the Council of Jerusalem." L. KIERKELS, *To Commemorate the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Catholic Hierarchy in India and Ceylon 1886 – 1946*, Bangalore 1946, p. 12.

³ Though the South Indian apostolate of St. Thomas is itself clouded in darkness, due to lack of, or rather in the absence of, documentary evidences, one cannot ignore the possibility of the apostolate of St. Thomas in India as there are persisting traditions that were handed down to posterity in the form of folksongs. If they are analysed critically and taken into consideration with the later evidences like copper plate grants which are an authentic form of enquiry into the past of a people who had reasons in not conserving the documents, we could well arrive at some reliable conclusions with regard to the early beginnings of Christianity in India. A. MUNDADAN, *History of Christianity in India: From the Beginning Up to Middle of the Sixteenth Century (up to 1542)*, Vol. I, Bangalore 1984, p. 29. Their consciousness of being the disciples of St. Thomas is attested by their adherence to the tradition that the Apostle established seven Churches: Palayur, Cranganore, Kokkamangalam, Parur, Niranam, Nilakkel and Quilon. Their belief in the South Indian apostolate of St. Thomas is brightened by the fact of their affinity

where he achieved the crown of martyrdom.⁴ For unknown reasons, early Christianity in India did not spread to other parts of the country. The diffusion of Christianity in India was largely the work of the later *Portuguese Padroado*.

2.1.1 'Maritime Evangelisation'

The great age of conversion⁵ dawned with the exploration and discovery of distant lands. A desire for lucrative business, inquisitiveness and a spirit of adventure brought the European merchants to the shores of Malabar and even beyond. Once they became familiar with the sea route to the distant isles, the Portuguese explorers were convinced of the need to spread Christianity. They thought that if the conquered peoples became Christians they would be loyal to a Christian king. This would logically mean that missionaries accompanied all the expedition groups that went to the East. They could proudly proclaim that they had come in search of 'Christians and Spices'.⁶ This is attested by the fact that Christianity under the Portuguese flourished along the coast. One of the original dreams of the Portuguese was to establish Christianity in the entire territory that they thought was under their control. They tried to achieve this in many ways but not without much struggle and resistance on the part of native Hindus.⁷

Having established themselves in Goa by 1510,⁸ missionaries, approved and supported by the Portuguese authorities (as representatives of the King of Portugal), were sent to Bengal with the hope of establishing Christianity there and of subjugating the territory to *Padroado*. Their plans to subjugate the territory worked well for Goa, but the situation was different in Bengal. Although (Portuguese) missionaries had established some mission centres that coincided with Portuguese mercantile stations along the Bay of Bengal, they missionaries were busy in administering the sacraments to the Europeans who lived there for trade and commerce. For this reason the missionaries did not take the initiative to convert the native population. It was probably for this reason that these centres disappeared like 'sandy constructions on a sea-beach'. The Jesuits⁹ and Augustinians¹⁰ were the early evangelisers in Bengal.

to one or the other communities mentioned above. Cf. B. VADAKKEKARA, *Origin of India's St. Thomas Christians*, Delhi 1995, pp. 18, 137 ff.

⁴ The archaeological evidences and the veneration of the tomb by not only Christians but also people of other religions are indications that the person buried there was a holy man. Concerning the historicity of the tomb, Benedict Vadakkekara observed: "The ancient tomb of Mylapore, the testimonies of the ecclesiastical writers, and the constant belief of the different churches serve as collateral evidences in vouching for this historical actuality". Ibid., pp. 469 – 470

⁵ In order to recapture the spirit of the times the term 'conversion' is used.

⁶ J.J.A. CAMPOS, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, Calcutta 1919, p. 12.

⁷ M. DOMENGE, *La Mission de Vizagapatam*, p. 100.

⁸ M. Mundadan writes: "Historians agree that the primary aim of the Portuguese expeditions to the East was not to establish a colonial empire but to gain control over profitable trade." M. MUNDADAN, *History of Christianity in India: From the Beginning up to the Middle of the Sixteenth Century (Up to 1542)*, p. 432.

⁹ H. Jossion wrote that "le P. Nicolas Pimenta, Visiteur de la Compagnie de Jésus aux Indes, envoya au Bengale, en 1598, le P. Francois Fernandes, Supérieur de la Mission et le P. Dominique de Sousa. L'année suivante, vu les bonnes nouvelles qui lui parvenaient, le P. Visiteur désigna deux autres Pères pour la même Mission: les PP. André Boves et Melchior Fonseca". Thus, we could conclude that the

The Orissa coast held a strategic position on the map for the Portuguese, since its waters were less violent than other coasts in India. During the first quarter of the 16th century, the Portuguese founded a few settlements along the coast. Initially they obtained a royal sanction for their trade. Commenting on the Portuguese merchants' supremacy on Orissa coast, Ganesh Chandra Rath observed:

Portuguese merchants established their commercial supremacy and by 1599 A.D. the Portuguese trade in Orissa was already in a very prosperous condition. Thus, the people of Orissa can be said to have had an uninterrupted commercial and maritime trade from the 16th century B.C. to the end of 16th century A.D. At that time the Orissa coast was known as *kalinga* coast and the merchants of Orissa earned the reputation of being *Sadhabas*, rich and prosperous. During the 16th century A.D. ships, great and small, adorned the ports of Orissa.¹¹

The maritime importance of ports like Pipli, Balasore and Ganjam, known for “the facility for reconstruction of ships and the availability of export commodities, encouraged multinational European companies to establish their factories in different port towns of Orissa”.¹²

2.2 Christian presence in Orissa: the Portuguese period

J. J. A. Campos thought: “The earliest European settlements in the Gulf of Bengal were established in Orissa. It was the same with the Portuguese as with the English and the Dutch”.¹³ It was natural for missionaries to follow Portuguese Christians, wherever their work took them, to provide for their spiritual needs. Thus, one might conclude that the expansion of the mission work occurred, at least initially, wherever they found Portuguese traders and their servants, particularly in some of the coastal settlements that were situated in Orissa. As mentioned earlier, in comparison

Jesuits were the first ones to reach Bengal. H. JOSSON, *La Mission du Bengale Occidental*, vol. I, Bruges 1921, p. 51.

¹⁰ The friars of St. Augustine, officially known as the order of the Hermits of St. Augustine, was one of the most important mendicant orders formed during the 13th century. They belonged to a reformed branch of the order, known as the Discalced Augustinians, sometimes called the ‘Barefooted Augustinians’ or ‘Augustinian Recollects’. The first batch of Augustinians arrived in Goa in 1572. There is a dispute among the Augustinian historians themselves as to the time of their arrival in Bengal. Sicardo and other Augustinian historians place it in 1599. Manrique asserts that they came after the Portuguese settled in Hoogly in 1580. By living a more austere life, and by being faithful to something of their former hermitical status, they were more ready than others to go abroad and to be preachers of Christianity. Cf. E.R. HAMBYE, “Christianity in Bengal of the 17th and 18th Centuries: Some Notes and Remarks”, in *IES* 9/1 (1970), p. 40. Campos is of the opinion that the Augustinians established themselves at Bandel which had a church, “on which depended all the churches and parishes in Dacca, Salicur, Chandpur, Banja, Pipli, Balasore, Tamluk, Jessore, Hijili, Tesgaon, Chittagonga, Dianga, Rangamati, Catroba, Sirpur and Arakan”. J.J.A. CAMPOS, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, p. 107.

¹¹ G.C. RATH, “Impact of European Companies on the Foreign Trade of Orissa during the Mughal Era”, in *Indica* 36/1 (1999), p. 5.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹³ Affirming the presence of the British in Orissa, J.J.A. Campos wrote: “Before the English had any footing in Bengal, they (Portuguese) settled in Pipli in 1625 and in Balasore in 1625.” J.J.A. CAMPOS, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, p. 97.

with the ports in Bengal, the ports in Orissa were very adept for navigation. Here follows the scanty information we have about some of the stations.¹⁴

2.2.1 Hijili

This coastal station was situated on the border between Orissa and Bengal. J. J. A. Campos observed: “It was formerly an island now united to the mainland and was a district of Orissa under native rulers. At the time of the Portuguese occupation, it had its own chiefs but in 1505 according to local traditions the Muhammadans under Taj Khan and his brother, took possession of it.”¹⁵ Hijili may have been the first European settlement in the Bengal region and the Portuguese merchants carried on a brisk trade there. Because of this the Christian community was also large. Two churches were successively built there, which grew into parishes, owing to the increased number of Christians.

A. Hartmann records: “In 1622 Fr. Manoel de Esperança had gone to Orissa to establish a new Christian community near Hijili, because he heard that many Portuguese lived there whose faith had grown cold. When the Moslems heard of his intention, they tied him to a tree and whipped him. They also threatened to kill him, if he should continue his efforts”.¹⁶ He therefore transferred the people to a new location only to discover that it was infested with tigers. The second church was erected because of a persecution, which resulted in the destruction of Hoogly in 1632. Many Christians took refuge in Hijili. This exodus also affected Banja, another settlement in the vicinity. As trade declined, so did the Christian community. By the beginning of the 19th century the Christian community disappeared and the two churches were destroyed.¹⁷ Hijili was later called *Feringhi* or *Feringhee Desh* (a term applied to the Portuguese).¹⁸

2.2.2 Balasore

¹⁴ By the Portuguese period is meant the time when the Portuguese *Padroado* missionaries were active in various parts of India, i.e. the 16th and 17th centuries. The Christians of the Portuguese period could fall under three categories: 1) Europeans coming from different nations for commerce and other related matters who are found along the Hugli; 2) the descendants of Portuguese in the service of the Mughal government (they were strong in some centres: Hugli, Pipli, Chittagong, Dacca, etc.); and 3) the local converts, who were not many in number. Cf. H. JOSSON, *La Mission du Bengale Occidental*, vol. I, pp. 115 – 116.

¹⁵ J.J.A. CAMPOS, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, p. 94.

¹⁶ A. HARTMANN, “The Augustinian Mission of Bengal (1599 - 1834)”, in *Analecta Augustiniana* 41 (1978), p. 175.

¹⁷ The Augustinians built the two churches, and both of them were dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary. The destruction of the churches was probably due to inundation and lack of maintenance in a climate affected by salt water. J.J.A. CAMPOS, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, pp. 94-96; E.R. HAMBYE, “Christianity in Bengal of the 17th and 18th Centuries. Some Notes and Remarks”, p. 44; J. THEKKEDATH, *History of Christianity in India: From the Middle of the Sixteenth to the End of the Seventeenth Century (1542-1700)*, Vol.II, Bangalore 1982, p. 466.

¹⁸ J.J.A. CAMPOS, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, pp. 94 – 95. Since the term *Feringhi* could be same as *Parangi*, an explanation will follow later in the chapter when we deal with the Malabar rite controversy.

Balasore was situated on the coast of Orissa,¹⁹ that is, on the Bay of Bengal. J.J.A. Campos remarked that, “the Portuguese had a small settlement in Balasore of which no vestige now remains”.²⁰ There was the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary, which existed till 1730. It was a parochial church having, probably, a resident Friar. It formerly had several thousand Christians, but by the year 1720 it counted only about 1,000. One could argue that it was the decline in trade that contributed to or even resulted in the poverty of the people.²¹ The revival of Christianity began with the arrival of the Belgian Jesuits in 1865 when Fr. Sapart²² came to stay in Balasore. The mission began to produce results, particularly during the time of the Great Famine. In any case, the number of adherents was so negligible that it never made any big news in the mission.²³ In August 1672, Balasore received a distinguished guest, Msgr. Francis Pallu, Vicar Apostolic of Tonkin, who was on his way to his mission. Due to inclement weather, he had to remain in Balasore for some time. He spoke of the deplorable condition of Christianity in that region. It was from here that the missionaries took care of Cuttack where there were some Christians in the service of Nawab, the governor of the country.²⁴

2.2.3. Pipli

Pipli was a maritime town situated on the Bay of Bengal,²⁵ in the kingdom of Cuttack (*Cateca*), where the Portuguese also had a settlement.²⁶ The Portuguese seem to

¹⁹ Though Balasore corresponds to the present city in the eastern part of Orissa, it is now devoid of the sea which receded during the course of years. The long stretch along the Bay of Bengal was sometimes called the Orissa coast.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

²¹ Besides Balasore there was another centre called Jampardo or Jampada, which was probably near Gabgaon, a village adjoining the old Balasore where there was the Church of Our Lady of Salvation. There were never many Christians in the settlement. It was completely abandoned at the beginning of 19th century. Cf. E.R. HAMBYE, “Christianity in Bengal of the 17th and 18th Centuries. Some Notes and Remarks”, pp. 39–53; J. THEKKEDATH, *History of Christianity in India*, vol. II, p. 465.

²² Chrysanthus Sapart was born on October 25, 1816, at Châtelet (Hainaut). He entered the Society of Jesus on October 2, 1835 and arrived in India on January 31, 1861. He died at Ranchi on March 14, 1906. Cf. R. MENDIZÁBAL, *Catalogus Defunctorum in renata Societate Iesu ab a. 1814 ad a. 1970*, Romae 1972, p. 200.

²³ Fr. Sapart started the Balasore mission again in 1865. The principal activities of the missionaries were: instruction of catechumens and neophytes, visiting the dispersed Christians and doing some charitable work, like the care of poor children going to school. Though this mission deserves historical analysis, due to the extensive area under our purview, this study limits itself to the southern and north-western parts of Orissa.

²⁴ From August 1672 till March 8, 1673, Msgr. Pallau remained in Balasore. Cf. H. JOSSON, *La Mission du Bengale Occidental*, vol. I, pp. 85-86.

²⁵ It is not the present Pipli town found in the Puri district of Orissa. It might have been located on the mouth of Subarnerekha River. Campos mentions: “In the beginning of the sixteenth century, that is, a short time after the discovery of the sea-route to India (1498) the Portuguese established themselves on the coast of Madras. Alarmed at the growth of a foreign power, the natives rose against the Portuguese, who escaped northward and in 1514 founded a town in Pipli about four miles from the mouth of

have settled in Pipli by 1514.²⁷ During the first decades of the 17th century there was a parish there with about 300 Christians.²⁸ There was also a Dutch factory there, but it is asserted that the vicar of the place, Francis de Piedade, managed to get the local Muslim governor to chase them away in 1622. The Augustinians built a residence, and a priest visited regularly whenever there was a need, like baptism, marriage, etc.²⁹ Most of these Christians were either Portuguese or Indian soldiers in the service of the Muslim chieftains. When the military unit was disbanded later in the century, the Christians dispersed and the parish itself was closed down.³⁰ The priest of Balasore looked after the few that remained at Pipli.³¹ However, it is not certain when the mission was closed, since some sources indicate that the church was destroyed by a cyclone in 1832.³²

2.2.4 Tumlok

Probably called by other names, like Tamboly or Tamluk, this was yet another coastal settlement where there was the Church of our Lady of Hope. According to Campos, “Tamluk is situated on the southern bank of the *Rupanayan* and was an important seaport in ancient times mentioned as *Tamalites* in Ptolemy’s geography”.³³ The settlement was meant for the few Christians who were dependents of the Portuguese who had commercial dealings there. The church was built under the influence of the famous Augustinian traveller and official visitor, Fr. Manrique, who obtained a *firman* to this end from the Muslim Governor of Cuttack.³⁴ This privilege

Subarnarekha river, establishing their earliest settlement on the coast of the Bay of Bengal.” J.J.A. CAMPOS, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, p. 97.

²⁶ Pipli was called the Little Port in comparison to the big one that was Hugli (sometimes, it is spelt as Hoogli). “Vers 1567, les ports fréquentés par leurs navires étaient: le Port d’Orissa, probablement Pipli; le Petit Port (Porto Pequeno), c’est-à-dire l’estuaire du bras le plus occidental du Gange”. It is here that the Portuguese founded their first settlements. Cf. H. JOSSON, *La Mission du Bengale Occidental*, vol. I, p. 47.

²⁷ J.J.A. CAMPOS, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, p. 94.

²⁸ Campos wrote: “Early in the seventeenth century the Augustinians built a church and a residence in Pipli the church was dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary.” *Ibid.*, p. 98.

²⁹ A. HARTMANN, “The Augustinian Mission of Bengal (1599 - 1834)”, p. 168.

³⁰ The decline of Pipli was due to the difficulty of navigation as sand began to gather. H. Jossen explained the reason in the following words: “...que l’ensablement de la Subarnarekha rendait de plus en plus inaccessible aux naïvres”. H. JOSSON, *La Mission du Bengale Occidental*, p. 97. A. Hartmann thought that “Pipli had a shallow harbour with not enough depth for ships to anchor in. So eventually it lost its trade to Hugli”. A. HARTMANN, “The Augustinian Mission of Bengal (1599 - 1834)”, p. 168.

³¹ J. THEKKEDATH, *History of Christianity in India*, vol. II, p. 466.

³² VINCENT URBANEJA, *Notes on the History of Christianity in Orissa*, A collection of Unpublished Documents, Gopalpur-on-sea, p. 3; E.R. HAMBYE, “Christianity in Bengal of the 17th and 18th Centuries”, p. 43.

³³ J.J.A. CAMPOS, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, p. 96.

³⁴ According to the Augustinian document of 1720, Tamboly was situated on the coast of Orissa. In the first half of the 17th century there was a parish church and a resident vicar there. It was Manrique, the official visitor of the Augustinian missions, who obtained the permission of the governor of Cuttack to erect a church at Tamboly.

was received either in 1635 (according to Campos) or in 1640 (according to Hosten). By the beginning of the 19th century, the church and station had completely disappeared, i. e., when the trade ceased, the community also disappeared.³⁵

2.2.5 Banja

Though situated in the vicinity of Tamluk, Banja seems to have been much more important centre for Christians. There were a *casa misericordia*, a hospice, a hospital and an alms-house, typical establishments found in almost all the important Portuguese centres in India and the Far East. There was also the Church of Our Lady of Salvation. The number of Christians was large, and they were considered wealthy, generous and helpful. However, the settlement reverted to the jungle by the beginning of the 19th century because of the bad climate, which had disrupted the trading possibilities.³⁶

Towards the end of the 18th century there was a general decline of the mission stations in Orissa due to the declining importance of the ports along the coast and to the internal struggles and misunderstandings among the missionaries of different congregations. The missionaries themselves were discouraged by the meagre results.³⁷ As noted earlier, the Christian community consisted mainly of the Portuguese who settled there for the purpose of trade and commerce and the Indian soldiers who were stationed there as soldiers for the local chieftains. These groups subsequently left the place because of changing fortunes and opportunities for military service. Referring to the work of the Augustinians, A. Hartmann wrote: "In (the) whole province of Orissa the Augustinians walked from settlement to settlement taking care of the Portuguese and taught in between also the pagan natives."³⁸ However, the number of conversions of the native people probably was so meagre that it never found a place in any of the important works of the place.

2.3 Nineteenth Century Christianity in India: Some features

The nineteenth century is generally considered as the century of missionary enterprise. The new century witnessed the establishment of new missionary congregations, the revival of older congregations with a reinvigorated missionary zeal,

³⁵ E.R. HAMBYE, "Christianity in Bengal of the 17th and 18th Centuries", p. 43; J. THEKKEDATH, *History of Christianity in India*, p. 466.

³⁶ E.R. HAMBYE, "Christianity in Bengal of the 17th and 18th Centuries", p. 43; J.J.A. CAMPOS, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, pp. 94-95.

³⁷ Summarising the condition of Christianity in Orissa, H. Jossion wrote: "En orissa, la religion catholique était sur le point de disparaître; comme Pipli depuis longtemps tombé dans l'oubli, Balasore était maintenant abandonné par les marchands européens: Danois, Hollandais, Portugais, Français et Anglais laissaient leurs factoreries tomber en ruines. Alors, raconte-t-on, 'le dernier Augustin assembla un jour les catholiques, restés de l'ancienne chrétienté, dans l'église peinte en noir pour la circonstance, et, après leur avoir reproché leur vices, il déclara qu'il allait les abandonner comme incorrigibles et qu'ils éprouveraient la malédiction de Dieu. En effet, divers événements dispersèrent tous ces chrétiens avec leurs familles. La plupart ont vu une fin malheureuse et il ne resta plus de trace de leur ancienne prospérité. Et comme pour confirmer cette tradition populaire, le cyclone de 1832 renversa l'église', ou plutôt ce qui en restait. En 1825, les murailles seules existaient encore." H. JOSSON, *La Mission du Bengale Occidental*, vol. I, p. 141.

³⁸ A. HARTMANN, "The Augustinian Mission of Bengal (1599 - 1834)", p. 168.

and an inspiring leadership provided by the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. These factors affected the history of the Catholic Church in India, which experienced a rejuvenation of missionary efforts and a vast expansion of mission.

The springtime of this new missionary activity took place during the pontificate of Gregory XVI (1831 - 1846), the former Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (commonly known as *Propaganda Fide*).³⁹ Unlike preceding centuries of missionary endeavour, when countries such as Portugal and Spain were the patrons of mission, the *Propaganda* became directly involved in the affairs of mission. This involvement of the Holy See was necessitated by the degenerating conditions of the mission under the Portuguese *Padroado*. The situation of the Catholic Church in India was far from satisfactory. Convinced of its special mandate, the *Propaganda* despatched missionaries there despite its encroachment on the privileges granted to the Portuguese Royal Patronage. That the *Propaganda* from the beginning had “insightful ideas as to how missionary activities were to be conducted is evident in the fact that it recognised two fundamental principles on which missionary activity was to be based: the bringing up of an indigenous clergy; and (the) accommodation and adaptation to the cultures and traditions of the people”.⁴⁰

However, in reality, the *Propaganda* found it difficult to discharge its duties due to inherent rivalry among various religious congregations, diocesan clergy and political powers. On the one hand, the Catholic mission, tried to win adherents by eradicating numerous social evils that enslaved the masses, particularly superstitious beliefs such as Meriah, female infanticide, etc.; on the other hand, it presented a community hampered by dissension, lack of evangelical zeal and paucity of personnel. These limitations will affect the Catholic Mission in India.

The salient features of nineteenth century Catholic Mission need to be considered because of their importance to the history of the Catholic Church in India, and for their impact upon the missions in Orissa, so vast a field. Thus this essay will offer a brief description of some important issues during this period.

³⁹ Propaganda Fide was officially erected on June 22, 1622 by the bull *Inscrutabili Divinae Providentiae* of Pope Gregory XV. Propaganda was normally referred to as the ‘*Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*’. The foundation of the Propaganda was certainly a welcome event in the history of the Catholic Missions. The Pope’s intimate collaborator, Cardinal Ludovisi, writing on March 11, 1623 to the Bishop of Arras, mentioned the reasons for founding the Congregation. Regarding the motive of the Propaganda, J. Metzler wrote: “From the beginning of his pontificate, His Holiness had the special intention of doing all in his power to bring about the conversion of heretics and infidels and it is for that reason that he erected the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide.” J. METZLER, “Foundation of the Congregation “de Propaganda Fide” by Gregory XV”, in *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide Memoria Rerum. 350 Years in the Service of the Missions 1622 – 1972*, vol. I/1 1622 – 1700, Rom 1971, p. 81. A similar view is also expressed by S. Thanugundla. He wrote: this was 1) “to be an instrument in the hands of the Pope for furthering the interior reform of the Church in the European countries that had succumbed to Protestantism and for regaining areas; 2) she would be the link with the orthodox to foster closer relationship between Rome and the orthodox; 3) she would be responsible for the spread of the Catholic faith in America, Asia and Africa. In other words, she was meant to preserve, strengthen and to spread the Catholic faith throughout the world”. S. THANUGUNDLA, *Structures of the Church in Andhra Pradesh: An Historico – Juridical Study*, PUU, Rome 1976, p. 124.

⁴⁰ I. PADINJAREKUTTU, *The Missionary Movement of the 19th and 20th centuries and its encounter with India*, Frankfurt 1995, p. 13.

2.3.1 Padroado – Propaganda conflict

The spread of Christianity, as found in India today, owes a great deal to Portugal, which under the royal patronage (*Padroado* in Portuguese)⁴¹ tried to spearhead the challenging task of evangelising India, whose civilisation was based on religions that are older than Christianity itself. However, the Portuguese did not know much about India. Undeterred by the innate religious outlook of the Indians, the Portuguese proceeded to realise their two-fold goal of ‘evangelisation and commerce’. J. Comby writes: “We can not isolate the apostolic zeal of the evangelizers from the lure of profit for the navigators. We need to consider the global motives of the discoverers, as they must have been perceived by those whom they discovered.”⁴² This was generally also the pattern of evangelisation in almost all the newly acquired territories.

However, as K. S. Latourette recorded:

The flourishing missions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which had planted Christianity firmly in the Portuguese enclaves and had brought into being small Roman Catholic communities in several parts of the country, notably in the south, had declined. Roman Catholic Christianity was suffering from an ebb tide that was not to be halted until well along in the situation were being circulated in Europe.⁴³

Commenting on the negative impact that *Padroado* produced, J.J.A. Campos wrote:

After spreading her influence over two worlds, Portugal had exhausted herself. The task undertaken was too great for a small nation. The energy soon spent itself out... Pampered by wealth, the Portuguese in India had grown indolent. Luxury bred vice and profligacy. The civic virtues of the earlier rulers had given place to venality and corruption. Concealed beneath the pomp and splendour of the Portuguese in India lay the seeds of decay and dissolution.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Here are some of the important documents regarding *Ius Padroado*: (1) *Romanus Pontifex* (January 8, 1455) of Nicholas V gave the monopoly of conquering and subduing all the lands and kingdom of infidels and the faculty to found and construct churches in the conquered territories and provide the necessary clergy to King Alfonso and his successors; (2) *Inter Caetera Quae* (March 13, 1456) of Callistus III confirmed the right given by his predecessor and granted jurisdiction to the present and future possessions that will be acquired; (3) *Ineffabilis* (June 1, 1497) of Alexander VI clarified the duties relating to *Padroado*; (4) *Dum Fidei Constantiam* (June 7, 1514) of Leo X elaborated the rights attached to *Padroado* and these could not be revoked without the consent of the king; (5) *Pro Excellentia Praeeminentia* (June 12, 1514) of Leo X reaffirms the rights of the king; (6) *Aequum Reputamus* (November 3, 1534) of Paul III conveyed the erection of the Diocese of Goa and enumerated the duties of the *Padroado* personnel and their responsibility in promoting the cause of Catholicism; (7) *Etsi Sancta et Immaculata* (February 4, 1557) of Paul IV confirmed the rights of *Padroado* and the Diocese of Goa was raised to an Archdiocese. Cf. JORDÃO, LEVY MARIA, et al. (eds.), *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae Regum in ecclesiis Africae, Asiae atque Oceaniae*, Olisipone 1872-1879.

⁴² J. COMBY, *How to Understand the History of Christian Missions*, trans. John Bowden, London 1996, p. 56.

⁴³ K.S. LATOURETTE, *The Great Century in Northern Africa and Asia. A.D. 1800 – A. D. 1914*, pp. 71 - 72.

