CHAPTER III

ESTABLISHMENT AND EXPANSION OF THE SANTAL MISSION

Early Jesuits and their attempts in Santal Mission

The separation of Ranchi from Calcutta Archdiocese helped the early Jesuits to focus their attention towards the Santal Parganas and Purnea districts. These were the unexplored areas of the Archdiocese but the Anglicans had been working here since 1859. Belgian Jesuit missionaries had the dream to establish a mission station among the Santals of Santal Parganas. On 1st August 1879, a Jesuit missionary of the Bengal Mission Fr. Charles Schaff (German) resident at Jhargram who identified a number of Santals among his converts over there, wanted to explore their ancestral land, the Santal Parganas. Therefore he took the loop line train to venture into the region of Pakur. He, however, travelled incognito and determined not to reveal his identity as a missionary. There he met the Manjhi, headman of the Santal Village to realize his venture. But the Manjhi was not very sympathetic to him. After touring some villages he returned to Pakur to find a policeman looking for a Fr. Schaff to hand over a letter which spelt as ‘To Rev. Father Schaff, Catholic missionary.’ Thus his missionary identity came to light. The local Santals immediately took him to the Manjhi, “who ordered him to leave his territory at once, and forbade his men from providing him food and helping him to carry his luggage.”

Fr. Schaff was forced to walk 24 miles to the next railway station. “The sun was burning. The Father had to carry a heavy burden, and to travel during the hottest hours of the day. When he arrived at the station, he was utterly exhausted and famished.” “Fr. Schaff went to Asansol where Fr. Martin Jacques was the Parish Priest. He looked so run down and metamorphosed by his trials that they took him for a beggar. ‘I am a poor traveler, he said, please give me hospitality, I beg you, and be kind enough to give me a little money.’ Fr. Jacques answered, “I shall give you food; you can rest here for some time. As to giving you money, it is above my means. You have to beg from the Asansol gentlemen.” When Fr.Schaff removed
the hand kerchief partly covering his head, Fr. Jacques recognized him with utmost surprise. “Comfort followed …. After spending a few days in Asansol, Fr. Schaff resumed his missionary journey to explore the Damin-i-koh, the part of the Santal land placed under the exclusive English control.”

In December 1886, Fr. Schaefer, another Jesuit of Bengal Mission, left Calcutta for Dumka, the capital of Santal Parganas District with instructions to find a place to begin a mission station. Charles Fabre-Tonnere, in charge of the public security of the district, welcomed the missionary. “During ten months”, wrote Fr. Schaefer, “I had the happiness of touring the whole Santal Parganas in the company of this honest and virtuous man.” He submitted his report of his observations, on return to Calcutta in October 1887 and the place to establish the apostolic work. But the answer fell like a thunder bolt: ‘Since Rome, said Mgr. Goethals, has allotted to us the District of Darjeeling so that we might open there a College, we greatly regret that we must, for the time being, renounce opening a mission in Santal Parganas, for lack of men…’

In fact, they had to wait for many years for the same reason for a resident missionary among them. While that was the case of Catholic missionaries, the Protestant sects had established five Missions in the region. Among them, the most important was the Scandinavian one, named the Indian Home Mission. Its first ministers settled down among the Santals half a century ago. They already directed 29 mission stations and 9 schools for their converts emigrating from the plantations in Assam. They also possessed a tea garden to which a colony of the mission was attached. As per the 1911 Census, there were then in the Santal Parganas 10,163 Christians, 9,731 of them local people. The Catholics among them formed only a minuscule minority: 1,079 of them local people. Fr. Martin Jacques and his assistant Fr. Louis Stevens built the first new Chapel at Madhupur, in the south-western tip of the Santal Parganas District in 1908 for the railway colony residents. Twice a month the Jesuit Fathers of Asansol visited the Catholics in the Chord Railway line. Sometimes more than 60 persons attended Mass. The Protestant
missionaries were already active among the Santals in Santal Parganas and had achieved promising results.

Purnea District, the other district of the Santal Mission has an area of 4,885 sq. miles extending from the Ganges northwards to the frontier of Nepal and it is a level tract of county, traversed by several rivers flowing from the Himalayas, the greatest of which is the kosi. The Ganges separates the Santal Parganas District from Purnea District. The main crops of this district are rice, pulses and oil seeds. There are good roads in the district. The northeast frontier railway goes through the parishes belonging to the Santal Mission and they are Purnea, the District’s Capital, Majlispur, Islampur and the substation, Katihar. Purnea possessed a church and a presbytery. The Catholic community there was of about 150 persons who were only Europeans and Eurasian government employees or indigo planters, spread out all over the countryside.

Purnea was a part under the Capuchins when Patna Vicariate was created on 7th February 1845. As a result of the establishment of the Indian Hierarchy, the Patna Vicariate was suppressed on 1st August 1886, and its territory was attached to the Diocese of Allahabad under the Capuchins. On 7th June 1887 Pope Leo XIII transferred Purnea district to Calcutta Archdiocese, mainly to provide a territorial link between Calcutta and Darjeeling. The Jesuit Fr. Thomas MacGonagall arrived at Purnea on 1st December 1887, from Calcutta and succeeded the Capuchin Fr. Heliodore, O.F.M. Cap. At this point the parish priest of Purnea was also in charge of the railway colonies from Sahibganj to Burdwan. He used to visit also Rampurhat, Nalhati and even Naya Dumka. After Fr. MacGonagall, there were three other Jesuits resident at Purnea remained till 1978.

Santal Mission and the Jesuit Pioneers:

Leopold Knockaert He joined the Society of Jesus in 1873 and embarked for the Bengal Mission. He was sent to Balasore (now in Orissa), where the first Belgium Jesuits had been fully absorbed by the re-evangelization and education of the long neglected European and Anglo-Indian Catholics of the town.
Knockaert must have sensed the constraints of the local situation due to the effects of the famine in Orissa in 1866, and he moved after a year to the village of Daiga where some ten local families had been baptized and more were on the way. The people needed more land and the Raja of Mayurbhanj was approached and he gave rent-free for the first 20 years some 16 square miles of jungle. Fr. Knockaert shifted with some of his Christians to the new place in 1879 but he fell ill and he had to be replaced. Due to his ill health Fr. Knockaert was transferred to Midnapur, lived in Jhargram and worked among the Santals. The American Baptists insisted their converts to break from their community. This act brought an understanding in the Santal community that the accession to Christianity implied loss of one’s belonging to the ‘jat’ and hence the movement stopped short. Contact with the few Santals somehow initiated Fr. Knockaert to the language and the Santal ethos, an investment that ripe some thirty years later. On the outskirts of the town he came across some 50 baptized Hari families, making a living as palanquin bearers and skin dealers. These people were considered by all as the scum of society. They were starving most of the year as they earned little money seasonally. They used to beg or rob. After drinking heavily, quarrels were daily occurrence. He took up the challenge and shaped them into a self-respecting community. He himself had written that, “Now the houses are well kept, surrounded by small vegetable gardens; people have learned to save and drunkenness is exceptional. Quarrels have almost stopped. Children attend schools and a panchayat takes up the problems when they arise.” Fr. Leopold Knockaert was in Purnea from 1900 till 1925, except for the three years when he was at Kurseong.

Fr. L. Knockaert was noted for admirable constancy in his work, and his apostolic endeavours. During the First World War, a conversion movement among the Santals of Purnea began to increase. The number of indigenous Christians in the District rose from 52 as per the 1911 census, to 3,892 in 1920. In December 1912, Fr. Rocca, an Italian missionary from the diocese of Krishnagar, informed Fr. Knockaert that a certain number of Santals had migrated from his Dinajpur district to Purnea district and settled in the village of Bagdob near Kishanganj. Further he suggested establishing a contact with them. These Santals lived in small groups and
found distinct from the rest of the population. In 1911, among the two million inhabitants of Purnea district, the census enumerated only 21,000 as plantation coolies or migrants who in search of land for cultivation. These ignorant cultivators lost to the cunning and greedy Muslim land owners and became their tenants.

Fr. Knockaert, with ardent desire, reached the village of Bagdob. Witnessing his association and friendship, immediately Bagdob opened its heart to the missionary. At first “They took to each other”, writes Josson. The people welcomed him with delight and gave him great hopes. Initially, the zamindars were not disturbed by the conversions and left the catechumens in peace. But, towards the end of 1913, after the harvest, the extortions and harassments started and they became so violent that Fr. Knockaert resolved to shift the whole colony to the surroundings of Purnea. On 28th January, 1914, “the exodus”, as he called it, took place in great silence during the night and without drawing the attention of the Muslims, they had to save their carts, the cattle and the provisions. The women, children and invalids – about 50 to 60 persons – were directed at 1.00 a.m. towards the closest railway station from where a train immediately took them to Purnea. Thus was founded the Christian village of Abdullanagar.

This successful exodus event of 28th January 1914 coupled with the founding of the Christian village of Abdullanagar boosted the reputation of Fr. Knockaert among the Santals of the region. In July 1914, at Belbari in the sub-division of Kishanganj, he obtained the release of 10 Santals who had been wrongly confined. This intervention on his part, again crowned with success, provided a chance to secure a foothold in Belbari. Soon several groups of Santals followed the example of the people of Belbari. During the winter, the daring missionary moved from village to village, receiving them one after the other into the church. In June – July 1915, an expedition begun during the cold season through the extreme North East of the Purnea District was completed; all the Santals established East of the new line of the Darjeeling Express which connects Siliguri with Kishanganj, as well as of the line of the Eastern Bengal railway which carries on from that town to the South, had enrolled with the missionary.
As the number of Santal Catholics was increasing, Fr. Knockaert organized his work more systematically. He divided the territory into ten sections, and provided with a catechist, a school and a chapel. On 23rd November, 1916, on his way back from Kurseong to Calcutta, Archbishop Meuleman visited the new Christian community through all its extension, from North to South in Purnea district. This first pastoral visit, which lasted one whole week, was ended at Purnea where the Archbishop confirmed a group of Christians, including the men from Abdullanagar.

During the First World War period, help from Belgium was stopped. Fr. Knockaert desired to tap the local resources and keep his benefactors informed about the events related to the Santals of Bihar. So, he published five booklets in the form of reports to his Archbishop, the narration of his main mission tours among the Santals. These booklets cover the period from the beginning of the “movement” in November 1914 to April 1916. The first four were re-printed in 1916 under the title, *Four Mission Tours among the Santals* and the last one, *Further Progress among the Santals*, deals already with the consolidation period. These five booklets were the diaries of the missionary tours of Fr. Knockaert. They not only give us an outstanding picture of the missionary approach of Father, but also a genuine insight into his personality. In 1915 he wrote what he hopes the symbol of the cross would mean for the Santals “truly a symbol of salvation and liberation in more than one sense: liberation from the Bongas (evil spirits), liberation from the oppression and zulum under which the Santals have suffered so long; above all, liberation from the tyranny of the devil and the curse of sin, and restoration to the kingdom of God through Christ! How it will powerfully invite all the Santals to take refuge under the wide-extended protecting arms, saying, ‘Come ye all to me, who are laden and burdened, and I shall give you relief and peace’”

G. Beckers, S.J. calls the missionary approach of Fr. Knockaert as a “holistic approach”, even before this word became prevalent.

Fr. Knockaert to administer his mission arranged the 98 odd Santal villages, into 10 circles and in each circle he established a school and a chapel. His motive of starting schools was: “The children would learn reading and writing, making out
rent-receipts, pattas (leases), etc. and by all this put an end to all this oppression and injustice.”

So in the schools some young men of 20-25 and even men of 40-50 were taught, putting the hand to the plough in the morning and to the pen in the evening. All through his diary, Fr. Knockaert expresses his positive appreciation and love of man, the real man as he meets him, first of all, the Santals. He concludes his first booklet as, “They are such a fine race! They are well worth that we should work for them. They are well worth, considering their number (2 million) and their quality, that we should devote ourselves, to the utmost to gain the whole race for Christ.”

With the help of Catechists, recruited and trained locally, by 1920, 889 Santals were baptized and there were 3,003 catechumens.

When Fr. Knockaert, residing at Purnea and looking after the mission work among the Santals of his district about 1918, the Superior of the Bengal Mission, Mgr. Ferdinand Perier asked this missionary to cross over to the south of the Ganges and penetrate into Santal Parganas proper. Fr. Knockaert, who was already 65 years old when he started working for the Santals of Purnea district, found Mgr. Perier’s proposal too difficult to execute. He did splendid work for the Santals who had wandered far from their own land in search of better living conditions but who still spoke feelingly of their “mare disom”, their home in the Santal Parganas.

