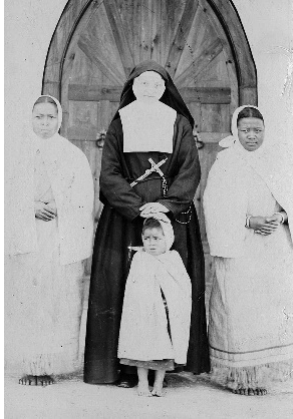


# STUDIA DE HISTORIA SALVATORIANA



Salvatorian Sisters' Mission in Northeast India  
1890 - 1915  
and



Native Salvatorian Sisters in India  
New start 1984

STUDIA DE HISTORIA SALVATORIANA

Sectio 9/1

Salvatorian Sisters' Mission

In North East India –

A First Glimpse

1890-1915

and

Native Salvatorian Sisters in India

New Start 1984

Study Group Mary of the Apostles

Villa Salvator Mundi

Rome – 2011

Villa Salvator Mundi

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Revised and expanded edition of the publication of 1994

*“Salvatorian Sisters’ Mission in North East India*

*A first Glimpse, 1890 – 1915”*

Sr. Felizitas Saffer, SDS

Digital edition edited and prepared in 2018 by S Natanaela Szczurko, SDS

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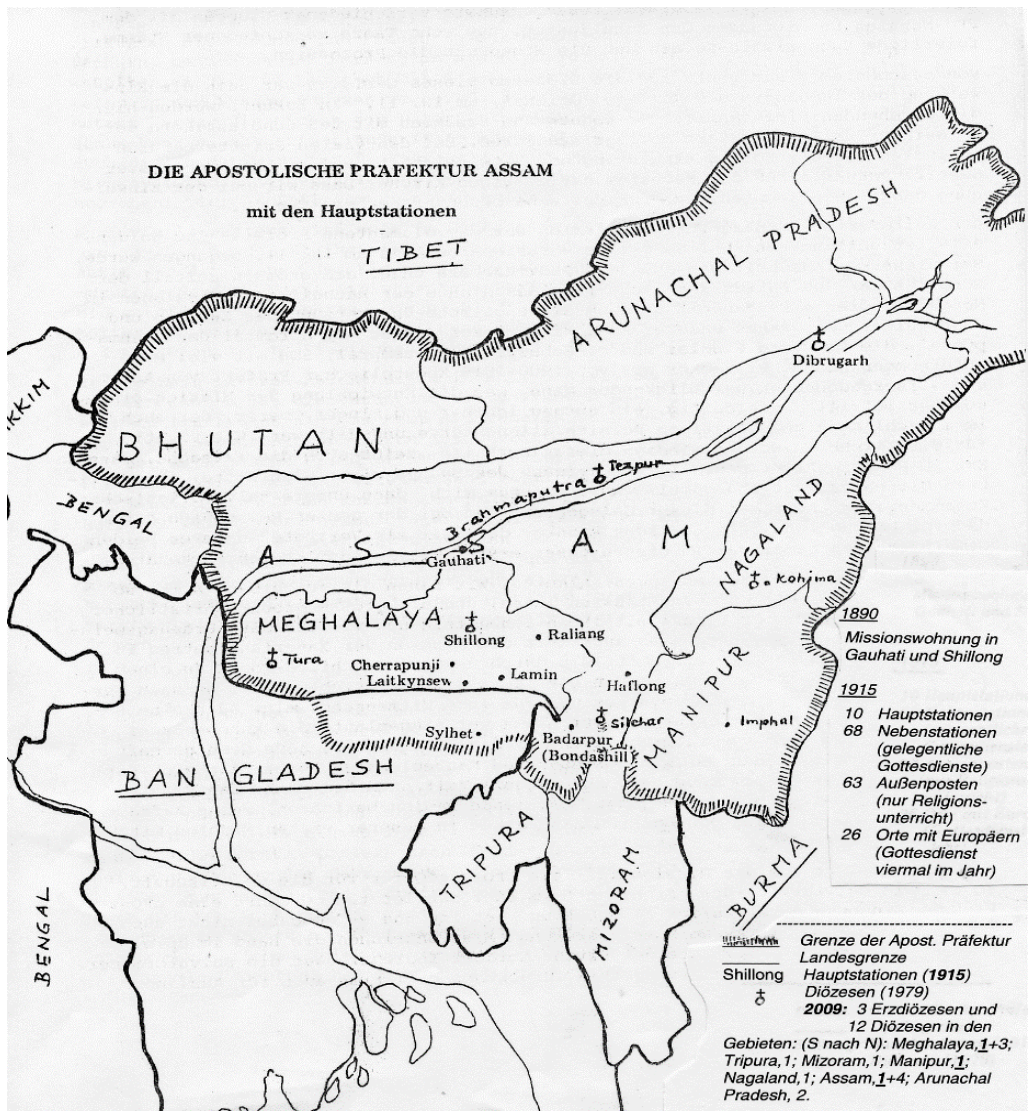


Figure 1: Map: The Apostolic Prefecture of Assam <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> SDS Informations, Dec. 1979.

## Introduction

The Study Group “Mary of the Apostles” started with the English version *Salvatorian Sisters’ Mission in North East India: a First Glimpse, 1890 – 1915*, published in 1994. In order to prepare the German edition, the members of the Study Group had to go back to the Archives to find original source materials. They also included new material on the re-foundation of the mission in India, which began in 1984. In the Introduction for the enlarged German translation of that volume, S. Felizitas carefully explained the long process for arriving at the German volume. It is worthwhile to include her original introduction here to document that process.

July 25, 2018

Study Group “Mary of the Apostles”

### Introduction from S. Felizitas:

... The first English booklet was compiled on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> jubilee of the mission by S. Aloysia Kliemke, SDS, and S. Maryclare Hart, SDS. In 1994 they revised it, when the unit which had been newly erected in 1984, celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> jubilee with the native Salvatorian Sisters.

At that time, S. Alyosia wrote in her introduction:

*It is certainly remarkable when a Congregation sends out its first missionaries – three of a total of seven professed members – just two years after its foundation. Such a move speaks of the apostolic-missionary spirit of the Founders and first members of the Community and clearly indicates its essential orientation. ...*

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*The following pages, gleaned from a variety of documentation, try to give a first idea of the life and activity of the Salvatorian Sisters in the then Apostolic Prefecture of Assam from 1891-1915. The Sisters had three communities in the hill country of present day Meghalaya: the central house at Shillong (1891-1915), the community at Shella (1896-1897) which moved to Laitkynsew (1897-1908) in consequence of the earthquake of 1897, and at Raliang (1897-1915). In Dibrugarh, a house had been bought in February 1915 in the hope of*

*extending the sisters' apostolate there. However, the repatriation issued by the Government in consequence of the outbreak of the First World War forced the Sisters, like the Fathers and Brothers – to leave the country. They departed from Shillong on November 15, 1915.*

*The accounts of the mission in those early years testify to the amount of work and the difficult conditions which the missionaries met with in India. ... 'The fruits of salvation prosper only in the shadow of the Cross'<sup>2</sup>. In living it fully, the Sisters fulfilled the hope of Mother Mary: 'May they glorify the Holy Cross in India!' and, in this way, they laid a foundation for the future.*

*We rejoice that a new beginning in India has now been made by our Fathers and Sisters and that there are already a number of professed Indian Salvatorian Sisters ... whose concern it is to bring the Good News of salvation to all and, in particular, to the people of their own vast home country.*

For a long time already the Sisters of the Mother Mary Study Group had wanted to have a history of the first Salvatorian Missionaries in Northeast India written in the German language. Finally, they decided to translate the English booklet into German. When doing so they realized that the content was, for the most part, an English translation of German reports, letters, chronicles, articles, etc. Instead of re-translating, it was a challenge for some members of the Study Group to locate the original German texts as this meant looking through hundreds of different sources in the archive. Sometimes, on having found the right passage and reading on, it was seen that the wording which followed enriched the text in question and it seemed reasonable to add this for inclusion in the new German edition. By doing so, some descriptions could be made clearer. On the other hand, it sometimes made sense to shorten some content to avoid duplication. As a rule no inverted commas were put for chronicle reports taken from copies of transcriptions. Mistakes in spelling and punctuation were adjusted to the rules for present-day German but in quotations they were left, especially for the spelling of proper names which varied as one can easily see on the first page description of the first missionaries' farewell from Tivoli which is taken from Mother Mary's diary. Her spontaneous and very personal style of writing shows what was important for her.