⁴⁴ J.J.A. CAMPOS, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, p. 121.

In his work *Disputed Mission*, Ines G. Zupanov writes that the general situation of the mission in India was affected by the prevailing outlook of the time:

From the beginning of 17th century, the Roman Church authorities tried to assert direct control over the overseas missions and circumvent, in many respects, the dwindling Portuguese jurisdiction. In 1622, a special Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (*Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*) was established, claiming as its aim the proselytism of the non-Christian world, which the Padroado was unable to reach.⁴⁵

A careful observer could already note at the close of the eighteenth century that the Roman Catholic Church in India was in decay. But, “when the 19th century dawned, the Roman Catholic missions in India had reached a point of weakness almost amounting to inanition.”⁴⁶ The suppression of the Society of Jesus had a disastrous impact on the missions, as few were willing to continue the magnitude of their work.⁴⁷

One of the main concerns for the Pope was to increase mission personnel, whose recruitment had been paralysed by anti-Catholic movements in Spain and Portugal, which traditionally provided personnel for the mission. So the Holy See implemented a strategy to promote a resurgence of the decadent mission by “the division of missionary areas and their transfer to the various orders and congregations”.⁴⁸ Efforts to ameliorate the situation increased during the pontificate of Gregory XVI (1831 - 1846), a former Prefect of the Congregation of the Propagation of Faith who was well acquainted with the local conditions of the mission territories. “The Pope himself undertook the reorganisation of ecclesiastical affairs in Asia, beginning first in India.”⁴⁹

2.3.1.1 *Multa Praeclare* and its Effects

Adding confusion to chaos, one can note, was the absence of shepherds in the more important dioceses. Since the death of the Archbishop of Goa in July 1831, the

⁴⁵ Ines G. Zupanov further reflects on the conflict between Rome and Portugal. The inability of the Portuguese crown to administer efficiently their overseas missionary enterprises and Rome’s effort to reclaim for itself the jurisdiction over the distant missions was a sign of an even more ‘important struggle between the Papacy and the rising nation-states’. Cf. I.G. ZUPANOV, *Disputed Missions. Jesuit Experiments and Brahmanical Knowledge in Seventeenth-century India*, New Delhi 1999, pp. 91 & 114.

⁴⁶ S. NEILL, *A History of Christianity in India. 1707 – 1858*, vol. II, Cambridge 1985, p. 276.

⁴⁷ The suppression of the Society of Jesus (1773) had a catastrophic impact on the mission in India, because were more diffused. They knew the people, their language and customs. They began with the education of youngsters and tried to propagate the faith through the press apostolate, by providing enough Christian literature in the vernacular. Therefore the suppression of the Society of Jesus and the outbreak of the French Revolution had a negative impact on a degenerating mission. Cf. M. Domenge, *La Mission de Vizagapatam*, pp. 102 – 103. In view of the grim situation, very few of the clergy were willing to go to India, and such unwillingness clearly indicated a loss of missionary fervour compounded by the challenges involved in working under inclement weather. Under such circumstances it was not easy for the King of Portugal to find suitable candidates to fill vacant sees. T. ANCHUKANDAM, *The First Synod of Pondicherry 1844*, Bangalore 1994, p. 11.

⁴⁸ J. BECKMANN, “The Resumption of Missionary Work”, in H. JEDIN (ed.), *History of the Church*. Vol. III, Abridged Edition, New York 1981, p. 108.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

four sees (Goa, Cranganore, Cochin and Mylapore) to which the Padroado had the privilege of appointing candidates were vacant. Gregory XVI (1831 - 1846) understood the difficulties with the appointment of candidates to these sees without recourse to Portugal, even if the situation warranted an immediate action by the Holy See. Realising the delicateness of the matter, Cardinal Pedicini, the Prefect of the Propaganda Fide, sent a letter requesting Lisbon to fill the vacancies. Although Portugal was unable to fulfil its obligations as envisaged in the *Padroado* agreement, it insisted on its privileges granted by the Pope *ad perpetuum*. This was the beginning of a confrontation between Rome and Portugal. I. Padinjarekuttu tells us: “Instead of perceiving the problems and solving them, both Propaganda and the Portuguese authorities tried the method of confrontation, with damaging consequences to both sides and particularly to the Church.”⁵⁰ Rome perceived that Portugal was not in a position to meet the needs in India. Therefore, Gregory XVI decided to take up some definite measures to improve the situation. Beginning in 1834 diplomatic relation between Portugal and the Holy See worsened, so that even the bishops who had been appointed to the Sees of Goa and Mylapore could not get papal confirmation of their election.

After prolonged consultation and debate, Pope Gregory issued the Apostolic Letter *Multa Praeclare* on April 24, 1838.⁵¹ Commenting on *Multa Praeclare*, E. Hull observed: “By these enactments the Holy See derogates from the past bulls by which the Sees of Cranganore, Cochin and Mylapore were erected; and also from the bull in which the See of Goa was erected in this sense, that in future the Archbishop of Goa cannot exercise any jurisdiction whatever over the countries of which we speak, viz., the diocesan areas of Cranganore, Cochin and Mylapore.”⁵² Commenting on the *raison*

⁵⁰ I. PADINJAREKUTTU, *The Missionary Movement*, p. 50. Based on papal documents and existing tradition, the Portuguese government was convinced that the ancient privileges granted to Portugal by the papacy could not be revoked by succeeding popes without the consent of the other party. The *Padroado* was their national pride, for it recalled their golden epoch of their missionary endeavour and the enormous sacrifices that went with it. Therefore, any alteration in the granted privilege would invite their wounded sentiments. Cf. G. MARTINA, *Pio IX (1851 - 1866)*, Roma 1986, p. 379.

⁵¹ It is interesting to refer to G. Martina’s thoughtful statement here: “il 24 aprile 1838 col breve *Multa Praeclare*, frutto di lunghe consultazioni a Propaganda, aveva esplicitamente riconosciuto l’anacronismo del patronato portoghese, ed aveva praticamente soppresso ogni giurisdizione delle diocesi di Cranganor, Cochin, Meliapur (probabilmente solo nei territori inglesi), sostituendola con quella dei Vicariati già costituiti”. *Ibid.*, p. 383. The apostolic letter *Multa Praeclare* did not abolish the Padroado dioceses, but it restricted its jurisdiction to the territory of Goa. Commenting on the letter a renowned Anglican historian made a judicious statement: “Instead of effecting the rescue of Catholic Missions in India from almost complete collapse, its result was to inflict grave injury on the reputation of the Church in the eyes of the Protestants and non-Christians, to cause loss of the esteem in which bishops and priests had been held, to produce contest and conflict, and even blows, among Christians. And yet, all things taken into consideration, the Brief was far from being a failure. It aroused the Padroado clergy from their lethargy, recalled to the Portuguese crown in the most urgent fashion its duties under the Padroado, laid on it the duty at once and vigorously to concern itself for the well-being of its missions in India, and prepared the way for a new agreement.” S. NEILL, *A History of Christianity in India (1707 – 1858)*, vol. II, p. 287.

⁵² Here are some reasons that justify the action of the Holy See: 1) In granting patronage the Holy See never sacrificed its duty to ‘provide for religion, or to deprive itself of the power of making new laws and arrangements’. 2) Portugal was no more in command of India, except in Goa. The changed scenario in India warranted such a step. 3) The Holy See did not innovate; but only repeated what it did in the past. In

d'être of Multa Praeclare, the noted historian Stephen Neill wrote: "It was his [Gregory XVI] intention to put an end to the Portuguese claims, to make plain the full jurisdiction of the holy see over all the churches in India, and to assert that, when vicariates had been created, the vicars apostolic appointed by the Pope had full and perfect authority over all Christians of the Roman obedience in the territories assigned to them."⁵³ There was division in every corner of the Indian Church; between those who accepted the authority of the Vicars Apostolic and those who maintained the Portuguese authority. The apostolic letter of Gregory XVI led to long and bitter jurisdictional conflicts, which were mistakenly called a schism.⁵⁴ In the midst of such conflicts and confusion Propaganda went ahead with the erection of Vicariates Apostolic in India.⁵⁵ The Holy See encouraged and helped the missionary efforts and as a result many institutes, new and old, wanted to take up missionary activities.⁵⁶

2.3.1.2 The End of Portuguese Padroado and its Effects

Instead of solving the problems affecting the missions, the efforts of Propaganda increased the tension. John Correia Alfonso identifies the struggles relating to the Padroado – Propaganda conflict: "unfortunately, when Padroado clergy and Propaganda prelates came into contact, conflicts of jurisdictional matters often arose which in no way helped the Catholic cause. The un-edifying struggle covered the whole of the eighteenth and most of the nineteenth centuries, being especially fierce in the regions of

the past the Holy See carved out a vicariate apostolic from the dioceses. Cf. E. HULL, *Bombay Mission History*, vol. I, Bombay 1927, pp. 238 – 239.

⁵³ S. NEILL, *A History of Christianity in India (1707 – 1858)*, vol. II, p. 286.

⁵⁴ The period between 1838 and 1857 is known as the "Goan Schism", although according to some authors it is doubtful if it could be considered as such. E. Hull is of the opinion that there was no schism. To quote his words: "Hence it seems to me that whatever the convictions of the Vicars-Apostolic might have been, they were not technically justified at any time in publicly calling the Goa clergy 'schismatics' in the canonical sense of the word. (It is one thing to say there was schism, and quite another thing to call an individual person 'schismatic')." E. HULL, *Bombay Mission History*, vol. II, Bombay 1927, p. 123; Cf. I. PADINJAREKUTTU, *The Missionary Movement*, p. 55.

⁵⁵ In the early part of the nineteenth century a professedly Roman Catholic community in Bengal had neither public worship nor administration of the sacraments, nor gave any indication of its faith. It had a few images of the Virgin Mary and the saints. As late as the 1830s there was fear that Roman Catholic Christianity would disappear in Bengal because of the decline in the number of Christians and the failure to give religious instruction to the youth. Even the Augustinians, as a religious group, were unable to live up to their commitment in Bengal. Probably prompted by this state of affairs the Christians began to ask for missionaries who could speak English. "Alle, die er in dieser Angelegenheit befragt habe, stimmten überein, dass das Leben der Augustiner in Bengalen wenig lobenswert sei, dass man dort unbedingt gute Priester brauche, welche die englische Sprache beherrschen", wrote the Apostolic Vicar of London Msgr. Bramston. Cf. N. KOWALSKY, "Die Errichtung des Apostolischen Vikariates Kalkutta nach den Akten des Propagandaarchives", in *ZMRW* 36 (1952), p. 120. In 1800, there were four dioceses in Portuguese hands. In them the lives of the Goanese priests were often scandalous. It was at the request of some Irish Catholics in Calcutta, who wanted an English-speaking priest to cater to their spiritual needs, that the Holy See consented to sending some English-speaking priests.

⁵⁶ G. MARTINA, *Pio IX (1851 - 1866)*, p. 415.

Bombay, Madura (Madurai) and Madras”.⁵⁷ In spite of various attempts – such as the *Concordats* of 1857 and 1886,⁵⁸ which were theoretically a victory for the Portuguese as the Holy See conceded in many aspects to the Padroado – the conflicts persisted, damaging the progress of the Church. Furthermore, the issue of ‘double jurisdiction’ continued to vex the church.⁵⁹ Subsequent settlements between 1886 and 1890 ultimately led to a final agreement in 1928, which put an end to the double jurisdiction in India; new guidelines were issued in the final settlement that reduced the power of Portugal considerably. In 1950 Portugal renounced its Padroado rights in dioceses within the Indian union and revised the boundaries of Goa accordingly. The final revision in 1953 put an end to this long struggle that lasted for centuries.⁶⁰

The effects of the *Padroado – Propaganda* conflict were disastrous. It weakened the Catholic rank in India, and evangelisation work suffered. Internal conflicts and dissensions paved the way for various Protestant groups to flourish in their missionary efforts. The Catholic community was divided between the two factions, often resulting in violence when one of the parties went to take possession of a particular church. M. Dhall commented: “Under such circumstances the new religious force at work as W. Hunter observed in 1888, was not Catholicism, but Protestant and Anglican Christianity. Nevertheless missionary activity from all sections of British Christianity increased and missions, Baptists, Congregational, Presbyterian, Wesleyan from England and USA were active in many parts of India. These organisations worked through voluntary societies with great earnestness and self-sacrifice, and often with abundant blessings.”⁶¹ Later during the second part of the nineteenth century, when the Catholic Church was able to set its own house in order by the laudable efforts of Propaganda, it felt the need to arrest the advance of Protestantism in India.

2.3.2 Malabar Rite Controversy

The Malabar Rite⁶² controversy has been associated with the Jesuits who worked in the Madurai Mission. The Jesuit Mission in Tamil Nadu during the 16th and 17th

⁵⁷ J.CORREIA-AFONSO, “The Seventieth Anniversary of the Indian Hierarchy”, in *World Mission* 7/4 (1956), p. 498.

⁵⁸ On June 23, 1886, a concordat was signed between the Holy See and Portugal that provided the elevation of the See of Goa to that of Patriarchate *ad honorem*. Cf. *Ibid*.

⁵⁹ By double jurisdiction it is meant that the two contending parties, the Padroado and Propaganda exercised their spiritual duty in the same territory under different religious superiors.

⁶⁰ The two clerical power centres offered nothing but division and confusion to the people. “The two sets of priests were trying to gain control over churches and parishes and, in the process, were favouring one or other caste group according to its perceived loyalty to themselves”. M. AMALADOSS, “The Gospel, Community and Culture”, in *ZMRW* 80 (1996), p. 246; Cf. K.S. LATOURETTE, *The Great Century in Northern Africa and Asia. A.D. 1800 – A. D. 1914*, pp. 72 – 73; I. PADINJAREKUTTU, *The Missionary Movement*, p. 76.

⁶¹ M. DHALL, *The British Rule. Missionary Activities in Orissa (1822 - 1947)*, p. 17.

⁶² Malabar Rite has nothing to do with the Syrian rite practiced by the St. Thomas Christians of the Malabar coast. The controversy obtained its name from the fact that the mission area of Madurai, Mysore and Carnatik came under the mission or province of Malabar. It is basically connected with some concession in using certain cultural elements typical of the Zone. V. CRONIN, “Malabar Rite”, in *New*

centuries (as today) was faced with the inveterate problem of maintaining the caste distinctions in order to reach out to the people of higher castes. The word *parangi*⁶³ was a derogatory term used by non-Christians to refer to Christianity as *Parangi Margam*,⁶⁴ or the way of *parangi*. The term refers both to the vast number of its adherents who came from lower social origins and who were different to a ritually pure lifestyle, and the 'licentiousness' of the priests who ignored the rules of conduct expected by noble castes. Catholic priests ate beef, drank wine, and freely mixed with social outcasts, such as Pariahs, and so the people of higher castes despised the religion the priests professed and preached.⁶⁵ The Jesuits, under the leadership of Fr. Robert de Nobili, decided to remove the stigma attached to Christianity by evangelising the Brahmins with the conviction that the "caste need not be regarded, just in and by itself alone, as a bar to the acceptance of the Catholic faith or vice versa".⁶⁶ De Nobili, in hopes of wiping out the stigma attached to Christianity, tried to adopt certain practices of the higher caste, maintaining that they had only a civil or social implication and never a religious significance. He was convinced that the conversion of Brahmins, who belonged to the priestly class or who were teachers of the *Vedas*, might serve as examples to their followers or members of the lower castes, since the people looked up to the Brahmins for religious instructions. After a prolonged reflection and study of the local customs and language, he adopted the lifestyle of Brahmins by living in a hut in their quarters.⁶⁷ He tried to win them over by becoming a Brahmin *sanyasi*, who was given utmost reverence, but such cultural adaptations or external transformations involved enormous sacrifices.

Concession accorded to certain practices of the Brahmins and commitment to minister to their members inevitably led to the formation of two distinct categories of priests among the missionaries: the *sanyasis* and the *pandarams*. The former were

Catholic Encyclopaedia, vol. IX, pp. 97-99; P. M. D'ELIA, "Contro i riti Malabarici in India", in *Civ. Catt.* 91/2 (1940), p. 331.

⁶³ *Parangi* is derived from the Persian word *farang*, which means "a Frank; an Italian; European; a Christian; all nations which wear short garments." It is probable that the word '*farang*' comes from western Asia, which then was identified with the people of Western Europe. Later this word obtained a corrupt form in India, '*Parangi*'. Though the word referred directly to the Portuguese as *Parangis*, it also stigmatised those associated with them. Cf. L. STANISLAUS, *The Liberative Mission of the Church among the Dalit Christians in Tamil Nadu*, p. 181.

⁶⁴ *Margam* is a Sanskrit word used in Tamil, meaning way of life. It could also mean the way to attain salvation.

⁶⁵ The missionaries had to mix with the people of a lower origin as they, in the first place, responded to the call of the Lord *en masse*, and from whom the missionaries would take a cook to prepare non-vegetarian meals for them.

⁶⁶ The Portuguese who were called *parangi* "mixed freely with the low caste, ate beef, drank wine and took Indian wives, without bothering about the caste, untouchability or other social conventions. This did not matter in Goa and other Portuguese dominions, where they were ostracised. Those who associated with them also fared the same fate. Moreover the Christian religion, which they followed, was also despised. That explains why Fr. Gonçalo, in spite of more than ten years, was not able to convert a single Hindu". Cf. S. RAJAMANICKAM, "Founder of the Madurai Mission-Robert de Nobili", in S. L. GABRIEL et al. (eds.), *Christianity in India. Its True Face*, Thanjavur 1981, p. 112; J.E. WALSH, "De Nobili: Classic Example of Accommodation", in *World Mission* 9/2 (1958), p. 96.

⁶⁷ M. DOMENGE, *La Mission de Vizagapatam*, p. 100.

required to learn Sanskrit, engage in scholarly pursuits by studying the sacred scriptures of the Hindus, and serve the Brahmin Christians. The pandarams, in contrast, learned the vernacular and served Christians of low caste origins.⁶⁸ Such measures introduced to convert the Brahmins elicited outright suspicion. Opposition initially came from de Nobili's own confreres; his greatest adversary was Fr. Gonçalo Fernandes who criticised him till the end of his life and persuaded many priests and laymen alike to do so. Later others – such as the Archbishop of Goa, the Dominicans and the Franciscans -- joined the critics. But de Nobili also had supporters in the Church hierarchy. Besides his own relatives in Rome (including Robert Bellarmine who could not help him immediately), Archbishop Ros of Cranganore and Fr. Laerzio, the Provincial of Malabar, were his great patrons.⁶⁹

The Bull, *Romanae Sedis Antistites* of Gregory XV, issued on January 31, 1623, gave provisional approval for appropriating the 'signs of nobility', such as *punul*, the sacred thread, the sandal paste and the ceremonial bath. S. Rajamanickam comments that "it marked the beginning of a new epoch, when the church came out to encounter and to win not only the Brahmins of Madurai but all the nations of the world".⁷⁰ Afterwards the Jesuits in the Malabar province formally adapted the Brahmin mode of life. Rajamanickam elucidates the *raison d'être* of this adaptation: "Nobili's method of evangelisation is precisely based on the principle of adaptation. To him the fundamental question is not whether this or that custom may be followed by his neophytes but whether the Indians as a nation would be given every legitimate facility to enter the Christian fold as pagan Rome and Greece were given by the primitive church."⁷¹ The problem of adaptation surfaced again at the end of the 17th century, when the French Capuchins of Pondicherry disagreed with the Jesuits on this policy and reported them to Rome. Pope Clement IX sent Patriarch Charles Maillard De Tournon to settle this question permanently. The patriarch signed a decree on June 23, 1704, in which some of the practices of the 'Malabar Rites' were forbidden while others were retained.⁷² The

⁶⁸ The *Sanyasis* would be seen moving about on horseback or in a palanquin, eating rice, dressed like Brahmins and saluting no one as they went along, while the *Pandarams* covered with rags walked on foot surrounded by beggars and prostrated themselves when the *Sanyasis* passed, covering their mouths lest their breath should defile the teacher of the great.

⁶⁹ S. RAJAMANICKAM, *The First Oriental Scholar*, Tirunelveli 1972, p. 76.

⁷⁰ One of the great theologians of the time, Peter Lombard (1555 - 1624) was of the opinion that 'the thread (*linea*), the tuft of hair (*curumby*), sandal paste (*sandalum*), and the ablutions (*lavatorias*) were from their inception signs and marks of the political nobility and not superstition or of the cult of idols'. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 45. I.G. ZUPANOV, *Disputed Missions*, p. 242.

⁷¹ S. RAJAMANICKAM, *The First Oriental Scholar*, p. 58.

⁷² Patriarch Charles de Tournon was originally destined to go to China to settle the controversy over the Chinese rites. He was asked to look into the case of the Malabar Rites in India. From November 6, 1703 till July 1704 he remained in Pondicherry. Probably because he was sick, he never went to Madurai or to any other parts where the controversy was said to be reigning. Writing about the mission of Tournon, P.M. D'Elia says, "Sembra dunque che l'informazione del Patriarcha, il quale non pareva in grado di fare personalmente le debite ricerche specialmente per il cattivo stato di salute, non fosse condotta con le dovute garanzie d'imparzialità e di oggettività, ma piuttosto sotto l'influsso degli avversari dei gesuiti". P.M. D'ELIA, "Contro i riti Malabarici", p. 340. Before leaving for the Philippines, the patriarch despatched copies to the provincial of the Malabar province, the superiors of Madurai, Mysore and

‘Malabar Rite Oath,’ introduced by Pope Clement XII on May 13, 1739, obliged the missionaries to condemn 16 articles. Later Pope Benedict XIV in the Bull *Omnium Sollicitudinum*, issued on September 12, 1744 abolished the ‘Malabar Rites’.⁷³ The oath remained in force till April 9, 1940, when it was finally abolished, a year after Pope Pius XII abolished the oath concerning the Chinese Rites.

2.3.3 Establishment of the Hierarchy in India

After much planning, Pope Leo XIII established the hierarchy of India by issuing the apostolic letter *Humanae Salutis Auctor* on September 1, 1886.⁷⁴ The hierarchy consisted of eight archbishops with their suffragan dioceses (altogether nineteen units in India alone). In all there were about twenty-five ecclesiastical units both in India and in Ceylon, including those under the Padroado.⁷⁵ Following the promulgation of the apostolic letter, Pope Leo XIII appointed Msgr. Antonius Agliardi as his delegate to execute the decision. He organised meetings with bishops on a regional basis to settle matters. After the consultations he sent the acts and documents to the Holy See for approval. The Holy See published the brief *Post Initam* on June 7, 1887.⁷⁶ Referring to the Vicariate of Vizagapatam the apostolic brief mentions that “Adjoining the western vicariate of Bengal is the extensive mission deriving its name from Vizagapatam which takes in the whole territory between the boundaries of the Bombay vicariate and the Bay of Bengal up to the Godavery river on the south and was divided from Madras in the year 1850”.⁷⁷ Together with the reorganisation of the Indian Church into several ecclesiastical provinces, efforts were intensified to train local clergy. This was one of recommendations presented by Fr. Jean-Felix-Onésime

Carnatic missions. The superiors were to see that the decree was kept under the pain of excommunication. The missionaries who refused obedience were to be suspended ‘a divinis’. Cf. S. RAJAMANICKAM, *The First Oriental Scholar*, p. 59.

⁷³ In October 1744 Propaganda Fide, in the name of the pope, asked the superiors general of the Jesuits, Augustinians, Capuchins and Franciscans to execute the decree. Accordingly the superiors in their name and in the name of the missionaries in the kingdoms promised to execute the prohibition of the Malabar rite. Out of 60 dioceses or missions under Propaganda 26 were obliged to take the oath. Of the 26, eleven never bothered about it. Cf. P.M. D’ELIA, “Contro i riti Malabarici”, pp. 428 – 429.

⁷⁴ For the text see ASS 19 (1886), pp. 176 – 184.

⁷⁵ The incumbents of these dioceses were designated by the apostolic brief *Apostolatus Officium* of November 25, 1886. Cf. J.CORREIA-AFONSO, “The Seventieth Anniversary of the Indian Hierarchy”, p. 498.

⁷⁶ F. D’SA, *History of the Catholic Church in India*, vol. II, p. 297.

⁷⁷ “Finitima est Vicariatus occidentali Bengalico missio vastissima de Vizagapatam nuncupata quae universum territorium inter fines Vicariatus Bombayensis et mare Bengalicum usque ad flumen Godavery ad austrum comprehendit, et anno MDCCCL a Madraspatana divisa est”. ASS 19 (1886), p. 181; Cf. L. KIERKELS, *To Commemorate the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Catholic Hierarchy in India and Ceylon 1886 – 1946*, p. 34. The English translation is taken from F. D’SA, *History of the Catholic Church in India*, vol. II, p. 309. Earlier, the apostolic letter *Ex pastoralis officio muneris* of April 3, 1850 announced Vizagapatam as a separate vicariate.

Luquet⁷⁸ to Roman authorities in favour of the establishment of an ecclesiastical hierarchy for India, who would eventually take over from missionaries from the outside.

2.3.4 Indigenous Clergy

The idea of creating an indigenous clergy was very much present since the beginning of the Portuguese Mission in India, and the establishment of seminaries lends credence to this view.⁷⁹ The Synod of Pondicherry in 1844 marked a major milestone,⁸⁰ not just for the mission of Pondicherry but also for the Catholic Mission in India as a whole. It provided the impetus for a new outlook or approach in the missionary endeavour, particularly in the formation of a native clergy, in the creation of more vicariates and in the establishment of a hierarchy for India. Following the Synod of Pondicherry, Luquet was sent to Rome to explain the ‘Acts and Documents’ of the Synod to the Sacred Congregation and get them approved. Formation of an indigenous clergy was very dear to him.⁸¹

Following the establishment of a hierarchy for India, the papal delegate looked for a suitable place to establish a seminary for India. This was finally founded in 1893 at Kandy (Ceylon), and it was intended for both India and Ceylon.⁸² Pope Leo XIII’s

⁷⁸ Jean-Felix-Onésime Luquet was born at Langres on June 17, 1810. He left for Pondicherry Mission on December 21, 1842. While studying at the seminary he exhibited a great concern for the promotion of native clergy. His participation in the First Synod of Pondicherry in 1844 enabled him to represent the mission and explain the Acts and Documents of the Synod to the Holy See.

⁷⁹ In his booklet on *The Native Priesthood*, Willi Henkel cites one of the best authorities on India, Joseph Wicki, who arrived at the following conclusion: “It becomes clear from our observation how after initial difficulties the idea of the theological colleges and seminaries gained ground in India and generated greater success than one had dared to hope. Even during the first admissions to studies, it was noted that the boys came from respected castes and brought a patrimony with them, if they became secular priests. Their training was largely restricted to the essentials. The great importance attached to music and song is remarkable, evidently in order to adapt to national feelings. The talent for higher studies shown by the inhabitants of India is emphasised repeatedly. Whereas in Africa, China and Japan the question of a national priesthood was still in its infancy in 1600, India was already well supplied with priests from among its own peoples. However, the final consequence, the appointment of nationals to the bishop’s throne and higher offices, could not be realised until a later epoch.” W. HENKEL, *The Native Priesthood*, Aachen 1989, p. 3.