Fr. Alphonse De La Croix was replaced Fr. Knockaert in 1925 when the latter got retired. Fr. A. De La Croix was a Belgian Jesuit who had been helping Fr. Knockaert in Purnea since 1921. Though he had never worked among Santals and was ignorant of their language and customs, he tried his best touring and making new converts to enlarge the Santal Mission. He elaborately displayed his broad knowledge of the Santals and describes his yearly touring of the Santal Parganas in the Newsletter of Bengal Mission, “Our Field”. Though he had zeal, he did not have the halo and charisma of Knockaert. Fr. De La Croix however was a staunch supporter of his Guru, Fr. Knockaert. He writes in “La Malle des Indes”, the monthly periodical of the Belgian Jesuits: “I toured the Santal Mission, Kaulsi, Dhalkola, Belbari, Majlispur. The closer I get in touch with our Santal Mission, the more I admire the work of Fr Knockaert. Magnificent and colossal enterprise which ought by all means to be kept, protected, solidified and amplified as far as
possible…. In some 20 years’ hence we will have a second Chotanagpur in the Purnea District!” 58

He was assisted by Fr. Murgutti of the Foreign Mission of Milan, with his occasional visits to the Santals of Purnea district. Fr. Murgutti worked among the Santals round Dinajpur (now in Bangladesh). “On 16th April 1923, Fr. J.B. Anselmo, also of the Foreign Mission of Milan, penetrated into the Santal Parganas proper. He came from Rohanpur in Malda district, crossed the Ganges, boarded a train to Barharwah and the set out on a 9 day’s tour by bullock cart. He made 8 similar tours in two years and won some converts but had to face stiff oppositions from the Protestants. The Lutherans of the Northern Churches in the Santali monthly “Pera Hor” (November, 1926) announced that the end of the world was nigh, for Anti-Christ in the person of a Catholic missionary had appeared in their midst.” 59 At this difficult juncture, for the Santal Mission, Fr. Anselmo was recalled to Italy to be the Rector of the Seminary at Milan. The aging Fr. De La Croix paid regular visits to the Catholics of Fr. Anselmo. The latter returned after a few years as the Bishop of Dinajpur. In December 1924, Fr. De La Croix summed up as, “According to Fr. Knockaert, there have been 5000 Santals, who some way or other showed themselves disposed to enter the bosom of the Church. From these 700 were baptized. We find these 5000 Santals scattered in 155 villages, grouped in 16 circles.” 60 The movement among the Santals of Purnea District required more missionaries to cope with the increase of Catholics and to prepare those who wanted to embrace Catholicism. Further, the Santal Parganas District where a greater number of Santals live, needed more explorations and concerted efforts of the missionaries besides the major role of the Archbishop Ferdinand Perier.

Sicilian / Maltese Jesuit Province in Santal Mission

It was a common experience in those days that the Provinces which had missions attracted more vocations. Accordingly the Provinces wished to have a mission entrusted. Fr. Liborio Rubino, the Provincial of Sicily since 7th August 1921, had not only wanted his Province to increase in numbers, but also increase its missionary zeal. 61 In 1923, the Sicilian Jesuit Province included Malta and Greece.
In the beginning of 1923, there were 112 Fathers, 48 Scholastics and 72 lay brothers: altogether 232 Jesuits from the three countries, Sicily, Malta and Greece that formed the Sicilian Province. Towards the end of the 27th General Congregation, on the 20th December 1923, Fr. Ferdinand Willaert, the Belgian Provincial wrote to Fr. Maurice Veys, the Superior of the Bengal Mission that the Sicilian Provincial had expressed his desire for a mission territory to Fr. General, who was well aware of the immense responsibility of the Belgian Province and the great needs of the Bengal Mission. Fr. General seemed to be inclined to accept Fr. Rubino’s plea and spoke about it with the Belgian provincial. In the same letter Fr. Willaert asked Fr. Veys to “study the map of the mission well and, with agreement of the Bishops, propose which part of the mission could eventually be assigned to them and under what conditions.” At that time the Archbishop of Calcutta was Mgr. Brice Meuleman and his new coadjutor was Mgr. Ferdinand Perier. The same letter continued: “One should not forget that Sicily is a small Province and never be big; hence there should not be a large territory assigned to them. It should perhaps be such that in 20 years’ time it will not have more than 20 mission stations with perhaps 20 missionaries.”

The Belgian Provincial though was favourable to the possibility of collaboration from the Sicilian Province, had to wait for a reply from Calcutta to process further. On the other hand Fr. Rubino, the Sicilian Provincial on his return to Palermo after the General Congregation, immediately addressed the members of his province about a mission in India and asked for volunteers. Fr. Rubino, wrote to Fr. Willaert on 23rd January 1924 about the encouraging response and offers of his Province members. On 27th January 1924, Fr. Willaert, the Belgian Provincial replied Fr. Rubino as,

“I was really happy with your letter because this shows the tremendous zeal there is among the members of your province. The help you will be giving this summer to the mission is very precious for us and this fraternal collaboration is going to bring these two provinces very close to each other.” He also added: “But at the same time I want to say that I was a bit surprised with your letter. For the time being, that is, until the Bengal Mission Superior and the Archbishop of Calcutta give their consent, we should not talk of your
participation in the Bengal Mission. So for the time being the only news we can make public is this: The Fathers of the Sicilian Province are going to work with the Fathers of the Bengal Province in the Bengal Mission.”

That same day, Fr. Willaert also communicated to Fr. Veys in India about Fr. Rubino’s letter and his response to him.

On the 9th February 1924, the Belgian Provincial wrote to Fr. Rubino that Mons. Meuleman, the Archbishop of Calcutta and Fr. Veys, the Superior of the Bengal Mission would receive them, the Fathers and Brothers who volunteer their life, their labour and hardship for the welfare of the Indian people. The Sicilian Province had offered its help for the spread of the Gospel. Fr. Willaert added that, “It is our wish that when the number of Fathers of Sicily increases, and have accustomed themselves to the situation here, a part of the Mission of Bengal will be completely to them so as to become the Sicilian Mission.”

The Sicilian Provincial informed Fr. General on the 8th March 1924 that they had agreed to send three men that year, “Fr. Anthony Debono, the present spiritual director of the Gonzaga College, Palermo, Scholastic Giuzeppe Cordaro who is to go for his theology and Scholastic Bernard Bugeja who is to start his philosophical studies.

On the 17th March 1924, the Superior General, Fr. Ledochowski, congratulated the Sicilian Province for their generosity to start new field of apostolate and wrote,

“In this way a noble contest of noble deeds will be entered upon between the Mother Province and the Bengal Mission: that in the former, aroused by the desire of a great undertaking, will prepare and supply men who are crucified to the world and to whom the world is crucified, new men dead to themselves and living only for God, such men are needed in the Mission, so that they may do some good. On the other hand the Mission will gradually show to the Mother province the renewed deeds of her forbears who flourished in some parts of Asia….”

“And now I bless abundantly the first fruits of the new Mission. These dear ones expected by the Belgian Fathers will reach Calcutta. The letters from India inform me that His Grace the Archbishop and the Superior Regular will receive the members from the Sicilian
Province with the utmost affection and will give them all help so that
they may acquaint themselves with the field of their activities and by
exercising themselves in it, little by little, they will build it up…” 70

Fr. Maurice Veys, the Bengal Mission Superior informed Fr. Rubino at
Palermo on 28th January 1925 that,

“We received the missionaries you sent us with great joy….Perhaps
you have already been informed that I have commissioned him to
start the mission among the Santals.” He continued: “I have
appointed Fr. Debono71 for this great task. He is going to have a hard
and poor life there, but at the same time he will find enough scope for
his zeal and I am sure that in a short time we shall start seeing its
fruit.”72

Thus the communications among the Superior General of the Society of
Jesus, the Jesuit Provincials of Sicily and Belgium, the Superior of the Bengal
Mission and the Archbishop of Calcutta navigated the Sicilian Province inclusive of
Malta and Greece, to take up the Santal Mission.

Fr. De Bono landed in Calcutta on 4th October 1924. Before settling himself
for the Santal Mission based in Majlispur, he spent the days of December 1924 and
January 1925 with Fr. Margutti at Dinajpur, Krishnagar diocese, and learned the
language and customs of the Santals.73 On the 9th March, 1925, Fr. De Bono settled
down for good. Around Majlispur, a group of Santal Catholics had settled down
around a mud chapel and something like a hut for the Missionary to stay. There were
many other families, far and wide with little instruction besides the Sign of the
Cross. This was the long and the short of the Santal mission when the Maltese
Jesuit, Anthony De Bono, recently arrived in India. He settled down on the 9th
March, 1925 in the mud hut of his new Mission Station, Majlispur (P.O. Kanki,
Purnea District)74 and lived in the midst of his people. He shared his life along with
two scholastics, Joseph Cordaro (Sicilian) and Bernard Bugeja (Maltese).

In Bilbaree (Belbari), some miles from Majlispur, there stood another mud
chapel in the same unpretentious style. The Mission possessed several fields in the
district, but many tenants were unknown and the rent had not been paid for several
years.75 As the Santhals were poor and ignorant, zamindars had been exploiting
them all over the district. The zamindars also did not want the missionaries settling and helping the Santals as it was a threat to the zamindari system. The baptized Santals were scattered all over the district. 90% of them did not know any more the sign of the Cross, still less their Christian duties. While Fr. De Bono was staying at Majlispur Santals approached for their protection against their Mussulman Zamindar. Fr. De Bono was gradually grasping the mission with the support of Fr. Dela Croix. He wrote that ‘he was living in a hut that lets in the water except in one tiny spot. It was there that I spent the day, but at night—stayed in the place given to me by the headman of the village, where he kept his hens, his rice and all the rubbish of his house.’ Besides these physical hardships, another major drawback was the lack of trustworthy catechists: among them, “one is a drunkard, the second a dunce, the third one turned a Protestant, only the fourth one promises to be good when he is out of his teens.”

Once the agents of a Muslim Zamindar in a village of the neighbourhood, Sidpara claimed that two Santals who were with Fr. De Bono had to pay money to him. It was true to the extent of two or three Rupees. These Santals were taken to the village and were not allowed to allow them to go till they pay the money. Fr. De Bono sent a short note written in pencil to the Sub Divisional Officer, Kishanganj, some 20 miles away. He had also sent word to Islampur Thana (Police Station). The next day the police came and released them. A case was registered on 29th June 1926, the Zamindar was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for two years in addition to a fine of Rs. 100/-. The Majlispur Santals made a perpetual lease of 378 bighas of land from their zamindar against a yearly rental of Rs. 204/-. They were not given any receipt for the payment. But the zamindar demanded a lump sum of Rs. 965/- towards the rent for 4years with interest as soon as he heard that a missionary was going to settle down in their midst. He was planning to obtain a court decision against the Santals, to raise the rent and lease the land to other tenants. He was also preventing the missionary from stationing in Majlispur. Moreover the Santals had already decided to leave Majlispur and settle somewhere else as they did not have such a huge sum
to settle with the zamindar. The Mission bought the land from the Santals; the poor ryots paid the money claimed by the Zamindar and the Mission was safe.  

The next setback was the house. The same zamindar had persuaded the local contractors not to work for the missionary. It was with great difficulty that Fr. De Bono got a Bengali contractor from Kishanganj and erected a temporary bungalow with wattle walls and a thatched roof. A kiln was prepared for baking bricks on the spot. Fr. Benjamin Cauchi, a mature man of 43, had landed in India from Malta on the 5th October, 1926. After a short stay in Calcutta, he was sent as an assistant to Fr. De Bono to pick up the language and learn the ropes from him. Fr. De Bono was a man picked up the language Santhali and had mastered in two years. However, the excitement of the first two years seems to have quietened down: work among the Santals was at a standstill. Fr. Cauchi left after one year to begin his life adventure, pioneering within the Damin - I - Koh. But low caste Bengalis were on the move. Unfamiliar with the Bengali language, Fr. De Bono called on Fr Remy Louwyck, a disciple of Fr. Aloys Wauters, the well known apostle of the Bengalis in Calcutta. Fr. Remy had been the Parish Priest of St. Teresa Church, Calcutta, for 15 years and had then joined his guru, who was Parish Priest of Sacred Heart, Dhamtoila, Calcutta. The first group to whom Fr Louwyck ministered was a group of 24 converts from Protestantism and another of 58 Hindus, headed by one Bhuban Sarkar, a schoolmaster at Jaigir, some 37 miles north of Majlispur. Later ten villages of Barois, numbering 700 suppressed caste people whose profession was to grow ‘ran’ (pepper betel) showed interest in Catholicism.

The Pulis, were said to be far superior to the Santals had shown enthusiasm towards Catholicism. They also were equally oppressed by dominant caste Hindus and Muslim zamindars. These people wanted the protection of the missionaries. It is revealed from Fr. De Bono’s writings that, “I am sure that if I could sacrifice a thousand rupees in fighting cases for them, we might have them en masse. They are very numerous in this part of the country; several are already very well disposed; something more positive will be done for them in the near future.” He spelt that “Majlispur would be a decent mission station in the near future. Since the first of January 1930, we had had over two hundred baptisms.” A Sicilian Fr. Joseph
Cordaro joined in the place of Fr. Louwyck as the new assistant came. He belonged to the first batch sent by the Sicilian Province in 1924. In his visit to the Santal villages he administered 106 baptisms. Further he was approached by a group of Hindu Pulis, spoke to him in Santali, which was unusual among the Hindus and Mahomedans. They expressed their desire to receive baptism and asked for a catechist.  