The German edition is enriched by a third part, in which S. Anna Mary Bezawada, SDS, reports very vividly and clearly the details of the Salvatorian "New Beginning in India".

Full of much gratitude towards the first missionaries of our congregation, we today rejoice, above all with our Indian Sisters, that the return of Salvatorian Sisters to their very first mission land combines the past with the present in a very good way.

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<sup>2</sup> Father Jordan, Spiritual Diary 1/163.

This book has fulfilled its purpose, if we – on reading it – understand what these pioneers, these true witnesses of the Gospel, really accomplished.

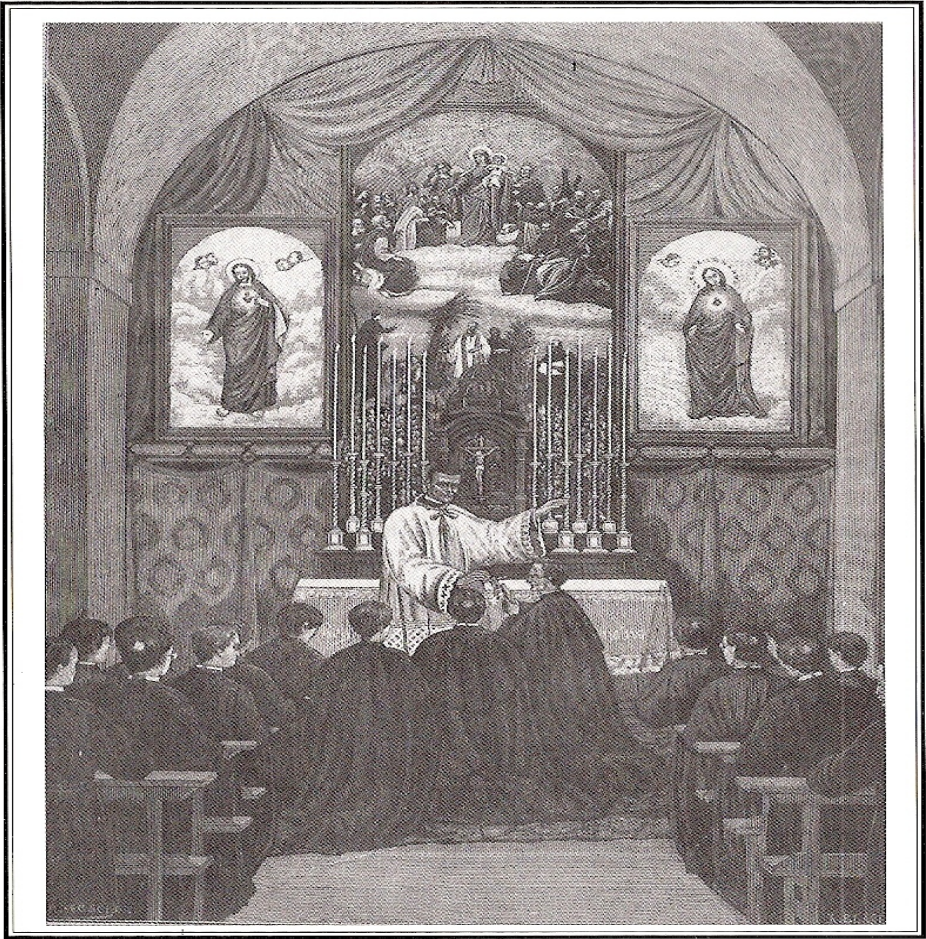
It is true for them, what the encyclical “*Evangelii nuntiandi*”<sup>3</sup> says about evangelizing in today’s world: “Thanks to their consecration they are eminently willing and free to leave everything and to go and proclaim the Gospel even to the ends of the earth. They are enterprising and their apostolate is often marked by an originality, by a genius that demands admiration. They are generous: often they are found at the outposts of the mission, and they take the greatest of risks for their health and their very lives. Truly the Church owes them much.”

Sr. Felicitas Saffer (2011)

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<sup>3</sup> “*Evangelii nuntiandi*”, Apostolic exhortation of His Holiness Pope Paul VI, 1975, § 69.





*Figure 2: Sending the First Missionaries, January 17, 1890<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup>The First Missionaries of the Catholic Teaching Society: Fr. Otto Hopfenmüller (+21.8.1890), Fr. Angelus Münzloher, Br. Marianus Schumm (+30.8.1890), Br. Josephus Bächle.

# Part I - The first Mission of the Congregation – 1890-1915.

Farewell to the first Missionaries – Tivoli 1890

Mother Mary reports in detail about the farewell and the sending of the first Assam-missionary sisters in her diary. She writes:

“On November 28, Sister Scholastica, S. Benedicta<sup>5</sup> and Sister Laurentia<sup>6</sup> made their perpetual vows here. ... The chapel was decorated beautifully with the new statue of Our Lady and the six bronze candleholders and the large crucifix, which had arrived in the meantime (gifts from Amberg). Ven. Father spoke with tenderness about the happiness of religious life and he encouraged the three sisters who will soon leave for the missions, to loyalty, love of the cross and to abnegation, if they should not see success in India.

On December 10, we had a simple moving farewell celebration for the Sisters in the chapel, *Ave Maris Stella*; in the refectory I gave them a commemorative card, held a short address, and then we said goodbye, “for God the sacrifice”, may Mary help, the Holy Rule – we remain united.

S. Laurentia is the appointed superior for Assam. Rev. Father Ignatius still came to say good-bye to the sisters. We went to the Most Rev. Bishop here, who was particularly gracious – and then I was allowed to go with the Sisters, the three departing priests and a lay Brother, Br. Cirus (Br. Cirus Disclafoni), under the guidance of our Ven. Founder, first to the Cardinal Vicar, who was even so kind as to speak in German. Then to the Holy Father, the Pope. His Holiness gave us his blessing, obviously happy to see Germans. We then went to Archbishop Simeoni, Cardinal for the missions, who was also very gracious, and still to His Excellency Jacobini who talked longer with us and had each of us introduced to him!

On the evening of the 12<sup>th</sup> I could still attend the farewell ceremony in the chapel, during which I knelt beside the Sisters. Ven. Father and Founder handed each one a crucifix and gave a beautiful address about love for the Church, religious spirit, and devotion to Mary. (Before this, Rev. Br. Linus<sup>7</sup> had taken his perpetual vows.) The beautiful singing of the Brothers contributed much to the celebration. (Before that, the Brothers had celebrated in the refectory

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<sup>5</sup> The spelling of the names is usually according to the SDS-Diarium. S. Benedikta; Mother Mary writes in her Diary ‘Scholastica, ‘Benedicta’.

<sup>6</sup> SDS-Diarium: Sister Laurentia - the abbreviation of ‘sister’, likewise: in quotations of M. Mary “Schw.”, otherwise “Sr.”.

<sup>7</sup> Reads: Brother Cirus, who left for Assam in 1890. (Only in 1901 did a Frater Linus make profession.)

which had been decorated beautifully; there were three speeches and songs). God be praised for everything. His mercy lasts forever!!!!!!”<sup>8</sup>



*Figure 3: a Khasi hut in the village Laitumkrah, Shillong, Meghalaya*

## SHILLONG

The important events are registered vividly in the chronological report<sup>9</sup> during the period of 1890 - 1912 and here they are reproduced literally in excerpts:<sup>10</sup>

1890

We three Sisters left Rome on December 12, 1890, together with three Rev. missionary priests and a Rev. brother. The mission of Assam with its main station in Shillong had been newly founded in 1890 and of the first two missionary priests and two brothers, one Rev. priest and one Rev. brother had already died. The first three Sisters were Rev. S. Laurentia Heilmeyer (superior), Rev. S. Benedicta Ruderich and Rev<sup>11</sup>. S. Scholastica Hopfenmüller.