⁸⁰ “Le Synode du Pondicherry (18 Janvier – 13 Février 1844) procura une grande joie et une grande espérance à notre missionnaire, car on y traita en tout premier lieu de la formation du clergé indigène. On admit en conséquence le principe de l’éducation complète des indigènes, en vue du sacerdoce, on résolut la réorganisation du Séminaire d’après ce principe. Cette décision parut au P. Luquet l’oeuvre capitale du synode...” R.C. ROUSSEL, *Un Précurseur. Monseigneur Luquet 1810-1858 des Missions Etrangères de Paris*, Langers 1960, pp. 28 – 29.

⁸¹ “Si je disais: le clergé indigène est nécessaire; il est possible chez tous les peuples, je pouvais à cette autorité si puissante, ajouter le témoignage des faits accomplis; je pouvais montrer avec un saint orgueil des prêtres du sein d’une nation timide, versant néanmoins avec joie leur sang pour J. C. Or à ce témoignage du sang il n’y a rien à répondre, parce que N. S. l’a dit: majorem charitatem nemo habet ut animam suam ponat quis pro amicis suis”. Cf. *Synode de Pondicherry et instruction de la S. C. de la Propagande sur la formation du clergé indigène. Rapport sur les faits accomplis à Rome par suite du Synode du Pondicherry*, p. 17.

⁸² Leo XIII’s benevolent action in favour of the formation of an indigenous clergy was lauded everywhere. Referring to this historic event Delacroix says: “Lui enfin qui voulut pourvoir aux frais de sa

apostolic letter *Ad Extremas* (1893) clearly manifested the church's commitment to the promotion of native clergy, not as the ones who would be assisting the missionaries but as the ones who are well prepared to promote the interests of religion in their native land.⁸³ Writing on the formation of the Indian clergy, J. L. Miranda maintains that the indigenous priest is linked to "his compatriots by origin, character, feelings and aspirations, possesses extraordinary facilities for introducing the faith into their minds, and is endowed with powers of persuasion far superior to those of any other man".⁸⁴ The idea of creating an indigenous clergy was again affirmed by Pope Benedict XV when he issued the apostolic letter *Maximum Illud* on November 13, 1919, which was destined to have a profound influence on missionary attitudes and policies.⁸⁵

2.3.5 The British Raj and Mission

The guiding principle of the religious policy of the British Raj in India was neutrality, since commercial success and political stability took precedence over any other concerns. Both depended largely on friendly relations with the people, regardless of their ethnic and religious background. Therefore, any action that might endanger those friendly relations was discouraged. M. Dhall illustrates in no ambiguous terms the neutrality observed by the British in matters relating to religion: "Between 1783 and 1813 the East India Company showed open hostility towards the introduction of Christianity and western ideas in India and followed a policy of neutrality."⁸⁶

However, one could observe certain shifts in religious policy after 1813. The British East India Company, especially after the enactment of the Charter Act of 1813, was open to allow missionaries to pursue their mission in India. To quote again M. Dhall: "After 1813, mission societies did not follow colonisation. Countries which did not have any colonial stakes in India had also their missionary representatives in India."⁸⁷ However the British government meted out a step-motherly treatment of Christians, which induced both Hindus and others to wonder whether the government

construction en adressant une encyclique aux évêques du monde entier, *Ad extremas*, du 23 juin 1893. Ce séminaire modèle fut confié aux jésuites belges du Bengale, en témoignage d'approbation pour leur réussite dans l'évangélisation des misérables aborigènes du Chota Nagpur. Sur la médaille commémorative, Léon XIII fit graver une inscription qui exprima la règle d'or de l'apostolat: *Filii tui, India, administri tibi salutis*. Ce seront tes fils, ô Inde, qui t'apporteront le salut". Cf. S. DELACROIX (ed.), *Histoire Universelle des Missions Catholiques*, vol. III, Paris 1958, p. 98. The seminary itself was later transferred to Pune in 1955. For detailed information on the formation of indigenous clergy see C.M. DE MELO, *The Recruitment and Formation of the Native Clergy in India (16th-19th century): An Historico Canonical Study*, Lisboa 1955.

⁸³ For the text of the apostolic brief *Ad Extremas* see ASS XXV (1892 - 1893).

⁸⁴ J.L. MIRANDA, *On the Formation of a National Indian Clergy*, Trichinopoly 1920, p.15

⁸⁵ For a detailed explanation on the background and effects of *Maximum Illud* on the missions see A.MIOTK, *Das Missionsverständnis im historischen Wandel am Beispiel der Enzyklika "Maximum Illud"*, Steyler Verlag, Nettetal 1999; Y. DE STEENHAULT, *History of the Jesuits in West Bengal: 1921-1985*, (Part I: 1921-1947), Ranchi (no year), p. 7.

⁸⁶ M. DHALL, *The British Rule*, pp. 22 – 23.

⁸⁷ M. Dhall wrote: "The American Quakers, Unitarians, Presbyterians, Free will Baptists, Methodists, the German and American Lutherans, the Canadian Baptists and many others worked in the British Indian territories and beyond that." *Ibid.*, p. 16.

had any religious policy at all. Already in 1853 the government introduced legislation regarding religious freedom. Even after the *Sepoy Mutiny* of 1857⁸⁸ the British government did not feel the need to modify this policy, but rather affirmed its commitment to neutrality in religious matters. Religious toleration became the hallmark of the British rule, and this was the core of the proclamation of the Queen to her subjects in 1858.⁸⁹ Commenting on the religious policy of the British in India, J. Beckmann wrote:

The external difficulties of the Indian mission included the relationship to the colonial power. The English East India Company had absolutely no interest whatever in missionary activity. It required a direct order from London before the work of Anglican missionaries in 1833 and of non-British protestant Mission societies in 1834 was permitted. The Catholic Church, which had been active in the country for centuries, did not seem to exist at all.⁹⁰

However, the British later had to change the policy of neutrality in order to avail the services of the missionaries in providing education and other forms of social assistance to the people of the country. Missionaries ran charitable institutions and opposed several inhuman practices that had religious sanctions, such as *sati* (burning of widows at the funeral pyre of their husbands), the Meriah sacrifices, the caste system, etc.⁹¹

The British official policy of religious neutrality initially helped the missionaries, since they did not face any serious challenges from other religious groups, thanks to the protection extended to all. A. Mayhew summed up the general attitude towards the Christian missions in India in the following words: the British government

freed from nervous scruples about its association with the Christian faith, offered fair field and all necessary protection and opportunities for mission work. This was the general conclusion reached in the report of the international conference on Missions, which examined carefully at Edinborough in 1910 the attitude of government to the missions in all parts of the world.⁹²

Commenting on the advantages that mission reaped during the British Raj, Stephen Neill said that “to the majority of missionaries and Indian Christians British rule no doubt presented itself as in every way a boon. The Government was doing many things

⁸⁸ The rebellion of soldiers serving under the British, an event that occurred in almost all parts of India.

⁸⁹ In 1858, when the Queen took control of the government in India, she made a declaration: “We declare that it to be our Royal will and pleasure that none be in anywise favoured, none molested or disquieted by reason of their religious faith or observances, but that all alike shall enjoy the equal and impartial protection of the law; and we do strictly charge and enjoin all those who may be in authority under us that they abstain from all interference with the religious belief or worship of any of our subjects, on pain of our highest displeasure. And it is our further will that, so far as may be, our subjects of whatever race or creed, be freely and impartially admitted to offices in our service, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability, and integrity, duly to discharge”. S. NEILL, *Colonialism and Christian Missions*, London 1966, p. 98.

⁹⁰ J. BECKMANN, “The Missions between 1840 and 1870”, pp. 82 – 83.

⁹¹ I. PADINJAREKUTTU, *The Missionary Movement*, pp. 58 – 62.

⁹² A. MAYHEW, *Christianity and the Government of India*, London 1920, p. 198.

that in less tranquil days they had longed to see done. It gave them the fullest possible liberty to do the things that Government could not itself rightly undertake”⁹³.

At the same time, the preference of the British for Anglicanism was very obvious. This is attested to by the disparity in salaries of the military chaplains. Protestant chaplains received a monthly salary of Rs. 1,100/-, whereas the Catholic chaplains received only Rs. 50/-.⁹⁴ The Government’s preference for Protestantism was obvious from the number of groups, such as the Anglicans and Baptists, who came from England. They were preferred on the pretext that they were subjects of the Empire, while the Catholic missionaries were mostly from outside, except the Irish missionaries who were working in the Madras Mission. Every Annual Report of the Presidency had a column on Ecclesiastical Matters, which invariably contained information pertaining to the Anglican Mission. Seldom one reads about the Catholic Church.⁹⁵

However, one could argue that, although the British observed religious neutrality for all practical reasons, they did not prevent the missionaries from trekking into the mountains and crossing the valleys ‘in search of souls’; the British recognised the missionaries as agents of social change and of the advancement of ‘civilisation’,⁹⁶ evident in the recognition of freedom accorded to the schools run by missionaries.⁹⁷

2.4 The Theatines in Visakhapatnam

On their arrival at the Visakhapatnam Mission,⁹⁸ the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales met Dom Joseph Xavier d’Attaide,⁹⁹ a Goan Theatine, who was the last of the

⁹³ S. NEILL, *Colonialism and Christian Missions*, p. 103.

⁹⁴ The amount is mentioned in the letter of J.F. Thomas, Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras, which was forwarded to the SCPF (Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide) as a proof of his claim that only the subjects of the British Empire should take up the mission of Visakhapatnam. Msgr. Fennelly to Cardinal Frasoni, Madras, July 10, 1845, APF, Indie Orientali: Scrittura Riferite nei Congressi, vol. 10, ff. 473 – 482; S. GAL, *Conversions et Christianisation en Inde au XIXe Siècle: la Fondation de la mission savoyarde de Vizagapatam. Vers 1845- Vers 1890*, Unpublished Work, Université de Lyon 1991, p. 43.

⁹⁵ In talking about different churches, the British Government’s Record shows the following category: Church of England (Anglican denomination), Church of Rome (Roman Catholics) and others (all the other denominations).

⁹⁶ J. Bruls observed: “Mission and colonisation buttressed one another: the missionary gave the coloniser a clear conscience and in return received support and protection. Christian missions supplied Europe’s ambitions as a civiliser with the spiritual component they had hitherto fundamentally lacked.” J. BRULS, “From Missions to ‘Young Churches’”, in R. AUBERT (ed.), *The Christian Centuries*, vol. V, London 1979, p. 391.

⁹⁷ Recognising the favour bestowed on the mission, Msgr. Tissot wrote: “Ici dans l’Inde, non seulement le Gouvernement anglais ne nous est pas hostile, mais il nous favorise. Il s’offre à subventionner nos écoles, nous laissant pleine liberté pour l’instruction religieuse. Il offre aux Soeurs de St. Joseph, à Nagpur, la direction d’une école normale. Les sujets manquent. Le moment serait des plus favorables, si nous pouvions faire face à la besogne qui se présente.” Tissot to Messelod, Vizagapatam, November 26, 1884, AMSFS 5H5-2/2.

⁹⁸ Visakhapatnam, Vizagapatam, Visakh, Vizag and Waltair are all the names for the same town. The town is situated in 17° 42’ N. and 83° 18’ E., about 484 miles by railway from Madras and 547 miles from Calcutta. The French missionaries and the British used the name of Vizagapatam frequently in their writings. For the sake of consistency and uniformity the current name in use is preferred, i.e. Visakhapatnam, except when referred to in documents. There is a legend attributed to the name of this

missionaries of the Golconda Mission.¹⁰⁰ With him ended the history of the Theatines who, with a paucity of personnel and a vast territory to look after with two or three priests, maintained a few stations along the Coromandel Coast. The Theatines were sent to help out the missions in the kingdom of Idalcan. After having established themselves in Goa, they set out to find new stations nearby. Since they encountered some difficulties, they left Goa and sought a mission in the Kingdom of Golconda, whose

maritime town. When Prince Kulothunga Chola of Vengi on his way to Kashi – Varanasi (Benares), halted in this town, he was attracted by its beauty and so decided to build a temple for his favourite deity, Visakha – the Lord of Valour. From then on the town was called by the name Visakhapatnam. The Dutch, French and finally the British had their influence on the town. By the middle of 17th century, an English military garrison had settled there. In 1803 Visakhapatnam was made the district headquarters. It was already a military centre of the British. Rajas of Vizianagaram, Bobbili, Jeypore, Chammudu and Gangpur had their summer resorts and residences at Visakhapatnam. These Rajas contributed to the development of the town. Cf. *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. XXIV, Oxford 1908, pp. 337 – 339.

⁹⁹ There are variations in writing his name. Some write Attaide, others d'Attaide and yet others de Attaide. The General Archives of the Theatines in Rome have no records on this part of the history, except that Fr. d'Attaide made his final profession on February 10, 1822. (AGT = The General Archives of the Theatines).

¹⁰⁰ Golconda was known for its diamonds and paintings in the 17th century. Founded in 1518 by Quli Qutb Sahih, the city, situated in the western part of Hyderabad, was destroyed in 1687 by Emperor Aurengzeb, who annexed the region. Golconda mission was a large territory stretching from Masulipatnam (Andhra Pradesh) to Cuttack (Orissa). Christians were scattered, and they were in the service of the rulers. The Congregation of Regular Clerics, founded at Rome in 1524 and popularly known as Theatines, sent its first priests to Goa in 1639. "It is known from different writers that from 1640 to 1750 there came 56 professed members of the order to Goa and 3 novices, all non-Portuguese, of whom 23 reached Goa, 13 died in the missions and 12 returned to Europe. As it was not possible for more religious to come from Europe, the prefect, as their superior was called, obtained permission from his General in Europe, confirmed by the king of Portugal, to admit Goans into the order. Limited to 4, it was extended to 12 and 4 lay brothers and finally to 20. Up to 1804 the number thus admitted was 39 and 1 lay brother. Of that number 20 died in the convent and 9 in the missions". Cf. F. D'SA, *History of the Catholic Church in India*, vol. II, pp. 369 – 370. At that time the jurisdictional battles between Bishop Mathew de Castro and the Archbishop of Goa were ravaging the territory. Realising the difficulties Bishop de Castro moved to Golconda. He went to the capital Masulipatnam to establish the church in the territory. J. THEKKEDATH, *History of Christianity in India*, p. 299. Manco, accompanied by a Goan priest, went to Bijapur, the capital of Adil Shah, to pick out the mission territory for the group. Manco was the third Italian Theatine who had come to India after Don Pedro Avitable and Joseph – Maria Anebiveri. He had a vast territory to look after, namely, from Masulipatnam to Balasore. Cf. *Memorandum Left by Dom Xavier d'Attaide, La Mission de Vizagapatam. Extrait du Registre Officiel 1845*. Dactylographié et Photocopié par le Père Raymond Bosso, Jan 1990. *MSFS Archives 8/2*, Annecy. Propaganda Fide on 23 January 1663 found it necessary, however, to have the Superior General "seriously admonished" that it was "not the mind of the Sacred Congregation that his members reside at Goa simply as religious, but rather that they go out to the surrounding infidel regions and exercise their office as missionaries". But in 1682, they were again rebuked because they were still clustered around Goa. Cf. R.M. WILTGEN, "The Evangelisation Congregation at the Service of Java, Borneo, Sumatra (1622 - 1815)", in *Regnum Dei* 28/98 (1972) p. 125. They did not succeed in their work in Golconda. After the death of Bergamora in 1693, the mission went over to the Augustinians who also experienced the same fate. J. THEKKEDATH, *History of Christianity in India*, p. 299. Before the arrival of MSFS there were 3 priests: a Goan stationed in Visakhapatnam and two Irish priests working as chaplains in the northern part of the vicariate. Cf. Anonymous, *Notice sur la Mission de Visagapatam*, Annecy 1866, p.10. The extension of the mission at that time was quite large, i.e., from Masulipatnam to Balasore. Neyret to Mermier, September 6, 1850. *L'état de la Mission en 1850*. Archives MSFS, 7Z/ 5 H 5.

capital was Masulipatnam.¹⁰¹ The Indian Theatines were responsible for the Catholic communities of ‘Bisanagar (Vijaynagar) and Visapatan (Visakhapatnam)’ in India under the Bishop of Mylapore, and for Sumatra and Borneo under the Bishop of Malaca. Since the missionaries were constantly exposed to the danger of ecclesiastical conflicts and prejudices, the superior at Goa wrote to Pope Clement XIV (1769 - 1774) asking for extraordinary faculties, so that the missionaries proceeding to the missions might not “be expelled on the occasion of every sinister event”.¹⁰²

The memorandum written by d’Attaide recalls some of the names of the Theatine missionaries who worked in Golconda mission.¹⁰³ In it he presents a list of missionaries who worked in the Visakhapatnam mission between 1806 and 1828.¹⁰⁴ From what is presented as the notes on “Vishak Mission”, Joseph Baud (1890-1980),¹⁰⁵ the former Bishop of Visakhapatnam, writes that from 1806 until 1846 there were hardly one or two Theatine missionaries, most likely from Goa, visiting the scattered Christians living all along the Coromandel coast (from Masulipatnam to Puri and Cuttack). J. Baud recorded,

¹⁰¹ Annibale Spalla spells out the beginning of the Teatine mission in Golconda: “Quando la Sacra Congregazione de Propaganda Fide aveva inviato i Teatini alle Indie, aveva indicato il luogo dove essi avrebbero dovuto lavorare, cioè il cosidetto Regno di Idalcan [Idalcan]. Per questo, dopo di essersi stabiliti bene in Goa, nel dicembre del 1640, partiva il P. Manco, accompagnato da un sacerdote indiano, messo a sua disposizione dall’archivescovo di Goa, per la città di Vizapur (Bijapur) nel detto Regno. Ma pare che incontrasse difficoltà da parte di autorità religiose, che non desideravano altri religiosi sotto la propria giurisdizione. Ed il padre, senza per nulla insistere, mentre già gli era stata offerta una grande casa da un ricco signore fiammingo colà stabilito, pensò di non contraddire per nulla e si decise ad andare nel Regno di Golconda.” A. SPALLA, “Le Missioni Teatine nelle Indie Orientali nel Secolo XVII e le cause della loro fine”, in *Regnum Dei* 27/97 (1971), p. 17.

¹⁰² R.M. WILTGEN, “The Evangelisation Congregation at the Service of Java, Borneo, Sumatra (1622 - 1815)”, p. 138.

¹⁰³ Dom Xavier D’Attaide gives only the names of those who worked in Golconda mission. “As regards the mission of Golconda, the first missionary after Don Francisco Manco was Don Antonio Albuquerque; the second, Don Cajetan Astiao Farias who, after his ministry of 32 years in this mission died at Vizagapatam; the third, Don Joseph – Maria Miranda who died at Masulipatam. Don Pascal Lobo succeeded (Miranda) and died there also. The mission was for some time vacant, due to the fact that there were not a sufficient number of priests who could be spared. During this interval, the Masulipatam mission was occupied by a French priest and that of Vizagapatam by a Dominican friar, Joseph de Concicao. After some time, these missions were again supplied with priests of the Theatine Order namely Don Cajetan Saldanha and Don Pedro Viegas... In 1810, three Theatines and a secular priest were sent from Goa: Don Sebastian Xavier from (for) Massule, Don Riccardo from (for) Yanam (who died there); Don Emmanuel Mascarinhas for Vizagapatam and Fr. Celestino Joao Paes for Ganjam”. *Memorandum laissé par Dom Xavier D’Attaide*, p. 32.

¹⁰⁴ Here is the list of the missionaries who served in Visakhapatnam: 1806 – 1810: Don João Cajetan Saldanha; 1811 – 1816: Don Emmanuel Mascarinhas; 1816 – 1822: Padre Celestino João Paes; 1822 – 1828: Don Roque Camillo Assumpção and Don Cajetan Gabriel de Santa Maria and 1828 – 1849: Don Joseph Xavier d’Attaide, who died on July 6, 1849 after receiving the last sacrament from the hands of Bishop Neyret. He was about 66 years when he died. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁰⁵ Msgr. Joseph Baud was born in 1890 at Bellevaux, Savoy. He came to India in 1911 and was ordained a priest in 1914. He was appointed the coadjutor bishop of Visakhapatnam in 1942. He succeeded to the see in 1947 and remained as the bishop of the same till 1967, when he retired. He died on March 13, 1980. Cf. F. MOGET, *MSFS Obituary*, Uchgaon 1999, p. 34.

From October 1816 to November 1818 Dom P. Celestino Paro Parais travels from Berhampur to Ichchapur, Chicacole, Vizianagram, Bimlipatam to Vizagapatam. In July 1826, Padre Gaitano Isao Godinho is in Ganjam and Berhampur. From June 1827 to December 1827 Dom Gaetano Gabriel de Sta Maria goes from Berhampur to Vizag via Chicacole and Veizianagaram (Vizianagram).¹⁰⁶

2.4.1 Dom Joseph Xavier d'Attaide

Dom Joseph Xavier d'Attaide was the last Theatine missionary in Visakhapatnam. He was zealous and the only priest to serve the entire Catholic community all along the coast, from Madras to Calcutta.¹⁰⁷ He had been in Visakhapatnam since 1828 taking care of small Catholic communities in different military settlements.¹⁰⁸ The military garrisons in Cuttack, Ganjam, Aska and other places had the annual services of priests, who baptised children, heard confession of the adults, rectified marriages, etc. In February 1848, d'Attaide made his first visit to Cuttack and on April 14, 1848, he sent a report of his voyage to Msgr. P. J. Carew, Vicar Apostolic of Calcutta as Cuttack was under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Vicar Apostolic of Calcutta. During his visit in Cuttack, d'Attaide had administered the sacraments of confession and communion to 36 persons. He received some adults and baptised 13 children.¹⁰⁹ Writing about d'Attaide's activities, Francis Moget notes: "He knew Portuguese and Tamil with some English, but with his extensive ministry, he could not do any mission work among the non-Christians. Besides, his poor knowledge of English limited his ministry among the British troops to the celebration of Mass and

¹⁰⁶ J. BAUD, *Notes on the Stations of the Diocese of Visakhapatnam*, Unpublished work found in Jnana Deepa Vidyaapeeth, Pune 1959.

¹⁰⁷ "Le dernier de ces missionnaires mourut l'année dernière à Vizagapatam, après avoir desservi lui seul, pendant douze ans, toute la côte d'Orissa". Cf. Neyret to Mermier, *L'état de la Mission en 1850*, September 6, 1850, AMSFS, 7Z/5 H 5; Msgr. Neyret to Cardinal Barnabò, Vizagapatam, October 18, 1860, *Relatio Vicariatus Apostolici Vizagapatami*, APF Indie Orientali: Scrittura Riferite nei Congressi, vol. 17, ff. 1408 – 1411.

¹⁰⁸ There were some military garrisons that had some Catholic soldiers: Cuttack, Berhampur, Aska, etc. Though the majority of the Christians were Catholics, and a considerable number of the soldiers in the king's regiments were Irish Roman Catholics, and therefore at that time British subjects, the government had a predilection for the national Church: Anglicans. Besides the Irish Catholic soldiers, there were Portuguese, French and Indians of Portuguese origins and Tamils. Cf. S. NEILL, *A History of Christianity in India: 1707 – 1858*, vol. II, p. 291.

¹⁰⁹ Cuttack was an important town where there was a military garrison, in which there were a good number of Catholics. Though Cuttack was under the vicariate apostolic of Calcutta, it was almost abandoned. That is why Msgr. Carew was willing to give this part of his vicariate to the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, as the city is closer to Visakhapatnam than Calcutta. "... il les pria donc d'y aller en son nom". Cf. H. JOSSON, "Histoire de la Mission: Les Dernières Années de Mgr. Carew", in *MB* (1920), pp. 197- 198.

hearing Confessions.”¹¹⁰ However, it was he who provided the only link that existed between the cloudy and stagnant past and the bright future spearheaded by the MSFS.¹¹¹

Fr. d’Attaide placed himself immediately under the jurisdiction of Fr. Henri Gailhot, the pro-vicar apostolic of Visakhapatnam, when the latter was appointed to lead the first team of missionaries from Savoy.¹¹² He never associated with other Goan priests who supported Padroado claims.¹¹³ He was residing on the church premises of St. Anne, which was considered to be his private property.¹¹⁴ But he bequeathed this property (including all the other chapels he had built or used for worship) to his successors, namely, the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales. He signed a will to this effect and gave it to his clerk, M. Lobo to execute it, lest some Goan priest might claim the property. Subsequently, M. Lobo, executed the will on the day of d’Attaide’s death. Msgr. Neyret mentioned that after five years a priest arrived from Goa to claim the property of St. Anne. According to this priest, it belonged to the diocese of Mylapore (Meliapour) or to the see of Goa. He presented his case to the Collector, Mr. Robertson, a just man and a friend of the priests, who did not want to deal with the affair.¹¹⁵

2.5 Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales

The growth of the Catholic Church in India is influenced by the personal traits and labour of some religious congregations to which different territories were entrusted. Therefore, it is inevitable that in studying the history of the Visakhapatnam mission, or tracing the beginning of the Ganjam mission for that matter, one also encounters the history of the Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, which was

¹¹⁰ F. MOGET, *The Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales of Annecy*, S.F.S. Publications, Bangalore 1985, p. 60.

¹¹¹ Sources for the Golconda mission are limited except for a few references here and there. “There are two baptism registers, one for Yanam 1767 – 1837. Another of the East Coast from Machilipatnam to Puri from 1806 to 1846. There are names of Capuchins, Theatines, Jesuits and Diocesan priests among the visiting missionaries. They used to visit Machilipatnam, Eluru, Kakinada, Yanam, Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram, Bheemunipatnam, Puri, Cuttack, etc. The Catholics might have been European personnel, Tamils or Goans, employed or engaged in business”. Cf. Anonymous, “Diocese of Visakhapatnam”, in *Visakhapatnam Diocesan Centenary (1886 - 1986)*, p. 3.

¹¹² A short biographical presentation of Fr. Henri Gailhot will be mentioned later in the chapter.

¹¹³ Though he originated from Goa, he did not have any sympathy for the Portuguese Padroado. He never had any difficulty in accepting the jurisdiction of the Propaganda in the territory. “Don Xavier d’Attaide fut toujours un prêtre irréprochable dans ses moeurs et missionnaire zélé. Seul missionnaire de Goa qu’il y eut sur ces côtes depuis Madras à Calcutta, sa position le sauva au moins de la tentation ou du danger de tomber dans le malheureux schisme de ses compatriotes, soit de la presque totalité des missionnaires de Goa répandus dans les Vicariats Apostoliques. Comme par son testament il avait chargé son exécuteur testamentaire de remettre à son légitime successeur toutes les chapelles qu’il avait fait bâtire ou qu’il avait desservies, le dit exécuteur testamentaire, M. Lobo, son clerc et comme le P. d’Attaide natif de Goa, mit en possession de Ste. Anne les Missionnaires de S. Francois de Sales, soit le vicaire Apostolique, le jour même de la mort du P. d’Attaide”. *Notice de Msgr. Neyret sur Don Xavier d’Attaide*, in *La Mission de Vizagapatam*, Extraite du Officiel 1845, Annecy, AMSFS 8/2, p. 33.