There was a movement towards Catholic religion among the Bengalis and the Hindus in Majlispur. By the end of 1930, Majlispur had a church, blessed on 2nd December and a convent for the Sisters of Charity of Lovere, better known as ‘Bambinas’. These sisters showed heroism wherever they had been touring they made it a feature to stay among the villagers for days, to instruct women and children in the fundamentals of Christian faith. This attitude of the sisters attracted and kept the Santals in the Church. Priests who had given them retreats at home testified their commitment. They attracted numerous novices from Adivasis, Keralites, Bengalis, who were generous and hard working.

A fitting climax to these pioneering days at Majlispur was the visit of Archbishop Perier on 27th January 1931. There were the usual greetings, “Johar Bishop Sahib” in the Santali way, garlands and dancing by the convent girls and a drama by the boarding boys. Needless to say, the Archbishop, who had at heart the development of the Santal Mission, was immensely delighted, and opened his purse in equal measure. Although Majlispur had a mixture of people along with the high percentage of Santals, different from ‘Damin - I - Koh, where none but Santals can own land, had become a promising Mission Station, a launching pad for evangelization among the Santals.

**Damin –I – Koh and Fr. Benjamin Cauchi**

Fr. Cauchi volunteered for the new mission as the Sicilian Province of the Society of Jesus, which then included Malta and Greece, started sending missionaries since 1924 to help in the Bengal Mission. In 1926, he led the second group of missionaries to India, accompanied by Scholastics John Milanes and
Joseph Portelli and Brother Rosario Melito. On arrival in India he joined Fr. De Bono at Majlispur. The Santal Mission covered two districts: Purnea, which included Majlispur, and Santal Parganas. In Santal Parganas, there was only one church at Madhupur and a few scattered Catholics, visited occasionally by the priests from Purnea and Dinajpur. In 1929, Archbishop Perier, much interested on the Santal Parganas before his elevation to the episcopate gave the mandate to Fr. Cauchi to start the evangelization in Santal Parganas. As per the status of the Mission for 1930, Fr. Cauchi was appointed for the exploration of a new mission station in Santal Parganas.  

Fr. Cauchi was not the first Jesuit of the Bengal Mission to set foot inside the Damin-i-Koh, where the Santals own land and have settled in great numbers. The Catholic Church in the twenties realized the evangelization of the Santals. It is to the credit of Fr Alphonse De la Croix who took the first step and taught the ropes to Fr Cauchi used to tour yearly the Santal Parganas’ villages inside the Damin from Purnea. He was 67 when he reported that he had “walked no less than 42 miles on my old legs the previous years in the cold season” and recorded that “a promising movement has begun… we have over there about 600 Catholics, mostly in the Damin, scattered in 16 villages, with 10 catechists and School masters. 3 chapels have been put up at the disposal of the visiting missionaries by the Santals themselves.” One could obviously not expect that a man of his age had taken the bold step of settling down within the Damin in a hut or under canvas. But Fr. Cauchi was courageous enough to identify himself with the poor Santals living in poor huts.

At the beginning of 1930, the Archbishop Perier and Fr. Veys, the Superior of Bengal Mission appointed Fr. Cauchi to explore the possibilities of a new mission station and to establish eventually the Catholic faith in the 4 sub-divisions of the Santal Parganas, viz.: Dumka, Jamtara, Rajmahal and Pakur, an area of 2,595 square miles. The American Jesuits of the Patna diocese had already begun the work of evangelization in the western sub-divisions of Godda and Deogarh, which are also parts of the Santal Parganas District. Fr. Cauchi found himself in charge of a territory with a total population of 1, 1476, 555 souls of whom 598,000 were
Animists, 435,000 Hindus, 105,000 Muslims and only 9, 552 Christians, nearly all
of whom were Protestants.  

On 13th December 1929, Fr. Cauchi received an encouraging letter from His Grace Archbishop Perier wrote:

“I wish you to be well …. tell me what you want. I shall try my best
to meet your requirements. I must ask you to go about prudently, especially as regards your health. You have to decide where you can
establish your headquarters, where you can rest. You must have
received the ‘status’ (appointment) already. I can only congratulate
you on having been singled out for this beautiful career and I bless
you with my whole heart. I shall certainly not fail to pray for you and
the success of your work. I hope that Fr. Grech-Cumbo will soon be
able to give you help and assistance. Although I cannot as yet install
you as a full-blown parish priest, I grant you hereby all the faculties
given on the sheet of faculties to regular parish priests.”

On the one hand Fr. Cauchi was encouraged by the Archbishop’s letter
which speaks of his concern and confidence in him and on the other hand he was
discouraged by two huge obstacles in the way: the difficulty of getting land to settle
down, and the fact of having come long after the Protestants. On 4th January, 1930,
Fr. Cauchi left Majlispur and reached the other side of the Ganges, Santaliland, the
next day. He was seriously handicapped with his lack of knowledge of the special
laws of the land. Though he was aloof, he was ready to face any difficulty. One
thing he knew: he could not acquire land. The Santal Parganas have special laws to
protect the Santals from outsiders. The Land Regulations divide the Santal Parganas
District into ‘Damin-i-koh’ which belongs exclusively to the government and
Zamindar. In both these areas, the Santals are not the sole proprietors of the land.
They are entitled to cultivate at the same time they are not allowed either to sell or
gift it to anyone. It passes from father to son for generations. If it is lost either
through eviction or through extinction of heirs, the headman of the village is allowed
to settle it with any ryot of the same village---or failing this, with a neighbouring
one.
The Government officials, in general, were friendly to the Fathers. But in their official capacity, they almost ignored the presence of the Catholic missionaries. Officials liked to assign different sectors of the Parganas to different Christian sects for their evangelical work. The Protestants were the first to bring Christianity to the Santals. Hence they had acquired a kind of monopoly to preach in their fixed areas. The Lutherans, Church Missionary Society (hereafter C.M.S), Methodists and other sects never trespassed on one another’s zone. But they were unhappy with the arrival of a Catholic missionary because the latter claimed the right to preach wherever he liked. Conditions favoured the Protestant missionaries as others were not allowed to take up permanent residential quarters.99

**Hiranpur**

Fr. Cauchi unable to acquire land or hire a hut, he pitched his tent in the garden of a kind benefactor at Hiranpur. Hiranpur was a large bazaar in the Pakur sub-division. On Thursdays, there held a cattle market at Hiranpur, and Santals from all parts of the Parganas flocked there. As soon as the news spread about the “Padri Sahib,” crowds came to see him in his tent. Fr. Cauchi started contacting the old Catholics of Fr. Anselmo. He made many conversions in the villages he visited. He began to train his catechists, who were inefficient in the beginning.100 While this was the case there were oppositions he faced from unexpected quarters. Fr. Cauchi once stayed in the house of the head catechist of a village. The catechist’s son was living with a girl. So long as his son and the girl lived together without marriage, the catechist seemed satisfied.

The moment Fr. Cauchi suggested marriage for his son with the girl the catechist got annoyed and drove the missionary from his house. This dissatisfied catechist started an intense campaign against the Catholic mission and wrote a petition, to the Archbishop of Calcutta. He informed that though the Catholic religion was the true one, the Father, who was working in the Santal Parganas, was not preaching the true gospel of Christ. He therefore strongly suggested His Grace to form a council of Santals to decide all religious questions.101 Fr. Cauchi’s patience converted this man and brought peace to the mission.
On 25th February 1930, Archbishop Perier made his first official visit to the Santal Parganas. “There was not much to be seen in the line of bungalows, churches, schools – not even land. The visit was therefore more of a moral support to the missionary.”\(^{102}\) It also helped much to convince the people that the Catholic missionary had come to stay for good. His Grace unsuccessfully tried to acquire land at Dumka, the Capital of Santal Parganas. There were also rumours already rife that the missionary and the Catholics would be expelled from the country. One witty Santali catholic asserted that he would not be sorry to go on a trip to Europe and that he would be delighted not to eat rice every day.

**Kasturi**

Fr. Cauchi had a temporary residence at Kasturi, a pagan village near the station of Kotalpukur where lived Sidu Tudu, a government school master. He was a Methodist. During the First World War he had been to Europe. He was impressed with the churches and catholic life in France. He owned 2 dilapidated huts which were unfit for habitation in Kasturi. He repaired one of them and gave to Father and on 12th April 1930, Fr. Cauchi established his headquarters and the first mission station. This hut was everything for him office, chapel, refectory and dormitory-The next dilapidated hut turned into a school for catechists. Thirty promising young men, Pagans, Protestants and Catholics joined the school. They had daily religious classes. Later some of them were given temporary jobs and some continued to be catechists.\(^ {103}\)

Fr. Cauchi explained his uncertainty of stay as guest of a Santal, ‘all land within the Damin is under Government and with some privileged persons such as the C.M.S. (Church Missionary Society).’ Only Santals have the right to own the land. Besides there are two other classes of land Mustagiri and Khas. Mustagiri lands were in the hands of zamindars who used to sell it out to anyone. They constantly refused to give anything to Catholics because of the Protestants. Khas were free from Government control but existed only in small patches and scattered over a vast area.\(^ {104}\) [On 9th September 1930, Fr. Cauchi reports that Kasturi is mostly
Catholic. Further North he toured the Tinpahar-Bakudih area, up on the hills that marked the Godda limits.”


The Annual letters of 1930 have an interesting item entitled “Missio Santalica.” The gist of which is as follows: “The Patna Mission father will care for the Santals in Godda sub-division and the Districts of Deoghar and Sarawan. The Sicilian Fathers applied to the Bengal Mission will care for the other Santals of the Santal Parganas. According to Law, no Santal can alienate his land in favour of non-Santal. On July 6th 1930 Fr. John Grech joined Fr. Cauchi. A mud chapel was built in Kasturi.”

The Catholic population of Kasturi had risen to 580 of which 300 were converts from the Lutheran Mission. On 23rd February 1931, Archbishop Perier made his second official visit to the Santal Parganas. He came by train to Rampur Hat and from there by car to Dumka and then to Karrudih where he confirmed recent converts from Paharpur and the Catholics from Karmatanr, baptized long before by Bishop Anselmo in one of his forays from Rahimpur. They were friendly with C.M.S. Relationships with C.M.S. seem to have become somewhat friendly: ‘The Sardine Tin’, Fr. Cauchi’s vintage car, was playing up and they had to transfer to the Dumka-Hiranpur bus, where they were held up by a storm and had to repair to a Tea Association Dak Bungalow for the night. The next morning, one Mr. Weatherhild from the Hiranpur C.M.S. Centre took them by car to Kasturi. While return via Sahibganj where the Archbishop confirmed 8 Santals at the Railway Institute. Invigorated with the visit of their pastor, Fr. Cauchi and Fr. Cordaro retired to their dug-out at Kasturi. Fr. Cauchi wrote a few days’ later: “In spite of all the misadventures, His Grace’s visit seems to us like a dream; we all long to see him back in our midst.”
By March 1931, Fr. Cauchi had brought about 2000 converts. As Kasturi was too small a place to settle down permanently he moved a few miles away to Monglapara. He was well aware that his settling down within the Damin was something of a gamble. On the positive side, he was surrounded by 50 Christian families and besides he could visit from there some 20 village chapels. The Protestants held a meeting on 7th December 1931 to stop the flow into the Catholic Church and so they decided to write books and pamphlets against the Catholics, to write to the authorities against the Fathers and forbid them to stay among the Santals and to follow the missionaries and their catechists wherever they go.

Despite this hostile atmosphere, Fr. Cauchi settled down in Monglapara. The headman, Misir Murmu and his bosom friend, Pandit Murmu were an outstanding pair. They began life as devil worshippers but gave up their malpractices and felt the need of a religion. They attended the Methodist mission, but refused to receive baptism. As they had different ideals they started a religion of their own. They also administered medicines to the sick. These people learned about the Catholic missionaries known as “Sahibs,” dressed in white, wearing big beards and above all with no wives and children. And invited them to teach the true religion in Monglapara.

Fr. Cauchi and Fr. Cordaro accepted the invitation. A hut, with three rooms and a verandah was built for the Fathers at Monglapara. The Manager of the Pakur Estate objected but satisfied when he was explained that the Fathers were the guests. When another hut, to be used as Church and School, was ready, the Fathers shifted to Monglapara. The head catechist had taken care of the Christians and a master to look after the school in Kasturi. Fr. Grech-Cumbo came to replace Fr. Cordaro stayed back after the recovery of the later from illness. A band of Belgian Jesuits, Fr. J. d’Espierres, S. J., and Fr. A. Trussart, S.J. also joined in Monglapara. Soon a first U.P. School of the mission was opened with 150 boys. The Manager of the Pakur estate gave them the famous Monglapara hillock. For over a year, things went on well.
Sudden death of the headman, Misir Murmu due to snake-bite on 11\textsuperscript{th} October, 1932, brought trouble. As his son was a minor his uncle became the headman. On 14th December 1932, Pandit Murmu was charged with having transferred his land to others and summoned to appear before the Magistrate at Pakur on 11\textsuperscript{th} January 1933. Though the villagers who secured medicine and financial help from the fathers turned accusers Pandit Murmu defended the charges of his pagan fellow-villagers.\textsuperscript{115} The fathers were also charged for the acquisition of the hillock. The deed had already been executed and registered at Dumka.\textsuperscript{116}

Monglapara was doomed. The Fathers lost the case, and thus, for the third time, failed to acquire a property. The mission house was demolished by Fr. Grech-Cumbo on 13\textsuperscript{th} October 1933 and the church was demolished with the local Catholics after Mass on Sunday, 15\textsuperscript{th} October 1933. His Grace wrote to his sorrowing missionaries: “It is a big cross; let us be resigned to the will of God.”\textsuperscript{117} He felt grave concern about the fate of the mission. He advised the Fathers to look for land outside the Damin-i-koh, from where they could visit the Santal villages.

