

THE GROWTH OF THE SALESIAN CHARISM IN THE EAO REGION: RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES FOUNDED BY SALESIANS

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Introduction

The Salesian Society made a commitment in its last General Chapter to return to Don Bosco and start afresh from him. Seeking to be in line with this thrust given by the General Chapter, this study-contribution to the regional seminar can perhaps help to recover and to return to Don Bosco in the East Asia - Oceania (EAO) Region, where Salesian Missionaries who came to China, Japan and Thailand, sowed the charism of Don Bosco and saw among the fruits it bore the religious congregations founded by some of their fellow missionaries. At the root of their sowing was the spirit of the *da mihi animas, cetera tolle* of Don Bosco, lived in the style of the preventive system, directed to the young characterized as poor and abandoned, and now shared and sown likewise by the natives of the places where the Salesian seed was planted.

This study also aims to present the various congregations founded by some of the Salesian missionaries who worked in the East Asian region of the known Salesian world. It focuses briefly on their pre-history and immediate history, including their founders, purposes, and manner in which these congregations were established. Although it is largely based on primary documents collected from archives of the respective congregations, the Salesian Central Archives remain the primary source of this study. The period in which the study is collocated is the latter part of the first half of the 20th century, which covers the foundation of the Salesian missions in China (1910),

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Japan (1926), Thailand and Hong Kong (1927). The relevance of this study is reiterated by the strenna of the Rector Major for 2009, calling on these Congregations to rally together as solid branches of that one tree called Don Bosco. The study of the history of these congregations can give us insights into the evolution of Don Bosco's charism in the EAO Region.

The study and writing of the history of each of the Congregations referred to in this article should be the prerogative of these Congregations.¹ Due to the current lack of clear and scientific histories of these Congregations, this work is rather incomplete.

Being pioneers in their mission territories and in their direct ministry, Saint Luigi Versiglia and Bishop Ignazio Canazei, Venerable Vincenzo Cimatti and Fr Antonio Cavoli, Bishop Gaetano Pasotti, Fr Carlo Della Torre were not only Salesian missionaries in East Asia but also founders of female religious congregations made up of natives. Some of them were leaders of the missionary expeditions and religious superiors of their confreres (Versiglia, Canazei, Cimatti, and Pasotti); some held ecclesiastical offices as Apostolic Vicars (Versiglia, Canazei, Pasotti) and Prefect Apostolic (Cimatti). All of them were Italian in origin, coming from the northern part of Italy: Lombardy (Versiglia, Pasotti and Della Torre), Emilia-Romagna (Cimatti, Cavoli), Trentino - Alto Adige (Canazei). These were Salesians who had known personally Major Superiors in Turin, most specially the Rectors Major who personally knew Don Bosco and lived his spirit. The religious congregations founded by these Salesians were all born in their assigned mission territories at the advent of the Salesian work:

¹ In the East Asia - Oceania Regional Seminar on Salesian History conducted in Hong Kong from 4 to 6 December 2004, the following studies related to the Congregations founded by Salesians were presented: Maria Mukai YUMIKO, *Brief Historical Notes on the Foundation of the Sisters of Charity of Miyazaki*; Maliwan PARAMATHAWIROTE, *The Identity of the Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Thailand*; Anna Saksri NGAMWONG, *History of the Origins of the Institute of the Daughters of the Queenship of Mary*. Cf. Nestor C. IMPELIDO, *The Beginnings of the Salesian Presence in East Asia*. Vol. 2. (= ACSSA - Varia, 3). Hong Kong, [no publisher] 2006.

Shiu Chow (China), Miyazaki (Japan), and Rajaburi (Thailand). The need of immediate indigenous collaborators adept at working with the female constituents of the Salesians' missionary work arose, because the Salesians lacked sufficient preparation to work with native girls. The religious congregations whose members came from abroad were surely incapable of meeting the demands of this particular sector of the mission work, at least in the beginning.

The decision to found congregations by some Salesians in East Asia was inspired by the teachings of the Popes of the period: Popes Benedict XV (1914-1922), Pius XI (1922-1939) and Pius XII (1939-1958). The *magisterium* of the papacy regarding the missionary work of the Church guided and gave the Salesians-founders reasons on the relevance of giving origin to congregations: the apostolic letter of Benedict XV *Maximum Illud* (30 November 1919) on the propagation of the faith throughout the world, the encyclical of Pius XI *Rerum Ecclesiae* (28 February 1926) on the need of more missionaries and the involvement of the faithful in the work of evangelization, and the apostolic constitution of Pius XII *Provida Mater Ecclesiae* (2 February 1947) concerning secular institutes. The period in fact was in need of a direction, if only to launch the missionary zeal of the Church, especially for those who were earnest about extending the Kingdom of God to those who were receptive to it.

1. Sisters Announcers of the Lord (=SAL)

1.1. Bishop Luigi Versiglia and the "Vergini Indigeni"

A year after his Episcopal appointment (1920) as Apostolic Vicar of Shiu Chow, Bishop Luigi Versiglia had sent a report to Lyons regarding his jurisdiction. He reported that he had opened a house and a school for the formation of *vierges indigenes* or *catechistesses*.² He also wrote that in Lin Chow there was also a school of young aspirants to the religious life who awaited the opening of their formation

² Archivio Salesiano Centrale (ASC) A351 *Versiglia [fasc. 3]- Relazione del lavoro dell'anno [1920-1921] [21 November 1921]*.

house in Shiu Chow. This was under the care of a lady who left the comfort of her own house to live with the so-called aspirants in a house rented by the Mission. In another district of the Mission there were some of these *Kuneong* or *Vergini Cinesi* who taught needy children and lived in the *Kuneong Tong* or *casa delle vergini* (house of virgins).³ In 1921 he reported that the catechists in the formation house near the Salesian College of St. Joseph were already constructing a school to be entrusted to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (=FMA).⁴ Addressing the Mission's need to approach the female class, the FMA augmented the pastoral workers in the Vicariate Apostolic⁵ as requested by Bishop Versiglia. They were also entrusted with a school to take care of the female catechists, which was taking definite form and increasing in number through their work.⁶ By 1924, Bishop Versiglia was drafting the rules in order to make the growing Institute of the *Kuneong* a true religious institute as the members were completing their formation and beginning to serve in the various districts of the Vicariate.⁷ In order to help them learn to be catechists themselves, the FMA would bring with them one or two *Kuneong* to accompany them in their catechism of the families.⁸

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ ASC A351 *Versiglia [fasc. 3] - Relazione [1921-1922] [15 October 1922]*. In fact, in Hosai the Salesians also bought another terrain sometime in 1922, not far from the College of St. Joseph, as future residence for the FMA.

⁵ ASC A352 *Versiglia - Report on Vicariate Apostolic of Shuchow 1920-1921*.

⁶ ASC A351 *Versiglia [3] - Relazione [1922-1923] [8 December 1923]*. Sr Onorina Gallo FMA stated that already since 1920 the Salesians had thought of starting apostolate for the girls. For this they had acquired a small house and a playground in front of their College of Hosai, which they furnished as a future institute for "Suore indigene". In fact, there they began to gather immediately "alcune ragazze desiderose di abbandonare il mondo, per servire Dio e la missione come catechiste", a work which slowly consolidated. As early as 1925 ca. Msgr. Versiglia was formulating a special regulation, in order to make the institute "un vero Istituto religioso". Cf. Archivio Generalizia Figlie di Maria Ausiatrice, Roma (AGFMA), *Memoirs of Sr Onorina Gallo FMA*, Turin, SEI 1925).

⁷ ASC A351 *Versiglia [3] - Relazione [1923-1924] [30 August 1924]*.

⁸ *Ibid.*, *Resoconto del lavoro [1924-1925] [1 October 1925]*.

1.2. *The Sisters Announcers of the Lord*

Based on Fr Mario Rassiga's reply to the inquiry of Fr Giovanni Raineri, the real name of this Congregation was *Suore Annunziatrici del Signore* (=Sisters Announcers of the Lord). Bishop Versiglia wanted to call this group with a truly Chinese name: Hin (=Annunciare, Manifestare) Ciu (=Signore) Wui (=Società, Congregazione).⁹

The August 1968 issue of the Salesian Bulletin provides certain historical indications regarding the origins of the *Kuneong*.¹⁰ The *Primum Concilium Sinense* held in the Church of St. Ignatius in Shanghai (14 May to 12 June 1924), in Title XLII, article 196, provided an explanation of these girls to which Bishop Versiglia patterned the institute that he intended to establish in his Vicariate Apostolic. The *Virgines* were described as servants in the homes, serving the Missions under the direction of the Ordinary or of the Missionaries. There were other so-called *Missionis adiutrices*, who gathered in pious societies in the manner of religious and helped in the Missions, taught children in school, lead prayers in homes, baptized dying infants or adults and showed good example to all, whether Christians or pagans. These were supposed to be pious women of mature age, with proven experience, good name and sound doctrine. Some of them would make vows according to some rules.¹¹

Focusing himself on this direction after the Chinese Council, Bishop Versiglia saw the need in China for women to be prepared to do apostolate among their peers. Thus he opened a school for adult Christian catechists to whom he would give an intensive program and

⁹ ASC SAL 121 *Rassiga to Rainieri, Hong Kong, 10 June 1972*. In the 1970s this Congregation was present in Hong Kong, Macau and Formosa. It had one handicap: few of them understood and spoke English.

¹⁰ *Famiglie religiose fondate da Salesiani*, BS XCII (agosto August 1968) 16-17.