¹¹⁴ M. DOMENGE, *La Mission de Vizagapatam*, p. 122.

¹¹⁵ *Notice de Mgr. Neyret sur Don Xavier d’Attaide*, in *La Mission de Vizagapatam*, Extraite du Officiel 1845, Annecy, AMSFS 8/2, p. 33. The Collector is a government officer who is in charge of the revenue collection and law and order in the district.

established on October 24, 1838 in Annecy, Savoy, when it was canonically erected by Msgr. Joseph Rey of Annecy.¹¹⁶ The new religious fraternity began with six members under the direction of the founder Pierre-Marie Mermier (1790-1862), a diocesan priest.¹¹⁷ Speaking of the founder, the Constitutions of MSFS mention that “in fulfilling the longing for the religious life which he had felt for several years, Father Mermier had in mind a community whose goal was perfect charity, learned in the school of Saint Francis de Sales, a master of the spiritual life who was filled with apostolic zeal”.¹¹⁸ Initially the missionaries envisioned a mission in Savoy where the Christian life was wanting in dedication and piety. Their mission originally consisted of preaching retreats and exhorting people to live according to Christian values.¹¹⁹ Due to their initial success, the missionaries were viewed with hope. They were invited to preach missions in many parishes and to give retreats to priests.¹²⁰ With their simplicity and unwavering devotion the missionaries generated good will among the people.

¹¹⁶ The new congregation had also to obtain the approval of the king. Accordingly, King Charles-Albert of Sardinia and Duke of Savoy granted the approval of the government on September 29, 1838. Cf. J. REY, *Les Missionnaires de Saint-François de Sales d'Annecy*, pp. 47-48; F. Moget, *The Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales of Annecy*, p. 29.

¹¹⁷ Fr. Pierre-Marie Mermier, also referred to as Monsieur Mermier, a title common to the priests of his time, was born on August 28, 1790 at Vouray in the parish of Chaumont in Geneva. He came from a devout family. During the French Revolution some priests would go to his parish to celebrate Mass clandestinely. Since he came from a family of ‘fortune and position’, he experienced the brutal reality of terror during the French Revolution as General Montesquieu proclaimed: *Freedom, Equality and Fraternity*. Brought up in great devotion to the Catholic faith, the young Mermier opted very early for religious life. He was ordained a priest on March 21, 1813 for the diocese of Chambéry. As a young priest he worked untiringly in Magland and was later transferred to the College of Melan, where he taught. In 1819 he took charge of the parish of Le Chatelard where he met Monsieur Favre who ‘changed the life and pointed him to the true vocation’. In 1823 he gave up the position of spiritual director of the major seminary at Annecy and decided to dedicate himself to mission. The constitution of the group began to develop in 1830. There are a number of aspects that influenced the first constitution: a major part is influenced by the Lazarists, some elements were added from the Jesuits, Oblates and Redemptorists. Cf. A. DUVAL, *Monsieur Mermier: 1790 – 1862*, Bangalore 1982, pp. 7 - 11; S.GAL, *Conversions et Christianisation en Inde au XIXe Siècle: la fondation de la Mission savoyarde de Vizagapatam*, Université de Lyon, 1991, pp. 10 – 11.

¹¹⁸ *Constitutions of the Missionaries of Saint Francis de Sales*, The Mission of the Congregation, No. 3. Annecy 1984, p. 13.

¹¹⁹ P. RIME, “Missionari di San Francesco di Sales”, in *DIP*, vol. V, G. PELLICCINA AND G. ROCCA (eds.), Roma 1978, p. 1482, spells out the charism of the congregation in the following words: “L’Istituto ha i seguenti scopi: la predicazione delle missioni e dei ritiri nelle parrocchie, negli istituti e nelle comunità religiose; la conversione dei non credenti nei paesi di missione; l’educazione cristiana della gioventù nei movimenti di azione apostolica.”

¹²⁰ Since their foundation the Missionaries have been actively involved in the following apostolates: local parish missions, missions at far away places and the education of young people. They strive to live according to the ideals of St. Francis de Sales, their patron. Monsieur Mermier himself went around the parishes with enthusiasm, often spending three weeks continuously preaching retreats and teaching catechism. According to him, “this was the only way of bringing religious instruction to simple people and of breaking down their indifference and their mediocrity. It was with this in mind that Mermier gathered together his fellow-priests to form a religious congregation which would follow the example of Saint Francis de Sales, finding the enthusiasm they would need for their work”. Cf. C. MOREL, “A

In 1842 Cardinal Fransoni sent out letters to dioceses requesting missionaries for Africa. The letter which had been sent to the Bishop of Annecy was forwarded to Monsieur Mermier, who accepted it as a God-given opportunity to serve the mission. Warned of the usual delay by Rome, Monsieur Mermier was asked by the Bishop of Annecy to pursue the matter directly. Accordingly, he wrote a letter to the Cardinal Prefect expressing willingness to take up the mission in Libya with some conditions.¹²¹ He personally went to Rome to discuss the matter with Cardinal Fransoni.¹²² As a result, on June 2, 1843, Pope Gregory XVI, four years after founding, granted the congregation ecclesiastical approval. In the same year the “MSFS obtained the encouragements of the Holy See and many of the members consecrated themselves for (service in) the foreign missions. The founder, Mermier was very happy and approached Msgr. Rendu who welcomed it with great joy. This was also appreciated by the Roman Curia and Cardinal Fransoni, the Prefect of the Propaganda was very enthusiastic about it”.¹²³ In his letter, Cardinal Fransoni informed Monsieur Mermier that there would soon be an establishment of vicariates in India and that the newly established congregation would get one or the other vicariate.¹²⁴ On March 15, 1845, the vast area of Central India was severed from the Vicariate of Madras and was made into the Visakhapatnam vicariate. The new congregation, just seven years old, was entrusted with a vast territory.¹²⁵ From

Zealous Priest: Pierre – Marie Mermier (1790 - 1862)”, in *Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales. A letter to our Friends and Benefactors*. October 1988. p. 1.

¹²¹ The conditions were proposed when the congregation was in its infancy stage and still needed approval from the Holy See. Jean Rey cited from the note of Fr. Granjux: “1. Your Eminence should request from His Holiness any kind of approbation in favour of our congregation, so that it may prove useful, please God, not only to the diocese of Annecy, but also to neighbouring dioceses and the foreign missions; 2. The Holy Father should grant to the Superior of the congregation, who offers to be one of the first volunteers, a delay of one year, so that he may complete and strengthen what he has begun for the congregation of the Missionaries and that of the Daughters of the Cross; and, 3. The third and the last condition is that the congregation does not undertake any financial burden”. J. REY, *Les Missionnaires de Saint-François de Sales d’Annecy*, p. 84; F. MOGET, *The Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales of Annecy*, p. 37.

¹²² On September 30, 1842 he reached Rome and on the 2nd of October he had a meeting with the cardinal. In order to get the approbation, Mermier was to produce the recommendation letters of the four Bishops in Savoy. J. REY, *Les Missionnaires de Saint-François de Sales d’Annecy*, p. 84; F. MOGET, *The Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales of Annecy*, pp. 38 - 39.

¹²³ The new congregation was ready to go wherever the Holy See would send them. M. Domenge recorded the outlook of the missionaries: “Lorsque, en 1843, peu d’années après sa naissance, la congrégation de Saint-François de Sales eut obtenu les encouragements et la <<laude >> [*Decretum laudis*] du Saint-Siège, plusieurs de ses membres conçurent le pieux dessein de se consacrer aux missions étrangères. Le P. Mermier, leur supérieur et fondateur, accueillit cette demande avec une grande joie, et se hâta de la transmettre à Msgr. Rendu, alors évêque d’Annecy, non moins heureux que lui d’un semblable projet”. M. DOMENGE, *La Mission de Vizagapatam*, p. 109.

¹²⁴ “quod intra paucos dies de erigendis in Indiis orientalibus novis Missionibus agendum sit, quarum una vel altera electis tuis operariis commendari queat”. The letter was written on February 6, 1845. APF Lettre 1845, vol. 332, f. 85.

¹²⁵ “...Placuit autem S.C. selectis memoratis tuis presbyteris Vizagapatami Provincia a Vicaritu Madraspatano seorsim gubernanda curam committere...ad ducem, iis praeficiendum duxerunt alium aequae spectatum eximiumque operarium Puducheranae Missionis Henricum Gailhot qui Pro-Vicarii titulo

then on Visakhapatnam became the focus of the newly-founded congregation's concern and the centre of their activities.¹²⁶

The dispersed Catholic population of the time was composed of four principal groups: (1) Indians who had come from the Malabar coast to serve in the army along with their families; (2) Irish soldiers and their families; (3) Indians who had recently converted; and, (4) East Indians of Indian or Portuguese origin. There was also a small number of British and French Catholics in the area.¹²⁷ Even “before the arrival of the MSFS, there were only four priests to look after the 3,000 Christians of the vast territory: an Irish priest in Jalnah, two in Kamptee, an Irish and a Tamil. The fourth one is in Vizag”.¹²⁸

Upon their arrival in Visakhapatnam on February 19, 1846, the MSFS faced the arduous task of evangelising a vast territory of 435,000 square kilometres along the Coromandel Coast with a population of twenty million people, of whom mere 6,000 were Catholics.¹²⁹ Great distances, and a wide diversity of culture, language, and ethnicity posed major challenges to a congregation that was still in its infancy.¹³⁰

Msgr. Clement Bonnard,¹³¹ the vicar apostolic of Pondicherry, initially favoured the suggestion of sending two MEP Missionaries (Missions Étrangères de Paris) to help the MSFS in the Visakhapatnam Mission since the new arrivals were unfamiliar with

Vizagapatami Missioni Praerit”. Cardinal Fransoni to Monsieur Mermier (May 2, 1845), APF, Lettère 1845, vol. 332, ff. 269 – 270.

¹²⁶ “Cette Mission s’étend le long du golfe de Bengale, dans les Indes Orientales, de Cuttack aux bouches du Godavéry, sur une surface de cinq cents milles anglais (180 lieues de long sur 100 de large). Elle est borné au nord par le vicariat du Bengale, à l’ouest par celui de Bombay, au sud par celui d’Hydérabad, et à l’est par la mer, soit le golfe de Bengale”. Cf. Anonymous, *Notice sur la Mission de Visagapatam*, Anney 1866, p. 8.

¹²⁷ “La population catholique est composée de quatre elements principaux: d’Indiens originaires des côtes de Malabar, qui servent dans les armées ou qui les suivent avec leurs familles; de soldats irlandais et de leurs familles, d’indigènes récemment convertis, et d’East-Indians, soit d’Indiens d’origine portugaise. On y compte aussi, mais en petit nombre, des Anglais et des Français”. Ibid.

¹²⁸ F. MOGET, *The Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales of Anney*, p. 59.

¹²⁹ Anonymous, *The Fransalians of Visakhapatnam. Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, Visakhapatnam 1983, p. 2.

¹³⁰ From the original territory entrusted to the MSFS the Holy See eventually many dioceses. At present there are about thirteen dioceses in the original territory that covered almost five States in the Indian Union: Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharastra, Chhatisgarh, and Orissa.

¹³¹ Clement Bonnard was born at Saint-Maurice-Dargoire on May 20, 1796. After his ordination on June 17, 1821, he joined the Seminary of the Paris Foreign Mission Society at Paris in 1823 and left for Malabar Mission on February 4, 1824. After the death of Msgr. Hébert, he took over the Mission and became the vicar apostolic of Coromandel. Following the delimitation of missions in 1836, he was named the apostolic visitor, a position which he retained till his death on March 21, 1861 at Benares. He was often called Msgr. de Drusipare as he was named the titular bishop of Drusipare *in partibus infidelium*. Concerning the papal visit, Beckmann writes: “In order to counter the lack of unity among the vicars apostolic and the missionaries of the propaganda, they suggested a papal visitation. In August of the same year (1858) Pius IX appointed the vicar apostolic of Pondicherry from the Paris Mission Seminary, Clement Bonnard (1796 - 1861), as his visitor. He was charged with examining the deficiencies as well as determining the means of removing them in the areas subject to the Propaganda”. J. BECKMANN, “The Missions between 1840 and 1870”, pp. 180 – 181.

the peculiar situations of the country. However, due to some constraints in personnel, he later informed them of his inability to send Frs. Metral and Ligeon to help them.¹³²

2.5.1. Erection of Visakhapatnam Mission

Considerable progress in the mission occurred when Gregory XVI, through the proclamation of Apostolic letter *Multa Praeclare*, effected a reorganisation of the mission. In spite of the jurisdictional conflicts in India, it produced the desired results in Visakhapatnam mission, since the present Hyderabad and Visakhapatnam mission territories were attached to the Vicariate of Madras. This was a positive move as there were a good number of Christians serving in the army all along the coast.¹³³ This action by the Pope turned out to be of immense benefit to the faithful, particularly to the Catholic soldiers who had been working in the British army. In order to serve the dispersed Catholics, three priests were sent to some important centres in 1839. The second benefit was the erection of the Visakhapatnam Mission.¹³⁴ Since the priests from Goa were not generally liked – the Irish soldiers did not prefer the priests from Goa for confessions, since either the Goan priests did not know enough English or their general conduct itself kept them aloof, while the Indian soldiers opted for European priests instead of the ones with a dark skin (a general prejudice of the time) - the change brought about by the proclamation of *Multa Praeclare* was hailed with great enthusiasm.¹³⁵

At a time when the Propaganda was planning to reorganise the Catholic missions in India with the erection of new vicariates, Fr. J. F. Luquet, an MEP missionary from Pondicherry, was sent to Rome on a special mission to present the deliberations of the Synod of Pondicherry and to offer explanations if required. His mission earned him the purple hat, for he was appointed the coadjutor to Msgr. Bonnard, vicar apostolic of Pondicherry. Obviously, he succeeded in his initiatives to erect the Visakhapatnam vicariate with the intention of promoting his friend, Fr. Henri Gailhot, another influential priest in the Pondicherry mission and an active participant in

¹³² M. DOMENGE, *La Mission de Vizagapatam*, p. 114.

¹³³ Msgr. Neyret wrote to Fr. Mermier concerning the effect of *Multa Praeclare*: “En effet Grégoire XVI, d’hereuse mémoire, venait de jeter un 3ème regard de miséricorde sur la Péninsule. Par la Bulle *Multa Praeclare*, il venait d’adjoindre au Vicariat Apostolique de Madras les vastes régions qui forment aujourd’hui les deux Missions d’Hyderabad et de Vizagapatam. Cette nouvelle disposition de la cour de Rome était un bienfait immense tant pour les anciens chrétiens de ces Missions que pour ceux, bien plus nombreux, dont la diffusion des troupes de la compagnie anglaise dans toute l’Inde avait doté le pays depuis un certain nombre d’années. Ces nouveaux Chrétiens étaient les Irlandais d’abord, puis les cipayes (soldat indigènes) venus des cotes de Malabar et du Coromandel”. Neyret to Mermier, Vizagapatam, September 6, 1850. AMSFS, 7 5 H 5 – 2, p. 221.

¹³⁴ Neyret to Mermier, Vizagapatam, September 6, 1850, *Lettres des Missionnaires 1845-1857*. AMSFS 7Z/ 5 H 5.

¹³⁵ “Les Iers, avec toute la foi qu’on leur connaît, n’en avaient pas assez cependant pour se confesser aux prêtres de Goa. Ils n’accomplissaient pas même leur devoir pascal; c’est ce dont ils font tous généralement l’aveu. Pour les Cipayes et leurs familles, ils n’avaient sans doute pas le même éloignement ni les mêmes préjugés pour les Misses à peau noire que les Européens. Mais ils ne pouvaient les rencontrer, du moins que très rarement et plus brièvement encore”. Neyret to Mermier, Vizagapatam, September 6, 1850. AMSFS, 7 5 H 5-2, p. 221.

the first synod of Pondicherry, to that see.¹³⁶ In the general congregation of the Propaganda (February 17, 1845) it was decided to erect the Visakhapatnam Vicariate and to give it to a non-English prelate. On May 2, 1845 Cardinal Fransoni conveyed the decision of the Sacred Congregation to the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, Annecy.¹³⁷

The Holy See had also proposed to appoint a pro-vicar to look after the affairs of the mission territory. Since the missionaries were newcomers to the place, Rome appointed an experienced MEP missionary to help the community till they got used to the situation in India. Fr. Henri Gailhot, who at the time of his appointment was working in Bangalore, was to become the pro-vicar. With considerable experience in working at a military centre such as in Bangalore, he was a suitable choice for the new post. Thus, the foreign mission of MSFS began with six missionaries: four priests and two brothers.¹³⁸ The team embarked for India on June 5, 1845 and arrived in Pondicherry on September 7, 1845.

2.5. 2 Misunderstanding and Delay at Pondicherry

Although Msgr. Bonnard welcomed the missionaries and did all he could to make their stay a memorable one,¹³⁹ they were eager to reach their destination. They were asked to learn Telugu. As the desire to reach their destination kept growing, Fr. Jacques Martin¹⁴⁰ wrote to Msgr. Fennelly, vicar apostolic of Madras, under whose jurisdiction Visakhapatnam was, requesting him to give the canonical faculties for their

¹³⁶ F. MOGET, *The Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales of Annecy*, p. 48.

¹³⁷ Cardinal Fransoni wrote that the Sacred Congregation had decided to entrust the mission to the MSFS priests. The superior was given the freedom to choose the ones who would be suitable for the mission. "Dein vero per Multa S.C. narrat de missionis Visagapatami exordio, ac statu quae plane suadent missionis ipsius bono congruere, ut ab illius regimen novus Pro-Vicarius, inter eosdem presbyteros/ Annecienses eligendus, quamprimum statuatur, facta ex nunc R. D. Henrico Gailhot potestate, quod progressu temporis perficiendum erat, Puducherium reduend". APF Lettere 1845, part II, vol. 334, f.757.

¹³⁸ They are: Frs. Jacques Martin, who was the superior of the team, Joseph Lavorel, Jean Marie Tissot, Jean Thevenet and Bros. Pierre Carton and Sulpice Fontanel. F. MOGET, *The Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales of Annecy*, p. 51; Anonymous, *Notice sur la Mission de Visagapatam*, p. 9. There is no doubt that the first group of missionaries was very little informed of the country that they were entering and they knew nothing of the people (their language, culture, climatic and political conditions in which they lived) they were going to evangelise. All they probably knew about India was the exploits of General de Boigne, who made a fortune in the Maratha Army from 1781 to 1792. cf. S. GAL, S.GAL, *Conversions et Christianisation en Inde au XIXe Siècle*, p. 14f.

¹³⁹ It was Msgr. Rey of Annecy who lit the fire of apostolic zeal in the heart of Bonnard in one of his preaching missions. It persuaded the latter to enter Missions Étrangères de Paris. Anonymous, *Notice sur la Mission de Visagapatam*, p. 45. Probably owing to this initial contact he had with Annecy and the letters sent by Msgr. Rey and Monsieur Mermier, Msgr. Bonnard dealt very kindly with the newly-appointed missionaries. He did all he could to make them feel at home; "Msgr. Bonnard, leur vicaire apostolique, se montra d'une bienveillance toute paternelle. Conformément aux intentions du Saint-Siège, il donna à nos Pères, pour les initier aux travaux apostoliques dans l'Inde, un de ses prêtres, M. Gailhot, avec le titre de Provicar apostolique, relevant de l'Evêque de Madras". Cf. Anonymous, *Notice sur la Mission de Visagapatam*, p. 9.

¹⁴⁰ Fr. Jacques Martin was born at La Cote d'Abroz, Savoy. He was the superior of the first group of the MSFS that took up the Mission of Visakhapatnam. He left for India on May 14, 1845. He was appointed as the parish priest of Yanam. Hardly three months after assuming his work he died of sunstroke on May 5, 1846. Cf. F. MOGET, *MSFS Obituary*, pp. 49 – 50.

ministry in Visakhapatnam. But Msgr. Fennelly, without replying to Fr. Martin, wrote to Msgr. Bonnard explaining why he would not grant the requests of the Savoyards.¹⁴¹

The Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of Faith informed Msgr. Fennelly of the division of his vicariate that led to the formation of the Vicariate of Hyderabad and the Vicariate of Visakhapatnam.¹⁴² Sensing that his plan could not be realised with the new arrangements of the Sacred Congregation, Msgr. Fennelly had posed some initial difficulties by not granting jurisdiction to the MSFS, which was later given at the intervention of the Holy See. Besides the monetary benefits to be had from the places where there were garrisons, the government also paid a meagre stipend to Catholic chaplains. Considering these factors, Fennelly may have thought that an individual coming from a subject nation would more likely be eligible for such grants from the government.¹⁴³ He may also have believed that the Irish Catholics would prefer their compatriots, since he had previously expressed his intention of bringing Irish clergy to India who might help to develop this region into a diocese. In his letter to the Propaganda, Msgr. Fennelly describes the nature of the Catholic communities: “Those Catholics were mostly Europeans, attached to the military troops stationed at important centres in the vicariate. There were also a few Tamil Catholics who were either *sepoys* (soldiers) or servants of the Europeans.”¹⁴⁴ Because most of the Catholics of his

¹⁴¹ Msgr. Fennelly to Msgr. Bonnard, Madras, February 13, 1846, APF Indie Orientali: Scritture Riferite nei Congressi, vol. 10, ff. 1079 – 1080. F. MOGET, *The Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales of Annecy*, p. 55. Martin had written to the vicar apostolic of Madras informing him of their arrival and their willingness to place themselves at the service of the pro-vicariate of Vizagapatam, but Msgr. Fennelly did not reply. Instead, he sent a letter to the vicar apostolic of Pondicherry informing the latter that he had sent a letter to the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of Faith, registering his reservations about the work of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales in Visakhapatnam. Therefore he did not want to have any communication with the missionaries until he received a reply from Rome. He suggested that the Savoyards remain in Pondicherry in order to avoid any potential friction with the Irish priests. Msgr. Fennelly had even made an appeal to the supreme government in Bengal against the assignment of Visakhapatnam to a French congregation. Cf. M. DOMENGE, *La Mission de Vizagapatam*, p. 114. The refusal of Msgr. Fennelly to grant jurisdiction either to the pro-vicar of Visakhapatnam or to the MSFS was probably based on the experience of his predecessor, Msgr. O’Connor, that the British government preferred a candidate from among their subjects. This may have been the reason for rejecting a French candidate, particularly at a time when the relationship between France and England was not friendly. Based on this presumption, the prelate may have recommended the Irish clergy. Cf. E. HULL, *Bombay Mission History*, vol. I, p. 271ff.

¹⁴² For the division of Madras into three dioceses and the appointment of Henry Gailhot as the pro-vicar apostolic of Visakhapatnam: “Amplitudinem ejus ita imminuere ut interim tres in partes, ac distinctos veluti missiones ille divideretur, nempe Visakapatam, Hyderabad, ac Madraspatani. Prioris limites constitui rite posse visi sunt ad orientem sinus Bangalensis, ad septentrionem Bombayna et Calcutta missiones; ad meridiem denique flumen Godavery... aut incomodo consuerunt Emi. Patres rogandum Drusiparensem Antistitem, ut provisoria item ratione operarium suum Henricum Gailhot regionum Vizagapatam curam gerere posse, haud graveretur. Supralaudato vero missionario, cui sub pro-vicarii a sui titulo, durante munere, regiones illas moderari tribuitur, facultatibus quoque sicuti de coadjutore inuimus, communicare poteris, iis exceptis, qua characterem Episcopalem quae ille caret, requirunt”. APF Lettere 1845, vol. 332, ff. 293-295.

¹⁴³ M. DOMENGE, *La Mission de Vizagapatam*, p. 114.

¹⁴⁴ Anonymous, *Notice sur la Mission de Vizagapatam*, p.2. Msgr. Fennelly writes, “In regionibus Vizagapatam intra limites a Sacra Congregatione definitos, octo sunt oppida, in quibus locantur undecim

Vicariate were Irish, he as an Irishman preferred that Irish priests should run the diocese.¹⁴⁵ Thus he decided to ignore the newcomers. He even wrote to the vicar apostolic of Pondicherry stating emphatically that until he received a letter from the Propaganda he would have nothing to do with Savoyards.¹⁴⁶

Right from the beginning the MSFS was faced with major financial constraints.¹⁴⁷ The missionaries had to depend on the *œuvre de Propagation de la Foi* for their expenses on the voyage. Even that allotted sum had been exhausted by the time they reached Pondicherry.¹⁴⁸ Fr. Henri Gailhot came to their help by providing some funds in the form of Mass stipends. As they waited in Pondicherry for further instructions, they utilised the time to learn both Tamil and Telugu. When finally Msgr.

legiones (anglice Regiments) militum Angliae, una cum quatuor cohortibus Artilleriae (anglice artillery) et duabus cohortibus fossorum Castiensium (anglice sappers and miners) ex quibus licet quaedam constant praecipue ex aboriginibus, nihilominus plures sunt Indo-Brittani qui Anglice loquuntur, quaedam constant omnino ex Europaeis, et duces omnes sine exceptione sunt Angli aut Hiberni”. Msgr. Fennelly to Cardinal Fransoni. Madras, July 10, 1845, APF Indie Orientali: Scritture Riferite nei Congressi, vol. 10 ff. 473 – 482.

¹⁴⁵ M. DOMENGE, *La Mission de Vizagapatam*, p. 116. In his letter to Cardinal Fransoni, Msgr. Fennelly informs him that they have enough personnel to take care of the mission: “In collegio Omnium Sanctorum apud Drucondra in Hibernia undecim sunt alumni hujus missionis qui ad sacros ordines promoti confectis studiis theologicis jamjam Madraspatanum navigare parati sunt. Praeterea in nostro seminario sunt decem juvenes optimae spei, qui Deo adjuvante, suo temporis ad vineam Domini excolendam apti reperiuntur. Omnes isti juvenes sunt indigenae, sed non quales conatu parum efficaci apud Pudicherium instituuntur. Omnes sunt albis ex parentibus Hibernis, sed in India nati. In Collegio Sti. Patricii apud Maynooth quidam quoque sunt alumni, qui ad missionem Madraspatanum venire desiderant.” Msgr. Fennelly to Cardinal Fransoni. Madras, July 10, 1845, APF Indie Orientali: Scritture Riferite nei Congressi, vol. 10 ff. 473 – 482.