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<sup>8</sup> M. Mary, *Diary*, SHS 2.13, Book 2, page 43-45, 1890/91.

<sup>9</sup> *Chronicles Shillong* – APS Hamberg, Vienna.

<sup>10</sup> Differently from quotations taken from other sources, here and following the quotation marks are deleted, when writing excerpts from the chronicles.

<sup>11</sup> As here, so is very often in the original text the denomination “Reverend” before the Sisters’ names. In the following excerpts, this title is omitted, unless it belongs to titles or quotations.

1891

After a fairly good journey, we arrived in Shillong on January 12, 1891 and, after a long search in the darkness of evening, we found the little mission house in which we were to live. We left this house after some months as the superior, S. Laurentia, had recurring bouts of ill health and we moved into rented accommodation. From time to time, we also lived again in a little house on the hill of the new mission site which had been purchased in the meantime.

1892

On January 24, 1892, Sisters Ursula Meier, Ignatia Greiner and Xaveria Förster came from Rome to join us. We then moved to the mission hill again and remained there until the earthquake of 1897 destroyed everything. India's climate brought us much illness, particularly as we could not obtain our accustomed food. We tried to live mainly on a diet of rice and tea until, gradually, it was possible to obtain bread and other types of food. The lack of language knowledge also contributed a lot to the discomforts. Rev. Superior S. Laurentia was almost constantly sick. In the autumn of 1892, S. Scholastica was appointed as superior.

It happened that all of us had influenza at the same time and an English lady, Mrs. Worrenshon, proved herself to be of great help in nursing the sisters. Thus, the first years passed by. The first orphanage was opened here in 1893.



*Figure 4: Sisters in Shillong with orphan children*



*Figure 5: Coolis from the Khasi tribe*

1895

From Shillong, Sisters Ignatia and Xaveria had been visiting the school at Laitkor, which was quite a distance away over the hills. When a new school began in 1895 at Maukhar, near Shillong, they went to visit this instead.<sup>12</sup> From there, S. Xaveria wrote in a letter to Mother Mary: “In Maukhar, the school children told me that Fr. (Otto) – [*meant Father Otto Hopfenmüller*] who died some years ago, used to go from village to village ringing a bell to call them to classes – just like Saint Xavier, isn’t it? May he intercede for us.”<sup>13</sup>

S. Scholastica wrote to give Fr. Jordan some insight into the everyday life of the mission:

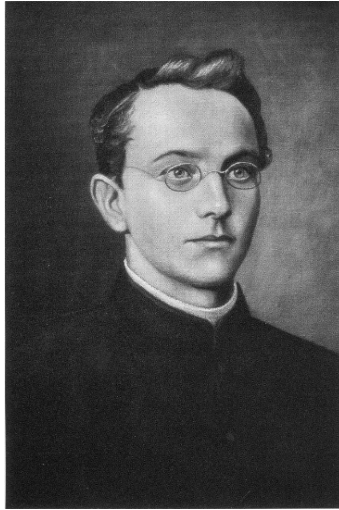
“Thank you very much that you have put us poor ones under the protection of the Rev. Fathers in this pagan land. Here, Fr. Ignatius is surrounded during the day by sick people needing help and in the evening by students of the religion classes. Rev. Father Superior is occupied with building a new house for us and we are busy with the school, the laundry, sewing, and the orphans, etc.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> a letter from S. Scholastica to Father Jordan, 09.03.1895.

<sup>13</sup> a letter from S. Xaveria to Mother Mary, 14.05.1897.

<sup>14</sup> a letter from S. Scholastica to Father Jordan, 09.03.1895.



*Figure 6: P. Otto Hopfenmüller, SDS*



*Figure 7: P. Angelus Münzloher, SDS*



*Figure 8: P. Christophorus Becker, SDS*

Highlight of the year for the orphans was surely the superior's nameday on the feast of St. Benedict. S. Xaveria helped the children to prepare for it and sent a detailed description of the day in a letter to Mother Mary: "First, there was a program: Joseph gave a speech in Khasi; Jacob and Peter – a poem in English; Margaretha and Theresia – a poem in German; Paul, Ignatius and Anthony – short items in German; a specially composed song was sung. It was very hard for the little ones to learn how to curtsy or bow. The orphanage, cleaned by the orphans the previous day, was decorated inside and out. You already know that it consists of only one big room. All those who were old enough went to Holy Communion that day. In short, it was a great feastday for all the children. There was no school and they received tea, bread and fruit at midday. All twenty-three had prepared a greeting and a picture. It was tiring work for me – but I did it very gladly in order to increase the joy of the mother of the orphans".<sup>15</sup>

Some months later less happy news arrived in Rome:

"My dear Rev. Mother! I wish you a blessed and holy Pentecost. Our house was like a hospital this week. The influenza found its way to us too. ... The dear Lord provided for us while we were all sick. a very aristocratic, but also very pious lady came from the town and gave us the best possible care. ...When she came, she was full of joy. She put a big white apron on and said, "Now, I am a sister and I'm going to nurse you". She is so friendly and is always smiling. ...

Her cook has already told her husband that she takes everything there is in the kitchen, but he doesn't mind because he is very good himself. Almost all the children in the orphanage were sick this week as well. ... Excuse my bad writing. I am writing in bed as I'm still not well."<sup>16</sup> So S. Benedicta concluded her letter in the hope of getting back to work next day.

Towards the end of 1895, the sisters began to make arrangements for the welcome of new missionaries and the opening of a new mission station.

"The first outstation of the sisters was begun in Shella, 50 English miles [*about 70 km*] south of Shillong. The superior, S. Scholastica, went there with S. Ignatia about two months before the arrival of the new sisters in order to prepare a suitable home for the new missionaries. a priest was already stationed at Shella.

The number of Catholics at the end of the year was: in Shella, 107; in Shillong, 144; in Raliang and the surrounding areas, 101".<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>A letter from S. Xaveria to Mother Mary, 23.03.1897.

<sup>16</sup>A letter from S. Benedicta to Mother Mary, 11.05.1895.

<sup>17</sup>*Missionär* 16, No. 1, 12.01.1896.

1896

Four new sisters from Rome arrived in Shella on January 29, 1896.

The Salvatorian missionaries, priests and sisters, had travelled together from Rome. The mission superior wrote an account of their trip: “The ‘Imperator’, as our steamer was named, arrived in Bombay [renamed as Mumbai] harbour on January 18 after 12.00 o’clock. We didn’t have to pay customs. Two servants from the Jesuits at S. Xavier College helped us to unload our luggage and also a sailor from Vienna was of great service to us on the way to the Jesuit College. ... Today, at 10 pm, January 19, we leave for Calcutta ...”<sup>18</sup> [Calcutta renamed as Kolkatta in 2001]

“We arrived at the port of Chhatak in the evening of January 28. a Khasi was waiting for us there. He had been sent from Shella by Fr. Gebhard, who was hindered from meeting us himself. Our faithful guide found us a place for the night and accompanied us next morning on the way to Shella. The journey was very difficult, but no one lost their sense of humour. We arrived at the mission station towards evening.”<sup>19</sup>

The new sisters were: S. Brigitta Schneider, S. Gabriela Bohnheim, S. Hildegardis<sup>20</sup> Dombrowski and S. Bernarda Reichel. S. Bernarda was appointed superior for Shella and we took S. Brigitta with us to Shillong, as we travelled further some days later.