¹¹ *Primum Concilium Sinense* (1924) Title XLII "De *Virginibus catechistis*", 196, 1-5: "Virgines de quibus est sermo, in domibus suis virginitatem servantes, Missioni inserviunt sub directione Ordinarii aut Missionariorum. »

provide a priest to follow them up, expecting that in a few months, they would be at the level of helping the missionaries and of intensifying the work of evangelization.¹² He offered this course for female catechists in Hosai, in the place of the FMA, hoping that from this initiative, the future sisters of the Vicariate would sprout.¹³ Bishop Versiglia wrote that the house of formation of the young catechists was full and that he hoped that at the end of 1927, a group of them would soon be of help in the Vicariate. He considered them prepared in study and piety.¹⁴ However, writing to the Prefect of the Propaganda Fide on 26 October 1929, he declared that the school of catechists could not yet be independent.¹⁵

1.3. *The Chronicle of the FMA of Hosai*

The chronicle of the FMA house of Hosai provides an early and important account of the beginnings of the SAL. As early as 1923, it recorded that seven girls, labelled by the chronicle as *Kuneong*, arrived on that Tuesday of 30 July, to sleep in a big room at the second floor of a house.¹⁶ Finding themselves at ease and in unity with the Sisters, they participated in the Eucharistic celebration and benediction. The chronicler expressed a prayer: that the Lord and the Blessed Virgin might help them to make these *Kuneong* good religious or at least exemplary Christians.¹⁷ They were provided a schedule by their FMA supervisor to follow.¹⁸ One of the sectors of the FMA house in Hosai was called a studentate for the *Kuneong*.¹⁹ Nonetheless, even

¹² ASC A351 *Versiglia [3] - Resoconto del lavoro [1925-1926] [24 October 1926]*.

¹³ *Famiglie religiose fondate da Salesiani*, BS XCII (agosto August 1968) 16.

¹⁴ ASC A351 *Versiglia [3]- Resoconto del lavoro [1926-1927]*.

¹⁵ ASC A352 *Versiglia to Prefect of Propaganda Fide, Shuchow, 26 October 1929*.

¹⁶ AGFMA *Chronicle of Hosai*, 31 July - 1 August 1923.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 15 August 1923.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 27 August 1923.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 14 December 1927. At another date in 1928, one the sectors of the FMA work in Hosai was a "Casa di formazione Kuneong indigene", with ten formandi.

if Bishop Versiglia asked the FMA to receive and supervise the *Kuneong*, the Salesians were directly involved in providing formation to these girls. Taking time to personally form these *Kuneong* whom he had recruited, he came and talked to them in the FMA house on 8 September 1923 in Hosai. He also gave a conference to the FMA Sisters at the invitation of the superior.²⁰ Later that year, he was already giving conferences “to the girls”.²¹

On 17 August 1924 Bishop Versiglia came to begin a triduum for them. Returning two days later to celebrate the Holy Eucharist, he distributed to the girls “the regulations to be studied”.²² In 1927, three days after the feast of the Immaculate Conception, Bishop Versiglia decided that the native *Kuneong* should take Mary Immaculate as their patroness.²³ Other Salesians took turns to help form them. Fr Carlo Braga went to the house of Hosai in order to give evening lessons of Catechism and Church History to the *Kuneong*.²⁴ Fr Larena came to bestow to some *Kuneong* the Carmelite scapular.²⁵ Later, Fr Giovanni Guarona, Pro-Vicar of the Diocese of Shiuchow, gave two retreats to this particular group from 2-3 April 1930.²⁶ Several years earlier, he began to give classes of catechism twice a week to these girls.²⁷

Bishop Canazei continued from where Bishop Versiglia had left off and took charge of the formation of the *Kuneong*. As it was the custom of his predecessor, after his conferences to the FMA in Hosai, he took the chance to speak to the *Kuneong* as well. To help them advance in their formation, he spoke to them regarding the vows,

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 8 September 1923.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 28 December 1923.

²² *Ibid.*, 19 August 1924.

²³ *Ibid.*, 15 December 1928.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 27 February 1928.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 20 July 1929.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 2-3 April 1930.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 27 August 1923.

taught them how to recite the Office of the Blessed Virgin during spiritual exercises and preached retreats to them.²⁸ It was on the occasion of an exercise for a happy death that he announced to them and to the Sisters the opening of the *Kuneong Tong* the following month of May 1932.²⁹ They took every possible chance in order to have a personal colloquy with their founder and to receive advice from him.³⁰

On 16 February 1930, a *Kuneong* named Pang Lucia left for her first field of mission and then stayed in Hosai to learn some trade.³¹ After Bishop Versiglia had just preached an exercise for a happy death for them,³² three *Kuneong* left on 21 February for the districts they were assigned to. The *Kuneong* Then Kala proceeded to Lien Chow with Bishop Versiglia, who was bound there for a pastoral visit.³³ Three days later, on 26 February, the FMA received the news that Bishop Versiglia and Fr Caravario, together with the *Kuneong* Then Kala and two other girls, were taken as hostages by pirates while they were on their way to Lin Chow. The next day, the FMA received a telegram announcing the death of the two Salesians. However, there was still no news about the three girls who were with the two missionaries. By March the news arrived stating the girls were finally free. One of the FMAs, Sr Elena, in fact, had gone to Lien-Kong-Heu to bring them back to Shiu Chow.³⁴

1.4. *Founder but not Originator*

Bishop Versiglia never had a chance to realize the foundation of the congregation which he had initiated, on account of his death on

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 5 December 1930, 12 July 1931, 2 September 1932.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 8 January 1932.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 30 November 1929.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 16 February 1930.

³² *Ibid.*, 14 February 1930. Bishop Versiglia had also preached at the beginning of the new year 1930. Cf. *ibid.*, 2 January 1930.

³³ *Ibid.*, 23 February 1930.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 26-28 February 1930.

25 February 1930. However, his successor, Bishop Ignazio Canazei, continued to strengthen the congregation which his predecessor had originated. In his annual report of 1931 Bishop Canazei³⁵ stated that one of the projects for the following year was the foundation of a female native religious congregation. He hoped to finalize their house of formation and to finally begin their first year of novitiate.³⁶ Consequently in 1932 Bishop Canazei put the initiative for native religious as the first among the works going on in the Vicariate Apostolic. The house was almost ready and the first group of novices hoped to enter by Christmas of that year. Bishop Canazei considered this as something that would bring joy to all, inasmuch as this venture realized the desire of Pope Pius XI.³⁷

Earlier, on 5 March 1931, Bishop Canazei spoke to Sr Palmira Parri, the FMA superior in Shiu Chow, expressing his plan to start the construction of the house of formation of the native religious. He asked Sr Parri to express her ideas regarding the female indigenous congregation for which he thought of asking her collaboration. Fr Kirchner declared that the SAL was the “apple of the eye” of Bishop Canazei.³⁸ It was from St. Ignatius’ motto *Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam*,³⁹ that Bishop Canazei took the name of the Congregation he was founding.⁴⁰ It was to be an association of native religious of

³⁵ The annual reports of Bishop Ignazio Canazei are catalogued among the documents labelled “Versiglia” in Salesian Central Archives. His annual reports, together with those of Bishop Versiglia’s, refer to the diocese of Shiu Chow.

³⁶ ASC A351 *Versiglia [3]- Relazione del lavoro compiuto [1930-1931]*.

³⁷ ASC A351 *Versiglia [3]- Relazione del lavoro compiuto [1931-1932]*. In the same year 1932, Msgr. Canazei stated that in Hosai, Shiu Chow, the FMA administered “un Ospizio per fanciulle povere”, whom they taught Christian doctrine and other domestic and manual work. “Tra di queste fanciulle quelle che hanno più attitudine, saranno poi catechiste di missione, altre che si sentiranno chiamate, si faranno religiose, altre ancora rimarranno con le Suore come donne di servizio.” Cf. *Ibid.*

³⁸ ASC SAL 121 *Kirchner - Annunciatrici del Signore*.

³⁹ ASC SAL 121 *Rassiga to Rainieri, Hong Kong, 10 June 1972*.

⁴⁰ ASC SAL 121 *Rassiga to Rainieri, Hong Kong, 10 June 1972*.

diocesan right, like other diocesan institutes. There would be regulations approved by the Vicar Apostolic which would govern the formation of the Congregation's postulants and novices, as well as the direction of its professed members. The house that the Vicariate Apostolic intended to build was supposedly destined exclusively as house for the native postulants, novices and professed members.⁴¹

Furthermore, since it was the desire of his predecessor to entrust to the FMA the initial care of the Congregation, Bishop Canazei asked if the FMA were disposed to assume the formation and direction of the Institute, at least in its initial stage. If the answer to his request was affirmative, he would then ask Sr Parri if she would be willing to be superior and mistress of novices of the new Institute.⁴² Sr Parri's response to Bishop Canazei's letter came two days later, on 7 March 1931.

Sometime in May 1931, Bishop Canazei wrote to the Propaganda Fide, asking permission to establish the Congregation according to the norms of the Code of Canon Law, canon 492. Propaganda Fide responded affirmatively to the request on 30 May 1931.⁴³ However, there were difficulties with regards to the establishment of a novitiate in Shiu Chow for the new congregation. Nonetheless, by 1936, Bishop Canazei had obtained from the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide the permission to erect a novitiate of the Institute in Shiu Chow. The Bishop of Canton, Antonio Fouquet MEP, sent a native sister of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of Canton to be the mistress of novices of the new Congregation.⁴⁴

⁴¹ AGFMA 13.65-114 *Canazei to Parri, Shiuchow 5 March 1931.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ ASC SAL 121 *Kirschner - Annunciatrici del Signore.*

⁴⁴ ASC SAL 121 *Zen to Cuevas, Hong Kong, 26 November 1986.*

2. Caritas Sisters of Miyazaki

2.1. Fr Cavoli's Foundation

Fr Antonio Cavoli admitted in his autobiography that he decided to found the Caritas Sisters of Miyazaki (CSM) by virtue of obedience to his superior. Fr Luigi Lonfernini, the parish priest of Fr Cavoli at San Giovanni in Marignano in Rimini, Italy, said that this autobiography was to bring to light some of Fr Cavoli's exceptional merits,⁴⁵ one being the foundation of the CSM. The situation in Japan, which was under the strong influence of nationalism to the point of fanaticism, simply pointed the direction towards the foundation of the CSM. Spying upon all foreigners, the militaristic government was strongly pressurizing the Apostolic Delegate in Tokyo to substitute all foreign Bishops and Prefects Apostolic, as well as all foreign directors of schools, with local ones. For this Fr Cavoli, the real director of the Hospice, had to resign making the superior of his sisters to act as head in front of the civil authorities. However, it was he who directed the Hospice, as all respected and subjected themselves to his directives.⁴⁶

Fr Cavoli and his superior, Fr Vincenzo Cimatti, had seemingly two different ideas concerning the foundation of a female religious institute. Fr Cavoli had as *prima idea* the creation of a lay association without vows and religious habit, possibly since he began to recruit volunteers to work for the Hospice which he started sometime in 1929.⁴⁷ Instead, Fr Cimatti, one day in 1937, expressed to Fr Cavoli an idea which he considered very convenient: "... to found a female religious congregation".⁴⁸ One could ask why Fr Cimatti had to suggest the idea to Fr Cavoli, when perhaps he could have decided himself to found a religious congregation by himself. Fr Cavoli stated in his

⁴⁵ Cf. Antonio CAVOLI, *Dall'Italia al Giappone. Autobiografia di un missionario*, Rimini, Stab. Tip. Garattoni 1959, p.5.