¹⁴⁶ Msgr. Fennelly writes to Msgr. Bonnand: “I had a letter from one of the Savoy missionaries who were destined to Vizagapatam. But as I sent a strong remonstrance to the Sacred Congregation against this appointment, I consider it inexpedient pending the remonstrance to hold any correspondence with them. Indeed it is not with them I should communicate in any case. It appears to me probable that your Lordship will have them all to yourself, and if it were so arranged, it would be perhaps the most convenient way of healing or preventing the bad feeling which will otherwise arise and has already been produced between the French and Irish missionaries”. Msgr. Fennelly to Msgr. Bonnand, Madras, September 21, 1845, APF Indie Orientali: Scritture Riferite nei Congressi, vol. 10, ff. 1079 –1080. Msgr. Fennelly was aware of the possible tension that might arise due to his interference in the assigning of mission territories to a congregation. Due to the humility of the Savoyards, more particularly due to the kindness of Msgr. Neyret, there was no tension. In fact, as a conciliatory measure Msgr. Neyret requested Msgr. Fennelly to leave two Irish missionaries, so that they could continue to serve as chaplains, an action very dear to Msgr. Fennelly. Later when Msgr. Neyret was made Bishop of Olene *in partibus infidelium*, he chose to be consecrated in Madras by Msgr. Fennelly.

¹⁴⁷ M. Domenge described the situation of their misery in contrasting colours, “Arriver seuls dans un pays absolument inconnu, affronter un climat meurtrier pour ceux qui osent le braver, ignorer complètement les langues dont la connaissance allait devenir indispensable, tout cela ne les inquiétait pas. Leur idéal du Missionnaire était de partir simplement avec leur Bréviaire et leur Bible à la main, comme saint Francois Xavier, et de s’en remettre, pour le reste, aux soins de la providence”. M. DOMENGE, *La Mission de Vizagapatam*, p. 110.

¹⁴⁸ F. MOGET, *The Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales of Annecy*, p. 55.

Fennelly was asked by Rome to grant the faculties needed for the new missionaries,¹⁴⁹ they left for Madras immediately, reaching their destination in nine days on February 9, 1846. They were given a rousing welcome by the Irish Catholics who served in the military garrison. The Catholic community initially paid the rent of the missionaries, as they did not have any house to live in.

2.5.3 Growth of Visakhapatnam under the first three Leaders

2.5.3.1 Fr. Henri Gailhot, the first pro-vicar 1845-1847

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Msgr. Bonnard's plan of sending two MEP missionaries to introduce the Savoyards in the mission did not materialise because of certain unforeseen problems.¹⁵⁰ Meanwhile, Fr. J. F. Luquet¹⁵¹ arranged with Propaganda Fide to appoint Fr. Henri Gailhot¹⁵² as the pro-vicar of the new mission.¹⁵³ Though the Propaganda declared that Fr. H. Gailhot would be the 'Leader and Superior of the mission', Fr. J. F. Luquet, then in Rome on a special mission, promised him that he would later be appointed as the vicar apostolic of Visakhapatnam.¹⁵⁴ Fr. Luquet's

¹⁴⁹ In his letter to the Propaganda Fr. Henry Gailhot informed them that Msgr. Fennelly refused to give him jurisdiction, in spite of the requests made to him: "Jurisdictionem a Reverendissimo Vicario Apostolico Madrapatanensi humillime petii, sed dare negavit". H. Gailhot to Cardinal Fransoni, Bangalore, October 10, 1845, APF Indie Orientali: Scrittura Riferite nei Congressi, vol. 10, ff. 632 – 633.

¹⁵⁰ The two MEP missionaries were Frs. Metral and Ligeon, who were also from Savoy. They were asked to initiate the new arrivals in the Vizag. Mission, as the MSFS could not converse in Telugu. Cf. F. MOGET, *The Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales of Annecy*, p. 55.

¹⁵¹ It was Luquet who surpassed the instructions given to him and used his influence in the erection of vicariates. "Msgr. Luquet avait outrepassé ses instructions et qu'en consequence nous lui retirons nos pouvoirs. Je ne suis pour rien, Monseigneur, dans tous les arrangements qui ont été pris soit pour les limites de Vizagapatam soit pour les ouvriers evangeliques contre lesquelles reclame Votre Grandeur." Msgr. Fennelly to Msgr. Bonnard, Madras, September 21, 1845, APF Indie Orientali: Scrittura Riferite nei Congressi, vol. 10, ff. 1079 –1080. Two letters addressed to the Propaganda (APF Indie Orientali: Scrittura Referite nei Congressi 1947, Vol. 11, f. 28f) speak of the erection of Visakhapatnam as a vicariate and the following document suggests that Henri Gailhot be appointed as a pro-vicar of Visakhapatnam.

¹⁵² Jacques Henri Gailhot was born on August 12, 1810, at Le Cheylard, Ardeche, France. After completing his ecclesiastical studies at Grenoble, he was ordained on December 20, 1834. He joined the MEP on September 16, 1835. He left for the vicariate–apostolic of Coromandel on September 3, 1838. He was sent to Bangalore as the military chaplain where he worked for 7 years. He was also an active participant in the First Synod of Pondicherry. On October 10, 1852 he quit the MEP and returned to France. He died on October 15, 1890. F. MOGET, *The Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales of Annecy*, pp. 61-66; T. ANCHUKANDAM, *The First Synod of Pondicherry 1844*, p. 32.

¹⁵³ Pro-vicar is a title given to a person who serves as a leader of a 'missio sui juris'. The pro–vicar is neither a bishop nor a vicar apostolic. He depends on the vicar apostolic for the jurisdiction and faculties to exercise his mission in the said territory. For the details regarding the appointment see APF *Lettere* 1845, vol. 332, ff. 699-700.

¹⁵⁴ Due to the understanding that he would be appointed the vicar apostolic of Visakhapatnam, Gailhot acted as the supreme authority in the mission. He was of the opinion that the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales were mere collaborators. He was autocratic in directing the mission. The missionaries found it difficult to listen to him. They were of the opinion that the Holy See had entrusted the mission to them and Fr. Gailhot was only a guide till they established themselves in the mission. Probably for this reason Gailhot kept Fr. Jacques Martin, superior of the group, in Yanam, which is located far from

promise was aimed at securing his friend's initial consent for the appointment. With that in mind he acted as if he were the vicar apostolic of Visakhapatnam. In contrast, the MSFS thought that Fr. H. Gailhot was only a temporary superior and that one of their confreres would be appointed the pro-vicar and eventually vicar apostolic. So friction between the two parties mounted.¹⁵⁵ However, the missionaries were full of praise for Gailhot's ability to organise and to provide material assistance to the mission. He was resourceful in making the acquaintance of the prominent people of the place. He was also very influential in Bangalore and probably for that reason he was promoted to this see, so that Msgr. Charbonnaux,¹⁵⁶ as the vicar apostolic of Bangalore, could administer the diocese without the interference of Fr. Gailhot.¹⁵⁷ When Theophilus Neyret was appointed the pro-vicar of Visakhapatnam, Gailhot left the place without waiting for the arrival of his successor.

2.5.3.2 Msgr. Sebastian Theophilus Neyret 1847-1862

Sebastian Theophilus Neyret was born at Giez (near Annecy) in 1802. After his ordination in 1825, he was sent to Cluses where he became known for his piety. Beginning in May 1832 he worked as a chaplain for the Sisters of St. Joseph in Evian for 13 years. He entered the MSFS in 1845 and was appointed the chaplain of Les Allinges, but he expressed his desire to go to India. Realising the need to appoint a member of the congregation as the pro-vicar of Visakhapatnam, the Holy See asked for suitable names of individuals who could be appointed for the mission of Visakhapatnam. Fr. Sebastian Theophilus Neyret was the unanimous choice of all.¹⁵⁸ Before his departure for India he was in Rome between November and December 1846 to consult with the Holy See.¹⁵⁹ He arrived in Madras on March 7, 1847 and waited there for the arrival of Fr. H. Gailhot, who had left Visakhapatnam without waiting for

Visakhapatnam. This caused a tension between the two parties. F. MOGET, *The Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales of Annecy*, pp. 61- 66.

¹⁵⁵ F. Moget records some of the complaints of the MSFS regarding the way Pro-Vicar Gailhot acted in a mission which the missionaries thought was given to them. One of the interesting comments is that Gailhot "acts on his own authority, without consulting anyone else. He started a congregation of Nuns with teenagers and two of them were recent converts from Protestantism. He had taken the pariah servants and thus brings us all into contempt. He cares only for the British and Irish". *Ibid.*, pp. 62 – 65.

¹⁵⁶ Etienne-Louis Charbonnaux was born at La Guerche, on March 20, 1806. He left for India on August 16, 1830. He was made Vicar Apostolic of Mysore in 1850. He continued the apostolic visitation after the death of Msgr. Bonnand in 1861. He died in Bangalore on June 23, 1873.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

¹⁵⁸ Msgr. Neyret's devotion and simplicity attracted reverence and respect from all: "Sa modestie, son recueillement, sa piété, sa charité ne sont point encore oubliés dans cette ville. Le fond de son être était un mélange de gravité et de douceur qui commandait le respect et attirait à lui tous les cœurs". Anonymous, *Notice Biographiques sur M. Pierre Mermier et Monseigneur Neyret*, Annecy 1863, p. 37; cf. F. MOGET, *The Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales of Annecy*, p. 69. For the decree of nomination of Neyret: AMSFS, *Mission de Vizagapatam*, 73-74; For details regarding the Apostolic Brief that erected Visakhapatnam as an independent Vicariate: APF *Lettere* 1850, vol. 339, ff. 219-220 and *Jus Pontificium de Propaganda Fide*, vol. VI, Romae 1894, 90.

¹⁵⁹ "Pour correspondre à ses désirs, le supérieur de la congrégation le destina à la mission de Vizagapatam. Avant de faire voile pour l'Asie, il visita les tombeaux des saints Apôtres a Rome". Cf. Anonymous, *Notice Biographiques sur M. Pierre Mermier et Monseigneur Neyret*, Annecy 1863. p. 39.

the new pro-vicar. Gathering whatever information he could from Fr. Gailhot about the mission, he reached his pro-vicariate on April 24, 1847. When the pro-vicariate of Visakhapatnam was elevated to the status of a vicariate, Fr. Neyret was elevated to the episcopate with the title of Bishop of Olene *in partibus infidelium*. Msgr. Fennelly consecrated him in Madras on February 24, 1849.¹⁶⁰ He inherited a mission whose chapels were deteriorating because of declining resources. However, between 1849 and 1862, one could easily observe the growth of the mission by the number of its assets: seven churches, fifteen chapels and many presbyteries. He even extended an invitation to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Annecy to help the mission by establishing in three convents.

Msgr. Neyret turned his attention towards the establishment of schools for children. He did all he could to establish schools wherever possible, and he was convinced of the need of establishing orphanages for poor children.¹⁶¹ The Sisters of St. Joseph were equally busy with the education of girls for whom they maintained orphanages that proved to be beneficial. Many students who attended the mission school later continued their studies and eventually returned to their own villages in order to educate their own people. Some of them entered the MSFS as well. Msgr. Neyret supported the promotion and formation of an indigenous clergy and recruited suitable candidates from Visakhapatnam.¹⁶² In order to enforce the apostolic fervour and expedite evangelising efforts, Msgr. Neyret divided the vicariate into four districts: Visakhapatnam, Yanaon, Kamptee and Aurangabad. Despite the initial economic constraints of the mission, support arrived periodically from the *Propagation de la Foi* (which sent annual donations), from charity-minded people, from Irish soldiers who paid regular subscriptions and sometimes even from Protestants.

He had great appreciation for the missionaries and tried to help them in every way possible. He was convinced that there was nothing comparable to the values of a missionary in this country.¹⁶³ Describing Neyret's characteristics, Francis Moget writes: "his virtues equalled his talents. He was admired for his rectitude, his openness of mind, his courteous ways towards all. He had a great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and was often seen with beads in his hands".¹⁶⁴ His simplicity and approachability won him

¹⁶⁰ Neyret considered his consecration as bishop as his second baptism. Every year he celebrated the anniversary of his consecration preceding it with a three-day retreat. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁶¹ The biographer of Monsieur Mermier praises the work of the missionaries: "Ces sont des espèces d'orphelinats qui donnent d'excellents résultats. Grâce à nos écoles, beaucoup de jeunes gens ont des positions honorables dans la société, car dans les Indes il est facile à celui qui a reçu quelque éducation, de s'élever au-dessus de la foule, surtout si sa conduite est bonne, et s'il sait se garder de l'ivrognerie, vice si commun dans ce pays." *Ibid.*, p. 42

¹⁶² Concerning the initiatives taken by Msgr. Neyret to promote native clergy, see Anonymous, *Notice sur la Mission*, p. 15: "Msgr. Neyret avait l'intention d'en élever aux ordres sacrés, pour commencer un clergé indigène que tous désirent, mais jusqu'ici, les circonstances n'ont pas permis de réaliser ce vœu".

¹⁶³ Neyret used to say, "dans ce pays rien n'est comparable à la valeur d'un missionnaire". Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 45

¹⁶⁴ F. MOGET, *The Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales of Annecy*, p. 69. The author of *Notice Biographiques* further writes: "entré dans la congregation sur la fin de 1845, le R. P. Neyret suivit les missions diocésaines pendant près d'une année. Dire l'édification qu'il donna pendant tout ce temps, et les vertus d'humilié, d'abnégation et d'obéissance qu'il fit paraître, n'est pas chose facile: il était vraiment

the hearts of the people!¹⁶⁵ He always practiced both physical and evangelical poverty: whether it involved undertaking an arduous and tiring journey or it meant lessening his Episcopal dignity in celebration, he did it happily for the mission and the poor.¹⁶⁶

Msgr. Neyret undertook many hazardous journeys in order to administer the sacrament of confirmation, to exhort the faithful to be fervent in their calling, to encourage the missionaries, and to show care for the sick and the suffering. He never sought his own comfort. His last painful journey was when he accompanied the new superior to Kamptee, where he died on November 5, 1862.¹⁶⁷

2.5.3.3 Msgr. Jean–Marie Tissot 1864-1890

Jean–Marie Tissot was born in Megeve, Savoy, on September 26, 1810. He lost his father two years later during the Russian campaign of Napoleon and received his Catholic education from his mother. He was ordained a priest on September 24, 1836 by Bishop Rey of Annecy.¹⁶⁸ After having worked in a parish as an assistant, he joined the MSFS in 1839. He was part of the first group of missionaries who came to Visakhapatnam in 1846. He undertook an expedition, at the request of Msgr. Neyret, with Fr. François Sermet¹⁶⁹ to the Kondh Hills to learn about the possibilities of evangelical work among the hill tribes. Besides his work as superior of the mission he was also the vicar general of the Vicariate of Visakhapatnam, a post he held until the death of Msgr. Neyret. So it was no accident that he was chosen to succeed Msgr. Neyret. The choice was applauded by all, both in the mission and in the congregation, as Fr. Jean–Marie Tissot had been closely associated with the mission since its beginning. When Fr. Tissot was consecrated at Bombay on August 4, 1864, he immediately visited all the mission stations, starting from Kamptee, Nagpur, etc.¹⁷⁰

Frequent visits and long journeys exhausted Msgr. Tissot, forcing him to return to Europe in 1866, where he could visit his native land and make his *ad limina* visit to the Pope. He met the directors of the Propagation of the Faith and requested them to continue their support to the mission in Visakhapatnam. He had the foresight to purchase a hillock near Visakhapatnam, what is now known as Ross Hill, that belonged to Mr. Ross, and built a shrine in honour of the Blessed Virgin. That shrine has grown

comme une lime entre les mains des directeurs des saints exercices, plus jeunes et moins habiles que lui”. Cf. Anonymous, *Notice Biographiques*, p. 39.

¹⁶⁵ To quote a sentence from the *Notices Biographiques* on Neyret, “Les Irlandais et les autres chrétiens disaient: ‘cet évêque est un bel homme, son port est majestueux, il parle magnifiquement; mais en voyant le nôtre, si humble et si pieux, nous ne pouvons nous empêcher de le préférer, et de dire que c’est un saint’”. Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 45.

¹⁶⁷ Anonymous, *Notice sur la Mission*, p. 15.

¹⁶⁸ Anonymous, “Bishop Jean Marie Tissot”, in Visakhapatnam Diocesan Centenary (1886 – 1986), p. 15.

¹⁶⁹ Fr. François–Marie Sermet was born at Sallanches (St. Roch), Savoy. He belonged to the third group of missionaries who left France on June 18, 1848 and reached India in December 1848. He accompanied Fr. Tissot to explore the possibilities of establishing a mission among the Kondhs on the Ganjam mountains, where he contracted mountain fever. On reaching Ganjam he died on September 12, 1850. Cf. F. MOGET, *MSFS Obituary*, p. 81.

¹⁷⁰ Anonymous, “Bishop Jean Marie Tissot”, in Visakhapatnam Diocesan Centenary (1886 – 1986), p. 15.

into an important sanctuary in the state.¹⁷¹ In 1870, he was back in Rome for the First Vatican Council. When Msgr. Tissot requested a coadjutor, he was given Fr. François Philippe,¹⁷² who was known for his prudence and intelligence.¹⁷³ He visited the mission at the request of the superior general. Although his appointment brought joy to the missionaries initially, due to some problems Msgr. François Philippe never reached his destination. When the hierarchy in India was established, the vicar apostolic was raised to the dignity of a bishop and, thus Msgr. Tissot became the first bishop of Visakhapatnam. In 1887, Visakhapatnam diocese was divided and Nagpur was made a diocese with Msgr. Alexius Riccaz as its first bishop.¹⁷⁴

During his last years, Msgr. Tissot spent much time visiting the missionaries. One of his great desires in India was to start a seminary for the training of future missionaries and this he did it at Gopalpur-on-Sea (near Berhampur) in Orissa in 1890. From Gopalpur he visited his beloved mission Surada, where he was attacked by mountain fever – just as he was when he made his first exploration with Fr. François Sermet. Previously he had been fortunate to survive but now he caught the fever that proved to be fatal. Bishop Tissot died completely alone in Thotavally near Surada on September 27, 1890. He was buried in the chapel of Surada.

To instil a spirit of self-help in his neophytes and orphans, Msgr. Tissot undertook many projects. One such project was meant to enable the local people to grow their own food. He thought that although the people were poor, they were used to agriculture and that they might not suffer from starvation if they could be provided with a small piece of land. In 1869 Msgr. Tissot acquired 1,000 acres of swampy land near Visakhapatnam, which became the site for the settlement of Catholics. Two Christian settlements, Gnanapuram and Kothavalsa (both of them are located in Andhra Pradesh), ultimately emerged on the site.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. pp. 16 - 17.

¹⁷² François Philippe was born at Cran, on July 12, 1835. He was ordained a priest on July 14, 1862. He worked as a chaplain of the Holy Cross Sisters of Chavanod for 8 years. He held important positions in the congregation. He was sent as a visitator to the MSFS mission in India in 1885. He was appointed coadjutor to Msgr. Tissot on August 14, 1886. He received his Episcopal consecration on November 30, 1886 but never succeeded Msgr. Tissot as his health did not permit him such an appointment. He died at Veyrier-du-Lac, on April 16, 1904. Cf. F. MOGET, *MSFS Obituary*, p. 44.

¹⁷³ Reference to the canonical visitation and to his elevation to the episcopate is dealt in the fourth chapter of this work.

¹⁷⁴ Alexis Riccaz was born at St. Jean d'Arves, Maurienne. He came to India in 1862. He worked in Visakhapatnam for many years. He worked in Gnanapuram, Ganivada, Kottadaba. He was appointed the vicar general in 1886. The following year he was appointed the first bishop of the newly erected Diocese of Nagpur. He died on September 7, 1890. Cf. F. MOGET, *MSFS Obituary*, p. 80.

2.5.4 First attempts

2.5.4.1 Reasons

At the request of Msgr. P. J. Carew, the vicar apostolic of Calcutta, Msgr. Neyret went to Cuttack, accompanied by Fr. J.M. Tissot.¹⁷⁵ This visit was probably very important as it occurred after the death of Fr. Joseph Xavier d'Attaide, who was the sole missionary providing pastoral care of the Christians along the coast. Msgr. Neyret wanted to visit the mission stations in order to learn about their actual situation. So, after the rainy season, in September 1849, he proceeded to the Orissa coast: Cuttack, Ganjam and Berhampur. The journey seems to have taken them about a month as they travelled over 300 miles. The language barrier made it impossible to have any direct contact with the people. However, he came to the conclusion that very little evangelisation had been done and that the 1,500 Catholics found along the coast were all outsiders. There were Europeans, Goans and Tamils who had settled down in the towns because of government service or trade. They were found in Cuttack, Berhampur, Ganjam, Aska and Russelkonda.¹⁷⁶ He concluded that unless a priest resided with them the Christians would continue to live in ignorance.¹⁷⁷

Msgr. Neyret also had a great desire to establish a mission station among the Kondhs. He appreciated their frankness and simplicity.¹⁷⁸ The evils of the caste system

¹⁷⁵ Cuttack was the place of Msgr. Neyret's first pastoral visit. Cuttack, a fortified town with a population of 100,000 people, is situated on the bank of the river Mahanadi. The distance from Visakhapatnam to Cuttack is about 300 miles. Tissot was there to baptise children and adults. He blessed marriages and rectified some of them. He heard the confessions of the adults and instructed them. He continues his letter to Petitjean describing the caravan that would accompany them. He explained the need for a caravan where there was danger of theft and attack of wild animals. Besides these, men were required to transport the provisions for the missionaries and to cook their food. In all, the caravan was composed of about 23 or 24 persons. Neyret wrote: "huit pour porter l'Evêque en palanquin, vous dirai-je; 8 pour porter de même manière un autre personne nécessaire à notre visite; deux pour le service du cheval du P. Tissot; 5 ou 6 pour porter les différents articles ci-devant et autres, et faire notre cuisine". Neyret to Petitjean, December 29, 1849. *Correspondance de Msgr. Neyret*, AMSFS 7 5 H 5 – 2, p. 188.

¹⁷⁶ A military station was established at the foot of the Ganjam Mountains, at Russelkonda, with the view to extirpate the horrific crimes of human sacrifices that existed amongst the Kondhs. Every year, after the monsoon, troops under the leadership of a captain would enter the mountains to stop this superstitious practice. Cf. Neyret to Mermier, October 2, 1850. AMSFS 7Z/ 5 H 5.

¹⁷⁷ Msgr. Neyret's letter to the Propagation de la Foi, Lyons expresses his concern for the Christians living without the presence of a priest. "Je viens de faire une première visite pastorale. J'ai parcouru toute la côte maritime, depuis Vizagapatam jusqu'à Cuttack. Partout, les misères des chrétiens sont grandes, attendu que l'ignorance est profonde. Jusqu'ici, cette partie de la mission, ainsi que bien d'autres, n'avait participé que fort rarement aux bienfaits de la religion, par défaut de prêtres. Deux y seront envoyés dans le courant de l'année. Je l'espère; leur présence y devient urgente. Deux autres seront encore nécessaires dans l'ouest de la mission." Cf. M. DOMENGE, *La Mission de Vizagapatam*, p. 179; F. MOGET, *Early Days of the Visakhapatnam Mission 1846 – 1920*, p. 142.

¹⁷⁸ In a glowing tribute to the Kondhs, Msgr. Neyret informs Monsieur Mermier: "Les habitants de ces vallées forment un peuple à part, n'ayant que fort peu de rapport avec les Indiens de la plaine, dont ils diffèrent par les moeurs aussi bien que par la langue. Chez eux, dit-on, le système des castes est inconnu, excepté sur les frontières de la côte d'Orissa, et encore y sont-elles moins tranchées et plus tolérantes que dans tout le reste de la péninsule... Ils ne sont pas d'un caractère féroce... la simplicité et la franchise... 'Aussi j'aime ces pauvres sauvages et je les crois bons'. C'est une terre toute neuve qui demande des ouvriers, mais de bons ouvriers. Les grands talents seraient utiles, mais bien moins nécessaires qu'une vertu à toute épreuve. ...A Dieu ne plaise que je vous dise, Mr. Le Supérieur, que la mission de Vizag n'a

were unknown to them, unlike in other parts of Orissa. They differed in their culture and manners from the people of the coast. One of the positive aspects of a mission in the mountains was that the aboriginals seemed to have had no contact with Europeans nor with Protestants. The only contact that the Protestants had was when the Meriah children were rescued and sent to their orphanages in Berhampur. Thus Msgr. Neyret hoped that the mountains would bring the desired results which were not available on the plain.¹⁷⁹ Since their original attempts to evangelise the Hindus proved to be futile, the missionaries turned to the aboriginals who were not Hindus and who had no contact with Europeans. They thought that Kondhs would respond positively to the message of salvation, if it were offered to them.

2.5.4.2 Exploration in the Ganjam Mountains

Among the missionaries, Frs. Jean-Marie Tissot and François Sermet were chosen for the initial attempts. Fr. Jean-Marie Tissot, who was in Berhampur with Msgr. Neyret for the pastoral visit understood the desire of the vicar apostolic and was happy to explore the possibility of evangelisation among the Kondhs. If possible, he and Fr. François Sermet were also to choose a place where they could build the first station.¹⁸⁰ After performing spiritual duties for the small Catholic community situated at the foot of the mountains in Berhampur, they proceeded to the mountains. As they reached Russelkonda, they found a Kondh boy, who became their interpreter. He was poor and unable to work. They spoke to him in Tamil or in Telugu, and he in turn would interpret their words into *Kui*, the language of the Kondhs. He was very helpful, especially during the time of the missionaries' illness. He never left them. They appreciated the

pas besoin d'hommes savants et instruits; mais quand vous en envoyez, ils ne manquent pas ici de besogne. Il nous en faut pour attaquer l'hérésie, mais ils me semble, Mr. Le Supérieur, qu'une vertu éprouvée nous est encore plus nécessaire. Nos pauvres khondes ne demandant pas des hommes capables de déraciner de vieux préjugés et de confondre des prétendus savants, car ils avouent franchement qu'ils ne savent rien. Si toutes les montagnes sont semblables à celles que nous avons visitées, nous n'avons nulle part rencontré une pagode. Ils font leur sacrifices sur une pierre. Je ne veux cependant pas dire qu'à la voix du missionnaire ces peuplades se convertirent en masse". Although Msgr. Neyret was unable to understand their language and to comprehend their culture, he was highly touched by their simplicity and frankness. Cf. Neyret to Mermier, Vizagapatam, September 6, 1850, AMSFS, 7Z/ 5 H 5. In another letter addressed to Monsieur Mermier, Neyret to Mermier, Visakhapatnam, October 2, 1850, AMSFS 7 5 H 5 – 2. Neyret wrote: "Je dois vous faire observer que ce peuple n'est pas, comme il apparaît d'abord par la nature de ses sacrifices, un peuple féroce et cruel...Ce peuple est bon, un peuple encore tout neuf si je peux m'exprimer ainsi, et par consequent simple et franc".

¹⁷⁹ "Ils n'ont pas encore été gâtés, disait-il, par le contact de Européens; la religion aura plus de prise sur eux. Les protestants n'y vont pas contredire la parole de Dieu, et créer, comme sur le littoral, cette multitude de sectes, qui toutes se disent chrétiennes, quoique toutes soient opposées les unes aux autres. Le succès, qui nous est refusé dans la plaine, nous attend peut-être sur ces montagnes". M. DOMENGE, *La Mission de Vizagapatam*, p. 186.