The mission superior’s account dates the journey to Shillong: “On January 31 departure to Chera Punjee,<sup>21</sup> the orphans and many other Khasi accompanied us over a long part of the way from Shella. We finally arrived at Shillong in the evening of February 1.”<sup>22</sup>

The superior, S. Bernarda, who was already in rather weak health, fell ill with galloping consumption soon after her arrival in Shella. She was brought to Shillong in a serious condition and died three weeks later on August 20, 1896. She was beyond all possible help. She had been in the mission as superior for about six months. Several months later, S. Kunigilde Meyer came from Akyab to Shillong.

1897

On March 3, 1897, S. Evangelista Hofmann arrived in Shella from Rome and S. Hildegardis was then called to Shillong. S. Ignatia was appointed as superior for Raliang and left on March

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<sup>18</sup> *Missionär*, 1896, Nr.4, 23.02.1896 (Chhatak is situated in today’s Bangladesh).

<sup>19</sup> *Missionär*, 1896, No. 6, page 83.

<sup>20</sup> SDS-Diarium: Hildegard Dombrowski; in various documents often called Hildegardis or Hildegarde.

<sup>21</sup> Cherrapunji – the place with highest rainfall in the world.

<sup>22</sup> *Missionär*, 1896, No. 6, page 83.



17, 1897, together with S. Brigitta and S. Hildegardis, to establish there, the sisters' third mission station. Raliang is situated 50 English miles away from Shillong to the South-East.

In Shillong itself, the Easter ceremonies of 1897 brought joy and caused some amusement. We read about it in a detailed letter of S. Xaveria to Mother Mary:

“... [We] had great celebrations, many first communicants, who were accompanied from the orphanage with great solemnity – and we won again seven souls through the holy baptism, three of them from our older persons ... . I have told you about one of them already once before. She was so disturbing and dull during the classes, and she distinguished herself again during the baptismal ceremony. Even Rev. Father Superior who held the ceremony, could hardly keep from laughing and nor could Fr. Ignatius, who was helping him. When, as is usual, Agatha was repeatedly asked: ‘Do you believe?’ it seemed to her that the priest had doubts and she replied, very indignantly: “Certainly I believe, really I do!” She could not retain her name very well and repeated it to herself until she forgot it again and asked the woman next to her: “What is my name then? If she didn’t understand Fr. Superior’s questions, she turned herself around to ask: ‘What did he say then?’ However much one wanted to be recollected, it was difficult not to laugh.”<sup>23</sup>

S. Xaveria’s letter continues telling us what happens to everyone on coming to a country new to them, where the local customs had to be seen and understood, and still they caused some surprises:

“I even saw a man eating caterpillars – the long, finger-thick caterpillars are completely covered with hair. They must be poisonous because everyone is careful not to tread on them. They cause the foot to swell up – one becomes quite lame – yet, they are still eaten as a great delicacy by the Khasi. The man told me: they lose their poison when they are roasted and taste wonderful. No wonder why all kinds of illnesses appear.”<sup>24</sup>

The sisters’ old goat house was now in use as a temporary dwelling for needy persons. At least six women and a child are mentioned as living there in 1897 and also a man by the name of Joseph: “When he was still well, he came into our chapel for Mass several times. When he became sick, taking everything into account, he decided to be baptized. So, one can see that where there is goodwill, the dear Lord will show such persons the right way.”<sup>25</sup>

Another inhabitant of the hut was a former pagan priest and his experience of conversion was different: “The pagan priest I mentioned came to the faith in the following manner. He and his

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<sup>23</sup> a letter from S. Xaveria to Mother Mary, 09.05.1897.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

fellow priests once held a ceremony to sacrifice eggs in order to find out if all was right with them. One egg after another was broken open, carefully examined and read. The result was: This is not the right way, you must go another way. The question remained: Yes, but where? He didn't think about it for long and he came, reunited with his wife – and we hope for his conversion soon.”<sup>26</sup>



*Figure 9: Shillong: Sisters, orphans, and kitchen personnel*



*Figure 10: Shillong Market*

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

These excerpts are taken from a letter written by S. Xaveria in the second week of May 1897. The sisters then had no idea of the event which lay only a few weeks away. The chronicles continue:

## The Earthquake in Shillong

The vigil of St. Anthony, on June 12, reduced us to a state of great alarm. At 5.00 pm, just before the start of Benediction, a terrible earthquake began which reduced all the buildings on the hill into piles of rubble in a few seconds.

Everyone fled into the open through the doors and windows. S. Xaveria was the only one to hesitate; earthquakes were frequent and she did not think this one was so serious. Then, when she did want to leave the house, her way was blocked by the rubble and she was thrown to the ground by the falling stonework. When the main tremor was over, she was pulled from the rubble, seriously injured.

There was a small house at the foot of the hill which had been completed a few days previously and was intended for use as an orphanage for girls. It was still standing and we did think of taking the wounded sister there but it seemed to be too dangerous as the earthquake continued with very few interruptions. Everyone without exception had to spend the night under the open sky and let God's blessings stream over them. We had no shelter, no food and no change of clothing.

One of our old ladies had just been preparing her rice and she had run out of the kitchen as it was collapsing, with her plate in her hand. The superior, S. Scholastica, came out of the house carrying two flower-vases which were prepared for the Benediction when the earth began to shake.

It was not possible to stand; we sat down and watched how the chimney tilted, the bell rang and everything collapsed. The priests also made their way into the open through doors and windows; after the catastrophe, one of the brothers crept out through the roof because there were no stairs left any more. The mission superior ran around between the fallen houses, wringing his hands in distress.

S. Scholastica's letter describes the brother's situation more graphically: "Brother Kilian also emerged from it unscathed, although he was in the attic of the priest's house and couldn't escape because the church tower fell onto his room. The house subsided, the roof sat on the ground and Brother Kilian crawled out from under the remains of the roof after the catastrophe, very white but unhurt."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> a letter from S. Scholastica to Mother Mary, 19.06.1897.

Four days later, when the rain had lessened, the Blessed Sacrament was dug out of the ruins of the church and solemnly brought with prayer and songs into the little house which had been standing at the bottom of the hill. There, in one room, our Divine Savior lived with 40 children and four sisters.

On July 4, 1897, S. Xaveria was able to write to M. Mary giving a graphic description of her experience: She was still excited about the experience as her style of writing shows:

“... [I] had ... just finished a novena to Our Lady of Pompei for a special intention and was still kneeling before the table – a picture of the above Madonna – with a rosary in my hand – an earthquake began – I am used to strong tremors here – for often – even at night, it can be so strong that it throws the bed here and there, however, after a few seconds of hesitation, I wanted to go over to the superior’s room to say: ‘This is a very severe tremor’ – I was hardly a step away from the table toward the door when a stone fell from above the door and threw me to the ground. In the same moment, I heard the chimney collapse behind me – a cloud of dust (of chalk, sand and building material) – I still heard all this but nothing more. What happened to me, I do not know to this day. When I came to consciousness, I found myself in a sitting position leaning against a bench – only my abdomen and right leg were covered with stones – blood was flowing from my head – onto collar, apron, dress, face – my hands were somewhat hurt by the falling stones – and still I was free and sitting, and previously, the stones had brought me to the floor --- it was really a wonder! I was so happy, so peaceful, I had no desire anymore. I only waited for the finishing stroke or blow to the head that would take me out of this world. This didn’t happen, however, even though the whole house cracked and more and more building material fell on me. The fallen material even protected me because the beams fell in such a way that they formed a roof over me and left a little opening on one side to the fresh air, something which I could not see because it was behind my back and I couldn’t turn around.