⁴⁶ Cf. A. CAVOLI, *Dall'Italia al Giappone*, p.95.

⁴⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

account that the suggestion of Fr Cimatti was dutifully linked to that which he had actualized and what he was doing – the Hospice. Fr Cimatti saw that a religious congregation would be beneficial and capable of administering the actual Hospice and of expanding elsewhere.

The Superior of the Mission, who was also Prefect Apostolic of Miyazaki, gave two reasons why he found it convenient to found an indigenous female religious congregation: the time was ripe to found one, and it was good to comply with the directives of Pope Pius XI (1922-1939) who had issued the encyclical *Rerum ecclesiae* about ten years earlier.⁴⁹

Fr Cavoli's first reaction was of great surprise because he believed he was incapable of founding a religious order. The conversation ended there and then, but not Fr Cavoli's thinking of Fr Cimatti's proposal. He was, in fact, saddened by the possibility that he might have to abandon his missionary work and go back to Italy – this, obviously, if the Japanese decided to send away all foreigners. It was only after the third attempt of Fr Cimatti to persuade him that he decided to heed the suggestion for fear of disobeying. Consequently, he moved to announce to the female volunteers long at work in the Hospice his response to Fr Cimatti's invitation: "... the decision to found a religious congregation".⁵⁰ Fr Cavoli never realized when he consented to the suggestion of Fr Cimatti what cross he was embracing, or, how much good the future Congregation would be operating and what consolation it would give him in his old age.⁵¹ He felt embarrassed when he had to announce to the ladies of the

⁴⁹ Pius XI, *Rerum ecclesiae* (28 February 1926), n. 27: "Perhaps it would be well if you would consider seriously and without admixture of self-interest, if it would not be more advantageous all around to establish entirely new Congregations, which would correspond better with the genius and character of the natives and which would be more in keeping with the needs and the spirit of the different countries."

⁵⁰ Cf. A. CAVOLI, p.95-96.

⁵¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p.96.

Hospice of his decision to found a religious congregation.⁵² The ladies, who were initially perturbed, were given time to think of the proposal to join the Congregation eventually. However, Fr Cavoli decided to choose in a gradual manner those who would begin the initial religious formation in order not to jeopardize the on-going work. All those who definitely decided to join the congregation could not become novices all at once, as it would leave no one free to attend to the task of administering the Hospice.⁵³ Consequently, Fr Cavoli and the Salesians began by asking approval from the Propaganda Fide in Rome for this new congregation. It was Fr Cavoli who gave the name “Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Miyazaki” to the new congregation. He was happy to choose the word “*Caritas*” for a reason: that the admonition of Pope Pius XI might be re-lived in a great number of souls through the new congregation and that its members might work and sacrifice themselves for the corporal and spiritual good of innumerable brothers.⁵⁴

Fr Cavoli again opted not to translate the word *Caritas*, because he believed that this word had no equivalent in the vocabulary of a pagan nation. The members of the new Congregation were commonly called *Karitas Kai*. The confreres jokingly called the members *Le Cavoline* in obvious reference and deference to its founder.⁵⁵ He felt the burden of the responsibility of following up the members of

⁵² Cf. *ibid.*

⁵³ Cf. *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Cf. Pius XI, *Rerum ecclesiae* (28 February 1927), n. 30: “Missionaries should remember that in preaching to the natives they must follow the same methods which the Divine Teacher used while He was on earth. Before He began to preach to the crowds, He first healed the sick [...] Neither should the missionary ever forget how kind and loving Jesus always showed Himself to babes and little children [...] that the missionaries who preach to the heathens know only too well how much good-will and real affection is gained for the Church by those who look after the health of the natives and care for their sick or who show a true love for their infants and children. All of which only goes to prove how readily the human heart responds to charity and to kindness.”

⁵⁵ Cf. A. CAVOLI, p.97.

the CSM, in their ascetic and apostolic formation. This was not easy, since it required the grace of God for a transformation of the members to be authentic. Consequently, he preached daily and explained the Constitutions and the meaning of religious life. He taught pedagogy, liturgy, ecclesiastical history, the Gospels, catechism; and he wanted to do this for the CSM until his death. For him, the CSM became distinct from the other religious orders in Japan for its solid religious formation and its sharp religious activity, not only because of the grace of God, but also because of the hard work of formation he invested in the new congregation.⁵⁶

2.2. *The Kyugoin and Fr Antonio Cavoli*

The *Kyugoin* (Hospice of Miyazaki, *Giardino della Carità*), was the initiative of Fr Cavoli, who gave his heart and soul to this project. In this work, the first members of the CSM learned the fundamentals of making charity an effective way of believing.

Fr Cavoli, formulating the scope of the new congregation which he founded, claimed that its scope was the happy result of a work, the Hospice, begun ten years previously. "Charity as a way to faith" was the Hospice workers' first experience which they now sought to make permanent through their commitment as members of the CSM. The *Hospitio Miyazaki* was in fact the *domus primaria* of the CSM.⁵⁷ For, as Fr Cimatti, the religious superior of the Salesians in Miyazaki, ecclesiastical authority of the Apostolic Prefecture of the same province and worthy superior of Fr Cavoli, explained to the Rector Major, Fr Pietro Ricaldone, the scope of the CSM was works of charity, whether corporal or spiritual, to old people, infants and orphans. All these were truly found in the Hospice of Fr Cavoli.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 98-99.

⁵⁷ Archives Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Hua Hin, Thailand (ASIHM), *Cimatti to Ricaldone, Miyazaki, 16 June 1937.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, "Propagatio Fidei operibus charitatis tam corporalibus quam spiritualibus sive in beneficentiae institutes pro senibus, pro. S. Infantiae pueris, pro orphanis...."

Fr Vincenzo Cimatti attached a *Pro Memoria* to his letter of request to Cardinal Biondi to begin a new religious indigenous female congregation in his Prefecture Apostolic.⁵⁹ Among the contents of this *Pro Memoria* was a brief account of the origins of the CSM wherein he indicated two important dates and in which he named his confrere, Fr Cavoli, as protagonist and originator, and the Hospice of Fr Cavoli as the source of origin of a new female congregation in Japan.

It was in the year 1929 that Fr Cavoli organized a female circle in honour of the Immaculate which started a discreet activity of visiting the poor. On 1 January 1933, some ladies of varying ages accepted the invitation of the Salesian missionary Fr Cavoli to work gratuitously for the Catholic Hospice of Miyazaki, an apostolate which was started by the same missionary. Later on, other ladies requested Fr Cavoli to take them into the Hospice, where they offered themselves in order to serve God, work gratuitously, live in common and visit the sick in their homes.⁶⁰ Fr Cimatti, writing to Fr Ricaldone on 26 February 1937, said that his suggestion to Fr Cavoli to found a female indigenous religious congregation was his wanting to highlight the importance of charity already aflame at the Hospice, but the lack of which Fr Cimatti definitely found among the Salesians.⁶¹ Fr Cimatti manifested his sad experience of conflicts among some confreres; but he tried to make charity get the better in all of them. It was the best that he could do for the confreres.⁶²

Earlier, on 2 January 1937, Fr Cimatti made his *rendiconto* to the Prefect General, Fr Pietro Ricaldone. He wrote to the Superior in Turin regarding his difficulties as superior. He admitted humbly and sincerely that he was one who was unable to command. Indeed, it

⁵⁹ Cimatti Museum Tokyo, Tokyo (CMT) Lettere, *Cimatti to Card. Fumasoni, Pro Memoria, Miyazaki 17 February 1937.*

⁶⁰ CMT Lettere. *Antonio Cavoli, Pro Memoria, Miyazaki, Giappone, 17 February 1937.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, *Cimatti to Ricaldone, Miyazaki 26 February 1937.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, *Cimatti to Ricaldone, Miyazaki 27 January 1937.*

took him several attempts to make Fr Cavoli heed his suggestion to found a female indigenous religious congregation. The confrere agreed to the suggestion, only out of obedience to his superior. But Fr Cimatti was ready to allow anything good, trusting in the good conscience of the confreres. He admitted to the Superior in Turin, though, that the finances were low, that souls were being lost, that the work was in tilt. He claimed that he was not a strong organizer, incapable of concluding what he began.⁶³ Perhaps, he had another reason for suggesting to Fr Cavoli to found a female indigenous religious congregation.

Fr Cimatti also admitted to the Catechist General, Fr Pietro Tirona, his handicap as a superior. He was not adept with the material concerns of the missions, on account of which he did not want to be distracted from his real concern – the apostolate and the formation of the Salesian personnel of the Mission.⁶⁴ It was in this state of mind that he made his request to the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide to begin in his Prefecture Apostolic a female indigenous religious congregation whose originator was Fr Cavoli. Definitely, Fr Cimatti could not afford to be distracted by other initiatives and works from his desire to focus on the Salesians and their formation.

2.3. *Things Started to Happen*

It was during a meeting of the *Circolo Immacolata* in September 1929 that Fr Antonio Cavoli suggested to the young members to visit the poor and the sick (Mt. 11, 5). To facilitate this work, he turned to the Municipal Office and to the Central Police Station, so that he might obtain a list of the poor and the sick that were most in need of attention and help. Nonetheless, it was Fr Cavoli who realized that words were not enough when catering for the poor and the sick.⁶⁵ Consequently, after one of the weekly meetings, he decided to ask

⁶³ *Ibid.*, Cimatti to Ricaldone (Prefect General), Miyazaki 2 January 1937.