¹⁸⁰ Msgr. Neyret reported: "Le premiers missionnaires qui y seront envoyés, devront prendre connaissance du pays, le parcourir et choisir pour commencer l'endroit le plus favorable, les peuples le mieux disposés. Si cette entreprise réussit, il nous faudra plus tard des frères pour apprendre à ces pauvres gens à cultiver un sol qui paraît fertile, il nous faudra aussi des religieuses... Enfin il me semble que c'est une carrière intarissable à exploiter." Neyret to Mermier, Visakhapatnam, September 6, 1850, AMSFS 7Z/ 5 H 5.

boy, since he was familiar with the forest, which was nearly impenetrable. One had to make one's way with the aid of a hatchet.

This was certainly an adventure on their part, since neither of them knew the terrain or the climate nor spoke the language of the Tribals. Their initial enthusiasm waned through fatigue and insufficient water and food. Soon they were worn out completely. They had few provisions for the way, except some rice, fruit and wild roots. They had no shelter for the night. However, they used their trip in the mountains well by reaching out to as many people as possible. This exploration left an indelible mark on their lives as missionaries. They enjoyed the hospitality of Kondhs and appreciated their humour and frankness.¹⁸¹ They trekked through the mountain jungles, moving through thorny creepers, crossing deep rivers and visiting villages nestled on the crest of hills and ravines.

After a month-long journey and fatigue, these two enthusiastic missionaries reached a chapel and presbytery located about 120 miles from Visakhapatnam, at Ganjam. They were already exhausted when reached that Christian community. But their health seemed unharmed. But on the 9th of September 1850, they had a violent attack of mountain fever. Msgr. Neyret in his letter to Mermier mentioned that "Fr. Sermet wrote me that both of them were ill. There is some hope of recovery for Sermet, but Tissot was very serious... that's the mountain fever, a doctor told here. Having heard that I sent two palanquins".¹⁸²

Initially Fr. François Sermet was less affected; hence he went to aid his confrere. Fr. Tissot was so serious that he asked his companion to give him the last sacrament; after sometime in his turn Fr. Sermet also asked for the same. Fr. Sermet was subject to violent attacks and the doctor had to be brought in. But there was no hope. He succumbed to the fatal fever on September 12, 1850, at the age of 26.¹⁸³ The following morning, the Catholic community of Ganjam came together to bid farewell to a young missionary. Dr. Adam, who treated the missionaries, also attended the funeral. With great difficulty and courage Fr. Tissot muttered a few words as he had become so feeble that he had to be carried on a chair to bury his companion.

As Fr. Tissot was still suffering, he was taken to Chatrapur where one of the Christians had prepared a mud hut covered over by coconut leaves for his rest. Sympathizing with the condition of the missionary, whose health worsened severely, the Collector took him to his bungalow where a doctor regularly visited him.¹⁸⁴ Fr. Tissot remained there till he was able to travel to Visakhapatnam.

The initial difficulties which they had encountered on the mountains, did deter neither Fr. Tissot nor Msgr. Neyret. When Fr. Tissot recovered and was able to write, he furnished a detailed report about the expedition to Msgr. Neyret, who on the basis of favourable indications from the explorers, wrote to the Propaganda, informing them of

¹⁸¹ M. DOMENGE, *La Mission de Vizagapatam*, pp. 186 – 187.

¹⁸² Neyret to Mermier, *La Mort du Père François- Marie Sermet, 12 September 1850*, Visakhapatnam, October 3, 1850, AMSFS 7Z/5 H 5.

¹⁸³ M. DOMENGE, *La Mission de Vizagapatam*, p. 187.

¹⁸⁴ Neyret to Mermier, *La Mort du Père François-Marie Sermet, 12 September 1850*, Visakhapatnam, October 3, 1850, AMSFS 7Z/5 H 5; Tissot to Mermier, Visakhapatnam, December 3, 1850, AMSFS 7 Z/ 5 H 5.

the possibility of bringing the mountaineers (Kondhs) to the light of grace. Cardinal Franzoni, Prefect of the Congregation, replied favourably.¹⁸⁵ In the same manner Msgr. Neyret sent a letter to his superior at Annecy in France.¹⁸⁶ Monsieur Mermier responded by advocating prudence in undertaking such a major project without giving sufficient attention to the resources needed for the new endeavour. However, he promised to endorse Msgr. Neyret's decision in this regard as he understood the importance of the project.¹⁸⁷ They subsequently had to postpone the project until the opportune moment arrived.

2.6 Chotanagpur: Precursor to Gangpur

It was only after the Kol Insurrection of 1831-1832 that the British East India Company began to notice the problems of the Tribals of Chotanagpur. During the next 30 years many commissions of enquiry would be appointed to make specific recommendations. However well intended the recommendations might have been, the administrative and the judicial reforms were inadequate to solve exacerbating tribal problems such as land alienation -- in some cases the reforms even aggravated the problems. The ensuing struggle between the Tribals and the *dikus* or foreigners led to the involvement of the police and the courts. However, the Tribals were no match for their opponents. Legal proceedings, court language, as well as prejudiced and money-thirsty interpreters and lawyers made it impossible for the Tribals to present their case properly before the judiciary.¹⁸⁸ When it became almost impossible to reach a settlement through the courts, the Tribals tried to settle their differences with the Zamindars by themselves. Unfortunately such moves ended up in favour of the latter. The landlords often demanded exorbitant rent, *bethbegari* or 'forced labour', and other services to which they had no legal right. The problem escalated when the landlords refused to give receipts for payments of rent so that they could exact even more the next time.

2.6.1 The Beginning of the Lutheran Mission

¹⁸⁵ Cf. M. DOMENGE, *La Mission de Vizagapatam*, p. 189.

¹⁸⁶ Msgr. Neyret reported: "Il me semble, bien respectable supérieur, que si vous aviez vu une seule de ces peuplades, votre bon coeur serait ému de compassion. Oh! qu'il est douloureux de les voir si bien disposés et de ne pas pouvoir les secourir; c'est bien le cas de dire: *messis quidem multa, operarii autem pauci*." Neyret to Mermier, Visakhapatnam, December 3, 1850, AMSFS 7 5 H 5 - 2.

¹⁸⁷ Mermier wrote: "Cependant Rome se contente d'exhorter en applaudissant au projet que vous lui proposez de travailler à la conversion de ces montagnes sans vous promettre aucun secours, se fiant probablement aux ressources que nous n'avons pas. Après l'essai qu'ont fait MM. Tissot, Sermet et les troupes Anglaises ne serait-ce pas prudent d'attendre que notre mission fut plus solidement établie tant ici qu'à Vizagapatam... D'où je conclus que si par cette nouvelle entreprise nous rendions notre position encore plus difficile, nous nous exposerions à ruiner les petits commencements... c'est vous Monseigneur, qui êtes sur les lieux, qui êtes en rapport immediate soit avec Rome, soit avec ces pauvres Kondhas (Kondhs) et ceux qui les connaissent, qui pouvez mieux juger que nous, soyez-en toujours plus convaincu; nous approuvons dès ce moment et approuverons tout ce que Dieu vous inspirera de faire pour cette nouvelle Mission à laquelle Rome vous exhorte d'une manière si persuasive." Monsieur Mermier to Neyret, Aux Allinges, August 6, 1851, AMSFS, 5 H 5 - 2/1.

¹⁸⁸ L. CLARYSSE, "Lievens and Zemindari System", in *Sevartham* 10 (1985), p. 11.

The Lutheran missionaries of the Berlin Gossner¹⁸⁹ Mission were the Protestant pioneers in the Chotanagpur region at the time of these disturbances.¹⁹⁰ They had already witnessed the suffering of the aboriginals from Chotanagpur who served as 'coolies' in the streets of Calcutta. The Lutherans were nevertheless impressed by their gaiety. Helped by friends, the Lutherans established themselves at Ranchi,¹⁹¹ the capital of the Chotanagpur plateau. In 1850, after five years of dedicated service,¹⁹² only four Oraons belonging to the *Kabir Panth Bhagat Movement*¹⁹³ had been baptised. On October 28, 1851 two Mundas were baptized.¹⁹⁴ But the missionary activities of the Lutherans attracted the tribal population and subsequently many joined them.

The rise in conversions to Christianity frightened the landlords who began to persecute Christians. The missionaries travelled to the villages that wanted to hear them, and many villagers also went to Ranchi to speak with the missionaries. By 1856 about 900 people had been baptised and another 2000 were in contact with the missionaries.¹⁹⁵ The *Sepoy Mutiny* of 1857 disrupted the administration of Chotanagpur, and no European felt safe. The missionaries were forced to abandon the neophytes and escape to Calcutta. The tribal Christians once again at the mercy of the landlords. With the return of peace, the missionaries began to rebuild, and the government also offered relief funds to the aboriginals. This irked the landlords, who believed that the British government was now in favour of the aboriginals. By 1868 there were about 10,000 Christians under the care of the Lutheran mission.¹⁹⁶

¹⁸⁹ Johannes Evangelista Gossner (1773-1858) was the founder of the group called 'Gossners Missionsverein = Gossner Mission Association', founded at Berlin in 1842. He remained the director of the Gossner Mission until 1858. He was a former Roman Catholic priest. In 1826 he became a Protestant and in 1829 the pastor of Bethlehem Church in Berlin. From there he sent out, on July 10, 1844, the first missionaries to India. Cf. ROEBER, *Part of the History of Missions and History of the Church in India*, pp. 4 – 8.

¹⁹⁰ Hoffmann to General, Memoir, ARSI, Beng. 2008, Fasc.III, p. 5.

¹⁹¹ F. DE SA, *Crisis in Chota Nagpur*, p. 73.

¹⁹² Peter Tete cites S. C. Roy for the names of the four Lutheran missionaries: Pastors E. Schatz, F. Batsch, A. Brandt and H. Janke. They arrived in Ranchi in November 1845. Cf. P. TETE, *A Missionary Social Worker in India*, p. 11.

¹⁹³ The *Kabir Panthis* were another Hindu sect enjoying the patronage of Oraons. Their beliefs and rites differ slightly from those of the other *Bhakti Cults* [Devotion]. The *Kabir Panthi Gurus* [masters] act not only as spiritual teachers but also as priests. Their ministrations are obligatory for the religious service that must be performed on important occasions as birth, marriage and death. The Oraons who joined the movement did not completely abandon their tribal customs. Their regular ceremonies were always performed, either before or after the *Kabir Panth rites*. The vacillating Oraons could not comply with the tenets of the movements. A member was required to observe such practices as abstention from worship of idols and other visible symbols of divinity; abjuration of intoxicating drink and its use for libation; prohibition of blood sacrifices and of the eating of beef, pork and fowls meat; no worship of spirits and minor deities; belief in a single personal God; etc. Cf. S. FUCHS, *Rebellious Prophets*, pp. 44 - 46; A. KANJAMALA, *Religion and Modernization of India*, p. 61.

¹⁹⁴ P. TETE, *A Missionary Social Worker in India*, p. 12.

¹⁹⁵ F. DE SA, *Crisis in Chota Nagpur*, p. 77.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

2.6.1.1 The Mission Work of the Lutherans

The Lutheran missionaries organized schools throughout the tribal areas. With the introduction of education, the Tribals began to recognise their oppressed conditions as well as their lawful rights and privileges. They refused to render more free labour than they were obliged to do.¹⁹⁷ As they grew in number, they felt confident enough to oppose the landlords. The missionaries advised the tribal Christians to endure the wrongs in humble submission, that to speak the truth, to pay their rents, and to avoid taking recourse to the legal system. But they were not needed.¹⁹⁸ Although the Tenures Act II of 1869¹⁹⁹ brought some improvement, it did not, however, specifically deal with the control of their ancestral lands. The official enactment was a failure because it did not directly treat the causes of the dispute between the Mundas and the *Dikus*. Moreover, there was no provision to protect the hereditary rights of the Mundas and the Oraons to cut wood from the village forests around which their life revolved.²⁰⁰ The Tribals became Christians in order to obtain help from the missionaries and they remained in the Church as long as the new religion served their purposes and gave them protected from the terror of the Zamindari system.

In matters of church organization, the Lutherans tried to preserve as far as possible the social organization of the people. They used the services of the elders, catechists and teachers, almost all of whom were aboriginals, to propagate the faith. The success of the mission depended largely on the zeal and conscientiousness of these people. In November 1868, six of the older missionaries left the Lutheran Church and joined the Anglicans. About 3,000 converts followed them.²⁰¹ It should be noted that the landlords were not against the practice of Christianity as a religion but against the effects it produced on their adherents.

2.6.2 The Beginning of the Mission of Belgian Jesuits

In 1859 the Belgian Province of the Society of Jesus took charge of West Bengal, whose 15,000 Catholics were spread over the vast area of north-eastern Orissa, southern Bihar and West Bengal. Fr. Augustus Stockman²⁰² was very much impressed by his visit to Chaibasa and sent a favourable report to Msgr. Walter Steins²⁰³ in November 1868. Two

¹⁹⁷ P. TETE, *A Missionary Social Worker in India*, p. 14.

¹⁹⁸ F. DE SA, *Crisis in Chota Nagpur*, p. 93.

¹⁹⁹ In 1869, the Government introduced the Chota Nagpur Tenures Act setting into motion the *Bhuinari Survey and Settlement* operations, which went on till 1880. For various reasons the measure was a failure. Cf. F. DE SA, "The Crisis in the Mission of Chota Nagpur and the Reaction of the Landlords and the Police", in *IES* 8/3 (1969), p. 191.

²⁰⁰ P. TETE, *A Missionary Social Worker in India*, p. 17.

²⁰¹ F. DE SA, *Crisis in Chota Nagpur*, pp. 95-96; Hoffmann to General, Memoir, ARSI, Beng. 2008, Fasc. III, p. 6.

²⁰² Augustus Stockman was born at Gand, in Belgium, on June 27, 1826. He entered the Society of Jesus on April 8, 1847. He arrived in India on April 2, 1860 and died at Khunti on April 23, 1897. Cf. R. MENDIZÁBAL, *Catalogus Defunctorum in renata Societate Iesu ab a. 1814 ad a. 1970*, p. 161.

²⁰³ Walter Steins was born at Amsterdam on July 1, 1810. He entered the Society of Jesus on December 16, 1832. Joining the mission of Bombay, he eventually became the vicar apostolic there. He was transferred to Calcutta on April 14, 1867. He died on September 7, 1881, at Sydney. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

months later he was appointed parish priest of Chaibasa.²⁰⁴ He arrived on the 10th of July 1869.²⁰⁵ This is said to be the real beginning of the Chotanagpur mission. When Fr. Stockman settled at Chaibasa, people came to him to hear his preaching and teaching. However, it took almost four years for Mundas to adopt Christianity as their religion.²⁰⁶ Gradually, the Jesuits established mission stations in four important places -- Sarwada-Doldo, Bandgaon-Burudi, Chaibasa and Buruma, which they called *Quadrilateral*.²⁰⁷ De Sa stated that “the Fathers thought that the duty of the missionary was to preach the Gospel and to baptize those who wished to become Catholics. To help the people against oppression, they thought, was outside the scope of their apostolate”²⁰⁸ North of the *Quadrilateral*, a mission station was started at Jamgain by Fr. De Cock²⁰⁹ in 1882. Most of the Catholics belonging to this station were former Lutherans. Fr. De Cock, now the Director of the mission, was against missionaries helping the people in their land disputes. The younger missionaries, especially Frs. Müllender and John Fierens,²¹⁰ spent much time visiting the villages and getting to know the people.

2.6.2.1 The Internal Organization of the Bengal Mission of the Jesuits

The Chotanagpur mission was part of the Jesuit mission of West Bengal. The head of the mission was a ‘superior regular’. Fr. Sylvain Grosjean (1846-1915) was the superior regular between 1882 and 1892. The superior regular of the Bengal mission was under the provincial of the Belgian Province who resided in Belgium. A Jesuit was also at the head

²⁰⁴ An interest in the mission was sparked by a letter that Fr. Stockman received from Fr. Sapart, the founder of Balasore, reporting the prospects of mass conversions among the Tribals between Chaibasa and Midnapur. This piece of information was given to him by the wife of the District Superintendent of Police. Msgr. Steins was also informed by a British official of the prospects of conversion in Ranchi. Cf. P. PONETTE, “Ranchi Mission: Before and After Lievens”, in *IMR* 7/1 (1985), p. 34.

²⁰⁵ F. DE SA, *Crisis in Chota Nagpur*, p. 116; Hoffmann to General, Memoir, ARSI, Beng. 2008, Fasc. III, p. 6.

²⁰⁶ The first converts presented themselves to him in 1872. They were not Hos, one of the tribes belonging to the Munda family, who were the primary object of the missionary expedition, but Mundas. They came from six or seven families from Kontupai a few miles north of the town. They were baptized by Msgr. Steins himself. Since the Hos were hostile towards the neophytes, the missionary found a place for them to live in Tutui, just across the Singbhum border in the Ranchi district. Then it was possible because the Ranchi ecclesiastical district went over to the Calcutta jurisdiction in 1871. Cf. P. Ponette, “Ranchi Mission: Before and After Lievens”, p. 34.

²⁰⁷ H. JOSSON, *La Mission du Bengale Occidental*, vol. I, pp. 409-411.

²⁰⁸ F. DE SA, *Crisis in Chota Nagpur*, p. 119.

²⁰⁹ Ferdinand de Cock was born at Alost on April 22, 1831. He entered the Society of Jesus on September 26, 1850. He arrived in India on December 23, 1868. In 1877 he became the chaplain of the Madras regiment stationed at Doranda (Ranchi). When he fell sick, he was replaced by Lachawietz. De Cock returned to Doranda in 1880. He died at Calcutta on August 6, 1890. Cf. R. MENDIZÁBAL, *Catalogus Defunctorum in renata Societate Iesu ab a. 1814 ad a. 1970*, p. 131.

²¹⁰ John Fierens was born at Anvers on October 8, 1844. He entered the Society of Jesus on September 27, 1863 and arrived in India on December 2, 1869. Msgr. Steins ordained him a priest on January 3, 1875. Due to illness he returned to Europe and died at Anvers on November 3, 1893. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 146.

of the diocese; for example, Msgr. Paul Goethals (1832-1901)²¹¹ held this position between 1878 and 1901. Until 1887, he was the vicar apostolic with the title of archbishop. In 1887 West Bengal was made an archdiocese with Msgr. P. Goethals as its first archbishop. The missionaries of the Chotanagpur mission came under the jurisdiction of both superiors, as religious under Fr. Sylvain Grosjean and as missionaries or helpers of the bishop under Msgr. P. Goethals.²¹² The Catholic mission of Chotanagpur was not successful until the arrival of an intelligent and enthusiastic Jesuit, Father Constant Lievens, who reached Jamgain on the feast of St. Joseph in 1885.

2.6.2.2 First Missionary in Gangpur or Western Orissa

Fr. John Fierens was the first missionary to penetrate into the erstwhile kingdom of Gangpur in 1884. He was on his way to Sambalpur²¹³ to visit a Catholic community serving in the military garrison. This has some historical importance as it came not only before the apostolate of Lievens but it helped to recognise the ‘danger in the speedy spread of Lutheranism’ and the possibility of starting a mission in that territory. Fr. J. Fierens took

²¹¹ Paul Goethals was born at Courtrai on November 11, 1832. He entered the Society of Jesus on October 31, 1852. He was consecrated Bishop on December 3, 1877, and arrived in India on November 4, 1878. He died at Calcutta on July 4, 1901. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

²¹² F. DE SA, *Crisis in Chota Nagpur*, p. 150.

²¹³ Sambalpur, a town in western Orissa, lies between 20°43’N and 22°11’N latitude and 82°39’E and 85°13’E longitude. The fate of the inhabitants of Sambalpur depended on the Sai rulers. With the changing fortunes resulting from wars and destruction, “Maharaja Sai died in 1827, and his widow Rani Mohan Kumari was allowed to succeed. This was done against the local customs and laws of the land. Never in the history of Chauhan, ruler of Sambalpur, a woman had been raised to such a position. Disturbances immediately broke out, and for years there was constant internecine strife between the recognised ruler and other claimants to the chieftainship”. N. SENAPATI et al. (eds.), *Orissa District Gazetteers: Sambalpur*, Cuttack 1992, p. 70. There was a rival claimant for the chieftainship supported by some Zamindars. Matters became so serious that villages were plundered and chaos prevailed everywhere. In this situation of anarchy, a military force from Hazaribagh was called to end the trouble. In order to end the dispute Captain Wilkinson deposed the Rani and appointed Narayan Singh, a descendant of Bikram Singh, as the chief. In the eyes of the people he was not qualified for the throne, since his mother was from an inferior caste. As soon as the British withdrew the troops, rebellions broke out, including the more serious one in 1839, instigated by Surendra Sai who looked upon Narayan Singh as an usurper. As a descendant of the fourth Raja of Sambalpur, Surendra Sai claimed the throne. Narayan Singh died in 1849 and his wife Rani Mukhyapan Devi assumed the reins of Government as they did not have an heir to the throne. By virtue of Lord Dalhousie’s ‘doctrine of lapse’, the kingdom was annexed by the British and the Rani was given a sum for her maintenance. When the Mutiny of 1857 broke out, the uprisings continued in Sambalpur. On July 30, 1857, Ramgarh Battalion, stationed in Sambalpur, plundered the treasury, broke open the jail and released the prisoners among whom were Surendra Sai and his brother Udwan Sai. “Before the end of August, rumours of insurrectionary movements had begun to spread, though no actual outbreak occurred for sometime, and early in September two companies of Madras troops were ordered from Cuttack to Sambalpur by G. F. Cockburn, the commissioner of Orissa”. N. SENAPATI et al. (eds.), *Orissa District Gazetteers: Sambalpur*, p. 74. Later, the 40th Madras Native Infantry was despatched under Captain Knocker from Cuttack. Besides, Lieutenant Hadow of the Madras Artillery, who arrived at Cuttack with some light mountain guns, was also asked to reach Sambalpur. Even after the rebellion, the military troops continued to be stationed in Sambalpur. This explains why Catholics serving in the military were found in Sambalpur. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 70 - 79.

the longer way to reach Sambalpur, which put him in close contact with the people. Writing about the journey of Fr. John Fierens, M. Vermeire states,

Father Fierens was then (the) missionary in charge of Bandgaon, 17 miles beyond Khunti on the road to the Bengal – Nagpur Railway. That side there were between 1000 and 1200 Catholics, the fruit of some 15 of years work in Chotanagpur, a poor gain obtained until then. The reason why Fr. Fierens went to, and crossed Gangpur, was that at Sambalpur in Orissa there was a military garrison, which apparently was maintained there till about 1902. At that time, i. e. in 1884 this garrison contained a certain number of Catholics, single or married. The Archbishop of Calcutta was responsible for sending them a priest from time to time. At first, the aged Father Sapart of Balasore Mission was charged with this duty. But he had to cross the very broad Mahanadi river, besides others with plenty of rivers and canals. For a younger man like Fr. Fierens, riding the whole long way on a good horse, it was not so fatiguing (tiring) and probably was an interesting journey... Everywhere he found the Lutherans well established and nowhere did he meet any Catholics: so was it between Torpa and Basia and between Koel and Gangpur. A few miles from Kolebira, the Lutherans had a station at Takarma from where they were making converts throughout the neighbouring country and far even into Biru. They did not stop there for Fr. Fierens had hardly entered Gangpur than the road passed through Raiboga, a market place, where the Lutherans had a well-attended chapel; and so, until far beyond Gangpur, were there Lutherans in many villages.²¹⁴

2.6.2.2.1 State of the Catholic Community in Sambalpur

In one of the letters to his sisters in Belgium, in October 1884, Fierens narrated his visit to Sambalpur. Some of its main features are as follows:

I was in Sambalpur, which is about 200 miles from here, the western end of our mission. There is a regiment of indigenous soldiers, who come from South India. There are many Catholic soldiers among them. They live there with their wives and children. They are not recent converts, but Christians whose forefathers were converted by St. Francis Xavier. They are as active as Irish Christians. Once a year a missionary visits them (to administer the sacraments). They have a chapel where they come together for their morning and evening prayers. The catechist leads the prayers and teaches catechism to the children... They speak Tamil and Telugu. Men can speak some English and women, besides their mother tongue, a bit of Hindustani. It is in this language I manage to hear the confession of women and children. Besides the catechist there is a headman who looks after the conduct of the people. Normally, he is competent to deal with some minor cases and give due punishment; however, the serious ones will be reported to the priest when he comes for the annual visit... Their good soldiers subscribe every month some fees for the maintenance of the chapel: they need to procure candles and they have the habit of burning incense in front of the statues. They are very much devoted to St. Antony

²¹⁴ The journey from Balasore to Sambalpur might have been very tedious as they had to reach Cuttack by road where they need to take the boat to cross the Mahanadi. It might take them several days before they reached Sambalpur. However the road taken by Fierens from Bandgaon is less tedious, as he could cross a major part of the journey on horseback. M. VERMIERE, *Gangpur Mission History*, vol. I, Unpublished Collection of Documents, Bishop's House Rourkela, p. 1; M. VERMEIRE, *Biru Mission History: Samtoli 1904 – 1940*, vol. III, APBS India Lievens. General Sources, p. 23.

of Padova. This devotion comes from the Portuguese as he is their compatriot. I had to baptise the children born during the year and most of them bear the name of St. Antony, Antony for boys and Antoniamma for girls. During his eight days of stay among them, the priest has to bless one day their houses, an other day the cemetery, see to the repair of the chapel, etc. I opened a list for subscription for the Europeans living at the station. It brought about 100 francs.²¹⁵

In his letter to Msgr. P. Goethals and the superior regular of the mission, Fr. Sylvain Grosjean, Fr. J. Fierens sent a warning that, if rapid actions was not soon taken, the territory would be lost forever, as the Lutherans were going about with relative facility. In his comments on the ‘warning letter’ sent by Fr. J. Fierens, M. Vermeire wrote: “About 20 years later when the Catholic missionaries began to penetrate Gangpur, they found Fierens’ statements not only correct but they were astounded at the spread of Lutheranism in all directions.”²¹⁶ Wherever the Jesuits went they were preceded either by the Lutherans or the Anglicans, except in Barway and Chotanagpur.