God had not abandoned His tiny mission. The days of trial began to pass and the radiance of God’s grace was to penetrate the very heart of this pagan land. A truly wonderful development was to take place.\textsuperscript{118} Fr. John Grech Cumbo had the good sense to accept that he had been taught a lesson and did not lose courage. He shifted to Torai, outside the Damin-i-koh, in the vicinity of Pakur, a sub-divisional town on the East India Railway. He succeeded in buying a house with an adjacent plot of land of 9 bighas.\textsuperscript{119} In the course of time, Torai became a large station with church and school. Fr. Joseph Cordaro had already left for the Rajmahal Hills where he recalled Fr. Alphonse De La Croix of Purnea and his converts. Fr. Grech Cumbo pushed further North on a larger Railway Station at the foot of three sugar-loaf shaped hillocks, namely, Tinpahar (Three hills), which emerged as one of the largest mission stations of the Santal Mission with bungalow, church and school. In 1932, Fr. Cauchi, after a temporary stay in Sibnigar,\textsuperscript{120} 6 miles away from Dumka, purchased a plot of land at Dudhani, only one mile away from the District town, Dumka and from there he proceeded to Guhiajori where had succeeded in buying land for a bungalow.
The Fathers were now residing in three places and taking care of the mission, from Torai looked after Pakur Sub-division, from Tinpahar the whole of Rajmahal Sub-division, and from Ghuhajori the inhabitants of Dumka Sub-division. These four Parishes: Dudhani, Ghuhajori, Torai and Tinpahar were grouped to form the new Santal Parganas Deanery, which was established on 29th July, 1936, with Fr. Cauchi as its first Dean. At Torai, Tinpahar and Ghuhajori parish churches and presbyteries were constructed. At Dudhani, there was already a bungalow which was arranged to serve as the parish church. After the end of the Second World War, recruits from Malta began to arrive. In 1948, Cilimpur was started and a priest took up residence at Madhupur. From 1955, there was a resident priest in Sahibganj. The mere handful of Catholics of January, 1930, had increased to 13,235 in June, 1945. Besides, there were 2,500 Santal Catholics in the Majlispur and Purnea regions. In June, 1945, there were 143 catechists assisting the priests; while 119 churches and chapels were evenly distributed over the Santal Parganas.

Much of the credit for this remarkable development must go to the Pastor who inspired his men with his own enthusiasm and who visited all the stations every year. Fr. Cauchi wrote, “I know that humanly speaking, I could not have stuck it. But I was taught by His grace to trust in Divine Providence. Once, His Grace told me: ‘I knew that the district was difficult; I did not know it was so difficult. But trust in Providence; we shall succeed.’ Dark days there were. During them I would say: ‘Come on Grech…Come on Cordaro. At one time we were told that the Little Sisters of the Poor were praying for us; at another that the Carmelites had taken up our cause. His Grace wanted to be kept informed of everything—our consolations and desolations. Whatever opinion people may have of Mgr. Perier’s greatest achievement, he will always be remembered as the Archbishop who established the Catholic Mission in the Santal Parganas.”

Progress in the Santal Mission (1938-1947)

In the beginning of 1938, the Santal Mission was spread among five mission stations. In the North of the Ganges, Fr Bernard Bugeja, a Maltese Jesuit, was in charge of Majlispur. It was a big feather in the cap of the Maltese missionaries to
have started work in the Santal Parganas and the cradle and habitat of the Santali tribe. From 4 mission stations built around the Damin I Koh, in which all arable land belonged exclusively to the Santals, Frs. Cauchi, Cordaro, Grech Cumbo and Portelli converted many Santals. In 1938, Fr. Benjamin Cauchi was in charge of Dudhani, a suburb of Dumka, the headquarters of the Santal Parganas, with a convent school run by the Sisters of Charity, better known as the Bambinas, and a church with 1324 Catholics and 54 catechumens. Some six miles to the North, Fr. Anthony De Bono headed the Guhiajori mission with a bungalow, church and an Elementary School along with 2085 Catholics and 156 Catechumens and to the East, Fr. Joseph Cordaro, a Sicilian, took care of Torai with church, bungalow and a flock of 3039 Catholics and 400 Catechumens. Still further to the North, Fr. John Grech Cumbo was in charge of Tinpahar mission station with boarding, church and bungalow along with 3285 Catholics and 500 Catechumens, most of them inside the hill-fringed Damin-i-Koh. Fr. Portelli was his assistant.

Six priests were looking after 11, 188 Catholics over a large area of 200 miles from North to South and 50 to 70 miles from East to West, covering the two districts of Purnea and the Santal Parganas. Observing this situation Fr. Cauchi expressed in 1946 “Conversions today are not as numerous as they were at the beginning, but the number of Christians is always on the increase. A chief cause of the slow expansion is the small number of missionaries. At times we wonder how the people remain Christians when they are visited only once or twice a year.”

The growth of the Santal mission was noticed by the events which took place in the mission stations from 1938 to 1974. Though anything spectacular like mass conversion did not occur among the Santals, a considerable growth was seen in the mission stations.

**Majlispur under Fr. Bugeja**

Fr. Bernard Bugeja became the Parish priest towards the end of 1936 when Fr. De Bono left Majlispur. Fr. T. Roussos, a Greek Jesuit, was his assistant. Fr. Michael Bauwens, a newly ordained priest visited Majlispur and wrote in 1938, “The mission centre is in the midst of paddy fields. A group of Bengali catechumens
at Kakulbari are unable to make up their minds about taking the final step…Islampur is a big settlement, almost exclusively Muslims… an ideal spot for a future mission station. Besides Santals, a number of Bengali Harijans are interested.”130 The numbers of Catholics were steadily increasing. A new station between Majlispur and Gayaganga was imperative. Islampur, was to become a full fledged mission station some 20 years later.”

Fr. Bugeja established friendly relationships with influential non-Christians who were helpful to the mission.131 A Santal woman who was unjustly accused of witchcraft was saved by a Catholic Santal.132

**Dudhani under Fr. Benjamin Cauchi**

Fr. Benjamin Cauchi, the Parish Priest of Dudhani. The construction of the Church at Dudhani was started in November 1937.133 Fr. Geeraert drew the plan for a corrugated iron roof supported by steel trusses. On 9th January 1938, Her Excellency Lady Hallett, wife of the Governor of Bihar honoured the school by her friendly visit. The reception was warm and the children of the jungle got astonished. 134 On 5th February 1938, His Grace began his annual visit to the Santals Parganas from Madhupur. ‘His Grace was welcomed at Dudhani by the Sisters and the school children. Fathers had come from Gubahajori. There were some confirmations.’135 Mgr. Perier had a soft corner for the Santal Mission, and his purse was all along as large as his heart. In March 1939, the Parish Priest reports that the Bambinas had taken an important step by running a boarding school for girls with 90 boarders.136 In November the Parish Priest mentions that Madhupur was badly in need of a resident priest. There were all around opportunities for work among Santals in the neighbouring villages. Of late there was a robbery in the church and a retired and lonely English lady was murdered in her bungalow by bandits and the house was ransacked. As a consequence Park Street took a decision by appointing Fr. Tolly S.J. as Parish Priest of Madhupur in January 1945. One Fr. Scicluna wrote, “In the western side of the territory, the Lutheran ranks are depleted and they had to close their Mission Hospital. They approached Fr. Scicluna. “Father, if you stay in our midst, all Lutherans will come over to your Church.”137 The Sacred returns in June 1947 reported 20000 Catholics and 30 catechumens.
Guhiajori

Guhiajori situated some 10 miles north of Dumka, became the seat of the first full-fledged High School for boys in the Santal Mission. Fr. Cauchi in 1929 got the land on Santali land with the consent of the whole village. In the early 30’s, with the help of two Belgians, Fr Andries and Fr. D'Espierres, a church, bungalow and school building had been erected with funds donated by Archbishop Perier.

In 1938, Fr. De Bono was in charge of Guhiajori, but he was succeeded the next year by Fr. Portelli who headed the mission station till 1941, when Fr. Milanes replaced him. In June 1939, Fr. Portelli published a long epistle, relating an incident which shows how the local Santal Panchayat under the presidency of the Pargana (head of several Santal panchayats) settled a difficult case during a large ‘galmarao’ (meeting) that gathered about 200 men, Christians and pagans. It originated about one Phulchand, a pagan Mahili, aged 8 years, who was betrothed to a pagan girl. Two years later as the whole family became Christian, they claimed the ‘Gonon’ (bride money). At the local ‘galmarao’, the local Manjhi approved the decision that the Christians should be outcasted. The local catechist and the Father approached the Pargana and succeeded to desist from molesting the Christians.

The yearly Census registers ups and downs, as shown by the following figures:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Catholics</th>
<th>Catechumens</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>2085</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>2317</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
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<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>2738</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>2800</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>2907</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There is no explanation in the correspondence published in Our Field for the drop of Catholics from 2993 in 1941 to 2436 in 1942. In October 1939, Fr. Portelli wrote from Guhiajori that the training of Catechists is not up to the mark, the reason was most of them are converts from Protestantism and are not zealous. He was however shifted to Tinpahar in 1941.

On 29th February, Guhiajori His Grace Archbishop Perier gave the Sacrament of Confirmation to 23 peoples, and of the Deputy Commissioner, Santal Parganas, an Englishman, Mr. W. G. Archer, ICS, addressed the boys in flowing Santali. This visit seems to have raised waves in the high seas of administration. On 7th October, Guhiajori received the visit of none else but the Governor of Bihar, His Excellency T.G. Rutherford. In 1947, Fr. Grech Cumbo took over. In March-April Our Field reports that the Middle School Certificate (hereafter M.S.C.) examinations had yielded good results, 10 passes out of 12, and 2 distinctions. The High School started in Torai was brought to Guhiajori, classes 8 and 9 were started and planned to start Class 10 in the following year.

On 14th August 1947, Fr. Grech exposed a serious complaint related to the Catechists: “It is difficult to find young men ready to become catechists. The pay is too low. Education has swollen their heads, and on the other hand it is too early to direct the few willing young men to a religious order or a congregation. It would be perhaps more profitable for all concerned to train them for catechist work. ‘Hoc opus hic labour’—for such an undertaking, ‘Men’ and ‘Money’ would be absolutely needed. The first catechists know little or nothing, and still work went on. Now things have changed… The catechist must be above all, spiritual, educated and a leader.”

Torai: Frs. Cordaro, Grech Cumbo and Milanes

Torai was the station built on the fringes of the Damin next to the ruins of Mongolpara, a centre where, from the beginning, things were moving. In April 1939, Fr. Cordaro was busy building the bungalow followed by the church building. With the start of the Second World War Fr. Cordaro, a Sicilian became an enemy to
the Allied powers, Britain, France, U.S.S.R. and U.S.A. On 8th July 1940 he had to leave, en route for the internment camp. However, he was detained in Patna in the school run by the American Fathers, pending examination of his case. He was released on the ground that he stayed in India for 16 years without returning to Italy during the Fascist regime. Since then he was in Majlispur where on the 16th May 1945 and expired on 1st April 1946.

Fr. Cordaro chiefly centered in Torai. The church he built was dedicated to the Little Flower. He built numerous chapels all over the district and due to this the number of Christians during his tenure increased threefold. Fr. Grech Cumbo becomes a regular correspondent from 1942. It is heartening to read the sufferings of the missionaries, on a Palm Sunday there was, a sick call from a man of thirty, in the last stages of consumption. He was all alone as his wife left him, a very common occurrence among Santals. He asked for the last Sacraments. “I was greatly edified, for this is generally the last thing they think of, if they think of it at all. After Mass I brought him the Viaticum, anointed him and give him my last blessing. He received all this with great enthusiasm, and I remained with him for some time, when all of a sudden he sat up in his bed and asked me for ‘Money’. This request ruined all my consolations!”144 While working inside the Damin I Koh, the missionaries faced difficulties of special nature regarding acquisition of land:

“A great drawback is that we cannot get land in the Damin- I- Koh, so our numerous girjas (village chapels) in the villages are built on land belonging to the Christians, They wait till the church is ready, allow us to use it, and then all of a sudden turn it into their own use or into a stable. This is what happened in a village called Celgo... on my arrival.”145 In July-August’ 1945, Fr. Grech explains how the Christian Doctrine of Marriage meets with little understanding. “A marriage can easily be dissolved by feeding the panchayat with a goat. Prenuptial instructions, sermons and lectures have little or no effect.”146 This historical sketch of Torai could be concluded by pointing out that the result was 4202 Catholics and 50 catechumens.147
Tinpahar: Frs. Grech and Portelli

“The Rajmahal hills demarcate the boundary of the Damin - I - Koh, where all arable land is owned by the Santals. On these hills live two primitive tribes, the Malto and the Sauria Paharias, among whom we have tried to make converts with little success, and beyond is the habitat of most of our Christian Santals.”