⁶⁴ CMT Lettere, Cimatti to Pietro Tirona (Catechist General), Miyazaki 7 January 1937.

⁶⁵ Cf. A. CAVOLI, *Dall'Italia al Giappone*, p.81.

from each of the members a *soldo*, for a total of 21 *soldi*, and told the first contributors that he wanted their work to begin with an act of faith in Divine Providence. Thus, from the following Sunday, “those ladies” went to visit the poor with some gifts in hand. The poor asked who this God who sent gifts was, so that they might thank him. Consequently, the young visitors could make discourses about God, the immortal soul, Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin or Paradise, and the poor, especially the aged, felt the need to go to Church to thank God. Baptism was then administered to those who asked for it out of conviction.⁶⁶

It was Fr Cavoli who decided to open a hospice for the poor. After the celebration of baptism on Christmas of 1931, which was a source of joy for the missionaries, he had a bright idea: to open a place to gather the poor so that they could be better served. Consequently, he thought of two things: buying an old house to welcome 8 or 10 among the neediest, and entrusting these poor to some ladies of good will. Later, in March 1932, he went to the Municipal authorities to present his project of a “poor people’s paradise”. He bought for his project half a hectare of land outside the City in July and construction began in August.⁶⁷ By 18 December 1932 the Hospice was officially inaugurated and the first group of old people entered the Hospice in January 1933.⁶⁸

Fr Cavoli managed to find, after much difficulty and preoccupation, some willing ladies to serve the aged residents gratis and for the love of God. This would, in fact, grow into a lay association marked by a spirit of sacrifice. He would go from the parish residence to the Hospice to say mass for them; he would sometimes give these volunteers conferences, catechism lessons, and other things. By the end of spring of 1933 a new section was added for orphans who

⁶⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 82-84.

⁶⁷ Before the midnight Mass Fr Cavoli baptized about 20 poor people and other catechumens. Earlier, he had baptized other poor people in their houses on account of their inability to go to the church. Cf. *ibid.*, p.86-87.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.89.

entered it on 16 August 1933. When he came back from Italy, he saw the need of further expanding the Hospice: a building for the orphans, a section for babies, a church, and a kindergarten. In May 1935, work began once more. By 29 September 1935 the Hospice was inaugurated for the second time. When the Emperor came to Kyushu Island in the autumn of 1935, as originator and head of a unique social work in the whole of Miyazaki, Fr Cavoli was invited by the Prefect of Miyazaki to have an audience with the Emperor. His Hospice, in fact, helped to change the mentality of the civil authorities, who could not imagine a social work with a foreigner as its head.⁶⁹

It is very clear that the Hospice of Miyazaki was an initiative and invention of Fr Cavoli.⁷⁰ He continued to move in the direction of reaching out to the poor, most especially the elderly, who were most in need of attention and respect. Earlier, on 31 January 1937, Fr Cavoli had once more initiated an activity in favour of the elderly in the Prefecture Apostolic, the *Giornata dei Vecchi* (Day of the Elderly). In fact Fr Cimatti wrote to Fr Ricaldone about this activity, which he and the Salesians sought to institutionalize. This was indeed an initiative of Fr Cavoli in the city of Miyakonojo of the Prefecture Apostolic. He considered this project to be in accord with the mind and heart of the Japanese, deeply rooted in the Japanese conscience, and narrated in their legends and stories.⁷¹

2.4. *The Kyugoin in its Chronicle (1933-1937)*

Both the early Chronicles of the *Kyugoin*, as well as the Salesian House of Miyazaki, presented clearly the protagonist of the work at the *Kyugoin*: Fr Cavoli, who initiated it, and did not hesitate to give himself wholly to it. His wartime experience had taught him what commitment was. But one should not forget that it was at the *Kyugoin* that the first core group of the CSM experienced Salesian religious life, as well as charity. The chronicle of the *Kyugoin* for the years

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.92.

⁷⁰ CMT Antonio Cavoli, *Pro Memoria*, 17 February 1937.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, *Lettere. Cimatti to Ricaldone*, 31 January 1937.

1933 to 1937 reveal the involvement of the Salesians in this work, most specially Fr Cavoli.⁷²

Already in March 1933, Fr Cavoli spoke of perfection to the ladies who worked as volunteers at the *Kyugoin*,⁷³ thus introducing them to a more profound idea of commitment. On 24 March 1933 he specified the purpose of the group that he had organized: the members of the group work and minister to the residents of the Hospice out of love. Furthermore, he told the members that they should “pray and work”, striving to be holy, as they lead the beneficiaries of their work of love.⁷⁴

Moreover, Fr Cavoli started to organize the work at the *Kyugoin* which involved both Salesians and lay volunteers, especially the females who were deemed to be more adept and adapted to the work. On 5 September 1933, he, Fr Leone Liviabella, the native catechist Matsuo, Osafune, and the couple Kurita met to discuss how to organize the work.⁷⁵ The Salesians continued to follow up the work, even when Fr Cavoli left for Italy in order to make some propaganda for his initiative.⁷⁶

Fr Cimatti himself shared the zeal of Fr Cavoli and esteemed the initiative of his confrere, whose presence was felt very much at the Hospice. Two days after Fr Cavoli left, he visited the *Kyugoin* and gave a talk to those who ministered there.⁷⁷ He continued to visit regularly in order to animate its volunteers, giving talks about the

⁷² This chronicle is in Japanese. Sr Sophia Oshita CSM, working in Caritas School Don Bosco in Santa Rosa, Laguna, Philippines, provided the English translation of this document on 1 March 2008.

⁷³ Suore della Carità Archivio Storico Tokio, Tokyo (SCAST), *Chronicle of the Kyugoin (1933-1937)*, 18 March 1933.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 24 March 1933.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 5 September 1933.

⁷⁶ Fr Cavoli left Miyazaki on 3 October 1933. It was his first return to Italy after he left his native country in 1925. Cf. SCAST *Chronicle of the Kyugoin (1933-1937)*, 3 October 1933.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 5 October 1933.

Mass and the importance of the visit to the Blessed Sacrament.⁷⁸ Fr Liviabella, instead, came to hear the confessions of the volunteers who were Christians.⁷⁹ The following year he was assigned to be director in the absence of Fr Cavoli, thus committing him further to the apostolate.⁸⁰ A certain Matsuo, catechist of the Salesian Parish, instead, came to teach religion to the residents, as well as to the Aisi members and its aspirants.⁸¹ At times the Osafunes substituted him in teaching catechism to the residents.⁸² Even the Bishop of Fukuoka was a visitor sometimes.⁸³ The principals of seven Miyazaki elementary schools came for a visit, as well as the chief of police of Miyazaki and his assistant.⁸⁴ Some City Hall officials of Miyazaki made a survey of the work. Even the ambassador of Italy came to visit the Miyazaki parish and the Hospice.⁸⁵

On 13 April 1935, Fr Cavoli came back from Italy.⁸⁶ As soon as he came back he continued what he had begun and what the confreres who substituted him during his absence did. He returned to teaching at the *Kyugoin*, especially its volunteers. From 3 May 1935 he continued to explain the Bible to the Aisi.⁸⁷ He sent two Aisi members to attend a seminar for nursery teachers.⁸⁸ To prepare for the establishment of a nursery he held a meeting with a committee of the local government at the *Kyugoin*.⁸⁹ On 20 October 1935, he, the

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 15 February 1934.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 20 February 1934.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, [...] January 1934.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 23 November 1933.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 29 July 1934.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 23 May 1933, 27 January 1934. On his visit of 27 January 1934, the Osafunes and Mr. Kurita welcomed him.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 24 May 1934.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 12 July 1934.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 13 April 1935.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 3 May 1935.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 5 June 1935.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 15 July 1935.

Osafunes and the Kuritas went to Tokyo to participate in a conference regarding social welfare.⁹⁰

Fr Cavoli made sure that the female volunteers of the *Kyugoin* were followed up in their spiritual journey. From 15 to 17 July, the Aisi members had their retreat.⁹¹ Fr Cavoli even introduced the possibility of the volunteers being members of the Association of Salesian Cooperators, as he sent the Osafunes and the Kuritas to the meeting of the Association.⁹² The serious sickness of one of the Aisi members, Kubo Sewo (later Sr Giuliana, one of the first CSM), drew the concern of Fr Cavoli.⁹³

Fr Cavoli's return from Italy meant financial help which he brought with him, in order to expand the work. In fact, for the feast of St. Vincent de Paul, titular saint of the Hospice, Mass was celebrated in the newly inaugurated chapel.⁹⁴ On 29 September 1935 the new orphanage was inaugurated, with none less than Fr Cavoli presiding over the celebration.⁹⁵ Earlier, on 16 September 1935, the *Kyugoin* had started to learn printing.⁹⁶ The local government seeing the good that was being done, pledged to help. Therefore Fr Cavoli, the Kuritas and Matsuo went to the City Hall on 30 July 1935 officially to receive a subsidy of 1800 Yen. Later on a grant of 4074 Yen was received from the national government.⁹⁷

The *Kyugoin* continued to make news, inasmuch as the good it was doing was noble and significant. A foreigner, who was in-charge

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 20 October 1935.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 15-17 July 1936. It was practically the same schedule for the next year. Cf. *Ibid.*, 15-17 July 1937.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 1-2 February 1936.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 8 April 1936.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 19 July 1935.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 29 September 1935. Fr Cimatti and Fr Cavoli celebrated the second anniversary of the *Kyugoin* with the children's department. Cf. *Ibid.*, 29 September 1937.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 16 September 1935.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 22 April 1937.

and who was showing such tremendous compassion for the marginalized citizens of the country which hosted him, continued to receive visitors and their help as well.

Five days after Fr Cavoli returned from Italy, the Governor of the Prefecture of Miyazaki visited the *Kyugoin* and even gave a donation.⁹⁸ It was then the turn of the Prefect of Kagoshima together with two religious sisters.⁹⁹ Thirty-six people, made up of the Mayor of Miyazaki, the committee for the poor and the principal of a school, also came for a visit.¹⁰⁰ On 13 November 1935, the Emperor himself, while visiting Miyazaki, passed by the *Kyugoin* with the people welcoming him along the way. Two days later, the Grand Chamberlain Irie visited too.¹⁰¹ These illustrious visits definitely added further renown and tribute to the good which the Hospice was doing not only for Miyazaki but for the whole of Japan.