2.6.3 Three Great Missionaries of Chotanagpur

Of all the Jesuits who had lived and worked in Chotanagpur, the names of three individuals have become household names. Even today, the Tribals remember these great men with respect and gratitude for their dedicated service. Here we have three great men of

²¹⁵ This is a liberal translation, which retains faithfully the essential aspects of the text. Fr. Fierens wrote: “Je reviens à peine d’une excursion, j’ai été à 200 miles anglaises d’ici à un endroit nommé Sumbulpur (Sambalpur) vers l’extreme ouest de notre mission. Là il y a un regiment de soldats indigènes, qui viennent tout à fait du sud des Indes et dans ce régiment il y a un bon nombre de soldats catholiques avec leurs femmes et leurs enfants. Ce ne sont pas de chrétiens de date recente, mais leurs ancêtres ont ete convertis du temps de St. François – Xavier, ils ont une foi vive come les irlandais; ils sont visités une fois l’an par un missionnaire, mais ils ont une chapelle, dans laquelle ils se reunissent tous les jours, matin et soir, pour faire leurs prières en commun, il y a parmi eux un catechiste, qui préside aux prières à la chapelle, et qui doit apprendre les prières aux enfants quand ils sont en âge et aux néophytes qui se joignent a eux de temps en temps parmi les soldats paiens du régiment. Le catéchiste s’appelle dans leur langage, l’enfant de l’église, ils parlent tamul et telugus, mais les hommes en assez bon nombre parlent un peu l’anglais, les femmes comprennent tant soit peu l’hindoustani, c’est par cette langue là que je me suis tiré d’affaire pour entendre la confession des femmes et de quelques hommes et des enfants en âge de comprendre. Il y a, outre le catéchiste, un headman ou chef des chrétiens du régiment, c’est lui avec son conseil qui arrange les différents qui surgissent pendant l’absence du prêtre; les cas un peu graves sont juges par le prêtre, président au conseil lors de la visite. J’ai (...) à présider un jour à un conseil ou un homme qui avait commis une faute pendant l’absence du prêtre devait être jugé et puni. Dans le cas actuel, la punition était une aumône à faire à la chapelle, quelques chandelles pour la chapelle et quelques coups de baguette sur les mains, que le cupable reçoit a genoux au milieu du conseil de guerre de la part d’un autre soldat qui est désigné pour cette besogne. Ces bons soldats souscrivent chaque mois quelque chose pour l’entretien de la chapelle et pour la lumière, car la chapelle est toujours illuminée au temps de la prière, ils ont aussi l’habitude de brûler de l’incens devant’autel pendant le temps des prières. Ils ont une grande devotion à St. Antoine de Padoue. Cette devotion leur vient des Portugais, dont St. Antoine était le compatriote. J’avais à baptiser les enfants nés pendant l’année et plus de la moitié devait porte le nome de Antony, ou Antoniamma pour les filles. J’ai baptisé un païen et je l’ai marié à une fille des soldats. Le prêtre pendant un séjour de 8 jours parmi eux doit finir toute la besogne del’année, un jour on bénit toutes les maisons, un autre, le cimetièrre, on donne nom des directions pour les réparations de la chapelle, j’ai même ouvert une liste de souscriptions dans ce but parmi les habitants européens de la station, qu’a rapporté à peu près 100 francs.” Fierens to Jeanne, Mathilde and Marie, Bandgaon, October 22, 1884, APBS, India / Lievens. Box 14/ 4.

²¹⁶ M. VERMIER, *Gangpur Mission History*, Vol. I, p. 1.

God, with their respective qualities, striving to attain the same end but with different means: Fr. Constant Lievens lit the fire that burst into flame; Fr. Sylvain Grosjean as superior regular organized and planned every campaign from his desk; Fr. John Baptist Hoffmann with his practical mind supplied the temporal needs by founding the Cooperative Credit Society and helped the government to enact laws protecting the tribal land holding system. In the final analysis their only aim was to spread the kingdom.²¹⁷

2.6. 3.1 Life and Achievement of Fr. Sylvain Grosjean

Fr. Sylvain Grosjean was born at Martilly in Luxembourg on March 4, 1846. Orphaned at the age of 9, he was educated by his maternal grandparents. He entered the Society of Jesus on September 24, 1864 in Belgium. In 1873 he arrived in Louvain for his philosophical and theological studies and was ordained a priest on September 7, 1879. During these years he kept up his interest in the Mission of West Bengal and finally arrived in India in December 1880. Two years later, he became the superior regular of the Bengal Mission of the Belgian Province of the Society of Jesus and remained in that office till 1892. Pope Leo XIII's call for the establishment of an indigenous clergy echoed in his heart. Later, when Msgr. Zaleski, the apostolic delegate in India, was given the task of founding a papal seminary for India, he chose Fr. Sylvain Grosjean as his assistant to complete the project.²¹⁸ During his tenure as the first rector of the papal seminary at Kandy (1893-1899), Fr. Sylvain Grosjean built the permanent structure of the seminary and also taught Latin, philosophy and later even theology.²¹⁹ When he was relieved as rector of the Seminary, he volunteered to help the Chotanagpur mission. When his term as rector of the Manresa House at Ranchi ended in 1909, he realised his longstanding desire by volunteering to work in the newly-established parish of Kesramal in Gangpur. At the age of 63, he became the parish priest and one of the co-founders of the parish, which is located at Kesramal, 6 miles north of the Rajgangpur railway station.²²⁰ After a long life of untiring service as a leader and a missionary, he died on September 6, 1915, and was laid to rest at Kesramal.²²¹

After having taken over as the superior regular of the West Bengal mission in 1882, at the age of 36, Fr. Grosjean made his first tour of the Chotanagpur mission (1883-1884) with Msgr. P. Goethals in order to assess the missionary activities of the Jesuits and to understand the situation of the people. Fr. Grosjean wanted the missionaries in the field to probe into the vital social and human problems of the people and to offer effective help in order to eradicate their misery. This, he felt, would begin a broad movement, what the Belgian Jesuit Missionaries would call *Mouvement de la Grâce*. For this purpose he had already earmarked two young and intelligent men: Frs. Constant Lievens and John Baptist

²¹⁷ C. TIMMERMANN, "Ranchi Mission", in *Xavier's Footsteps. A Jubilee Souvenir of the 4th Centenary of the Society of Jesus*, Anand 1939, p. 110.

²¹⁸ J. VAN TROY, "Fr. Sylvain Grosjean SJ (1846-1915). Jesuit Leadership", in P. TETE (ed.), *To Chota Nagpur with Love and Service. Pioneers in the Ranchi Jesuit Province, Ignatian Commemoration Volume*, Ranchi 1991, p. 15.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

²²¹ H. JOSSON, *Un Chef de Mission aux Indes*, p. 396.

Hoffmann.²²² His descriptive accounts of the mission, sent to the superior general and to the provincial, are examples of his intelligence and the keen interest he had in the development of the Chotanagpur mission.

As Jesuit superior of the growing mission, he had not only an enthusiastic vision but also agonizing concerns about the health of his over-burdened brethren. Often he stressed the need for missionaries to have good housing, and he ordered that a 'Manresa House' should be built, which would serve as a house of formation and a place for missionaries to regain their physical and spiritual strength.²²³ Fr. Grosjean cared deeply about the missionaries and felt one with them in troubled times. In one of his letters to his friends, he wrote: "I literally tremble when I receive letters from Ranchi."²²⁴ In 1887 the Belgian province sent 10 new missionaries, whom Fr. Grosjean allocated according to the most pressing needs of the mission. In 1888 he was visited Fr. Lievens' mission on horseback. He was deeply impressed by the way Fr. Lievens handled the mission. Later he wrote, "that within two years we shall have 100,000 baptized and catechumens. Three tribes, the Mundas, the Kharias and the Oraons are coming over. Now is the time or never".²²⁵

As a good leader, the superior spent the whole of March 1889 among his missionaries in Chotanagpur. He gave a Holy Week retreat to 200 catechists, many of whom were ex-Protestants; he animated the school and repeated his tour of the district. At the threat of the *Renny expedition*,²²⁶ Fr. Grosjean engaged an eminent lawyer from Calcutta to appeal in favour of the missionaries and the jailed Tribals. To ensure that the missionary work was carried on with a sustained spirituality, Fr. Grosjean appointed a number of priests in charge of the major mission stations as *ministers*. They were to ensure that the missionaries faithfully adhered to a life characterised by poverty and obedience both to God and to the Church.²²⁷ Fr. Grosjean's commitment to the work in the Chotanagpur mission was unmistakable. In his letter to the Belgian provincial in November 1891, he wrote: "I hope that after I have worked so long for Chota Nagpur, you will allow me to come to the help of the mission in danger (danger of the expansion of

²²² J. VAN TROY, "Fr. Sylvain Grosjean SJ (1846-1915)", p. 4.

²²³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ In the wake of numerous conversions of Tribals, the landlords recognized the danger and were plotting against the Jesuit missionaries. They sought means to bring both the missionaries and their converts into conflict with the government, and, they complained to the commissioner, Mr. Grimley. Noticing foul play in the motives of the *Zamindars*, the Commissioner dispatched an enquiry commission under the acting deputy commissioner of the Lohardugga district, Mr. Renny, in November 1889. The hostile attitude of Renny towards the Jesuits led to the suggestion of expelling the Jesuits from Chotanagpur. However, in their effort to mollify the so-called unrest, Renny and Lillingston condemned many Tribals to imprisonment. Renny punished the people with severity. He saw proof that the disquiet was due to the action of the priests. He felt obliged to punish the act of open resistance to authority with severity. By this means he hoped to show the people that the kingdom was not theirs (the missionaries) and that they would not be allowed in the future to take the law into their own hands. Cf. F. DE SA, *Crisis in Chota Nagpur*, pp. 203-215.

²²⁷ J. VAN TROY, "Fr. Sylvain Grosjean SJ (1846-1915)", p. 11.

Lutheranism), a mission which in 1882 had 500 Catholics and is now threatened to lose 45,000. I shall do whatever obedience will require. I offer myself to go to Ranchi as Minister of Manresa House or to go to Barway.”²²⁸ He had a deep appreciation for Fr. Lievens, stating, "in my opinion, Fr. Lievens is the most qualified man to animate a great movement, for which he was exceptionally gifted; he is one of the very rare men, who, single-handed have made the missionary work significantly advance".²²⁹

Fr. Sylvain Grosjean also promoted the social services of the mission. In 1908 he forcefully pleaded with the British authorities, and even collaborated with them, to provide relief for the famine-stricken people of the plateau. He was one of the more dynamic superiors of his age, who provided the mission with extraordinary maps and statistics. In Belgium he was an accomplished public relations man and a successful fundraiser. The old worn-out parish priest of Kesramal saw himself as Christ on a mission from the Father, committed unconditionally to the salvation of the Tribals of Gangpur. Through all his travels, preaching and teaching, he shared gradually with the people his own personal experience of the crucified and Risen Lord. And it was here that he was laid to rest on September 6, 1915. The presence of his tomb in the soil of Gangpur will remind future generations of his untiring service and missionary zeal. He will live on in the hearts of the tribal population of Gangpur.

2.6.3.2 A Sketch of Fr. Constant Lievens' Life

Fr. Constant Lievens was born on April 11, 1856, in the Flemish town of Moorslede, Belgium. It was Fr. Callaert who pointed out to him the immense work that lay in the subcontinent, particularly in the Bengal Jesuit Mission, which had started a few decades earlier. Soon after taking his first vows he arrived in India (December 2, 1880) and was sent to continue his theological preparations at the Hill Seminary in Asansol. Along with his theological studies, Fr. Constant Lievens showed interest in learning the local languages, and he was able to converse fluently in both Bengali and Hindi within a short time. He was ordained to the priesthood on January 14, 1883 by Archbishop P. Goethals of Calcutta.

With the able guidance of Fr. Sylvain Grosjean, the superior regular of the Bengal Mission, Fr. Lievens reached his destination, Doranda, via Girdih and Hazaribagh on March 18, 1885. On the following day, the feast of St. Joseph, he was directed to move to Jamgain to begin the task of evangelisation. Later, he met his benefactor, Bisheshwar Dayal or Bisheshwar Singh, the *Jamadar* or the policeman in charge of the police station at Torpa, who not only gave him shelter but defined what his missionary endeavours should be in the future. The *Jamadar* told Lievens: "If you want to win over these people to your religion, you should take up their legal defence in court."²³⁰

Realising the tribal solidarity manifested in their communal living, Fr. Lievens insisted on receiving the Mundas into the church only in groups. He also observed that the people tended to be 'clannish', so that when the head of a family or a village became a

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid., p. 13.

²³⁰ Hoffmann to General, Memoir, ARSI, Beng. 2008, Fasc. IV, p. 1; M. VANDEN BOGAERT, "Social Transformation of a Tribal Society. Fall-out of Evangelization in Chota Nagpur", in *Sevartham* 11 (1986), p. 25.

Christian, the rest followed his example, thus preserving their social ties and diminishing any need for migration.²³¹ Therefore, at times a whole family or a whole village came forward requesting baptism.²³² To mark their abandonment of their former religion, the converts would cut off their *chundis*, the tuft of the hair on the head, which was a symbol of their traditional beliefs.²³³ Sharp growth marked the fruit of Lievens' labour; records show that there were 56 Catholics at the arrival of Lievens in March 1885, and 50,351 in August 1888.²³⁴ It is evident that, as more people began to request baptism, Fr. Lievens was unable to handle the situation, especially when there was but a handful of priests to instruct them in the new faith. This apparent lack of foresight in his method of evangelisation brought him criticism from within the Jesuit community, including Msgr. P. Goethals and later Fr. J. B. Hoffmann.²³⁵

The mass conversions to Christianity soon assumed the form of a social revolution. The landlords were alarmed by the progressive changes in the attitudes of the usually docile and submissive tenants: in many cases the tenants refused to pay rents as well as to provide unpaid labour to the landlords. A great commotion erupted, in those areas where the Tribals faced persecution and atrocities from the landlords. Some were beaten up while others were forced to abandon the land.²³⁶ Fr. Lievens was accused of leading a rebellion. Many false cases were filed against him in court. Archbishop P. Goethals ordered Fr.

²³¹ F. DE SA, "The Crisis in the Mission of Chota Nagpur and the Reaction of the Landlords and the Police", p. 193.

²³² In his letter to Rev. Fr. General on January 7, 1889, Lievens wrote: "Actually the Lutheran missionaries are without funds, and their Christians in many places are ready to come and do come to us, provided we take care of them, give them instruction, build a chapel and hold a service. It is a most favourable time to convert a whole kingdom to Jesus Christ, time which probably will not last long, and which then passed away will be regretted forever." Lievens to the Superior General, January 7, 1889, ARSI, Beng. 1004, 3-XI,4.

²³³ The cutting of *chundis* took place at common meetings with the priest. After cutting off the tuft they would throw it far away with a hearty laugh. Cf. A. KANJAMALA, *Religion and Modernization of India*, p. 64.

²³⁴ VAN DER SCHUEREN, *The Belgian Mission of Bengal*, vol. I, p. 9.

²³⁵ According to Hoffmann, Lievens and his catechists whom he had sent to the villages, recommended three points that the tribal Christians/converts must take: (1) never to pay any rent without exacting proper receipts and if they are unable to read and write- most of them were illiterate- they are to pay only in the presence of an accredited mission servant; (2) to refuse absolutely any *bethbegari*, forced labour; and, (3) to refuse to pay any rent which Fr. Lievens considered exorbitant. The first point is perfectly legal. As regards to forced labour Fr. Lievens was strictly right, for at times forced labour and its exaction had not acquired the force of law by prescription. But sometimes due to the cleverness of the landlords and the ignorance of the British officials, the forced labour itself had an official sanction. Fr. Hoffmann accused Fr. Lievens of misusing the silence of the government to instruct the people to ignore its decisions. The rent fixed by Fr. Lievens as fair was in fact very low. Cf. Hoffmann to General, Memoir, ARSI, Beng. 2008, Fasc. IV, 1a - 1e; APBS India 1 - 14/3 Hoffmann letters: Hoffman to Provincial, Dortmund, March 11, 1925. Fr. Hoffmann is of the opinion that there is not much difference in the method of Lievens and that of the Lutherans. Fr. Lievens never promised independence, as did the Lutherans. He advised the aborigines not to pay the amount of *bethbegari*, which he considered exorbitant. The condition he put was that the people should accept Christianity.

²³⁶ A. KANJAMALA, *Religion and Modernization of India*, p. 65.

Lievens and his companions to discontinue their activities.²³⁷ In March 1892, the superiors in Calcutta objected to the mass conversions. They asked Lievens and his companions to refrain from helping the people with their lawsuits. But by now Fr. Lievens was a sick man who was unable to continue in the mission. He left Calcutta for Belgium in September 1892. On November 7, 1893 he succumbed to his disease (tuberculosis), which snatched away a zealous missionary and left the mission bereft of a father and a leader.

2.6.3.2.1 Lievens' Work and Method

No doubt Lievens' own personality and charism had much to do with people coming to him with the request for baptism. He made his objective quite clear: "I have come here among you for your eternal happiness. But in this life too I can make you happy. Confide your difficulties to me, I shall help you as much as the law allows. Believe me I know the law better than you do."²³⁸ Having learned about the experience of the Protestant missionaries in dealing with the government, he was particularly careful not to alienate the authorities by supporting directly or otherwise any agitation; he even claimed that he had nothing to do with the *Sardar Movement*²³⁹ which he considered a real socialistic agitation'. He acknowledged the authority of the government in dealing with the situation, and he invoked the applicable laws.²⁴⁰ Furthermore, two important factors led Father Lievens not to preach the gospel directly. First, the actual socio-economic condition of the people was so affected by the exploitation by the landlords that preaching about God and His liberative mission would have had no effect on them. Secondly, these people needed immediate help so that they could look for a better tomorrow. The usual methods practiced by the older missionaries were insufficient and even irrelevant.²⁴¹

The greatness of Lievens lies not so much in the many conversions he gained for the Catholic Church as in his selfless life of sacrifice, which emphasised charity, justice, human dignity, and equality. Fr. Lievens lit a spark at Torpa that would later spread throughout Chotanagpur and become a fire. In August 1888 he established himself at Ranchi, which was more centrally located than Torpa and more easily accessible to the

²³⁷ The motive for such a drastic action was the scarcity of personnel and the lack of finances. The view of Msgr. Goethals, archbishop of Calcutta, was very readily accepted by the then superior regular of the mission, T. Bodson. Cf. M. VERMEIRE, *Biru Mission History: Common History to the Whole Mission*, Vol.I, Part.II, ARSI, Beng. 2004, p. 5.

²³⁸ L. CLARYSSE, "Lievens and Zemindari System", p. 15.

²³⁹ *Sardar* means a leader, hence it was a movement of the leaders; and the *Sardar* Movement consisted of collecting money from the Tribals to defray the expenses of sending petitions to the Government. The petitions sent in 1870 and in 1879 were rejected. The Government viewed this movement as political unrest and took many precautionary measures to curb the violence. Since the leaders were Christians, the British officials thought that the whole agitation was instigated by the Christian missionaries. As a result, most of the missionaries disassociated themselves from this movement. And since the expected support did not come from the missionaries, the *Sardars* did not hesitate to turn against the missionaries as well. Van Exem is of the opinion that the *Sardars* would have gladly become Catholics had the new missionaries supported their struggle. But seeing the havoc created in the Lutheran mission, the new missionaries did not show any sympathy towards the movement. Cf. IBID., pp. 14-17; A. VAN EXEM, "Early Evangelization in Chota Nagpur", in *IMR* 1/4 (1979), p. 352.

²⁴⁰ L. CLARYSSE, "Lievens and Zemindari System", p. 15.

²⁴¹ Ibid., p. 13.

ever-growing stream of village delegations, which came to see him and consult him, or even to request him to visit their villages. The defence of the aboriginals in matters of rent and forced labour was not at all a new phenomenon; in fact, the Lutherans and Anglicans had been advocating the same for many decades.

Fr. Lievens began to study the law more thoroughly in order to learn more about the traditional rights of the Mundas (Oraons). He learned of the illegal accumulation of land by the landlords, their practice of not giving receipts for rent paid, and their illegal demand for *Bethbegari*, forced labour. By listening to the villagers' troubles and helping them, he came to be regarded as their friend.²⁴² De Sa stated that "at the village meetings the catechists explained the advantage of the Christian Religion -- protection from the oppression of the landlords, protection from the evil spirits, blessings on their fields and on their cattle, medicines in time of illness and so on".²⁴³ The impact of this apostolate of rendering help to settle land disputes was noticed by the superior regular of the West Bengal mission during a visit to Chotanagpur in February and March of 1888. Fr. Sylvain Grosjean accompanied Fr. Lievens during this visit in order to personally obtain information about the conflicts over peoples' lands.²⁴⁴

The effect of the *Mouvement de la Grâce*²⁴⁵ -- this is how the Belgian Jesuits named the movement that added thousands of aboriginals to the Catholic Church -- was a steady growth in the number of adherents, and it was heart-warming. De Sa expressed the motives of the Tribals in the following manner: "In the face of oppression and exploitation, the aboriginals were looking for justice. They were looking for the development of their human personalities, and for the way of life that would respect their human dignity. They could only achieve this goal as a community. And so when they were converted to Christianity, they came over either *to obtain justice, or because they had already obtained it*".²⁴⁶ It is illustrative to note the steady growth in the number of Tribals adhering to Christianity: in September 1886, there were 2,000 followers; in January 1888, the mission counted about 25,000 adherents; in March there were 40,000; and, in the early October the total was 56,000.²⁴⁷

The British Government seemed to look favourably upon the Jesuit mission. The Mundas and the other tribes felt secure with the European missionaries, both the Jesuits and the Lutherans, who seemed to have the protection of the government. At such a favourable time it was natural for the missionaries to expand the mission. The plan which Fr. Lievens envisaged, according to Van der Schueren²⁴⁸ was, "to convert all the Aboriginals of Chotanagpur, then penetrate into the independent states of Sirguja, Jashpur,

²⁴² F. DE SA, *Crisis in Chota Nagpur*, p.123.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

²⁴⁵ Hoffmann to General, Memoir, ARSI, Beng. 2008, Fasc.III, p. 1.

²⁴⁶ F. DE SA, *Crisis in Chota Nagpur*, p. 160.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁴⁸ Van der Schueren was born at Erpe in Flanders on March 5, 1863. His effort to protect the mission from collapse during the First World War was lauded. He died at Oak Park, USA on November 6, 1930. Y. DE STEENHAULT, *History of the Jesuits in West Bengal: 1921 – 1985* (Part I: 1921 – 1947), p. 114.

Raigarh, Gangpur and Bonai and convert all the Aborigines in these states, making one vast Christianity of them all".²⁴⁹ Despite his heavy schedule with the villagers, Fr. Lievens found time to write prayer books and a catechism in Hindi; he even composed some Hindi hymns to Flemish tunes. Fr. Lievens also had a keen interest in the training of catechists. Since the Aborigines were illiterate, he thought that the work of conversion would be a failure, if education was not given priority. Hence, almost from the beginning, he took an active interest in establishing schools.

It is noteworthy that it was the people who came to the missionary. While they waited at the mission house to learn about the settlement of their court cases, they received instructions in the Christian faith and received baptism. Therefore the real motives of the people are not clear, and some of the missionaries entertained serious doubts about them. One cannot categorically deny the socio-economic benefits that initially provided the motivation for their conversion to Christianity, but this does not rule out the possibility of a gradual assimilation of the tenets of Christianity. On the one hand, one cannot but applaud the *mouvement de la grace* inaugurated by Fr. Lievens that brought tens of thousands to the light of grace. On the other hand, a few questions remained to be answered regarding their entry into Christianity, such as preparation.

2.6.3.3 A Life Sketch of Fr. John Baptist Hoffmann

Born at Wallendorf, in the diocese of Trier, Germany on June 21, 1857, Fr. J. B. Hoffmann entered the Society of Jesus on April 20, 1877. After his ecclesiastical studies in India, he was ordained on January 18, 1891 in Calcutta. In 1892 he arrived in Ranchi to make his tertianship. He was asked to study both British law and the agrarian legislation pertaining to various practices in India, in the light of which he could understand fully the implication of the mutinous agitation that was simmering at that time throughout Chotanagpur. After his tertianship he was assigned to Bandgaon and later in 1895 to Sarwada, the heartland of the Mundas, who had been very much affected by the agitation of tribal leaders against the landlords, the government and the missionaries.²⁵⁰ Repatriated at the outbreak of World War I, Fr. Hoffmann dedicated the rest of his life to the publication of the sixteen-volume *Encyclopaedia Mundarica*, a lasting gift to the Munda world.²⁵¹ Fr. Hoffmann, with the help of Fr. Van Emelen (who was in Chotanagpur to collaborate with him), directed the work from Germany. The British government in India published these volumes at their expense. After the completion of his monumental work Fr. Hoffmann died in full satisfaction on November 19, 1928 in Trier.²⁵²

²⁴⁹ VAN DER SCHUEREN, *The Belgian Mission of Bengal*, vol. I, p. 22.

²⁵⁰ P. TETE, "J. B. Hoffmann", in Idem (ed.), *To Chota Nagpur with Love and Service: Pioneers in the Ranchi Jesuit Province*, Ignatian Commemoration Volume, Ranchi 1991, p.56.

²⁵¹The reason for writing the *Encyclopedia Mundarica* was that the Mundari language, Fr. Hoffmann thought, was disappearing rapidly. This gradual extinction of their culture and civilization was the effect of the oppression of the *Dikus* or Foreigners. Therefore he thought it was his duty to expound the true picture of the race and their civilization and to preserve the true memory of that which is on the verge of destruction. It was Hoffmann who made the public aware of the wealth and beauty and significance of the Mundari folklore, thereby creating interest in the preservation of the cultural heritage of the Mundas. Cf. P. TETE, *A Missionary Social Worker in India*, pp. 145-154.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 157.

2.6.3.3.1 Hoffmann, a Missionary and a Social Worker

Hoffmann was convinced that the complaints of the Tribals, which he recognized as the real cause of the rebellion, were just. He proposed that legal recognition must be accorded to the customs and the rights under which a farmer had cultivated the fields. He also suggested that these fields be accurately measured and marked on the maps.²⁵³ At Sarwada Fr. Hoffmann conducted a thorough study of the *Khuntkatti* and the *Bhuinari* lands (the ancestral lands) of the aborigines. The Munda *Khuntkatti* tenancies are lands owned by the *Khuntkattidars*, the male descendants of the original founders of the village of Chotanagpur. The *Bhuinari* land means that the ancestral lands belong to the original settlers of the country. The word *Bhuinari* is a local variation of *Khuntkatti* with a slight difference in meaning. Based on his thorough understanding of the practices of the Tribals, Fr. Hoffmann supported their struggle for the restoration of their ancient rights and privileges perpetuated by age-old custom and usage.²⁵⁴ Together with Mr. Lister, he wrote a special memorandum on the Munda land system, and this document persuaded the government ultimately to enact the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act of 1908, which recognized the age-old rights of the Mundas. Later the memorandum itself was included in the Act as an appendix.²⁵⁵

2.6.3.3.2 The Cooperative Societies

Economic self-reliance was one of the major objectives when Fr. Hoffmann founded various societies to help the Tribals. As he analysed the concept of the *Mouvement de la Grâce*, he was convinced that inherent to the concept was the mundane object of liberation from economic slavery or servitude. The establishment of the cooperative societies was his timely gift to the oppressed tribes of Chotanagpur. Before starting the cooperative Hoffmann wrote a small booklet entitled *Social Works in Chota Nagpore*, aimed at recommending his ideas to his fellow missionaries in hopes of getting their support.²⁵⁶ To mention some of the main issues addressed by Fr. Hoffman in his work *œuvres sociales*:

We all know that what they primarily and chiefly expected from us was assistance against the oppression and aggression of the alien invaders, and to obtain this they just barely accepted Christianity as part of the bargain... A good number of our neophytes consider the discipline of Christianity as an irksome restraint, which they submit to chiefly because they fear to lose our protection precisely in those matters where the settlement and the new law will in the future render that protection partly superficial and partly impossible...Christianity, so far from pauperising people, must necessarily

²⁵³ P. TETE, "J. B. Hoffmann", p. 57.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 58.