“Water was the major problem in Tinpahar. For the last 20 years my predecessors and I have been busy digging and blowing up rocks in search of water, and we find some, which keeps us alive for a time, and then the well dries up and we have to try somewhere else.”

“Father Grech Cumbo got the land and built church and bungalow. On 8th December 1939, the Archbishop Perier blessed of the new church in Tinpahar. The fund was provided by His Grace. From 1942, Fr. Portelli was in charge. He does not encourage the “mabap” system. Boarders have to contribute 3 maunds of rice at admission time, being the fees for the whole year. He wrote that most of the boys were giving it without difficulty. For Christmas 1945, the parish priest, has the joy of reporting, “600 Catholics turned up for the MSC Examination.”

On the last day of the British Empire he explained about his of converting the Malto and Sauric Pahrias in the Rajmahal Hills. “How to convert them? Our resources are hardly enough for the Santals. In Tinpahar we have educated a few of them. Any attempt at converting them through our Santali catechists is doomed to failure, as they are prejudiced and full of superiority complex.”

The June 1947 Census put Tinpahar ahead of the Santal Mission Stations with 4625 Catholics and 72 Catechumens.

The question we had put at the onset as we noticed that there had never been among the Santals mass conversions the type of which shook the Oraon tribe at several periods of their history, why this difference? First, on the part of the Santals themselves their numbers are almost five times those of the Oraons, 6 millions as against 1.2 million, counting even those who have migrated to the tea plantations of North Bengal and Assam. In their own habitat, the Oraons concentrated in some well-defined areas, the Barway, the Biru, Gangur and Jashpur. In all these areas they were persecuted at the hands of petty zamindars or worse in Gangpur and Jashpur of
semi-independent rajahs. To them the missionary appeared was a liberator from oppression. Christianity meant for them a rise in human dignity, an end of slavery, and also the salvation of their souls: it was symptomatic how missionary after missionary mentions how the Holy Spirit is at work in their souls, opening their souls to the word of God at the occasion of some temporal help.

The Santals on the other hand are often perpetual migrants, spread over large areas where they are scattered among other communities, from Mayurbhanj and Orissa to East Bihar and West Bengal, up to Assam and even the present Bangladesh. The only district in which they were the owners of their fields and forming the majority of the population is the Santal Parganas, they were protected by the British Government against the depredations of the zamindars and moneylenders. There the missionary stood little chance of appearing as a liberator. A last observation to add to these remarks: the ‘kairos’ the moment chosen by God for the outpouring of his Spirit in the hearts of a mass of men is a mysterious reality. The true response of a group of men to the offer of grace is another reality which is beyond human observation.

Expansion in the Santal Mission since Independence

The dramatic eventful history of the pioneering work among the Santals by the Maltese – Sicilian Jesuits in the 1920’s is still fresh in one’s mind and that can’t be erased from the memories. The mission stations, Majlispur, Kasturi and Monglapara became the bases of the Santal Mission and served as the battle-fields of challenges in many ways to the missionaries who invested their tireless efforts to expand this Santal Mission after the independence of India. The narrations of the missionary enterprise in the mission stations throw light to understand the extensive growth of the Santal Mission. The post-Independence years witness a slow but steady progress that was borne out by the following Sacred Returns:
<table>
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<th>Serial No</th>
<th>Name of the Mission Stations</th>
<th>Catholics</th>
<th>Catechumens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td></td>
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<td>1947</td>
<td>1953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Majlispur</td>
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<td>1554</td>
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<td>Purnea</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>561</td>
</tr>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>1884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Guhiajori</td>
<td>2907</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Madhupur</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tinpahar</td>
<td>4625</td>
<td>4591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Torai</td>
<td>4202</td>
<td>4392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Islampur</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Cilimpur</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>16320</td>
<td>17685</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The decrease of Majlispur is made up by Islampur, an offshoot. In the same way, Cilimpur was an offshoot of Dudhani and Guhiajori. Quoting the Sacred Returns of 1954-55, the *Calcutta Newsletter* gives a total of 20,696. The pioneering days were over, conversions were not many, and the stress is on consolidation and education. When Fr. General, J. B. Janssens, made Calcutta a Vice-Province and erected the Santal and Darjeeling Regions, Fr. J. Henrichs, the Superior, summed up the situation in his circular letter dated 6th March 1956 as, “The Bihar sector of the Calcutta Mission for the past thirty years has been staffed first by the Sicilian Province and later by the Maltese Vice-Province. Today it has a number of parishes, schools and convents which care for 20,000 Catholics. This part has therefore developed to such a proportion as to need a separate administration. For this reason, Very Rev. Father General now erects this area into a separate Region, which, though remaining part of Calcutta Vice-Province, and depending on it, will have its own Major Superior.”

Two new mission stations, namely, Islampur and Cilimpur were erected during this period. In 1951 the Guhiajori High school was recognized by the Government of Bihar. In 1956, Sahibganj became the regional headquarters. Fr. Joseph Portelli was the first Regional Superior Fr. A. Scicluna accompanied him.
Ecclesiastically the area remained part of the Calcutta Archdiocese. In 1962, it was included in the newly erected Diocese of Dumka, with Rt. Rev. Leo Tigga SJ, as its first Bishop.

**Mission Stations: Torai**

After the abandonment of Monglapara which was in the Santali land, Torai became the new Mission station. Like Tinpahar, Torai also was on the border of the Damin-I-Koh and it developed into a large centre from which the Catholics and others within the prohibited Damin area could be visited. Father J. B. Milanes was the Parish Priest of Torai from January 1947 to April 1951. Fr. Angelo Grech Cumbo succeeded him in April 1951 and remained in Torai till January 1963. He invited the Daughters of St. Anne, a local Congregation founded in 1897 by Archbishop Goethals of Calcutta to open a Convent in Torai. This was the first convent of the Congregation in the Santal Mission as well as the first convent for Santali Sisters in their own land established in 1951. The Sisters took over the management of the school which developed into St. Maria Goretti High School with a hostel for girls. Religious vocations were soon found among Santal girls and, on 26th July 1953, the first Santal nun took her vows. In 1956, the parish of Torai topped the list of vocations given to the diocesan congregation, the Daughters of St. Anne and this year, two more girls joined the congregation at the Mother House at Morapai.


**Tinpahar**

Tinpahar, on the Eastern Railway Loop, is another significant station from which Catholics visit within the Damin I Koh. Among the Santal parishes, it held the highest number of Catholics, estimating 4625 in 1947. Conversions however were
few and emigration might have taken place and therefore in 1953, there was a
decrease in the number of Catholics to 4591. Tinpahar, being a centre of
communications, the focus was on education. Fr. Angelo Grech, assistant to Fr.
Portelli, reports in June 1949 that the Middle English School counted 179 boys on
its rolls, all Catholic Santals. In July 1954, Class VIII was opened.\textsuperscript{160} The tenth class
was started with 15 boys.\textsuperscript{161} Class XI was started in 1958. The D.S.A. Sisters from
Calcutta came to Tinpahar on 29\textsuperscript{th} January 1954 established a second convent.
Nirmala Convent was blessed by Archbishop Perier on 16\textsuperscript{th} February 1954 during
his pastoral visit.\textsuperscript{162} From 1938 onwards, the Fathers from Tinpahar visited the
Catholics in the Railway Colony of Sahibganj, but no resident priest was there. To
prepare the way, a property on the banks of the Ganges was acquired and registered
in 1955. Thus establishing themselves in Tinpahar, they were extending themselves
to Sahibganj.

**Guhiajori**

This Guhiajori mission station canonically became a parish on 29\textsuperscript{th} March
1936 and Archbishop Perier blessed the newly built church and school on 24\textsuperscript{th}
September 1936.\textsuperscript{163} The School developed as the first Santal High School of the
mission. In January 1947, Class VIII was started at Torai was transferred to
Guhiajori.\textsuperscript{164} In July 1948, there were 230 boys on the rolls. In May 1949, Class X
was inaugurated with the first batch of 8 students, all Catholics. 7 of them were sent
for the Patna Matric Examination in March 1950.\textsuperscript{165} St. Joseph’s High School,
Guhiajori was recognized on 25\textsuperscript{th} March 1952 with effect from 1\textsuperscript{st} January 1950,
became a full-fledged High School under the Patna Board for Secondary
Education.\textsuperscript{166} In the initial years, the Matriculation results of this school were not
satisfactory. The unique success in the S.S.C. examination this year (1956) brought a
flood of applications for new entries to the school.

**Cilimpur**

Fr. De Bono founded in 1949 a new station of Cilimpur\textsuperscript{167} with about twenty
Catholic families, in Birbhum District, West Bengal, a few metres away from the
border of the Santal Parganas. When Fr. De built a hut on a larger scale, half of which would be used as a chapel and the other half as the Father’s residence. This mud walled chapel was replaced by a brick church in 1956. Fr. Maurice Galea wrote in August 1953, ‘We are at present very heavily engaged in building the new church, bungalow, rooms for the servants and a kitchen. A road up to Liknamara from a fund obtained for tribal welfare in our area was also constructed. The territory of this parish was carved out of Torai and Guhiajori parishes and it lies partly in West Bengal and partly in Bihar. The 1953 census recorded 1620 Catholics, with a good chunk of territory having been being added, carved out from the Guhiajori Parish. The Fathers of the Santal Mission always saw great apostolic possibilities in the area. Accordingly some land was bought here and a small mud-walled chapel was built. In 1948, the pioneer, Fr. Anthony DeBono, S.J., was assigned to start once more a new mission station here. It was a difficult beginning because he had to start from scratch. Even the small chapel was in a dilapidated condition. But the pioneer, with his usual cheerfulness, put his whole heart into the mission entrusted to him.

Upon his arrival at Cilimpur, Fr. DeBono was lucky to find a vacant Santal hut was completed by his successor, Fr. F. Michael Galea, S.J., and blessed on 11th November 1956, by Fr. F. Timmermans, the Jesuit Vice-Provincial of Calcutta. The next Parish Priest, Fr. Franz Wirth SJ, with Br. Milito’s help, built a brick residence for the priests in 1959. Br. P. Spiteri SJ built a larger one in 1967. The “DeBono School” was started here in 1959 in a temporary building as a memorial to the founder of Cilimpur. The present school building started in 1972 and the first floor was added in 1984. Initiation of Fr. J. Borg SJ, the parish priest helped to build a new Boys’ Hostel in 1988. The first “Grain Gola” (Grain bank) was started here by Fr. Borg in 1969. In November 1980, the portion of the parish in Bihar State around Hathimara was detached and established as an independent Quasi-Parish. Later the area around Boropahari, in West Bengal State, was also made a separate Quasi-Parish. Plans are afoot for a third separation with the establishment of Lagdum, also in Bihar, as a Quasi-Parish. So far, except for a couple of years, the parish priest of Cilimpur has always been a Jesuit.
Majlispur - Islampur

Fr. Yvo La Ferla paid regular visits from Majlispur to Islampur about thirty miles to the north to start a mission. He moved to Islampur where he spent days under a tree and in a hut and finally he put up a small residence for the Fathers in 1952. True to the name of the place, the major inhabitants were Muslims and the Santals were scattered. In February 1952, Fr. La Ferla was appointed the first Parish Priest of Islampur which was separated from Majlispur. Catholics were about 700, half of them being Oraons, and the other half: 250 Santals and 100 Haris. The Oraons were concentrated in three centres, but Haris and Santals are scattered in tiny groups of two or three families. In 1953, Fr. Francis Wirth was appointed to help Fr. La Ferla, and a large building was erected to accommodate a boarding, an essential feature of all Santal mission stations. It was stated in the Santaliland in 1957, “Santali huts were growing like mushrooms round the mission station. This was the result of the government’s praiseworthy efforts to provide land for the landless. Great tracts of fallow land in this area were now being turned into rice and jute producing fields, a great blessing to the many landless Santals that roamed these parts. With all these people nearby the congregation for Sunday Mass was on the increase.”