Then I thought about my co-sisters, Rev. Fathers etc., and thought everything and everyone was buried, killed, when at that same moment I heard the voice of an orphan girl who works in our kitchen screaming and crying ‘My God, my God, the poor sisters, the poor sisters!’ She ran around the house or rather, the pile of stones and came to the aforementioned hole. She must have seen me because she called my name and ran away to fetch help – there were still tremors – she returned when she couldn’t find anyone and seeing that I was unable to lift myself, she crept inside and made herself a way through with tremendous strength – really, only a twelve year old girl, with tremendous strength – the stones flew right and left like light feathers – beams which needed several men to lift them, she moved away – and during this work, she repeatedly returned to the opening to shout: ‘Have a care for the sisters, help the sisters!’ But as there still wasn’t anyone around, she finished her rescue work alone, except for one last beam which S. Laurentia lifted from my shoulder. The girl’s name is Franziska, the Khasi are usually fearful, but this little one was not afraid to risk being buried like me – though everything was

cracking, shaking and falling still. Oh, do not forget ... the most poor in Assam – don't forget to pray!! Pray! Pray!”<sup>28</sup>

S. Scholastica's next letter, dated the following day, July 5, arrived in Rome:

“Dear Rev. Mother. Nothing has got better here since my last letter. We live, eat and sleep together with the orphans and the women. The earth tremors continue, but they are lighter now. Everything seems so chaotic here. It can be 3-4 weeks before we get somewhere to live. There is no money available and this is much needed at all the stations right now. I wonder if this is not the beginning of the end of the world. Pray for us. In Rome at least, the houses and churches are still standing.”<sup>29</sup>

And Fr. Jordan too, had not forgotten his spiritual daughters in Assam. S. Scholastica's letter closed: “Give many greetings to dear Rev. Father. His card arrived this week.”

The chronicle continues:

Rev. Superior, S. Scholastica and S. Kunigilde slept on the open veranda of the little house for four weeks: a lantern was lit at night and hung there to keep the wild animals away, but the wind and rain extinguished the flame. Four weeks later, we received a tent from the government which had room enough for four sisters. Little streams of water flowed through the tent and pieces of wood were laid down in order to provide a way from one bed to another.

One of the sisters stayed with the children in the orphanage, the injured sister and S. Ursula prepared themselves a place to sleep in the ruins of the backhouse. S. Hildegardis shared this sleeping place with them when she was brought here following the accident in Raliang. When the rains ceased somewhat, we began to search the ruins of our house in order to salvage some of our clothing and other useful items.

Then another convent was built for us from the remains of the old ones and, by September 4, the outer structure of one room was complete. Very happy at being able to exchange their tent for a house, the superior S. Scholastica, S. Laurentia and S. Kunigilde moved in. The glassless windows were covered with paper, the doors were blocked with pieces of wood in the evening as a substitute for the missing locks. When it rained during the night, we opened up an umbrella in bed and it often happened that it was dropped by our tired hand and the rain wakened us again from our sweet dreams. As the workmen had some more weeks of work to complete on the house, we covered our sleeping quarters with old pieces of cloth.

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<sup>28</sup> a letter from S. Xaveria to Mother Mary, 04.07.1897.

<sup>29</sup> a letter from S. Scholastica to Mother Mary, 05.07.1897.

Our refectory was, at the beginning, an old Khasi hut. And because we had to return it to its owner, the old kitchen was cleaned out. a packing case was placed in front of it to provide a place for the cooking pots containing the food and a plank was laid over the two stones to act as seats for the sisters; we balanced our plates of food on our knees. After a while, our food was provided by a number of well-intentioned ladies, such as Mrs. Campel, Mrs. Arbuthnot and Mrs. Home. Over a long period, they sent us rice for the children and other foodstuff. (May God reward these kind ladies). The Holy Cross Sisters from Calcutta<sup>30</sup> also sent us various items for personal use and for the house.

As a result of the bad weather and the lack of necessities, all the sisters and many of the children became ill. Once it happened that 17 of the children were sick with dysentery at the same time. At the end of October, our house was completed. We could move in and no one was happier than we sisters that we could live together again. The Lord puts down and raises us up again, may he therefore be praised forever.<sup>31</sup>

In spite of the disastrous year, the number of Catholics had increased. The end of year total for 1897 was: Shillong 204, Raliang 168, Laitkynsew 150. The orphanages of Shillong and Raliang cared for 55 children. Members of the Society were also working in and around Cherrapoonji, Gauhati and Bondashill serving a further 818 Catholics. The number of mission stations was 6; the Salvatorians in Assam totalled 10 priests, 3 brothers and 11 sisters.

1898

In March 1898, S. Constantia Ebert arrived in Shillong after having had to interrupt her journey home from Akyab to Rome at Calcutta due to illness. Later, she was transferred to Laitkynsew but had to return to Europe due to ill health in

1904

The sisters were always interested in the joys and sorrows of the community at the Motherhouse in Rome. The orphans were told about the nameday of M. Mary and liked to write their greetings. Two letters were written from Shillong in August 1898: one from the 11 girls and one from the boys. The boys wrote:

“Ko Rev. Mother baieit jong gni.

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<sup>30</sup> Kolkata: here in the Documents the English way of writing Calcutta.

<sup>31</sup> *Missionär*, 1898, Vol 18.

Ha kane ka mgi burom jong Phi, ngi kaah ia Phi shibun. Ki jingaiei bad ki jing kyrkhu jong U Blei, Ngi duai na ka bynta jong Phi ba la ka sngi burom jong Phi, ngi pyddiang ka Communion na ka bynta jong Phi. Nga long u khunsuet u baieit ia Phi.”<sup>32</sup>

Signatures follow.

Our Dear reverend Mother,

On the day of your feast, we wish you God’s graces and blessings. We pray for you daily. On your feastday we receive the Holy Communion. I am an orphan child who loves you.

Ludwig, Petros, Benediktus, Friedrich

The mission work never stopped. Shortly before Christmas, S. Benedicta wrote to Mother Mary:

“My dear Rev. Mother, I am sure you will forgive me for not writing more frequently, but I have a lot of work with the children. We recently received five new orphans: all are small; the youngest is just starting to walk. Sister Superior once brought a tiny newborn baby (a girl) to the orphanage. Its mother had died in childbirth and it was lying at the feet of its dead mother, wrapped in old rags. No one cared for it. I was happy to have the infant, a beautiful girl, but, after only a few days, it was a baby angel in heaven. ...We shall now receive just such a little one again, about five weeks old.

... The Corpus Christi procession was on November 20 here. That was also much work. I had made white dresses and crowns for 18 girls and now, for Christmas, I am finishing clothing for all the children. There is no one to help me. Rev. Fr. Ignatius is having a new (temporary) church put up until a larger one can be built. The present one will then be used as a hospital. If God wills, the dear baby Jesus will have his home in the new Church by Christmas. There was another strong earthquake on September 30. ... It is now very cold. ...<sup>33</sup>

The sisters’ chronicle omits any news for the year 1899.

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<sup>32</sup> a letter of Khasi children to Mother Mary, August 1898; ASDS, Assam.

<sup>33</sup> a letter from S. Benedicta to Mother Mary, 14.12.1898.



*Figure 11: Orphan children in Shillong, 1899*

1900

1900 was a joyful Holy Year for the community in Rome where pilgrims gathered from all parts of the world. For the sisters in Assam, the year brought the sadness of parting.

The chronicle for that year states only:

On July 30, 1900, S. Benedicta Ruderich died, and on August 21 of that same year, S. Xaveria Förstera died of consumption and dysentery. Both had been sick for a number of years.