Msgr. Breton, the Bishop of Fukuoka, came to visit the *Kyugoin* again on 23 May 1936.¹⁰² Even the Superiors of Turin took time to visit. The Prefect General, Fr Pietro Berutti (1885-1950), who arrived in Miyazaki on 16 August 1937 came to visit the Hospice.¹⁰³ Earlier, the delegate of the Rector Major, Fr Antonio Candela (1897-1961), had also paid a visit.¹⁰⁴

The *Kyugoin* people participated in the midnight Mass of Christmas 1936, and at the early morning mass in the parish two of their residents received the sacrament of baptism.¹⁰⁵ It was another occasion for joy for Fr Cavoli and the Salesians to see their work

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18 April 1935. The Governor of Miyazaki came to visit again the *Kyugoin*. Cf. *Ibid.*, 1 July 1937.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 24 May 1935.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 27 November 1936.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 13, 15 November 1936.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 23 May 1936.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 17 August 1937.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 17 July 1937.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 25 December 1936.

bearing fruits of conversion. It was a prelude to greater things in the following year.

Early in 1937 Fr Cimatti and Fr Cavoli started to move towards the realization of the CSM. To ensure the personnel for such a move the people of the *Kyugoin* also cooperated to find vocations. On 31 July 1937 Osafune had gone to Sasebo for vocation promotion,¹⁰⁶ and returned from her campaign with two new Aisi members, Sasaki Nui and Yamaguchi Mitsue. Along with these two a certain Yamashita Kikue came as an aspirant.¹⁰⁷

The following month, on 5 August 1937, Fr Cavoli went to Fukuoka to request the Bishop to accept the aspirants to the novitiate of the congregation of sisters which the Bishop had founded.¹⁰⁸ A week later Fr Cavoli talked to five Aisi members who had applied for the novitiate.¹⁰⁹ By 22 August 1937 the acceptance of the aspirants to the novitiate was celebrated in the Parish of Miyazaki.¹¹⁰ Fr Cavoli himself accompanied these novices to Fukuoka.¹¹¹ In fact, he would go and visit them several times. The *Kyugoin* people would support their novices, sending whatever help they could.¹¹²

Since he started the Hospice, Fr Cavoli immersed himself in his initiative, making it almost his main concern and preoccupation. He dedicated himself full-time to it, giving the best Salesian contribution possible. However, this did not exclude the contribution of other Salesians to the *Kyugoin*. They continued to help in its development until finally it would be on its own. Nonetheless, the image of

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 19 July 1937.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 31 July 1937.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 5 August 1937.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 11 August 1937.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 22 August 1937.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* 28 August 1937.

¹¹² The *Kyugoin* people would send reading materials (Sunday and weekday reflections) to the novice Sr Vincenzina. They also sent her some blankets. Cf. *SCAST Chronicle of the Kyugoin (1933-1937)*, 13 December 1937.

Fr Cavoli would emerge more and more as the protagonist in the CSM's birth and growth.

3. The Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Before the arrival of the Salesians the Foreign Missions of Paris were already active in Thailand, put up by the Propaganda Fide for the Apostolic Vicariate of Thailand. They also had an indigenous female religious congregation, *Congregazione delle Suore Amanti della Croce*, to collaborate with the missionaries in the work of catechesis. This experience along with his own in China made Fr Gaetano Pasotti, head of the first group of Salesians in Thailand, realize the importance of an indigenous help, characteristically feminine. He, therefore, planned his own foundation of a local female congregation in his mission territory.¹¹³

3.1. “Buone Figliuole”

Fr Pasotti, Prefect Apostolic of Rajaburi, wrote to the Cardinal Prefect of the Propaganda on 12 June 1937 informing him that he had been working for a couple of years (from 1935 ca.) to establish a female native congregation of sisters, useful where the missionaries were already and where they were not yet. He said that there had been a discreet group of *buone figliuole*, which had gathered under the guidance of the most elderly among them and which conducted a life of work and of piety as if they were already religious.¹¹⁴

Cardinal Fumasoni Biondi, Prefect of Propaganda Fide, answered the request of Fr Pasotti on 14 July 1937, giving him permission to start the *Congregazione indigena delle Suore*

¹¹³ Cf. ENRICO DANIELI, *Don Bosco in Thailandia. 75 anni di lavoro missionario e Salesiano (1927-2002)*, 4 volumes, Bangkok (unpublished manuscript). This is a precious work which covers almost the whole history of the Salesians in Thailand. It can very well serve as a basis of study of any specific aspect of the Salesian history in Thailand.

¹¹⁴ Archives Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary [=ASIHM] (Hua Hin), *Pasotti to Fumasoni-Biondi, Bang Nok Khuek, 12 June 1937*.

Ausiliatrici.¹¹⁵ The Prefect Apostolic, in fact, had asked Propaganda Fide to give him the necessary authorization to initiate this female native congregation.¹¹⁶ The Daughter of Mary Help of Christians (FMA) he had chosen could be both superior and mistress of novices, until such time as necessary.¹¹⁷ Hence on 7 December 1937 he, as Prefect Apostolic of Rajaburi, erected officially the *Congregationem Sororum Indigenarum sub titulo 'Auxiliatricum'*.¹¹⁸

For the formation of the members of the new Congregation, Fr Pasotti asked the help of Sr Clotilde Cogliolo, Provincial of the FMA Province of St. Thomas (*Indiarum Orientalium et Extremi Orientis*), based in Madras, India, to help in this project. Consequently the FMA Provincial sent one of her sisters, Sr Antonia Morellato, as in-charge; she in fact, had been in her assignment since 24 May 1937.¹¹⁹ Later, another FMA, Sr Luigina di Giorgio,¹²⁰ joined her. The FMA, in fact, was the lone female religious congregation present in the Prefecture Apostolic of Rajaburi at the moment.

At the time of the foundation of the new congregation, Fr Pasotti had also erected the novitiate house of the *Auxiliatrices* in Bang Nok Khuek,¹²¹ and had appointed Sr Antonia Morellato FMA¹²² as mistress of novices.¹²³ On 11 December 1937, he expressed his

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Fumasoni-Biondi to Pasotti, Rome, 14 July 1937.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Pasotti to Fumasoni-Biondi, Bang Nok Khuek, 12 June 1937.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Fumasoni-Biondi to Pasotti, Rome, 14 July 1937.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Decree of Election. Pasotti, Bang Nok Khuek, 7 December 1937.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Pasotti to Fumasoni-Biondi, Bang Nok Khuek, 12 June 1937.

¹²⁰ Sr Luigina di Giorgio [Udine, 25 April 1900 +Banpong, 14 Sept. 1989]: arrived in Thailand in 17 October 1931; first profession, Conegliano, 5 August 1926; perpetual profession, Bangkok, 5 August 1932.

¹²¹ ASIHM Decree of Election, Pasotti, Bang Nok Khuek, 7 December 1937. The patroness of the novitiate house was St. Therese of the Child Jesus; previously, Fr Pasotti thought of making the Immaculate Heart of Mary as patroness.

¹²² Sr Antonietta Morellato [Padua, 13 June 1911 +17 Dec. 1978]: first profession, Conegliano, 6 August 1930.

¹²³ ASIHM Decree of Appointment, Pasotti, Bang Nok Khuek, 7 December 1937.

gratitude to the FMA Provincial for the help given. He added, though, that the FMA would not be alone; instead, a Salesian would also help in the novitiate. But he needed the help of the FMA, as he was occupied with other tasks. The work for the new congregation was a delicate one.¹²⁴ Later, he would write to the Cardinal Prefect of the Propaganda Fide and would request him to extend his gratitude to the FMA Mother General, for the work of formation Sr Morellato was doing for the *Auxiliatrices*.¹²⁵

By 8 December 1937 seven aspirants of the native congregation received the investiture. These immediately began their novitiate under Sr Morellato, who was only 26, having been born on 12 June 1911. For this, Fr Pasotti had to request from the Propaganda Fide an exemption. At the same time, he had to get also a sanation for the novices, since they had started the novitiate without the necessary exemption for their mistress.¹²⁶ By 21 November 1938 Fr Pasotti informed the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda Fide that the novices of the new congregation would make their first profession on 9 December 1938.¹²⁷

The FMA house in Bang Nok Khuek which belonged to the Mission was willingly given back to the Prefect Apostolic by the FMA Provincial to serve as novitiate of the *Auxiliatrices*.¹²⁸ The FMA, nonetheless, continued the direction of the novitiate and of the new

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, Pasotti to Cogliolo, Bang Nok Khuek, 11 December 1937.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, Pasotti to Fumasoni-Biondi, Bang Nok Khuek, 29 March 1939. In this same letter, Fr Pasotti informed the Cardinal that the new religious superior of the Salesians in Thailand was Fr Giovanni Casetta. Cf. *Ibid.* Fr Pasotti could now be Prefect Apostolic of Rajaburi full-time.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* Pasotti to Fumasoni-Biondi, Bang Nok Khuek, 6 January 1938. The dispensation for the age of Sr Morellato and the *sanatoria* for the novices were given on 7 February of the same year. Cf. ASIHM (Hua Hin), *Propaganda Fide, Rome, 7 February 1938*. Sr Morellato would be re-nominated mistress of novices for another three years by Fr Pasotti. Cf. *ibid.* *Reelectio Novitiarum Magistrae, Pasotti, Bang Nok Khuek, 7 December 1940*.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, Fumasoni-Biondi to Pasotti, Rome, 3 December 1938.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, Pasotti to Fiumisano Biondi, Bang Nok Khuek, 29 March 1939.

congregation. Both Fr Pasotti and the native sisters were sincerely happy to have the FMA with them.¹²⁹

3.2. *The Auxiliatrices*

Fr Pasotti was in need of a rule for the *Auxiliatrices*, but still did not know how to go about it. He wrote to the Cardinal Prefect of the Propaganda Fide on 29 March 1939, asking candidly if the Cardinal could send him some exemplars of constitutions of female congregations, whether native or European, which could serve as a basis for the future rule of his new congregation.¹³⁰ The Propaganda Fide sent him a copy of the constitutions of a Chinese congregation.¹³¹

When he asked permission to found a native female religious congregation in his Prefecture Apostolic, Fr Pasotti provided the Propaganda Fide information regarding the new congregation. It was destined for the Mission of Rajaburi, with an eminent missionary spirit, in which it was to be *Siamenses per Siamenses*. Its scope was to do in the female ambit activities which were within the program of the missionary: propaganda, education, charity. Furthermore, it was also to help the Salesian priests residing in the Missions. Its members would do domestic work; they were to help maintain the decorum of the churches. They were to serve in clinics, assist those in maternity.¹³² The *Auxiliatrices* were supposed to be disposed to do any work, whether material or spiritual: visit the sick, prepare them to receive the sacraments, baptize children *in articulo mortis*, prepare [adults] to receive baptism and first communion, take care of the orphans and girls at risk. They would help spread good literature within the diocese,

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, Pasotti to Fumasoni-Biondi, Bang Nok Khuek, 29 March 1939.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, Fumasoni-Biondi to Pasotti, Rome 15 April 1939.