Progress in Santal Mission was hampered by two basic impediments. Within the Damin-I-Koh, where Santals were concentrated and owned land, ministering had to be done from outside, making work in depth, education and administration of the sacraments difficult. Outside the Damin, Santals were scattered on wide areas in small groups, and rarely in possession of the land did they cultivate. Due to this semi-nomadic character of the Santal tribe, missionary work was loaded with difficulties. The Santals had resisted all the attempts of the “Dikus” to integrate them under their caste system. Being interested in education, the Santals have been attracted by the Catholic missionary schools. This has worked as a stepping-stone towards embracing Christianity.
The Santal Region

In 1956, the year in which the Santal Mission became a ‘Santal Region’ to 1989, the year in which the Santal Region became matured into a Province. The progress taking place in the Santal Mission required a change in its administrative structure. The Jesuit General planned the reorganization of all the Jesuit administrative units in India. He appointed Fr. Douglas Gordon, Provincial of Madurai, to find out the views of the Jesuit Fathers in different areas. Fr. Portelli, the first Regional Superior established his office at Xavier House, Sahibganj. This arrangement continued till November 1965, when the office shifted to St. Ignatius Residence, also at Sahibganj. It was again transferred to what had become St. Xavier’s School at Sahibganj from March 1967 till June 1970, when it was once more taken to St. Ignatius till November 1982, when it finally moved to Dumka in the Jesuit Novitiate.

The growth of Santal Region convinced everyone that the onetime Santal Mission now Santal Region had reached a stage of development to be made an independent administrative unit of the Society of Jesus. The Provincial Congregation of Calcutta in March 1974 sent a Postulate to Fr. General with the request that either Calcutta Vice – Province be made a Province, or its two dependent Regions, the Santal and Darjeeling Regions, be made independent Vice – Provinces. Calcutta became a Province in 1972. Again, in March 1978, the Calcutta Provincial Congregation sent a request to Fr. General to establish the Santal Region into an independent Vice – Province. The Regional Superior and his consulters repeated this request to Fr. General in October 1979. This desire was realized only after 10 years.

The Diocese of Dumka

Even before the arrival of the Jesuits from the Sicilian Province in the Bengal Mission, already in 1921, Fr. General Ledochowski and Fr. Ferdinand Perier, the then Superior Regular of the Bengal Mission, had exchanged letters with Fr. General, John B. Janssens, regarding the creation of a new diocese with Santal
Parganas and Purnea districts, separate from the Calcutta Archdiocese. The matter was again raised in the early fifties. In 1954, the Superior Regular, Fr. John Henrichs, exchanged letters with Fr. General, John B. Janssens, regarding the establishment of Santal Parganas as separate independent Mission or as a separate Diocese. In fact, in 1955 two “ternae” (list of three names of possible candidates) were submitted to the Holy See for the appointment of the first Bishop for the Santal Parganas and Purnea. However, no decision was taken till the resignation of Archbishop Perier of Calcutta, who is known as the Founder of the Santal Mission, on 10th August 1960.

From 30th January to 7th February 1961, the Apostolic Pro-Nuncio, Archbishop James Robert Knox, together with Archbishop Dyer, visited the Santal Region. The Diocese of Dumka was established by Pope John XXIII by the Apostolic Bull “Exultet Sancta Mater Ecclesia” of 8th August 1962. Fr. Leo Tigga, S.J. was appointed the first Bishop of the newly erected diocese as per the announcement made by the Vatican Radio on Monday, 3rd September 1962, at 9.30 p.m.

The Diocese of Dumka was formed by fusing together the area of the Santal Mission, till then part of the Archdiocese of Calcutta, and the then Prefecture Apostolic of Malda. The Diocese then comprised the undivided districts of Santal Parganas (except Godda Sub-division and Deoghar and Sarawan thana (police station) of Deoghar Sub-division) and of Purnea in Bihar State, as well as the districts of Malda and West Dinajpur with Rampurhat Sub-division of Birbhum district in West Bengal State. At the same time the Prefecture Apostolic of Malda, which included the districts of Malda and West Dinajpur, with over six thousand Catholics, was suppressed, and its territory and the faithful fused into the new Diocese. The creation of the new diocese of Dumka without any word with the Foreign Missionaries of Milan, who were looking after the Malda Prefecture still remains an unanswered question.
The Diocese of Raiganj

When the Diocese of Dumka was established, more than two thirds of its territory was in Bihar State and the rest in the State of Bengal. The language used in both the States was different, though Santali was generally spoken by Santals in both the States. The laws regarding land and education differed in both States. Besides, the Episcopal See was located in the south-western part of the Diocese. Communications were not easy, especially with the Ganges flowing across the Diocese. After much consultation, the Holy See was petitioned to bifurcate the Diocese of Dumka, and establish the two districts of Malda and West Dinajpur, both in the West Bengal State, as a separate Diocese. On the 8th June 1978, the Vatican announced the establishment of Raiganj Diocese by dismembering the two civil districts in West Bengal from Dumka Diocese. Bishop Leo Tigga of Dumka was transferred to the newly created See of Raiganj. Fr. Telephore P. Toppo, a diocesan priest of Ranchi Archdiocese was appointed as the second Bishop of Dumka. His Episcopal ordination took place in Dumka on 7th October 1978.

The Apostolic Bull, “Ut Pater et Pastor”, for the erection of the new Diocese of Raiganj, given in Rome, at St. Peter’s, on the 8th June 1978. The Diocese of Raiganj was promulgated on 10th November 1978, in the Parish Church at Chotparua, which became the Cathedral of the new diocese. With the bifurcation of the Dumka Diocese and the establishment of the Raiganj Diocese, the territory of the Jesuit Santal Region was now coextensive with that of the two Dioceses. Till 1962 all the Parish Priests in the Santal Parganas and Purnea were Jesuits. Gradually, with the increase of the diocesan clergy, the process of handing over started. However, the Bishops wished that the Jesuits continue to be involved in the parish apostolates. In fact, in Dumka Diocese, the parishes of Mariampahar and Hathimara, and in the Raiganj Diocese, the parish of Majlispur, have been entrusted to the Jesuits. The Jesuits have begun to venture into new apostolates to be complementary to the diocesan thrust.
Developments since 1956

ASANBANI

Dudhani Parish was geographically very vast. A plot of twelve acres cum bungalow at Asanbani, on the road leading from Dumka to Rampurhat about 48 kilometres south – east of Dumka, was purchased by Fr. J.B. Panepinto in June 1966.\textsuperscript{174} From April 1968, Fr. Joseph Zerafa was the first resident priest at Asanbani which was separated from Dudhani Parish.\textsuperscript{175} In 1975, Fr. Zerafa started a Hostel for the boys attending the local Government School in the village. He was elected Secretary of the Asanbani High School. He was helping them through Food For Work projects to build the school and a new apostolic venture of a night school for \textit{gupis} (cowherds) of the villages around Asanbani.\textsuperscript{176} On 16\textsuperscript{th} May 1982, Bishop Telesphore welcomed the Congregation of Teresian Carmelites (C.T.C.) to Asanbani. St. Mary’s Primary School (Hindi Medium) was established on 10\textsuperscript{th} January 1983.\textsuperscript{177} The Sisters are looking after the school and the hostel.\textsuperscript{178} The dream of the first priest stationed at Asanbani to build a spacious church was begun on 7\textsuperscript{th} July 1985 and completed on 22\textsuperscript{nd} November 1986.\textsuperscript{179} The \textit{Nawae Porob}, harvest feast, was also part of the day’s celebrations and it was most impressive to see all those people moving towards the altar with their gift of paddy during the offertory.\textsuperscript{180}

BOROPAHARI

It was a sub-station of Cilimpur Parish. Fr. J. Borg, S.J., acquired land at Boropahari, some 45 kilometres east of Dumka, on the Dumka-Rampurhat main road, for a future mission station separate from Cilimpur. On 15\textsuperscript{th} August 1989 it became new Mission Stationa Salesian priest began to reside here.\textsuperscript{181}

DAHARLANGI

On the Dumka-Sahibganj road, 10 kms from Litipara, lies the village of Daharlangi. It was the sub-station of Torai Parish. When Fr. Jos. M. Gauci Sacco SJ was the parish priest at Torai, this property was acquired. A school was started on 8\textsuperscript{th}
December 1979. The Jesuits launched their apostolic outreach among the Paharias in this area. A priest took residence here from 1989 onwards.

DUMKA: Bishop’s House

Dumka Diocese was established in 1962. The Bishop’s house was constructed at Dudhani in May 1969 and the Cathedral of the new diocese was blessed in November 1975. The Jesuits always lent a helping hand to the bishop of Dumka in the running of the Diocese. The Regional Superior was always a Consultor of the Diocese together with some other Jesuits.

Jesuit Novitiate

On 27th April 1976, Fr. General Pedro Arrupe gave permission to the Santal Region to start its own novitiate at Dumka. On 29th June 1977, St. Paul’s College, or Jisu Jaher (the sacred grove of Jesus), as it is also known, was canonically established as a house of the Society and a novitiate. The blessing of Jisu Jaher was performed on 10th January 1978. The Regional Superior’s curia was shifted to Jisu Jaher in November 1983.

Poor Clares Monastery

Poor Clares Monastery is not a Jesuit institution. But the Jesuits have played a great role in its establishment and thus it deserves to be included in Jesuit annals. During the meeting of the Dumka Senate of Priests held on 22nd September 1971, it was agreed to have a monastery of Contemplative Nuns in the Diocese. The construction of the Monastery was started in 1977. On its completion the first four Poor Clare Sisters arrived at Dudhani in February 1978.

Social Development Centre

This Centre was the idea of Bishop Toppo to serve as the coordination centre of the Diocesan apostolates and activities. Initially Fr. Y. La Ferla SJ while residing at Islampur, was the Diocesan Director of Caritas and of the Catholic Relief
services. When the Diocese was divided in 1978, the new Bishop thought of this Centre. The Diocesan Director of Caritas and C.R.S. was also in charge of the Diocesan Education Office.

“Sademarsal” (Mass Media Centre)

A Mass Media Centre at Dumka belongs to the Dumka Diocese and serves the Santali-speaking dioceses was blessed on 8\textsuperscript{th} October 1980. It is run with the collaboration of the Jesuits. The centre prepared many charts for catechetical, educational and medical instruction. A number of Santali music cassettes were produced, and a number of radio plays on social matter were recorded at the Centre.

GUHIAJORI: Parish

This is one of the parishes started by Fr. B. Cauchi, S.J., in 1933. For the next 50 years the parish priest was always a Jesuit. In 1970 a dispensary was built for the service of the people of the neighbourhood and the students in the school. Bros R. Milito and G. Farrugia served here as Infirmarians for a number of years. The Golden jubilee of the Santal Mission was celebrated here on Sunday, 2\textsuperscript{nd} November 1975. In January 1984, the area around Kanjwe, with the northern portion of Dudhani parish, was established as a new Mission Station. The longest serving and last Jesuit parish priest here was Fr. John Milanes. He ministered to the faithful from January 1958 till December 1983, when he retired after 25 years as Pastor.

St. Joseph’s High school

The Primary School gradually was upgraded. The high School section was started at Torai and shifted to Guhiajori. As the number of pupils in the school increased it became imperative to shift the high School section to a new location just across the road. In 1965 the construction of the new high School block was started, in July 1968 first floor was added to the school building to serve as a hostel and in February 1969 the construction of the Science Block was started. In December 1978, the Headmaster, Fr. Anthony Scerri, S.J., was transferred to Tinpahar High
School and thus ended the line of Jesit headmasters from Fr. S. Nobili, to Fr. A.R. LaGreca, to Fr. A. Camilleri, to Fr. A. Agius and to Fr. A. Scerri. The administration of the school passed into the hands of the diocesan clergy from the Jesuits.

**Apostolic School**

In June 1966, the Apostolic school was opened and Fr. Joe Schembri, S.J. In December 1975 a diocesan priest took over as its Director.

**HATHIMARA**

Hathimara, thickly populated by Santals is in Maheshpur Block, Pakur District. Fr. J. Protelli for taking special interest in Hathimara for a long time, to Fr. J. Borg and his catechist who saw to the land negotiations, to Fr. A. Agius for his encouragement and the building of the hut, Fr. L. Caruana who supervised the construction of the chapel and to Fr. J. Cachia for preparing the ground for the new Quasi-Parish. The mud-hut built in 1977 served as the Priests’ residence till the new residence was built in 1986. A chapel which was built in 1981 was replaced by a bigger church in 1988. On 8th June 1981, Fr. J. Cachia started St. Stanislaus School and a hostel with fifty children in two classes. He planted a number of trees and made preparations for a small poultry. The Teresian Carmelite Sisters inaugurated their mission in Hathimara on 16th July 1987. Bishop Stephen M. Tiru, by a decree dated on 2nd February 1989, elevated the Quasi-Parish of Hathimara into a full-fledged Parish

**ISLAMPUR**

Today Islampur is situated in the northern part of West Bengal State. Originally it was in Bihar and part of Mjilispur Parish. The pioneer, Fr. A. DeBono, S.J., had bought land for starting a mission station especially for non-Santal converts. In December 1951, Fr. Y. LaFerla, S.J., took up residence here. But for the first week he lived under a tree. The Fathers’ Residence, the Boys’ Hostel and later a church to Our Lady of the Wayside were built. When Dumka Diocese was bifurcated, this parish became part of the new Diocese of Raiganj.
JAMTARA

In the early fifties Fr. B. Cauchi, S.J. envisaged a new mission Station at Jamtara. With the approval of the Archbishop, in November 1960, he bought a property with a house near the railway station. The Fathers from Madhupur regularly visited Jamtara and offered Mass there. The Sisters of Charity of Nazareth (Mokama) accepted Bishop Telesphore’s invitation to work in Dumka Diocese in Jamtara on 8th December 1980. A school was opened on 24th February 1983 and blessed on 1st September 1984.