*Figure 12: Khasi-Christians of Shillong, Christmas, 1901*





*Figure 13: Shillong: Khasi girls in a handwork class with Sister*

1901

At the beginning of 1901, a periodical of the Society reported:

“In Shillong, the first and oldest house of the second Order of our Society, the work of the sisters continued to increase through God’s protection and blessing.”<sup>34</sup>

News contained in a letter from one of the sisters addressed to M. Mary confirms this fact:

“... Our orphan children, who are very loveable and affectionate, give us much joy. It is true that some died during this year, but the divine friend of children sent us replacements so that the empty places left by their going to join the dear angels were soon filled. Therefore, the charitable institutions which we direct here, of course still in great poverty and with much sacrifice, are again completely full. That is: the orphanage, the hospital for the sick and the home for the elderly poor. And how many requests for acceptance into these institutions we have had to refuse, to our great sorrow, partly because we do not have enough means to support them and partly because the space available is too limited! There is also enough to do with teaching in schools and with the adults in their homes. Still, if the dear Savior continues to

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<sup>34</sup> *Salvatorianische Mitteilungen*, 1901, No 1, page 10.

support us and to give us good health, we hope to be able to meet all the demands and so do much for his glory here and to save the poor pagans for heaven.”<sup>35</sup>

A further aspect of their work was described in another letter:

“In the morning, after I have completed the prescribed spiritual duties, I go out to teach in the village. I begin first with the schoolchildren, then I go to the adults who wish to become Catholics and I also go to see the sick. Recently, I again baptized a sick child in secret. The parents had given daily sacrifice of eggs and young chickens to the devil for the child, so that it would regain health. One day, when the child’s health seemed doubtful to me, I asked the parents what the eggs had said. The father replied: ‘In one or two nights, the child will be healthy’. ‘You may be right’, I thought, ‘if the Lord takes it’. I had a suitable opportunity then and I baptized the poor child. It is the third child in this family that has become an angel in heaven in this way. The woman would accept the faith more easily but her husband is very antagonistic, a brandy-drinker, and he doesn’t want to hear anything about conversion. Oh, how painful it is to see these people close their hearts and ears to the dear Jesus and give service only to the devil!”<sup>36</sup>

It was this year of 1901 that England’s Queen Victoria died. She held the title of Empress of India and the event must have been marked in Assam, at least among the resident European community. She was succeeded by King Edward.

The Shillong chronicles do not mention any special happenings for the years 1901, 1902 or 1903.

Toward the close of 1901, an orphan named Margaret wrote to M. Mary in English:

“... My best wishes on Christmas day and the New Year to you ... My dear Mother, many thanks for the picture, the holy Joseph you sent me. How glad I am indeed, but I can’t send anything to you, my dear Reverend Mother! But I will send my photo; I think you know I am a poor orphan, only my best wish and merry letter to you ... yours sincerely Margareth, orphan, Catholic.”<sup>37</sup>

The sisters mentioned that Margaret loved to write letters.

In October 1902, a Rosary Confraternity was begun in Shillong.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Salvatorianische Mitteilungen, 1901, No 4, page 60-61.

<sup>37</sup> Khasi orphan child Margaret to Mother Mary, 14.12.1898.

1903 brought continuing opportunities for the Christians to demonstrate their faith and to support each other. The members of the St. Vincent Association helped one another and others to deepen their Christian living. The Christians were also happy to have a candle light procession every first Sunday of the month. ... In Germany and Europe, such associations have been known for a long time: but here ... they are something new and very useful as their success shows. ... Thank you very much for the letters received and the beautiful prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. ... Please pray very much, dear Rev. Mother ... for us and the conversion of souls,”<sup>38</sup> was S. Scholastica’s petition to M. Mary in 1903 at the conclusion of her Easter letter.

In August 1903, Pope Leo XIII died in Rome and Pius X was elected. These events were a completely new experience for the young Christian community in Shillong.

S. Scholastica informed M. Mary: “... We heard by telegram of the death of the Holy Father and of the election of his successor to the Holy See. Now, the post is bringing newspapers with more details. It is consoling how God cares for his holy Church and so surely also for us who work and suffer for his glory. We also taught our Christians, who have never heard of such a thing before, to show their participation in the mourning as well as in the joys which followed, through a solemn Mass. How beautiful that must all have been in Rome, our experience here was just a pale reflection of it. However, to live a Christian life with our Christians is our ... joy: it is our consolation to see how they practice their holy religion...”<sup>39</sup>

As S. Ursula wrote: “The mourning was celebrated during a period of eight days, bells rang every midday, the chapel was covered with white and black cloth and our priests did their best ...”<sup>40</sup>

Not all events were sorrowful. Sister also described the nameday of the mission priest: “... Friday was the nameday of Fr. Ignatius. a solemn Mass was celebrated in the morning and the members of the St. Vincent Association, which was founded just a few weeks ago, went two by two from the Vincent House to the house of Fr. Ignatius carrying two paper flags they had made themselves. Our cook followed at the end playing an accordion. Hearty congratulations followed at his house and singing, after which they again went back to their Vincent House. After this came congratulations from the orphan children in the school where again, various poems and songs in English and Khasi were presented. The bigger girls gave small presents they had made ... the people are so nice, even if they often do not really

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<sup>38</sup> S. Scholastica to Mother Mary, 16.03.1903.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> S. Ursula to Mother Mary, 20.08.1903.

understand, they give of their best. Most of them did not go to work in the villages during the day in order to show their joy, love and attachment ...”<sup>41</sup>

The chronicles continue for the following year:

1904

In 1904, the Archbishop of Calcutta<sup>42</sup> made a general visitation. Following this, in that same year, S. Ursula was transferred to Laitkynsew but, in December 1905, she was brought back to us in a state of serious illness.

S. Kunigilde wrote giving some details regarding the visitation and quotes the archbishop’s remarks: “The archbishop went to see all the buildings and was surprised to see everything so well ordered. ‘It is very neat and nice indeed. You have very hard work but afterwards, you will get your reward in heaven’”<sup>43</sup>

Copies of the newly printed Constitutions arrived from Rome and were discussed with the archbishop: “The archbishop said, that one hour meditation is too much for missionaries as the climate here makes one weak and they will sleep the second half hour.”<sup>44</sup>

Some months prior to this visitation, in June 1904, the sisters were proud to report to the Motherhouse about the recognition accorded to the work of the orphans which was done under their guidance:

“The number of orphans is increasing, at the moment we have forty. We also have much to do with the poor and sick. On June 13, there was an exhibition here with sections for flowers, vegetables and handwork. We and our orphans contributed to this as much as we could and, to the great joy of the children, we received the first prize for vegetables.

In the handwork section, we, that is, our girls, presented 5 dresses, 2 pairs of stockings, 2 aprons, 1 petticoat, 1 embroidered cushion, 1 embroidered carpet, 1 embroidered table lamp cover, 3 tablecloths, 1 cushion in velvet work, a tea-cosy and still other smaller items. Margaretha and Laurentia received the first prize in this section and Luzia and Elisabeth received the second prize. That was a great joy for all our Catholics. ... a Protestant lady

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<sup>41</sup> S. Ursula to Mother Mary, 02.08.1903.

<sup>42</sup> Archbishop Brizio Meuleman, SJ; \*1862 in Gand (Belgium), Archbishop of Calcutta 1902-1924; +1924.

<sup>43</sup> S. Kunigilde to Mother Mary, 30.10.1904.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

awarded the prizes and we could therefore be quite at peace and remained free of the suspicion that might have come our way if this had been done by a Catholic.”<sup>45</sup>

1905

In September 1905, S. Laurentia left the Congregation without permission from the superiors – she repented and returned three weeks later. In November, she travelled with S. Scholastica to the Motherhouse in Rome.

Another account indicated that S. Laurentia suffered from acute attacks of malaria to the point of delirium and that she had to return to Europe for reasons of health.<sup>46</sup>

S. Scholastica was a delegate to the first General Chapter of the Congregation which was held in the Motherhouse at Salita Sant’Onofrio 11, Rome, from December 1-6, 1905. M. Mary was reconfirmed in office as Superior General on the first day. From Shillong, S. Brigitta sent her Christmas greetings with the wish: “May the infant Jesus enrich you with his heavenly protection and send you all the graces you need in order to carry out the duties of such a position with all its difficulties and concerns...”<sup>47</sup>



*Figure 14: Salvatorians in the Mission, October 1908*

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<sup>45</sup> S. Kunigilde to Mother Mary, 30.10.1904.

<sup>46</sup> S. Avellina Tietz, Notizen: Die ersten Salvatorianerinnen, ASDS.

<sup>47</sup> S. Brigitta to Mother Mary, 03.12.1905.