¹³² *Ibid.* *Auxiliatrices*. Pasotti to Fumasoni-Biondi, Bang Nok Khuek, 12 June 1937.

they would work for the formation and the development of the female Catholic Action.¹³³

Fr Pasotti's conviction was that the formation of the *Auxiliatrices* should be so complete as to answer the modern demands of the missionary.¹³⁴ Its spirit would be similar to that of the FMA, especially with regards to the education of the female young.¹³⁵ This female native congregation was in fact one of the enduring fruits which Fr Pasotti brought about in his apostolate as first Vicar Apostolic of Ratchaburi. He really needed the help and the collaboration of native sisters, especially in the female environment of the parishes. From the beginning the SIHM committed itself to the dream of its Founder, so that it could grow and develop through the formation received from the Salesians and the FMA. It has always served in the parishes according to the spirit of Don Bosco, giving them a distinct face from other female religious congregations already existing in Thailand. In its General Chapter of 1985, the SIHM clearly spelt out its identity, specifying service to the local Church as its first task and

¹³³ In fact, one of the first professed members of the new congregation was already studying to become a nurse to ensure the social work of the new congregation. Cf. ASIHM *Auxiliatrices*. *Pasotti, Bang Nok Khuek, 12 June 1937*.

¹³⁴ The "*Auxiliatrices*" would become eventually "Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary". The Secretary of Propaganda Fide wrote to Bishop Pietro Carretto on 10 July 1972, informing him that Propaganda Fide had conceded that the official title of the Institute "*Suore Ausiliatrici di Ratchaburi*" could be changed to "*Ancelle del Cuore Immacolato di Maria*". Cf. ASIHM *Secretary of Propaganda Fide to Carretto, Rome, 10 July 1972*. It would also be made into a congregation of pontifical right.

¹³⁵ ASIHM, *Pasotti to Fumasoni-Biondi, Bang Nok Khuek, 29 March 1939*. Later, Bishop Pietro Carretto described the "*Auxiliatrices*" as meant to assist the missionary: "Queste Suore avrebbero dovuto aiutare il Missionario nelle varie residenze", thus freeing the resident missionary from the material preoccupations of the kitchen; they were to give "cure specifiche verso le ragazze e donne". They were to live in communities of at least two (preferably three). Their spirit was similar to that of the FMA. Cf. ASIHM *Carretto to Rizzoli, Surat Thani, 30 August 1972*.

principal aim. For this, the members place themselves at the service of the parishes according to the directives of the Diocese.¹³⁶

3.3. *Annual Reports*

The annual reports of Fr Gaetano Pasotti as Superior of the Independent Mission of Rajaburi and later as Prefect Apostolic and Vicar Apostolic, show the history of how the SIHM came into existence in Thailand.

Fr Pasotti invited the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians to help in the missionary work of Thailand. In the year that he was named superior of the Independent Mission of Rajaburi, Fr Pasotti wrote in his annual report of 6 August 1931 of the possible arrival of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians towards the end of 1931. The sisters of this congregation were supposed to be given charge of a school for girls, parallel to the one for boys, and which already had 5 students.¹³⁷ At the same time, in the *Prospectus Status Missionis* of that same year 1931, he also referred to the existence of about 15 *Virgines indigenae* in Bang Nok Khuek who were all Siamese.¹³⁸

In the 1932 *Prospectus Status Missionis* he reported to the Propaganda Fide of the presence of *Sorores*, 13 Siamese *Virgines indigenae*. At the same time, there were now six Italian Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.¹³⁹ Nonetheless, Fr Pasotti stated in his Annual Report the arrival of six FMA on 16 November 1931. They started to learn the language as soon as they arrived. From early June they began to administer the school in Bang Nok Khuek which

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, Msgr. Gaetano Pasotti e l'Originalità della Congregazione delle Suore Ancelle del Cuore Immacolato di Maria Thailandia, 3-4.

¹³⁷ ASC A905 Rajaburi [7]. Pasotti, Annual Report, 6 August 1931.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* *Prospectus Status Missionis* 1931. The Delegate of the Prefect Apostolic was Fr Giovanni Casetta, who in fact signed also the *Prospectus*. Possibly, the "Virgines indigenae" referred to were probably Thai members of a local association of pious women called "Amanti della Croce", which were founded by the MEP when they were still in the Independent Mission of Rajaburi.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* *Prospectus Status Missionis* 1932.

had about 200 students and which had an oratory attached to it. For Fr Pasotti the arrival of the FMA was a step forward to meet the issue of female education, and at the same time he hoped that they would help to lay the base of a female native congregation.¹⁴⁰

In the annual report of 1934, the year in which Fr Pasotti was named Prefect Apostolic of Rajaburi (28 May 1934), he mentioned the opening of a house in Bang Nok Khuek for *Virgines Indigenae*, to provide more space to the FMA who had arrived.¹⁴¹ The following year he mentioned that he had also contacted Capuchin nuns to start a monastery in the Prefecture Apostolic.¹⁴² So, by 1936 there were not only the *Sorores Indigenae* and the FMA, but also five Capuchin nuns from Florence.¹⁴³ It is to be noted, however, that in the same year, there was the on-going formation of mission personnel who were native women. This was typical to places which were mission land, and Fr Pasotti had been working on this for more than a couple of years. He stated that much work had already been done regarding this.¹⁴⁴ In his annual report of 1937 Fr Pasotti wrote that he had been working for a couple of years in order to give life to this congregation and that it was almost complete. He expected the first group to begin regular novitiate and hoped that the personnel in formation might obtain legal titles.¹⁴⁵

The accompaniment offered by the FMA to the members of this congregation was accepted with common satisfaction. At the

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid. Pasotti, Annual Report, 1 August 1932*. In the same report, it was indicated that there was already a school for the formation of catechists where the Rector "tiene una conferenza mensile d'indole morale apologetica, col preciso scopo di concorrere alla formazione di questo prezioso elemento ausiliare". Cf. *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid. Pasotti, Annual Report, 1 August 1934*.

¹⁴² *Ibid. Pasotti, Annual Report, 9 August 1935*.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ ASC A905 Rajaburi [7]. *Pasotti, Annual Report, 15 August 1936*.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid. Pasotti, Annual Report, 19 August 1937*. It is interesting to note how the foundation of a female religious congregation in Thailand was coinciding with the foundation of a similar congregation in Japan and China.

same time the *Auxiliatrices* were asked to obtain a title which would render them capable of teaching at the missionary residences to which they would be assigned.¹⁴⁶ By 1938 Fr Pasotti could officially name the Sisters as *Auxiliatrices*, based in Bang Nok Khuek, with seven novices. There were also 10 aspirants.¹⁴⁷ He further wrote that by December 1938 there would be the first profession of six *Auxiliatrices*; another small group consisting of four was preparing to have the investiture.¹⁴⁸

Eight years later, in 1947,¹⁴⁹ the *Auxiliatrices* numbered 14, with 6 novices, all Siamese of course.¹⁵⁰ Fr Pasotti declared that from the day of foundation on 8 November 1937 he had tried to give a serious religious formation and a solid intellectual culture to them, who were not in any way inferior to other educated persons in the country.¹⁵¹ He also said that the two FMAs who had been guiding the new Congregation were very responsible. They even asked that the native sisters should share the responsibility of taking care of their fellow *Auxiliatrices*, suggesting that two native sisters form part of the Council.¹⁵² Furthermore, he declared that the superior of the elementary and high schools for girls of Bang Nok Khuek was an *Auxiliatrix*. He was indeed optimistic that this Congregation would be a real asset to the general plan of evangelization of the Vicariate Apostolic.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid. Pasotti, Annual Report, 1 September 1939.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid. Prospectus Status Missionis 1938.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid. Pasotti, Annual Report, 15 August 1938.*

¹⁴⁹ The Prefecture Apostolic of Rajaburi became a Vicariate Apostolic on 3 April 1941. Fr Pasotti was named its first Vicar Apostolic.

¹⁵⁰ ASC A905 *Rajaburi* [8] *Prospectus Status Missionis 1947.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid. Prospectus Status Missionis 1947.*

¹⁵² After almost five years of following up the *Auxiliatrices*, Sr Antonia Morellato and Sr Luigina Di Giorgio expressed their desire to Fr Pasotti that some sisters of the new congregation be involved as council members in dealing with the issues of the congregation. Cf. ASIHM *Morellato to Pasotti, Bang Nok Khuek, 24 April 1942.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid. Pasotti, Annual Report September 1947.*

Before long the members of the first group came back to the mother house to prepare themselves for the perpetual profession. While the FMA continued their meritorious work on behalf of the *Auxiliatrices*, two of the recently professed who showed good intelligence were sent to the school of the Ursulines in Bangkok to complete their schooling and to prepare to become kindergarten teachers.¹⁵⁴ Bishop Pasotti's *Prospectus Status Missionis* of 1949, however, did not include any annual report. The fact was that he was counting his days with the congregation which he had founded.¹⁵⁵

4. The Daughters of the Queenship of Mary

4.1. "Congregatio non grata"

The autobiography written by Fr Carlo Della Torre is a source which can tell us why he decided to found a female native congregation in Thailand.¹⁵⁶ The Superiors in Turin, in the words of Fr Ricaldone, wanted that the missionary work in Thailand be a model for the other missionary works by the Salesians: novices and clerics at work in the missions together with priest missionaries.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Pasotti, *Annual Report, August 1948*: The *Adiutrices* were 20 (14+6) professed, but with no novices. The FMA were down to 12 (4 Siamese and 8 Italians) from the previous 16 (they lost 4); they did not have any novice as well. Cf. ASC A905 Rajaburi [8] *Prospectus Status Missionis 1948*.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, *Prospectus Status Missionis, 1949*.