JIAPANI

Fr. B. Bugeja, S.J., the parish priest at Guhajori visited regularly Jiapani village, 40 kms from Guhiajori on the Dumka-Sahibganj road. He acquired a plot of land and in 1957 built a big hut to serve as a chapel with an attached room for the priest. Till December 1972, it was a sub-station of Guhiajori and the Fathers from Guhiajori Parish and School offered Mass every Sunday.

KANJWE

The territory of this Mission Station was carved out from Dudhani and Guhiajori parishes. In 1960, Fr. J. Milanes, S.J., had acquired the land and in December 1983 before he retired opended a school and a dispensary.

KODMA

In July 1969, a false case of attempted murder of a policeman was brought against Fr. Anthony Murmu, S.J., and against a number of Santals from Banjhi village, about 15 kms from Sahibganj town but the case dismissed. When Fr. Murmu, in 1973, wanted to stand as a candidate in the General Election for the national Parliament, he was granted an insult of Exclaustration by the Holy See and later he was dispensed from his priestly obligations. Banjhi was again the scene of trouble and tension between the Santals and the local inhabitants. In April 1985, Anthony Murmu, now a tribal leader, together with a number of Santals, was killed in a
police firing at Banjhi. The Santals of the surrounding area were in a state of shock. They needed support and encouragement.

Most of Santal Region Jesuits met at Sahibganj in mid-May, 1985, for what are called “Region Days”. The situation at Banjhi was discussed. It was generally felt that we had to show our solidarity with the people and assist them during the judicial inquiry by the Bihar Government. The Regional Superior appointed two Jesuits, Fr. Thomas Kavalakatt and Scholastic Silas Toppo to Banjhi village for this uncharted work. Eventually they shifted their abode to Kodma village where they reside in a Santal’s house. The Jesuits in Kodma are engaged in conscientizing the people, as well as in implementing economic and agricultural programmes in cooperation with the Government, which have helped the people to stand on their own feet.

**KUNDLI**

The village of Kundli was originally part of Tinpahar parish and later part of Talbaria Mission Station. In 1971 Kundli was established as a Mission Station separate from Talbaria. A Leprosy Rehabilitation Centre that was later taken up by the Missionaries of Charity.

**LAGDUM**

Lagdum was a substation of Cilimpur Parish. In 1982, a big mud chapel was blessed with great solemnity. In 1984 a community centre was built and a school was opened.

**MADHUPUR**

The church at Madhupur existed from 1908 and was built by the parish priest of Asansol for the benefit of the Anglo-Indian community. The parish was established in 1946 and for the next 40 years the parish priest was always a Jesuit. In 1959, Fr. B. Cauchi, S.J., bought a property and bungalow to become the residence of the CSST Sisters and for the Carmel School. It has a boys hostel.
MAJLISPUR

The cradle of the Santal Mission, Majlispur, always had a special place in our annals. Except for a brief period, all the parish priests were Jesuits. After the death in 1956 of the Founder of Majlispur, the parish priest, Fr. S. Calleja Gera, S.J., built the “DeBono Dispensary” to perpetuate his memory. In 1957, St Ignatius’ Junior High school was started. On 8th December 1962 the Holy Father’s Decree establishing the Dumka Diocese was fittingly promulgated. The Golden jubilee of Majlispur and the Santal mission was celebrated here on 9th March 1975, fifty years to the day on which the Pioneer first settled here.

MARIAMPAHAR

Mariampahar parish was started as a Mission Station in May, 1964 at Talbaria village when Fr. J. Borg, S.J. took up residence in a mud house lent to him by a local village catechist. On 25th May, 1965, Talbaria was separated from Tinpahar parish. On 31st July 1975, Bishop L. Tigga raised the Mission station of Talbaria to the status of a full-fledged parish and Fr. J. Borg was its first parish priest. In the adjoining village of Sitapahar there was a hillock which could be acquired. Fr. Borg set the ball rolling and the Government’s approval was obtained in 1971. In 1975, the Middle school built at Sitapahar by Br. P. Spiteri, S.J., was opened. The parish complex shifted to Sitapahar in 1980.

To commemorate the Golden Jubilee of Fr. Cauchi’s arrival in the Santal Parganas in January 1930, a Memorial Church was built on the hillock of Sitapahar and was dedicated on 2nd February 1980. From September 1981, the place of the Mission is known as Mariampahar. The Jesuit Residence and Retreat Centre were blessed it on 31st July 1983. A workshop was started here by Br. Spiteri to train the tribal boys in different trades, and it also manufactured the doors, windows and furniture for many of the parishes and institutions which were being built in the Region. In the early eighties a first floor was constructed on the workshop to serve as a hostel for the boys.
PURNEA

Purnea is the proto-parish of the Santal mission. A number of Jesuits served here as parish priests uninterruptedly from 1887 till 1978, when Fr. Joe Schembri, S.J., handed it over to a diocesan priest. Till 1974, when the Purnea district was divided and the Katihar district was established, the area of the parish was co-extensive with the whole district, 8,004 sq. kms. It is from Purnea that the Belgian parish priest, Fr. L. Knockaert, toured the district and visited the Santal catholic migrants scattered near Kishanganj town. The church which was built to replace the one destroyed in the 1934 earthquake had become too small for In Fr. A. Sammut’s time as parish priest, the church was enlarged.

Vinay Bhavan, Purnea:

There was a felt need for quite some time of a house to train our candidates before joining the novitiate or seminary. Thanks to the generosity of Bishop Leo Tigga, a spacious bungalow and property of late Mr. T. Williams, known as “Bara Mansahi” was given for the accommodation for the candidates for the Diocese of Dumka and the Society of Jesus of the Santal Region. In December 1981, Vinay Bhavan was transferred to the newly built candidates’ house in the Robertson compound at Sahibganj.

RAHUTARA

Originally this parish was part of Malda Prefecture and then passed on to Dumka Diocese in 1962. Fr. S. Nobile, S.J., was appointed parish priest in January 1963. Fr. E. Saliba was also here for a few months till he was asked by the Government to leave the district of Malda as it was a restricted area close to the international border of India with Bangladesh.

RAJIBPUR

This parish was also originally part of Malda Prefecture till 1962. In 1966. In January 1973, the Jesuits took up the administration of Rajibpur parish and the
responsibility for the school. St. Joseph’s School here was started in the early fifties by the Fathers of Malda Prefecture and, in 1962, it was recognized by the West Bengal Government as a High School, and a layman was confirmed as headmaster.

RAIGANJ

On 8th July 1978, the Vatican announced the bifurcation of Dumka Diocese and the establishment of Raiganj Diocese. The mission station of Chotparua was established a full-fledged parish on 31st July 1975. The Parish Church at Chotparua was declared as the Cathedral of the new diocese.

SAHIBGANJ: Parish

The small Catholic community, mostly Anglo-Indians, at Sahibganj used to be visited from Purnea. When Tinpahar Parish was established a church with an attached room was built by Fr. John Grech combo, S.J. On 31st July 1975 the status of Sahibganj was raised into a full-fledged parish.

St Xavier’s School

On 21st January 1957, Xavier School was started switch seven students. The name of the school was changed to St. Xavier’s in 1960. In 1968 the School was affiliated to the Board of the Indian School examination. The first batch of students appeared for the ICSE Examination in 1969 and all were successful. From June 1967 till 1981 Class XI were conducted, and for some years our Jesuit Juniors attended these classes.

St Ignatius

In 1959 the Society at Sahibganj and started in 1960 a boarding for the boys attending St. Xavier's. Now this serves as a hostel for Santal boys attending Sahibganj College.
Vinay Bhavan

In January 1982, the transfer of Vinay Bhavan from Purnea took place and the candidates for the society and the Diocese, occupied the new building.\textsuperscript{203}

Vinay Press

The Press started by the Region and known as “Loyola Chapasal” was started at Tinpahar in February 1979. It was shifted to its new premises in the compound of Vinay Bhavan in January 1982, and became known as “Vinay Press”.

SATIA

In May 1983, Fr. P. A. Chacko, S.J., was commissioned to start a new apostolate among another tribe of Santal Parganas district, the Paharias. For some time he lived in the existing house at Daharlanghi till, four years later, he was offered land at Satia by the Paharia villagers.

SHIKARIPARA

In an effort to bring the church closer to the people and to further divide the vast parish of Dudhani, in 1980. A mud chapel and school were also started in Shikaripara. 30 kms, to the east of Dumka on the Dumka-Rampurhat road.

SOHORGHATI

The Fathers from Torai regularly visited this place. In 1975, a priest was appointed in charge of the Mission Station and he started a school.\textsuperscript{204} The priests’ residence was blessed on 14\textsuperscript{th} August 1977. The Sisters of Providence of Gap opened their first house in India here in Sohorghati in 1978.\textsuperscript{205} On 30\textsuperscript{th} December 1979, a new church and convent were blessed. Kunjbona Mission Station was opened in January 1985, when the Daughters of St. Anne of Calcutta took up residence there.\textsuperscript{206}
TINPAHAR: Parish

The parish priests here till 1980 were Jesuits. On 13 January 1985, the parish celebrated the Golden Jubilee of its foundation by Fr. John Grech Cumbo, S.J.

St. John’s High school

The Middle School here has been existing for a number of years and was also recognized by the State Government. Gradually it was upgrade into a High school. The new High school Block was built in 1973. On 23rd May 1968 school was handed over to the Jesuits. In 1969 land was bought by the society for the construction of the Loyola Hostel which began in 1970, a part of the hostel also served as the Jesuit Residence. An extension of the hostel was started in 1981. In 1981 a spacious chapel was built and blessed on the feast of St. Ignatius in 1983.

TORAI: Parish

Torai was the first parish to be established in Santal Parganas after the bitter and sad experience of the eviction of the pioneers of the Santal Mission from Monglapara. Till 1980 the parish priest was always a Jesuit.

Catechists’ Training Centre

In any mission territory, where the parishes are very extensive and the faithful live in many villages scattered far and wide, and where roads and means of public or private transport are not available, the catechists are the indispensable co-workers of the parish priest. On account of the low rate of literacy in the area, it is not always possible to find a suitable person to be appointed as the parish catechist. For a long time the need was felt that the catechists undertake a longer and deeper formation. The Bishops of other Santali-speaking dioceses requested the Jesuits of the santal Region to open a catechists’ School. The Catechists’ Training centre (CTC).was blessed on 15th September 1976.
VISITORS

During the period of the santal Region’s history under review there were many visits by ecclesiastical and religious dignitaries. It suffices to mention a few of them. From 30th January to 7th February 1962, the Papal Representative in India, Archbishop J. R. Knox, and Archbishop Vivian dyer of Calcutta visited the Santal Region. In April of the same year, Fr. Leo d. Sullivan, the Visitor appointed by Fr. General for the Calcutta Vice-Province also visited the Santal Region. General Assistants also paid visits to the Region. In October 1959, Fr. Jerome D’Souza came for a visit and in January 1978, Fr. Cecil McGarry visited the region and blessed the new novitiate at Dudhani. All the regional Assistants for the Indian and later the South Asian Assistancy visited the Region during their term of office.

The first Vice-provincial of Malta, Fr. J. Delia, visited his confreres and since then all the provincials of Malta came to India and spent time with the missionaries. They are marvelled and thanked God for what had been achieved here in such a short time. The visitors were touched by the traditional Santal welcome they received from the people and everyone. But what left a deep and lasting impression on each of them was the religious experience they had. They carried with them back to Malta the memory of a living and vibrant local church, and the gratitude of the Santal tribals for the gift of Christian faith which was brought to them by the zealous and brave missionaries from Malta and Italy.

The distinguished visitors from the island of St. Paul, and from other places, always left the Santal Region with a prayer of thanksgiving to God for what his grace, with the cooperation of his chosen instruments, had achieved among the Santals. The Jesuit Maltese Province rightly considers the establishment of the Santal Mission, the Santal Region and later the Dumka-Raiganj Province as well as the establishment of the dioceses of Dumka and Raiganj as its greatest contribution to the church in India. With the ever-increasing local vocations the work started by the pioneers continues, and the building up of the local churches of Dumka and Raiganj are flourishing.
The Santal Region becomes a Province

The Bengal Mission with its headquarters in Calcutta, which included the Santal Mission, was established as a Vice Province, and the Santal Mission became an independent Region, the Santal Region, and it was entrusted to the Maltese Vice Province. Fr. J. Portelli became the first Regional Superior of the Santal Region in 1956. There were 12 priests, one Indian Scholastic Antony Murmu, the first local Santal from the Santal Mission and three lay Brothers. There were 22 Maltese Scholastics and three lay Brothers who opted for the Santal Region. After Fr. J. Portelli, there were five Regional Superiors and Fr. Emmanuel Stellini was the sixth and the last one who was appointed in November 1982.\(^{207}\)

Fr. Peter Hans Kolvenbach, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, in a letter to the Provincial of Calcutta, Fr. P.C. Mathew, dated 9\(^{th}\) November 1988 wrote, “I am pleased to inform you that in principle I have agreed to raise Santal Region to the status of a Province.”\(^{208}\) The new Province was officially established at Jisu Jaher, Dumka on 15th February 1989. Fr. Anjelus kujur assumed office as the first Provincial. There was a strong vibration of gratitude for the Provinces of Sicily, Malta and Calcutta which with their combined efforts made the creation of this new Province possible.