*Figure 15: Salvatorian Sisters with Khasis, 1908 – 1909*

1906

S. Scholastica attended the first General Chapter in the Motherhouse and returned to India with S. Eustachia Bauer, arriving in Shillong in March 1906. S. Scholastica had been appointed as the superior for Raliang and went there with S. Eustachia at the end of March. S. Ignatia went from there to Shillong as superior and commissary and arrived together with S. Hildegardis on April 1.

With the sisters from Rome, M. Mary had sent along something she knew would be welcome and, some weeks after settling down in Shillong, S. Ignatia wrote to her: “Oh, now I remember that you sent us figs as well, dear Rev. Mother, and I still have not thanked you for them. May God reward you for the gift. We enjoyed them during the journey here. We also gave some to the local people and explained to them that these are Roman fruits ...”<sup>48</sup>

The new missionary, S. Eustachia, also wrote from Shillong shortly after her arrival to the sisters in Rome:

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<sup>48</sup> S. Ignatia to Mother Mary, 12.05.1906.

“Dear Rev. Mother and dear Sisters,

Thanks be to God. We have at last arrived in the Shillong Mission. Everything gives a good impression. With the exception of the huts of the poor natives, it is very nice here, namely the small church with a nice little Gothic altar which enthrones the Queen of the Apostles. Cleanliness and order shine everywhere and make the holy poverty which rules here very pleasant. The whole church was full of Khasi for the Mass and sermon yesterday. These poor people edify one. It goes without saying that many sacrifices have been made and much work done here. ... I could also go along to visit Khasi families and also the graves of our dear departed ones. I picked up the enclosed rose leaf from the grave of Fr. Otto and the other flower from that of S. Bernarda. ... Dear Rev. Mother, with my whole heart, I wish you a joyous Easter and God’s reward and blessing for all the motherly care you give to your spiritual daughters. I thank you especially and for as long as I live, for the great grace of being appointed to this mission. As far as I am able, I will try to fulfil your wishes, dear Rev. Mother ...”<sup>49</sup>

At the beginning of April 1906, the community in Shillong numbered four sisters: S. Ignatia, S. Ursula, S. Kunigilde and S. Hildegard. The total number of sisters in Assam was nine. In June, S. Ignatia wrote to M. Mary that there was so much to do in Assam, but there were not sufficient sisters, neither the necessary means for it.

In the chronicles of 1906 we read:

On April 4, 1906, S. Brigitta died of a stroke in Raliang. She had been rather ill for a long time. S. Kunigilde substituted for the superior, S. Scholastica, in Shillong during the latter’s absence. In May of the same year, S. Kunigilde was transferred to Laitkynsew. In December of the same year, 1906, S. Ursula was bitten by a rabid dog and had to be brought to the medical centre of Kausali in the Himalayas, something that was made possible for us by the generous help of the British. S. Kunigilde was called from Laitkynsew in order to accompany her.

Sister Kunigilde wrote from Kausali giving M. Mary an account of the long journey:

“Dear Rev. Mother, ... a telegram arrived on December 6: ‘go immediately to Shillong.’ Unfortunately, I couldn’t leave that same day. I left Laitkynsew at 08:00 am on December 7 and reached Fr. Corbinian at 12:00 o’clock. I left again immediately without taking a meal (walking and sometimes carried in a basket) because I could not be at peace anywhere. I wanted to reach the lodging house, 34 miles away from Laitkynsew, so I ate something while walking rather than making a stop. I came to Dumbeb about 6 o’clock in the evening, where a Christian was already waiting for me with the news that I shouldn’t stay the night there but

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<sup>49</sup> S. Eustachia to Mother Mary, 19.03.1906.

should continue my journey. That was very difficult for me as I was dead tired. I took a cup of coffee and then, in God's name, went onward.

The coolies were very angry; on the way to Shillong, there was a holy quiet as in the convent, each one thinking his own thoughts. It was a very cold night, the frost lay on our clothes and I shook from cold; so did the coolies. At half past two in the morning, I arrived in Shillong and went to bed at about three but I could not sleep. After Mass, everything was made ready. At around eight thirty, we went to the motorcar and reached Gauhati in five hours. The priest was away on a trip, so we stayed with a lady until it was time to go to the boat. At about one o'clock in the night, the ship stuck on a sandbank and was released after an hour and a half's work. The next day was Sunday and I had time to watch the fish jumping into the air. At four o'clock, we had to leave the ship for the train. Toward the evening, we were both very thirsty and at each station, I looked out to see if there was something to buy. But it was useless, so I said to S. Ursula that we'd have to console ourselves, there was nothing. At five in the morning, we had to take the ship again for half an hour. I bought us tea and bread for which, to my horror, I had to pay one rupee. Then we took the train and this brought us to Calcutta. We went past beautiful palm plantations. We stayed with the I.B.V.M. Sisters until toward evening. Because S. Ursula wanted to go to confession, I sent for a German Jesuit; he came at about four o'clock.

I wanted a carriage reserved for women. The one that had been reserved was already occupied by three ladies. There were still two places but, S. Ursula is older, she could not climb up. I went to the station master and he agreed to my request. We slept quite well during the night. The journey was lovely, we went through palm, mango and other fruit plantations as well as through fields of corn, mustard and barley ... and there were many beautiful birds! We also had to go over a big bridge which collapsed two years ago, killing many persons. Then we had still one more night on the train.

The following morning, we were in Caltra. As I got out, I saw a religious approaching. He greeted us as he passed. When I replied, he asked if we were going to Simla. I said we were going to Kausali and he accompanied us. He also found us a rickshaw. I intended that only S. Ursula should ride but he said it would be impossible for me to climb the hill as it was too steep. And I had to agree with him that it was. Before we left, he told me that we should ask for Father Columban as he would surely be of help to me. When we arrived here, we were shown to a lodging house where I would have to pay 7 rupees daily. My hair stood on end at that. I asked for the priest and, when he arrived, I asked him where we could stay. He said we could stay with him if we liked. No one was happier than I was! He is a Capuchin Father, born in Florence and just 29. Then, in the same house, there is a secular priest aged 92 who is very child-like. He goes around all day and says Mass every day with great reverence. How I thank God that we can stay here and have daily Mass. Kausali lies on a very high hill, 7,000 feet above sea level. The houses are not together but lie apart, one here, one there, as all are on the hill. We have a beautiful view. To the north are the Himalayan Mountains covered with snow



and with various villages among the hills. Sunset is lovely with everything sparkling in the sun. And below us, we see hills entwined one on the other. a very beautiful area, but cold. Sister Ursula and I go to the hospital daily. The doctor is very friendly. In the beginning, she had two injections, now only one. I hope that we can leave again by January 6 ... S. Kunigilde S.D.S.”<sup>50</sup>



*Figure 16: Shillong: Sister with newly baptised children*

1907

S. Ursula returned with no ill effects in January 1907 and S. Kunigilde went back to Laitkynsew. Some months later, S. Kunigilde was transferred to Shillong due to illness and S. Hildegardis replaced her in Laitkynsew with S. Evangelista as superior. S. Gabriela also had to be transferred to Shillong due to ill health.

We get to know from the letter of S. Ignatia to Mother Mary that the doctor said the food must be the cause, she had also written to S. Evangelista about it. In the area of Laitkynsew, the state of famine had been particularly acute since the previous year.<sup>51</sup>

Although M. Mary had told the Apostolic Prefect toward the end of 1906, that “Assam is, above all, especially dear to me”<sup>52</sup> and had reiterated this statement in a letter to the sisters in

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<sup>50</sup> S. Kunigilde to Mother Mary, 16.12.1906.

<sup>51</sup> S. Ignatia to Mother Mary, no date.

<sup>52</sup> Mother Mary to Fr. Christophotus Becker, 24.11.1906.

spring 1907 “Asia (Assam) is always my most dearly beloved mission,”<sup>53</sup> she was not able to send new missionaries in response to the superior’s repeated requests.