¹⁵⁶ *Archives Daughters of the Queenship of Mary, Bangkok, (ADQM), Rainieri to Della Torre, Rome, 18 January 1979*. Fr Della Torre wrote his autobiography at the request of Fr Giovanni Rainieri, member of the Salesian General Council in Rome responsible for the Salesian Family. The Thai Provincial then, Fr Michael Praphon, and even Fr Luigi Ricceri, the Rector Major, insisted on Fr Carlo to write his autobiography.

¹⁵⁷ ADQM, *Manoscritto di Autobiografia di Don Carlo Della Torre, 167*. Fr Ricaldone, speaking to the neo-missionaries of Thailand, in the words of Fr Carlo, "ci fece capire che era suo desiderio di vedere che la missione del Siam fosse una missione di modello per i salesiani, perche si inizia con la presenza di chierici e novizi insieme ai sacerdoti missionari". Cf. *Ibid.*

When Fr Carlo was still a post-novice, doing his Philosophy, he was given quite an exceptional assignment which was not normally given to clerics. A former army conscript who entered the Salesian seminary when he was already 23 years old, he was more mature than the rest, and definitely must have learned much from life in the army and in the war zones. The cooks of the Salesian seminary in Bang Nok Khuek needed replacement. As a solution girls were appointed as cooks with a *suora indigena*¹⁵⁸ at their head. At this stage (Fr) Carlo was put in charge of the money and of the house register, and was asked to do the marketing as well. So he was not only assistant to the clerics; he became also assistant to the girls who worked in the kitchen.¹⁵⁹ The old sister in-charge of the kitchen girls was one who was always nagging and complaining. Fr Carlo had to intervene to pacify the girls, who said that they were ready to continue but not with the sister in-charge. Fr Pasotti, superior of the mission, seeing that the situation of the food and of the kitchen was bettered, decided to appoint (Fr) Carlo in-charge of the kitchen and a coadjutor to help him. But he also saw other elements which he considered as indicative of God's plans for him. The Salesian priests who were working in the missionary residences complained that there were no sisters to take care of the girls;¹⁶⁰ that they found it difficult to take care of parishioners of varying origins and of both sexes at that. They admitted that already they knew little yet of the Thai language and further they had to deal with the different dialects. The fact was that elderly parishioners spoke Chinese more than Thai.¹⁶¹

(Fr) Carlo had once asked from Fr Pasotti to remove him from the work of the kitchen. But the superior had refused. He interpreted

¹⁵⁸ The "*suora indigena*" was probably one of the "*Congregazione delle Suore Amanti della Croce*" who still remained in Bang Nok Khuek.

¹⁵⁹ ADQM, *Manoscritto di Autobiografia di Don Carlo Della Torre*, 177-178.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 180-182.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 186.

this refusal as a sign from divine providence to make him do good to souls and to take certain resolutions. He claimed that it was in a moment of prayer that he decided to present two projects to his superior Fr Pasotti. The second of the two was to ask Fr Pasotti permission to begin the foundation of a female religious congregation, with few of the girls working in the kitchen as the first possible vocations. He formulated his proposal to Fr Pasotti along the following lines: the parish priests of the Salesian Mission complained that nobody was taking care of the girls in the parishes; the FMA were not yet ready for work in the parishes. Why not attempt to lay the foundation of a female religious congregation, which would later occupy themselves with the girls in their Mission?¹⁶² His superior was said to have agreed to this proposal, for an experimental period.¹⁶³ (Fr) Carlo logically met with opposition on the part of some of his confreres. The subjects of his plan were women; he was only a cleric; some confreres were hostile towards women; the Superior of the Mission was supposedly undecided and easily influenced.¹⁶⁴ Despite this, the personnel of the kitchen were serene and the postulants of the would-be congregation were very promising. Consequently, he started to write a sort of rules for the future native congregation, adapted to the conditions and life in Thailand and at the same time similar to the way of life of the Salesian Sisters. Upon finishing this, he submitted it to his Superior.¹⁶⁵

The young cleric now planned to put up a wall in order to create a sort of *clausura* for the girls of the kitchen, and within the same confines he planned to build a chapel so that the girls did not need to

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 198-199.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, *Manoscritto di Autobiografia di Don Carlo Della Torre*, 203.

¹⁶⁴ It is said that Bishop Pasotti made use of the first girls whom Fr Carlo formed for a future religious congregation as the vocations for the religious congregation he established. Cf. ASC DQM 28, *History of the DQM and request to be member of the Salesian Family*.

¹⁶⁵ ADQM, *Manoscritto di Autobiografia di Don Carlo Della Torre*, 234-235.

go to the Seminary chapel and be a cause of distraction to the seminarians.¹⁶⁶ He stated that it was when he had finally finished the work for the kitchen (about six hours before the beginning of the spiritual exercises in preparation for the priestly ordination) that he was unceremoniously told by the superior that the plan to found a female religious congregation was on hold.¹⁶⁷

On 17 May 1936 Fr Carlo had tried to convince his superior to allow him to follow his plan. He had once thought of not making the perpetual vows and was even ready to ask for dispensation from the vows, if only to achieve what he planned. For seven years, he had struggled to get an approval of his plan, but the Superiors in Turin had not even made any attempt to answer him.¹⁶⁸ Nevertheless, he had no rancor in his heart towards his superiors.¹⁶⁹ But after having understood the mind of the Rector Major, he decided to ask for the “*indultum saecularizationis*” and to be incardinated in the Prefecture Apostolic.¹⁷⁰ He had tried always to understand and obey his Superiors.¹⁷¹

Later, on 26 December 1936, Fr Carlo told Fr Pasotti of his desire to open a hospital similar to that of Blessed Cottolengo. At the same time he planned to prepare good catechists, who would dress as nurses and go to the houses of the poor sick with medicines.¹⁷² He sincerely believed that the best place to do this was in Bangkok, where there was better possibility of doctors and medicines. At the same

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 238.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 253-254.

¹⁶⁸ Archivio Ispettoria Thailandia, Bangkok (AIT), *Della Torre to Pasotti, Bang Nok Khuek, 17 May 1936.*

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, *Della Torre to Pasotti, Bang Nok Khuek, 17 May 1936.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, *Della Torre to Pasotti, [...], 1 July 1936.*

¹⁷¹ Writing to Pasotti from Thamuang on 5 January 1939, Fr Della Torre recognized the good will of the Rector Major and of the Prefect Apostolic himself. For this, he was still willing to subject himself to their consideration. Cf. AIT, *Della Torre to Pasotti, Thamuang, 5 January 1939.*

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, *Della Torre to Pasotti, [...], 26 December 1936.*

time he renewed his request to leave the Congregation and become a secular priest.¹⁷³ The Superior continued to ignore his request; he continued to be docile.

4.2. *Requests to Leave*

On 29 June 1937 Fr Carlo was assigned to the Salesian Parish in Tha Muang as an assistant parish priest. Persecution and poverty during the years of the Indo-China War made the lives of the missionaries very difficult. His desire to found a native religious congregation at the service of the parish and of the mission was once more stimulated when he was asked to be parish priest. He renewed his work among the girls working in the kitchen and the helpers in the parish and started to make them live a sort of religious life.¹⁷⁴

Fr Carlo tried to dialogue with his Provincial, Fr Giovanni Casetta.¹⁷⁵ On 30 January 1940 he asked if the latter could help him obtain at least an indult of exclaustation.¹⁷⁶ He felt sure of his motivation: his ideal was not in accord with the requirements of religious life; at the same time he could not renounce his ideal in order to continue in religious life.¹⁷⁷ He renewed his request for exclaustation to the Provincial on 23 May 1943 as suggested by the Apostolic

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, *Della Torre to Pasotti*, [...], 26 December 1936. Fr Pasotti suggested to him to try to obtain incardination to the diocese of Bangkok. Cf. *Ibid.*, *Pasotti to Della Torre*, 29 December 1936.

¹⁷⁴ ASC DQM 28, *Constitutions of the DQM*, 2.

¹⁷⁵ In a conversation with Fr G. Casetta on 14 January 1939 Fr Carlo expressed that he did not want to make the perpetual profession, for he believed that he was destined for some thing else. Cf. AIT, *Transcription of a conversation between Fr Giovanni Casetta and Fr Carlo Della Torre*, 14 January 1939.

¹⁷⁶ On 26 March 1940 Fr G. Casetta informed him that the permission had arrived from Turin for Fr Carlo to look for a Bishop who would accept him in his diocese. Cf. AIT, *G. Casetta to Della Torre*, Bangkok, 26 March 1940.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, *Della Torre to G. Casetta, Thamuang*, 30 January 1940. The Apostolic Delegate writing to Pasotti on 13 February 1940 communicated that the only thing he could do for Fr Carlo was to find a Bishop who would welcome him. Cf. AIT, *Drapier to Pasotti*, 13 February 1940.