Endnotes

1 Charles Schaff was born at Trier on October 4, 1835 and entered the Society of Jesus on November 22, 1862. He arrived in India on January 9, 1873. Returned to Europe on May 2, 1887 and died on April 6, 1900 at Oberroblingen (Saxony).

2 As mentioned in the *Catholic Directory of India 2005 – 06*, Jhargram Mission was established in 1904 and it is in Midnapore District, West Bengal.


6 Asansol is a sub-divisional headquarters within Burdwan district. It is an industrial town, 225 Kms. North West of Calcutta. By the Apostolic Bull dated 24\(^{th}\) October 1997, the Diocese of Asansol was bifurcated from Calcutta Archdiocese.
Martin Jacques was born at Fenal (Namur) on June 14, 1835. He entered the Society of Jesus on May 30, 1855. He arrived in India on December 4, 1867 and he died in Melbourne (Australia).


Ibid., pp. 229 -230


Paul François-Marie Goethals was born on 11th November 1832 at Kortrijk, Belgium. After joining the Society of Jesus, he did both his Philosophy and Theology in Belgium. He was the Provincial Superior of the Belgian Jesuits (1870 – 1876). Due to his administrative skills, leadership qualities and good knowledge of English, he was chosen as the Apostolic Vicar of Calcutta of Bengal Mission entrusted to the Belgian Jesuits. He arrived in Calcutta as the Apostolic Vicar on 4th November 1878. When Catholic hierarchy was established in India on 1st September 1886, he became the first Archbishop of Calcutta. He started a Catholic Printing Press. At one time, he was the President of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. He died in Calcutta on 4th June 1901.


*Census of India*; vol. V, Part III, pp. 254 and 258.


Thomas MacGonagall was born on October 1, 1850 at Benaras. He entered the Society of Jesus on 12th September 1874 and he died on February 25, 1912 in Calcutta.


Leopold Knockaert was born on 16th September 1850at Zarren in West Flanders. Like his countryman Fr. Constant Lievens, he completed his Minor Seminary at Roeselare and found his missionary vocation while he was a theology student at Brugge. He completed his theology privately at St. Xavier’s, Calcutta and after priestly ordination, he was sent to Balasore.


28 Ibid., p. 27.
29 Ibid.,
31 Ibid.,
and in Yves de Steenhault, History of the Jesuits in West Bengal, Part I: 1921 – 1947, Vol. 1, Catholic
Press, Ranchi, p. 59.
34 Ibid.,
36 Josson, Histoire de la Mission du Bengale, II, p. 350 as quoted in Yves de Steenhault, History
38 Henri Josson, History of the ‘Bengal’ Mission, p. 442; Yves de Steenhault, History of the Jesuits
41 Ibid.,
42 Archbishop Brice Meuleman SJ, was born on 1st March 1862 at Ghent, Belgium. He was
ordained Priest on 20th January 1895 and appointed as Archbishop of Calcutta on 21st March 1902. His
Episcopal Consecration was on 25th May 1902. He resigned on 23rd June 1924 and he died on 15th
July 1924.
44 Henri Josson, History of the ‘Bengal’ Mission, p. 442; Yves de Steenhault, History of the Jesuits
45 Fr. Knockaert’s five booklets on his mission tours: i) First Mission Tour: 24 Days Among the
Santals (24 November - 17 December 1914); ii) Second Mission Tour: Two Months Among the
Santals (6th Feb. to 27th March 1915); iii) Third Mission Tour: My Hot Weather Tour Among the
Santals (1st June – 6th July, 1915); iv) Fourth Mission Tour: The Archbishop’s Visit to the New Santal
Mission (23rd – 29th November, 1915); v) Fifth Mission Tour: Further Progress Among the Santals
46 Henri Josson, op. cit., p. 443.
47 L. Knockaert’s Fourth Mission Tour: The Archbishop’s Visit to the New Santal Mission (23rd – 29th
49 Fr. Knockaert’s Second Mission Tour: Two Months Among the Santals (6th Feb. to 27th
March 1915), p. 41.
51 Fr. Knockaert’s First Mission Tour: 24 Days Among the Santals (24 November - 17 December
1914), p. 20.
52 Fr. Knockaert’s recent converts as mentioned in the Sacred Returns of 1st August 1921; Yves de
53 The third chapter titled, “Paradise Regained” on the Establishment of the Santal Mission in Santal
Parganas, in “A Great Achievement” the Episcopal Silver Jubilee Souvenir of His Grace Dr.
Trevor L. Picachy, Published by the Catholic Association of Bengal, vividly carries the encounter between Mgr.Perier and Fr. Knockaert, pp. 10-11.


55 Catalogus Missionis Bengalensis Provinciae Belgicae Societatis Jesu Calcuttae, 1921

56 Our Field, February – March, 1928, pp. 13 – 16


58 “La Malle des Indes” (Published in French from St. Mary’s, Kurseong), August 1922 as quoted in Yves de Steenhault, History of the Jesuits in West Bengal, Part I: 1921 – 1947, p. 65.

59 “A Great Achievement” the Episcopal Silver Jubilee Souvenir of His Grace Dr. Ferdinand Perier, p. 11; The Synod Document (Baisi Reak’ Olak’ Sabud Katha), Diocese of Dumka, 2000, p. 62

60 “La Malle des Indes” (Published in French from St. Mary’s, Kurseong), December 1924 as quoted in Yves de Steenhault, History of the Jesuits in West Bengal, Part I: 1921 – 1947, p. 65.


62 Ibid.

63 From the letter of Fr. Willaert, the Belgian Provincial to Fr. Maurice Veys, the Superior of Bengal Mission, dated 20th December 1923.

64 Fr. Willaert asks Fr. Veys in the same letter dated 20th December 1923.

65 Ibid.

66 From the letter of Fr. Rubino, the Sicilian Provincial to Fr. Willaert, the Belgian Provincial dated 23rd January 1924.

67 Fr. Willaert’s letter to Fr. Rubino dated on 27th January 1924.

68 From the letter of Fr. Willaert to Fr. Rubino, dated 9th February 1924.

69 Fr. Rubino’s letter to Fr. Wladimir Ledochowski, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus dated 8th March 1924.

70 AR,V, 1924, p. 127; The Superior General, Fr. Ledochowski’s reply to Fr. Rubino, the Provincial of Sicily, dated 17th March 1924; Santal Region Newsletter, Vol. 8, No. 2, April 1974, p. 1.

71 Anthony De Bono was born in 1887, at Victoria, Gozo (Malta) in the pious family of Giovanni Maria and Rosa Maria De Bono. During his school days, he was popular among his classmates for his sense of humour. He joined the Jesuits at Bagheria (Palermo) on 15th September, 1904. After studying Philosophy at Jersey, he had four years of Regency at St. Aloysius’ College, Birirkara, Malta. He started his theological studies in Wales (U.K.) and completed it at Naples (Italy) where he was ordained priest on 25th July, 1920. He had his tertianship in Florence (Italy) and in 1923 he was appointed as the Spiritual Father of the boys at Gonzaga College in Palermo (Italy) where he pronounced his Final Vows as Jesuit on 2nd February, 1924.

72 The Bengal Mission Superior, Fr. M. Vey’s letter to Fr. Rubino, the Provincial of Sicily dated 28th January 1925.

73 Our Field, January-February, 1925

74 Our Field, January-February, 1925; Catalogus Missionis Bengalensis Provinciae Belgicae Societatis Jesu Calcuttae, 1925; The Synod Document (Baisi Reak’ Olak’ Sabud Katha), Diocese of Dumka, 2000, p. 63.

The Catechists spiritually sound helpers of the Priests and pastoral guides to the people.

*Our Field*, June-July, 1925

*Born at Houthem, West Flanders on 24th June 1863; Entered the Society of Jesus on 26th September 1882; Reached Calcutta on 4th November 1886 and served the Bengal mission for nearly 48 years.*

*Our Field*, March – April, 1930, p. 33.

Benjamin Cauchi was born at Floriana, Malta on 4th October 1883 to the parents, Vincent and Maria Carmela. On 7th December 1898, at the age of 15, he entered the Society of Jesus in Malta, where the Sicilian Province had its Novitiate after the expulsion of the Society from Sicily. He took his vows on 8th December 1900 and after his priestly studies, he was ordained a priest on 21st September 1913. After his Tertiarieship in Ireland, he returned to Malta in 1915 to teach Mathematics at St. Aloysius College, Malta. He was well settled in his apostolate in Malta. Fr. Cauchi had been in the bent on the Missions since his early years in the Society of Jesus. During his philosophy he had asked to be sent to Japan. But he was sent for Theology to St. Beuno’s, Wales with the idea of later joining the Mission in British Guiana. However God has disposed otherwise and he was sent to India after a successful career as a Mathematics and Physics professor, as well as prefect at St. Aloysius College, Malta. *Santaliland*, Family Letter of the Maltese Jesuits of the Santal Region, September – October 1958, No. 34, p. 1.

*Our Field*, January – February, 1930, p. 15; *Catalogus Missionis Majoris Calcuttensis – Ranchiensis, Provinciae Belgicae, Societatis Jesu*, 1930; The Synod Document (Bais Reak’ Olak’ Sabud Katha), Diocese of Dumka, 2000, p. 63

*Our Field*, February – March, 1928.


Bernard Bugeja was born at Valletta, Malta on the 28th October 1902. He studied at St. Aloysius’ College, Birikara. In October 1924, he was a scholastic when he came along with Fr. De Bono in the first group of Jesuit pioneers for the Santal Mission. He did his Theological studies at Kurseong, where on 21st November 1933, he was ordained priest. He succeeded Fr. De Bono at Majlishpur towards the end of 1936. After 14 years of missionary adventure in Majlishpur and dedicated service in other stations of Santal Mission, he died on Ash Wednesday, 16th February 1983.


167 *Catalogus Missionis Majoris Calcuttensis – Ranchiensis, Provinciae Belgicae, Societatis Jesu*, 1949


171 Fr.Leo Tigga, S.J., was born at Paikpara village, Rengarih Parish (now in Simdega Diocese), Ranchi Province, on 31st January 1916. He joined the Society of Jesus on 28th April 1937 at Sitagarh (Hazaribagh) St. Stanislaus Novitiate. He studied Philosophy at Shembaganur and Theology at Kurseong. He was ordained on 21st November 1948 and he was on the Staff of Loyola High School, Ranchi for five years after one year of missionary work in a parish. He was appointed Rector of the same school on 13th December 1959. On 3rd September 1962, he was appointed Bishop of Dumka.


175 *Boge Juda*, Newsletter from the Santal Region, Vol. 2, No. 11, April 1968, p. 1


178 *Santal Region Newsletter*, No. 154, June 1983, p. 3.

179 *Santal Region Newsletter*, No. 188, November - December 1986, p. 4

180 *Santal Region Newsletter*, No. 188, November - December 1986, p. 4

181 *Directory of Dumka Diocese*, 1994, p.35

182 *Santal Region Newsletter*, No. 131, December 1979, p. 5


184 *Santal Region Newsletter*, No. 137, 20th December 1980, p. 3.

185 *Santal Region Newsletter*, No. 136, 13th November 1980, p. 1

186 *Directory of Dumka Diocese*, 1994, p. 42


188 The invitation letter signed and sent by Fr. Louis Zammit, Catholic Church, Hathimara, for the inauguration of the Apostolic Mission of the Teresian Carmelite Sisters in Hathimara Parish, dated on 27th June 1987.; *Directory of Dumka Diocese*, 1994, p. 42


190 *Santal Region Newsletter*, No. 137, 20th December 1980, p. 2

191 *Santal Region Newsletter*, No. 137, 20th December 1980, p. 2


193 *Santal Region Newsletter*, No. 159, November 1983, p. 2


Santal Region Newsletter, No. 132, June 1980, p. 3; Directory of Dumka Diocese, 1994, p. 54

Santal Region Newsletter, No. 132, June 1980, p. 3

Directory of Dumka Diocese, 1994, p. 54

Santal Region Newsletter, Vol. 9, No. 4, August 1975, pp. 1-2; Santal Region Newsletter, Vol. 9, No. 5, August 1975, p. 1


Santal Region Newsletter, No. 145, February 1982, p. 5


Directory of the Diocese of Dumka, 1994, p. 65;


Santal Region Newsletter, No. 206, January 1988, p. 1