²⁵⁶ Back from sick leave in Europe early in 1908 he set out to launch the Chota Nagpur Catholic Cooperative Credit Society. It was to be a common enterprise of the Jesuits and the people. He prepared a 17,000-word pamphlet to conscientise his brethren, sometimes using a language which we no longer commonly associate with his times: "If we should still maintain that for our Mundas and Oraons those organizations are out of question, quite impossible, or nearly sure to fail, well then, the best thing we can do is to pick up our little bundles and go back to Belgium." Cf. A. VAN EXEM, "Early Evangelisation in Chota Nagpur", in *IMR* 1/4 (1979), p. 90.

tend to relieve poverty by the only means that are worthy of man, viz, by thrift and distinct rise in the intellectual and moral level of the masses... If we want this growth to continue we must offer the aborigines a new and powerful motive for joining Christianity, i.e., through sound economic organizations. But this economic organization is precisely the aim and object of the *œuvres sociales* and cannot be brought about without them. ... Let us teach them how to use their education for the development of a spirit of self-reliance, self-help and productive resourcefulness.²⁵⁷

He furnished convincing reasons for the founding of the cooperative.²⁵⁸ He recognized the importance of the rural unit that is very vulnerable and at the same time active in its participation of developmental activities. Therefore the rural unit is the starting point for all Fr. Hoffmann's social activities. The aim of the village unit consists of education in thrift and good business habits of all the members of a village or of a small group of villages.²⁵⁹

The structure of the cooperative was based on the *Raiffeisen* system²⁶⁰ in Germany but adapted to the local laws, customs and social background of the Tribals in Chotanagpur.²⁶¹ Fr. Hoffmann also received recognition from the government when the Catholic Cooperative Society was registered on December 2, 1909, and the Cooperative Stores in 1913. The Catholic Cooperative Credit Society met with great success. For the

²⁵⁷ J. B. HOFFMANN, *Social Works in Chota Nagpore*, 1904. ARSI, Beng. 1004, 4-IX, 13, pp. 4- 10. Commenting on the work of Fr. Hoffmann, Fr. Grosjean informs the provincial in Belgium that the pages are remarkable and in order to make it realistic he proposes that a press be established in Ranchi, especially for periodic publications concerning the same matter. Cf. Grosjean to Provincial, Calcutta, March 4, 1909, APBS India 1 – 12/ Grosjean; Grosjean to Provincial, Calcutta, April 28, 1909, APBS India 1 – 12/ Grosjean; Grosjean to Provincial, Calcutta, June 26, 1909, APBS India 1 – 12/ Grosjean.

²⁵⁸ Besides their eminently philanthropic and Christian aim, these organizations pursue a second and equally important aim - the economic education of the lower classes. They also teach the cultivators a simple and easy means of putting even the smallest savings into a perfectly secure and moderately profitable investment at any moment they choose and at their place of residence (or very close to it). These organizations are managed by the very people for whose benefit they have been founded, and thus they train others in self-help and in a spirit of sound independence and activity which is so highly rational and Christian. Cf. J. B. HOFFMANN, *Social Works in Chota Nagpore*, p. 17.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

²⁶⁰ The Raiffeisen system is named after its founder Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen (1818-1888), who drew the inspiration from the Rochdale pioneers in England and adapted it to the economic needs and condition of Germany, especially after the famine of 1846-1847. Raiffeisen started these banks to rescue the peasants of the Rhine Province from the clutches of the usurers who had brought them to the brink of destruction. The Raiffeisen system is made up of agricultural cooperative credit societies founded in 1848 to facilitate credit for small peasant proprietors. In 1849 loans were also granted to small farmers. The members of the cooperative were rich philanthropists who sold cattle to farmers on easy terms. In 1862 Raiffeisen founded at Anhausen the cooperative credit society of which the farmers themselves were members. These Cooperative banks proved to be very successful and since then the system has been known as the Raiffeisen system. Cf. F. KARRENBERG (ed.), *Evangelisches Soziallexicon*, Stuttgart 1963, pp. 995-996; P. TETE, *A Missionary Social Worker in India*, pp. 84-85. As a result of the establishment of Raiffeisen Banks in the Rhine Province, "those peasants are among the wealthiest and most Catholic of Europe, owing to the energy and enthusiasm with which the Catholic clergy, in the teeth of a narrow-minded government opposition, took up, spread and developed the work of Raiffeisen". J. B. HOFFMANN, *Social Works in Chota Nagpore*, p. 16.

²⁶¹ P. TETE, *A Missionary Social Worker in India*, p. 61.

services rendered to the Tribals, Fr. Hoffmann was honoured with a certificate, and in 1913 he was awarded the *Kaiser-i-Hind* silver medal on behalf of the King-Emperor for signal services rendered to the government.²⁶²

His monumental works and his dedicated services to the tribal community of Chotanagpur will live on for many centuries to come. Although he died in obscurity, away from the land he had come to love, his three outstanding achievements -- the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act, the cooperative and his contribution to ethnological research -- will keep his name alive as long as there are Mundas and as long as the Chotanagpur mission continues its operation among the Tribals.

2.6.4 Christianity in the Neighbouring States

The work begun by Fr. Constant Lievens kept expanding. It soon spread to the neighbouring territories. The expansion of the *Mouvement de la Grâce* was not limited to a few northern districts of Chotanagpur but expanded towards south, i.e. Biru. As a result, the Lutherans were compelled to expand their activities in Gangpur. They had a fairly large congregation at Raiboga, just across the Biru frontier.²⁶³ The mass conversions in Chotanagpur infuriated the Lutheran Gossner Mission, since it lost about 7,000 adherents alone in the Gangpur mission because of the friendliness and unpretentious service of Fr. Louis Cardon (1857-1946).²⁶⁴ The Lutherans considered the presence of the Jesuits a constant threat to their expansion. The activities of the Jesuit missionaries were, at the beginning, steered away from the district of Biru, as the local Raja was very hostile to them. However the enormous good that the mission brought to the Tribals could not but attract attention; the Tribals even travelled across the frontiers in search of missionaries, in order to experience the *Mouvement de la Grâce*. The three parishes of the Biru district -- Rengarih, Samtoli and Kurdeg -- became the centres of mission activities in Gangpur. Although a study of the expansion of the mission in itself would be worthwhile, this study will focus on the semi-independent state of Gangpur.

2.6.4.1. Deputations from Gangpur

After the initial success of Fr. Lievens in court, delegations came to him with requests that he should visit their villages. These delegations, often guided by the village *Panchayat* or council, consisted of the village headman and a few villagers. Obviously the practice of a collective approach to the conversion of the people seems to have continued even after the death of Fr. Lievens. An assistant in the Noatoli-Basia Parish, Fr. Louis Cardon, recorded in his diary on July 10, 1898: "People are coming from the bottom of Gangpur to become Christians. In spite of our good will, we can not receive these people."²⁶⁵ In his letter to Fr. Sylvain Grosjean on July 20, 1908 Fr. Cardon wrote:

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid., p. 29

²⁶⁴ Fr. Louis Cardon's name is very much linked with the history of Chotanagpur as one of the founders together with Constant Lievens and Sylvain Grosjean. Though, due to his long years of service in the region of Biru, he merited the name the 'Apostle of Biru', his service to the nascent mission of Gangpur cannot be overlooked. Therefore it is fitting that a brief biography be presented below.

²⁶⁵ Missionaries were prohibited from carrying on their work without prior approval of residing among people outside the British territories in India -- especially the princely states -- since such activities could

On my way back from Noatoli to Kompala (May 1901), deputations from Gangpur villages had met me at Sogra already, and continued coming in. I knew Msgr. Goethals was opposed to new openings. I could not receive them. As soon as Fr. Brice Meuleman (1862 - 1925)²⁶⁶ was appointed as the Archbishop of Calcutta, I got leave to receive the *Gangpurias* (people of Gangpur), and in no time the rout was in the Lutheran camp, through the numerous accessions from their Christians.²⁶⁷

The number of delegations seemed to have increased as the people felt that it was convenient to approach Fr. Cardon whenever he came to Rengarih from Noatoli in 1901.²⁶⁸ Although the total number of such deputations was not recorded, one can clearly notice the remarkable progress of the mission that drew Tribals from the neighbouring states. The Rengarih statistics for 1903 indicates that, of the total number of about 9,600 Catholics under the care of the Parish, at least two thirds were from Gangpur.²⁶⁹

2.6.4. 2 Biography of Fr. Louis Cardon

Fr. Louis Cardon was born at Néchin (Hainaut), Belgium, on December 25, 1857. He entered the Society of Jesus on October 25, 1876. His untiring missionary zeal brought him to India on November 25, 1884, where he pursued his theological studies in the Jesuit Seminary of Asansol. He was fortunate to begin his missionary career. With Fr. Constant Lievens, to whom he became an assistant in January 1889; Fr. Lievens in turn asked him to take charge of the mission of Tetara (Noatoli). Writing on the area of Fr. Cardon's activity, Peter Tete writes: "His area of apostolic activities included almost all that is now under the care of the whole of Noatoli Vicariate, Gumla, Soso and Majhatoli parishes; besides, the whole of Barway, Chechari and Biru."²⁷⁰ He and his legendary horse, Raja, were kept busy travelling to distant places in search of people who invited him. When he was not away on

violate the treaty that the British had established with the local rulers. The government communicated this policy to the Archbishop of Calcutta, who in turn informed the missionaries. Cf. M. VERMEIRE, *Gangpur Mission History*, vol. I, p.3.

²⁶⁶ Brice Meuleman was born at Gent on March 1, 1862. He joined the Society of Jesus on September 23, 1879 and came to India on November 4, 1886. On March 31, 1902, it was announced that he would succeed Msgr. Paul Goethals as the Archbishop of Calcutta; at that time he was superior regular of the Bengal mission of the Belgian Jesuits. After an eventful career for which he gave his best in organising the missions, he died in Marseilles, where he had gone to recuperate his health, on July 15, 1925. Cf. Y. DE STEENHAULT, *History of the Jesuits in West Bengal: 1921 – 1985* (Part I: 1921 – 1947), pp. 106 – 107; R. MENDIZÁBAL, *Catalogus Defunctorum in renata Societate Iesu ab a. 1814 ad a. 1970*, p. 297.

²⁶⁷ L. Cardon, July 20, 1908, APBS India 1- 13, Lievens/ Grosjean Memoir; Y. DE STEENHAULT, *History of the Jesuits in West Bengal: 1921 – 1985* (Part I: 1921 – 1947), p. 29.

²⁶⁸ Vermier mentioned that there might have been many deputations, but they were left unrecorded, as Cardon was not consistent in maintaining a diary. "There is no doubt that deputations from Gangpur became more frequent as soon as they had no more to go Noatoli to meet Cardon, but found him at Rengarih so much nearer." M. VERMIER, *Ganagpur Mission History*, vol. I, p. 3.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

²⁷⁰ P. TETE, "Fr. Louis Cardon, S.J. ((1857-1946): The founder of the Biru Mission", in Idem (ed.), *To Chotanagpur With Love*, Ranchi, p. 67.

mission tours,²⁷¹ he received the deputations coming to Tetara, the centre of his apostolic work.

Although he was well received among the poor people, he was hated by the Raja of Biru, the landlords and the police, who in 1889 had plotted a conspiracy against the missionaries. Even the British officials, such as Renny (the acting deputy commissioner of Lohardaga), accused Fr. Cardon and his confreres of revolt and warned them that they too would face the same fate as the German Jesuits under Chancellor Otto von Bismarck.²⁷² They were later vindicated with the help of a leading lawyer from Calcutta. Rather than relenting to such opposition, Fr. Cardon viewed it as a challenge to his apostolic endeavours. He continued to meet with people even in the remotest places, including Barway, where he accompanied Fr. Lievens in December 1890. To quote again the words of P. Tete: “During three years he was not only one of the pioneers but also one of Father Lievens’ most valued lieutenants, travelling throughout the length and breadth of Chotanagpur, preaching and baptising, gaining new villages, confirming the waverers (wayward), defending the oppressed, ever battling for the cause of Christ.”²⁷³

2.6.4.3 Cardon’s Work and Achievement

Fr. Louis Cardon was convinced that the development of the Tribals was fundamentally linked to their education. During his mission tours he collected both boys and girls from the villages for schools. The boys were brought to the centre (where the missionaries resided) where there were schools, and the girls were sent to the Sisters in Ranchi.²⁷⁴ During the famine of 1896-1897 the people witnessed the true nature of Christian charity, and as a result many Tribals opted to become catechumens and many villages returned to Catholicism. Fr. Cardon was instrumental in establishing Rengarh station, with a church, a presbytery, a convent and a school. When Biru-Gangpur was made a separate unit in 1909, the superiors found in Fr. Cardon a suitable candidate to be the superior. He wholeheartedly supported the initiative taken by Fr. Hoffman for the development of Tribals. He promoted the Catholic Cooperative Credit Society and the *Dhan Gola* or Grain Bank. Enumerating his works, P. Tete observed: “Father organised *Dharma Schools* where besides intensive religious instructions and prayers, they witnessed Christian life.”²⁷⁵ As he grew old, he withdrew from parish administration and spent much time in the garden. Since Fr. Cardon was also a botanist of some reputation, he discovered several orchids, one of which bears his name – the *Microsotolis Cardoni*. He was totally at home with aboriginal laws and customs. He collected much Oraon and Kharia folklore. He

²⁷¹ The general pattern of the mission tour was as follows: the visit of the missionary is announced in advance, and the catechist prepares the people for the Holy Mass and other sacraments like penance, baptism and marriage; after the Mass the people sit for *Panchayat*, in which they discuss various issues concerning the mission station in question.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 69.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

²⁷⁴ Commenting on the work of Fr. Cardon, Fr. Alary wrote to Fr. General: “Notre Supérieur local, le Rév. P. Cardon, est un homme de beaucoup d’expérience, il a une grande influence sur les gens du pays. Il rend de grands services aux jeunes qui commencent la carrière, ces services pourraient être plus grands encore.” Alary to General, ARSI Calcut. 1005 – XIII, 8, p.4.

²⁷⁵ P. TETE, “Fr. Louis Cardon, S.J. ((1857 - 1946): The founder of the Biru Mission”, p. 75.

was very affectionate to the aborigines. Vermeire writes that it is “a pity that he does not go out more often to visit them at their villages... The influence he exercised, even so from Rengarih, was such that it looked as if the whole of Gangpur would turn Catholic”²⁷⁶.

In recognition of his meritorious work, the British government decorated him with a second class *Kaiser-i-Hind* medal on December 15, 1936. After long and eventful years as missionary in the jungles of Chotanagpur, Fr. Louis Cardon died at Samtoli on February 11, 1947.

2.6.5 The Visit of the Jesuits to Gangpur

There were already conversions in Gangpur during the time of Fr. Leo Scharlaeken²⁷⁷ (July 1902). Rengarih was the centre from which the missionaries had contacted the Tribals of Gangpur. A village delegation would visit the missionary with a request, and the missionary would then send the catechists to explore the feasibility of opening a station. In this way, by November 1902, the missionaries gained about 5,000 people.²⁷⁸ As assistant priests in Rengarih, Fr. De Gryse and Fr. John De Smet²⁷⁹ concentrated their activities in Gangpur where they met the Oraons and the Dhelki Kharias. Though they did not work long in Rengarih, they reached a ‘good harvest’ in Gangpur. Fr. Cardon wrote to Fr. Grosjean on June 10, 1904, informing him that a contact had been made in Gangpur and that 62 families were ready to become Christians.²⁸⁰

Fr. De Smet continued to visit Gangpur even when he was transferred to Samtoli in July 1903. In 1907 he received many deputations from Gangpur, and village leaders from Nagra came to Samtoli, expressing their desire to become Christians.²⁸¹ On May 13, 1907, he went on a tour to Gangpur. In spite of the scorching heat he continued to visit villages until June 4. Since no chapels existed in that part of the mission, Holy Masses were celebrated under the trees. During the visit Fr. De Smet baptised 11 adults and 558

²⁷⁶ M. VERMEIRE, *Gangpur Mission History*, vol. I, p. 3; Fr. Perier wrote: “Le R. P. Cardon jouit d’une très grande autorité non seulement sur les indigènes du Biru, mai les notres l’ont en grande estime et recourent volontiers à ses lumières.” Perier to Provincial, Calcutta, March 10, 1914, APBS India 2 Box 23/1.

²⁷⁷ Before going to the Biru mission, Leo Scharlaeken was at Balasore (Orissa) since October 16, 1896. Scharlaeken was born on June 1, 1861 in Bruges (Belgium). He entered the Society of Jesus on September 27, 1879 and arrived in India on December 3, 1894. He died on November 20, 1902 at Calcutta. Scharlaeken was not an equestrian. Therefore, he went from village to village on foot. He had brought along with him a bicycle, but on those days roads in Biru were bad even for bicycles.

²⁷⁸ In his letter to his family in November 1902 Leo Scharlaeken writes, “These last months we have acquired a completely new country (Gangpur). Our parish now is as large as 3 Belgian provinces. We have not yet counted the number of those new Christians, but there will be about 5,000”. VERMEIRE, *Gangpur Mission History*, vol. I, p. 4; P. TETE, *The Kharias and the History of the Catholic Church in Biru*, Ranchi 1990, p. 95.

²⁷⁹ John De Smet was born at Swevezele on May 17, 1852. He entered the Society of Jesus on September 24, 1874 and arrived in India on December 6, 1876. He died at Noatoli on May 5, 1921. Cf. R. MENDIZÁBAL, *Catalogus Defunctorum in renata Societate Iesu ab a. 1814 ad a. 1970*, p. 281.

²⁸⁰ P. TETE, *The Kharias and the History of the Catholic Church in Biru*, p. 97.

²⁸¹ The names of the villages that came to Samtoli are: Bonai, Goghea, Ranakata, Konorkela, Demta and Katajor. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 174.

children. Some of the landlords of Nagra began to harass the Christians because they were afraid that the latter would go to court to redress their grievances.

The Lutherans of Nagra joined the landlords (Zamindars) in order to drive all the Roman Catholics out. Mentioning the difficulties of the Catholics in Gangpur, Peter Tete writes:

The Sub-Inspector of Police of Raghunathpali, reported Francis, the catechist, went with ten men taking guns, swords and sticks to Gaibira threatening to beat them. But the threat did not work. He (the catechist) was alleged to be a “disturber of peace”. Then on September 29, 1907, the police wanted Francis and the men of Gaibira to sign a paper, the content of which was not known. The catechist and the people refused to sign it. Francis was then taken to Kuarmunda handcuffed. Meanwhile Father De Smet had written to Mr. Craven, the Dewan of Suadi (Capital of Gangpur, it is now Sundargarh) telling him that the matter would be referred to Archbishop Meuleman with whom the *Dewan* was on friendly terms. Later Francis was acquitted.²⁸²

The work of conversion continued from Kurdeg under the able direction of Fr. Edmund De Gryse,²⁸³ who made it a point to visit the new adherents on different occasions and even to establish sub-stations at the border, for the Raja of Gangpur was hostile to the missionaries. He did this in order to strengthen the neophytes in their faith. On November 18, 1903, he visited Sakrabahar in Gangpur and visited four other villages. The Oraons were very receptive. They invited him to visit their villages and were very keen on sending their children to the schools run by the missionaries.²⁸⁴ The diary entries of Fr. De Gryse provide much information on the various delegations that met him and on the many families and villages that requested him to receive them into the Church. He felt that a great change would occur both in Biru and Gangpur if a good school were established.²⁸⁵ In September 1904 Fr. De Gryse was again in Gangpur, as he was on his way to Calcutta for a retreat. He made use of the occasion to visit Rengarbahar and Behrembasa in Biru and many villages in Gangpur.²⁸⁶ Since Gangpur had a large territory, the visits of the

²⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 173–174.

²⁸³ Edmund de Gryse was born at Leeuw-St. Pierre (Brabant) on June 26, 1865. He entered the Society of Jesus on September 24, 1884 and arrived in India on November 24, 1885. He died at Rengarh on January 8, 1908. Cf. R. MENDIZÁBAL (ed.), *Catalogus Defunctorum in renata Societate Iesu ab a. 1814 ad a. 1970*, p. 208.

²⁸⁴ M. VERMEIRE, *Biru Mission History: Kurdeg*, vol. IV, Sec.III, ARSI, Beng. 2006, p. 3.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

²⁸⁶ In addition to the regular visits of the missionaries and the village deputations, another important factor facilitated the spread of the faith in Gangpur: the presence of two important railway stations: Rajgangpur and Jharsuguda. The former is not far from Kesramal in eastern Gangpur and the latter is in western Gangpur. Sometimes he would take the train from Garpos station. The missionaries had to take the train to go to Calcutta for their annual retreat and other related matters. Most of them would spend a night in one or the other village hearing confessions, anointing the sick, baptizing and, above all, celebrating the Eucharist. This will be dealt with in the next chapter. Citing the diary of Fr. De Gryse, Fr. Vermeire writes: “In October (1904) he (Fr. De Gryse) went for his retreat to Calcutta, but visited on the way to the Railway (Station), Rengarbahar and Behrembasa in Biru, and many villages in Gangpur.” *Ibid.* p. 21. In October 1908 Fr. Van Hoeck made a trip to Calcutta. He visited some places on the way: Timna, Katanjheria, Kusumdegi and Barokhata. When he returned from Calcutta on October 23, he also visited

missionaries were generally long as they grouped together a number of villages to be visited. The tour of Fr. De Gryse in Gangpur in 1904 lasted about two weeks (4-17 September). This gave him an opportunity to establish new contacts.²⁸⁷ He was again in Gangpur in May 1905 to prepare for the visit of Msgr. Brice Meuleman. The visit of the two made such an impact on the people that more villages were added to the Catholic fold. The statistics of Kurdeg show that 2,345 Catholics out of 8,642 came from Gangpur State.²⁸⁸

On March 7, 1906, Msgr. Brice Meuleman paid a visit to Rengarbahar and Behrembasa (a place chosen as a sub-station for their activity in Gangpur), then with Fr. De Gryse he proceeded to Gangpur. Msgr. Brice Meuleman was back again exactly one year later to visit some of the villages in Gangpur; he did this on his way to Jharsuguda, the nearest railway station.²⁸⁹ As assistant parish priest of Kurdeg, Fr. Van Heck paid several visits to Gangpur.²⁹⁰ He is said to have baptized 120 children when he visited to Craven, the manager of Gangpur, in September 1907, to obtain a grant of medicines.²⁹¹

Yet the state of the mission was not all that encouraging. There were some recorded defections due mainly to the drunkenness and quarrelsome nature of the catechists.²⁹² There was also a general dissatisfaction among the Catholics of Gangpur, who felt that the Fathers did not provide them with the help they expected: protection from the *Zamindars*. In spite of the numerous difficulties and tensions, the missionaries continued their expansion work in Gangpur, especially under the able guidance of Msgr. Brice Meuleman, the Archbishop of Calcutta, whose periodic visits encouraged the missionaries. Their activities gained some enemies too; the political agent, Blakesley, recommended the expulsion of the Jesuits from Jashpur to the Viceroy in 1913, but that did not happen.²⁹³ Although the Jesuits continued to expand their work in Gangpur, the state of the Catholics was far from satisfactory. They were Christians in name only and would remain so until the Fathers decided to live among them.²⁹⁴ The spiritual welfare of the

different places. M. VERMEIRE, *Biru Mission History: Kurdeg*, vol. IV, Sec.III, APBS India 1 – Box 4, p. 87.

²⁸⁷ Some of the villages visited on the tour are: Sakrabahar, Saunamara, Rauldega, Gaibira, Simdega, Kirelega, Deogaon, Sahajbahal, Gorgabahal, Keetmunda, Latalaga, Kusumdegi, Katangjheria, Timan, Ambapani, Baiskar and Sakjor. He claims to have administered at least 104 baptisms in these places. Commenting on the people he writes: "The people are full of good will. The old people are the same everywhere. They drink and a little too much. Most of the Christians are Oraons depending on Kurdeg and are emigrants from Palkot and Basia districts." Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

²⁹⁰ He visited the following stations in Gangpur on April 1, 1906: Sakiabahar, Korai, Saunamara, Rauldega, Borobahal, Maiabahal, Gaibira, Deogaon, Kiralega, Simdega and Rengarbahar. On his way to Calcutta in March 1907, he visited the following villages: Timna, Borkata, Kusumdegi, Pachora, Katangjheria and Sakjor. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.* p. 57.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 34.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

Tribals depended very much on the visits of the Fathers to Gangpur and on the Raja's allowing the missionaries to attend to the spiritual needs of the Christians.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explored both the general background of the Church in India and some aspects of the Catholic Mission in Orissa, with all its shifting fortunes. The glorious past of Christianity in Orissa is first recalled in the Portuguese settlements along the coast, of which sadly nothing remains. Their premature end was like an eclipse, since Christianity reappeared or continued in some of the military settlements, such as Cuttack, Berhampur, Aska and Sambalpur. At the same time small communities in Ganjam and Balasore emerged. Given the nature of the former, one would not expect continuity, as they were composed mostly of soldiers who served in the army of chieftains. Some of the salient important issues of 19th-century Christianity are then presented. These issues created unnecessary confusion and actually slowed the process of evangelisation, although they also contributed to the church's establishment herself in Orissa. One can only marvel at the rapid progress and expansion of the church in Orissa despite the long distances, the scarcity of personnel, the paucity of resources, and opposition from many agencies.

The tribal people were attached to their ancestral customs and conventions of landholding and cultivation. They were ignorant of the new laws, which were often contrary to their established practices. They slowly began to lose their property vis-à-vis their identity as tribal people or better *Adivasi*, the original settlers. In this atmosphere of cultural estrangement and economic oppression, the missionaries responded positively and did what they thought was best; it was in fact nothing more than humanitarian or social help motivated by the teachings of the Church. Missionaries began their work by protecting the Tribals and Dalits from exploiting landlords, moneylenders, contractors and other *Dikus* (foreigners). Although they did not go beyond the limits of the law of the land in offering assistance to the needy, their activities had a lasting impact on the people, who later sought admission into the Church. The community mentality of the Tribals played a leading role in converting them *en masse*. In Ganjam, the MSFS was faced with the uphill task of penetrating the jungles infested with fatal mountain fever. The waning of their initial enthusiasm and the effects of the ill-fated explorations in the Ganjam Mountains called for reflection and better planning. This, of course, will be investigated in subsequent chapters.