Delegate whom he met on 16 May 1943 in the presence of Msgr. Perros, the Vicar Apostolic of Bangkok. If the superiors, however, had wanted him to ask for the indult of secularization, he would have had no problem for that either.¹⁷⁸ After almost 12 years in Thamuang (July 1937 to June 1949) Fr Carlo was finally asked to go to Bangkok, to the land bought for the technical school of St. John Bosco. Fr Pietro Carretto, then Provincial, had earlier written to Fr Carlo from Hua Hin on 31 March 1949. He authorized Fr Carlo to tell the personnel of the kitchen to decide if they wanted to go to Bangkok to prepare themselves for their future. He promised Fr Carlo that he would not place any difficulty to the designs of the Lord, if he wanted a *Piccola casa della divina provvidenza*.¹⁷⁹ Thus, while the future technical school was being constructed, he also started to construct a small house for the girls who had gone with him to Bangkok and who desired to become religious of the congregation that Fr Carlo wanted to found.¹⁸⁰

In Bangkok, however, Fr Carlo insisted on his plans to found the congregation. Hence the superiors obliged him to make the difficult choice of either leaving the Salesian Congregation or the congregation he wanted to found.¹⁸¹ It was during the extraordinary visit of a superior from Turin, Fr Modesto Bellido, General Councillor for the Missions, that he was asked to make his decision. He opted for the second in order to dedicate himself full-time to his institute. He also asked to be incardinated into the diocese of Bangkok, whose Bishop was kindly disposed to accept him. Obviously, with this decision, he and his followers accepted the fact that from then on things would be difficult and different for them.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Della Torre to Carretto, Thamuang, 23 May 1943. Fr Carretto answered him, expressing his availability to help find a solution for the confrere. Cf. AIT, Carretto to Della Torre, Banpong, 31 May 1943.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, Carretto to Della Torre, Hua Hin, 31 March 1949.

¹⁸⁰ ADQM, *Autobiography of Fr Carlo Della Torre*, 165.

¹⁸¹ AIT, Carlo Della Torre, Obituary letter, Bangkok, 15 June 1982.

¹⁸² ASC DQM 28, *Constitutions of the DQM*, 3.

4.3. *The DQM, a Secular Institute*

At first Fr Carlo thought of establishing a religious congregation.¹⁸³ But when he realized that this would limit the members to helping only the local churches, he decided to make the members of the religious congregation he started live a lay consecrated life for the apostolate, so that they could be closer to the people. For this he tried to grasp the idea of a secular institute, already exemplified by the Ursulines, founded by St. Angela Merici. On 23 December 1954 Bishop Chorin of Bangkok officially approved the Institute of the Daughters of the Queenship of Mary, in line with the papal teaching of *Provida Mater Ecclesia*.¹⁸⁴ The year after its canonical erection the first seven members of the DQM made their first profession on 9 December 1955. Almost a year later Bishop Chorin approved the text of the Constitutions on 18 October 1956.¹⁸⁵

4.4. *“Return to Don Bosco”*

When asking to be re-admitted to the Salesian Society, Fr Carlo wrote to the Holy Father on 3 August 1950 giving the reason for leaving the Congregation and being incardinated in the Diocese of

¹⁸³ It is said that in 1950 Fr Carlo was clearer with his idea of founding an indigenous religious congregation of women: “Dare all’ Istituto una norma di vita adatta al paese in cui si vive, tutta basata sullo spirito del vangelo, vita di preghiera, vita santa, e, nello stesso tempo, vita di dedizione e di apostolato, diretta tutta al lavoro di fondazione, di direzione per la conversione della gioventù affidata alle scuole dell’istituto.” Cf. ASC DQM 28, *Documents on the DQM # 02515*.

¹⁸⁴ *Apostolic Constitution of Pope Pius XII, 2 February 1947*. The secular institute was a society without public vows, with its own “external ways of association, different from the common life of Religious”, “an internal organization with rules and regulations and distributed responsibilities”, and “full membership involves freedom from incompatible commitments”; its members “profess the evangelical counsels” and “have their definite ways of ministry and apostolate.” (n.15)

¹⁸⁵ ASC DQM 28, *Documents on the DQM # 02515*. On 30 April 1982 the Constitutions of the DQM were given definitive approval by Msgr. Michai Kithunchu, Archbishop of Bangkok.

Bangkok “*pure et simpliciter*” as: for motives of apostolate, having founded a secular institute for sisters.¹⁸⁶

It was not difficult for him to be re-admitted. Fr Carlo had always demonstrated his being Salesian in spirit; he had always tried to instill a great love for Don Bosco and the Salesian spirit in the members of the Institute he founded. He had always remained very much attached to St. John Bosco. Fr Carlo had not left the Congregation for reasons of religious discipline. His request to re-enter was sincere and well intentioned. Hence the Provincial and his Council were unanimous in approving the re-entry of the confrere.¹⁸⁷ The Superior of the Thai Province then, Fr Michael Praphon, was precise in his personal opinion and personal judgment of the confrere and his re-admission. He knew the confrere personally. His conduct while he was outside the Congregation and his attachment to Don Bosco and to the Congregation even in difficult times was exemplary. The spirit of work and sacrifice which he instilled in the members of the Congregation he founded was praiseworthy. He had definitely enriched the Salesian Family.¹⁸⁸ Even the Archbishop of Bangkok was very positive towards Fr Carlo regarding his request for re-admission. During the period of his incardination in Bangkok he never gave any reason for complaints; on the contrary, he lived his life as a secular priest in a transparent way. Hence the Archbishop did not have anything contrary to the Salesian’s re-entry to his former religious congregation.¹⁸⁹ On account of his worsening health and danger of imminent death, Fr Carlo renewed his religious profession in the hands

¹⁸⁶ AIT, *Letter asking for re-admission to the Salesian Congregation*. According to Fr Colombini, Fr Carlo had told him that he had remained Salesian in his heart. Cf. ADQM 28, *Colombini to Rainieri, Bangkok, 6 May 1972*. For Fr Bottain, Fr Carlo leaving the Congregation was something imposed on him by way of an alternative. He, however, was “attacatissimo a tutto ciò che è salesiano”. Cf. ASC DQM 28, *Bottain to Rainieri, Bangkok, 20 November 1974*.

¹⁸⁷ AIT, *Estratto del verbale del Consiglio Ispettorale (12 November 1975)*.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, *Parere del Sig. Ispettore, D. Michele Praphon (1975)*.

¹⁸⁹ AIT, *Dichiarazione dell’Arcivescovo di Bangkok [1975]*.

of Fr Raymundo Garcia on 6 December 1981 in the presence of some confreres who were his novitiate companions. On 4 April 1982 at 6.45 p.m., having received the anointing of the sick, Fr Carlo passed to his Creator.¹⁹⁰

Conclusion

The Salesians founded religious congregations on account of the particular needs they encountered along the way in the missions. They saw new frontiers to which they sought to answer through these congregations. They all shared the Salesian charism which was at work in the Church in East Asia. This was the same charism which they sought to radiate further through the newly-founded congregations. These congregations were all home-born and home-grown, founded by male religious but assisted by female counterparts. They did not, however, remain in place all the way. Some sought to transmit the charism they received to others elsewhere; they became missionaries as their founders were. The foundation of these congregations was timely and providential. They were the concrete responses to the particular needs of their times, of the various churches where they originated and to which they belonged. Along the path of history, these congregations asked to become part of the Salesian Family. They indeed became members, if only to prove that the Salesian charism has indeed been deeply rooted in their native soil, that it has grown into sturdy branches. Their admission into the Salesian Family is proof that they have indeed been docile recipients of the spirit of the Founder of the Salesian Society, and at the same time they have ably transmitted to others the spirit of their Founder.

The establishment of these congregations by the Salesians had not always been easy. Definitely, the “Founders-Salesians” encountered difficulties of varying nature with their local superiors and those in Turin, with their confreres, with the local ecclesiastical

¹⁹⁰ ASC DQM 28, *Constitutions of the DQM*, 4. He died after 23 years of religious profession and 46 years of priesthood.

and civil authorities, with themselves as well. At the end though, they came out champions of their desire to live the “*da mihi animas cetera tolle*” of St. John Bosco. In a way, they were stubborn Salesians who did only what they thought was good for the mission of the Church and for the Salesian family.

The “Founders-Salesians” were Europeans who tried to form Asians. They tried to understand the latter; the latter too did not spare efforts to understand them and to make themselves be understood. Perhaps, the founders were unconsciously westernizing their first constituents. But their primary intent was clear: to have local partners in sowing the Salesian charism and native counterparts in making this charism gain roots. Obviously, they were children of their times. In East Asia, somehow, the Salesian ideal was finally inculturated and indigenized.

There is need to interrelate the histories of the congregations founded by the Salesians in East Asia. It would be good to study their common experiences – both difficulties and triumphs. It is good to know how they received the imprint of St. John Bosco and how much of it. This would mean examining the life stories of the protagonists of the various foundations, the projects of life which moved them to found and be part of these congregations. Moreover, it would be good to know the politics of the Superiors in Turin with regards to the founding Salesians and the congregations founded.

This study should somehow provoke the Congregations concerned to examine critically and analytically their histories. Then they can have a more solid basis for the study of the charism of their Congregation, their growth and development. The celebration of the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Society of St. Francis of Sales should be a stimulus to these Congregations too to study their respective foundations and especially their founders.

This paper reveals the new frontiers of those times, which the Salesians dared and shared with those whom they encountered. It was clear and urgent for them to recruit vocations, if only to ensure that what they sowed might persevere and bear fruit. The

congregations that were founded as a result were the well proven and valid response of the Salesians to the “new frontiers” of that particular epoch. For the Salesian charism to preserve its validity at the present time, perhaps in the place of those “new frontiers” we would have to look for the “newer frontiers” of today.

The foundation of these congregations reveals the desire of the Salesians to extend the efficacy of their missionary activity through the participation of locals inspired by the same charism. It further expresses their effort, at a time when the Salesians were taught to orient themselves particularly to the male sections, to give the Salesian charism a feminine character and to transform the Salesian charism into a movement with the same intent: the “*da mihi animas, cetera tolle*”. The native female religious congregations helped fill a lacuna – the care of the female sections of society – left by the Salesians, who wanted very much to be missionaries to all, regardless of the gender of the beneficiaries of their apostolic endeavours. They contributed to making Don Bosco belong forever to the places and to the people where his sons worked. At the end, Don Bosco became also East Asian.

The strena of the Rector Major of 2009 – “Let us commit ourselves to making the Salesian Family a vast movement of persons for the salvation of the young” – has a timely relation with the study just presented. We know, nevertheless, that the congregations founded by Salesians have long been dedicated to the salvation of the young. It is, indeed, true that the seed has become a “verdant and robust” tree. But how did it become a “*Bosco*”?