There were several reasons for this. First, the ever present lack of funds and then her desire to send only sisters who would really be of use: “At the moment, I do not know where to find sisters who are good at studying languages, are healthy and really pious.” In addition, other areas were also requesting sisters and so: “Think of it, we have 23 foundations of which 9 are in America. Where else can that be found in a new Congregation not yet 30 years old?! We must, therefore, thank our Divine Savior very much for the wonderful care he has shown our Congregation up to now.”<sup>54</sup>

A few months passed by and the sisters in Assam then received the news from Rome that Mother Mary had died there on December 25, 1907.

The Shillong chronicle continues:

1908

In 1908, a second General Chapter had to be held due to the death of our first Reverend Mother and Superior General. S. Ignatia went to Rome to attend the Chapter and S. Scholastica returned to Shillong to substitute for her.

Mother Ambrosia Vetter was elected Superior General at that Chapter and, toward the close of 1908, she was able to send two new missionaries to Assam.

1909

On January 14, 1909, S. Antonia Kreppelt arrived from Rome as commissary. She was accompanied by S. Kunigilde and S. Gabriela, who were returning after one year convalescence in Germany. Also, with them were S. Ignatia who was returning from the second General Chapter and S. Gebharda Dietmann who was assigned to nursing. S. Ignatia and S. Gabriela went to Raliang, the former as superior.

The five sisters who travelled together to Assam had an eventful journey. S. Antonia tells of it in her letter of January 1909 from Shillong.

Their Christmas had been spent on the Suez Canal and a smooth crossing of the Red Sea followed. But then: “On the Indian Ocean, it was extremely rough; the waves broke over the upper deck. We were wonderfully protected by God through all this and finally arrived in

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<sup>53</sup> Mother Mary to S. Ignatia, 04.03.1907.

<sup>54</sup> Mother Mary to S. Ignatia, 04.03.1907.

Bombay at eight o'clock in the evening. However, what a shock we had! Just as the anchor was being lowered, the engine of the ship broke down. We had to stay there until the following day, waiting for another ship to bring us into port. Had the accident happened one hour earlier, it would have cost us all our lives. We attribute our rescue from this great danger to the prayers offered for us in Rome as well as in our German homeland ...<sup>55</sup>

The chronicle reports further:

As commissary, S. Antonia travelled that same year with S. Eustachia as companion to Gauhati, Calcutta and Morobai. She left S. Eustachia in Calcutta and returned to Gauhati and Dibrugarh, where she bought a house. She then went to Dacca and back to Shillong. S. Antonia, together with S. Kunigilde, also went to look at a tea garden in view of making another foundation.

1910

In January 1910, she (S. Antonia) travelled from Shillong to Rome.

In 1911, a joyful letter arrived in Rome from Shillong: "God be thanked that we are still living to see the first step toward the Approbation of our Congregation. How much our dear deceased Rev. Mother strove for this and could not achieve it. In heaven, she will take care of us. On Sunday, the 17<sup>th</sup> of this month, we begin our holy retreat and at its closing on Tuesday, the 26<sup>th</sup>, there will be a thanksgiving ceremony for all the graces, especially for the aforementioned favour ..."<sup>56</sup> The cause of this rejoicing was the first Papal Approbation of the Congregation, the 'Decretum Laudis' which was given by the Church on August 18, 1911, together with the Approbation of the Constitutions.

S. Scholastica, one of the first members of the Congregation, was so excited that she wrote a second letter repeating the same thoughts: "We are so happy that our Congregation has received so many graces ..."<sup>57</sup>

The chronicles for the following year recall the fact that S. Antonia's departure in 1910 had left a vacancy in the administration of Assam which had to be filled.

1912

Then it fell to S. Scholastica as vicaress to manage the business affairs and on January 13, 1912, she was again appointed as superior with all the rights of a commissary. On February 10,

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<sup>55</sup> S. Antonia, *Salvatorianische Mitteilungen*, 1909, No. 2, page 22 – SHS 9, Vol. E, page 67.

<sup>56</sup> S. Scholastica to S. Elisabeth, 14.09.1911.

<sup>57</sup> S. Scholastica to S. Elisabeth, 19.09.1911.

1912, S. Innocentia Stahl and S. Priscilla Stadler arrived from Rome. The former remained in Shillong and the latter went to Raliang, where both of them carry out their missionary work.

Owing to illness, S. Gabriela was transferred to Shillong in this same year and S. Hildegardis left for Rome on October 6.

1913

On April 6, 1913, the new church in Shillong was solemnly consecrated. Present on this occasion were an archbishop, a bishop, the Apostolic Prefect and a great number of priests and people. This occasion gave us the opportunity to have the Blessed Sacrament in our convent chapel. Now, to everyone's joy, the dear Savior is living in our midst.

We have to mention the following as true and faithful benefactors of us sisters in the mission: parish priest Fr. Krauss, Mr. Görl, Mr. Vogt, Miss Weinsheimer, Mrs. Jäger, Mrs. Monahan.

## Apostolic Activities of the Sisters

1891-1912

The following report gives an overall view of the apostolic work of the Sisters:

In the first year that we were here, we sisters began teaching the children and also visited the sick. We taught English speaking children and later, when we had some knowledge of the Khasi language, we also taught Khasi children. Then we taught in the mission schools in several villages such as Laitumkrah, Nongtymmai, Umpling, Nongrah, Malki, Maukhar.

In the year 1893, we opened an orphanage for boys and girls. Soon after the foundations at Shella and Raliang, orphanages were opened there as well. The orphanage at Shillong began with 5 children and a school which was taken care of by the sisters. The number of orphans soon increased and the house had to be enlarged. Later on, the children were housed in two buildings so that we had one orphanage for boys and one for girls to take care of.

In the latter years, we did not teach in the school, but we had to take care of the boys' laundry and keep their clothes in good repair. We also built a small hospital together with a home for the aged which still continues with a dispensary for the poor.

As mission sisters, we also took care of the church, the church choir, the church laundry as well as of the laundry and kitchen of the priests. We have not been doing this last work for a number of years past, with the exception of the baking and sending out of hosts to most of the mission stations.

The foundation of a new convent for the sisters was laid in 1909. On July 16, it was blessed and we moved in. Since then, the old convent has been used by 8-10 Eurasian girls; they are being taught some English, music, typing, housekeeping and handicrafts. At the same time, we started the domestic science school (technical school) for girls and built a kitchen connected with a laundry, ironing room and bathroom for the orphans.

In 1912, the foundations of a primary school for Khasi girls were laid together with those of an adjoining building in preparation for its intended opening on May 1, 1913. We received help from the English government for the construction of these school buildings.

Our sisters are responsible for the teaching of all school and domestic science subjects, as well as for the care of the sick poor and dispensaries and they give private lessons to the new converts.

The following material is gleaned from a variety of sources (1913-1915):

The last years of our sisters' life and work in Assam began full of hope for the future and they had the satisfaction of seeing some exterior development of their work.



*Figure 17: Shillong 1913: Opening of Salvatorian Sisters' new school*

1913

A new Salvatorian school for Khasi children was opened on the birthday of the King, June 3, 1913. An account of this important event includes the following details:

The Apostolic Prefect wanted everything to be very festive. For some weeks beforehand, the sisters practiced poems and songs with the orphan girls. The big ones zealously decorated the school building and everyone helped together so that, by the opening date, even the open space in front of the school was beautifully in order.

Invitations were sent out and, at about 04.00 p.m., the principal guest arrived by car: the wife of the British High Commissioner for India, Lady Earle, who was very well-disposed toward our mission. The Apostolic Prefect brought her into the school where the sisters and orphans were waiting. The sister in charge of the orphans invited her to open the school and, using a key that was brought to her on a red velvet cushion by one of the girls, she did so.

All those present then entered the school for a program presented by the children. The boys' choir was there to make the occasion more festive. One of the girls presented a bouquet to Lady Earle and, after the recitation of a poem in English, a silver key was presented as a thank you and remembrance of the opening of the school. Poems in Khasi were said and several songs were sung; Lady Earle and other important guests obviously enjoyed the program. Everything went well and the celebrations concluded, according to English custom, with the serving of tea.

The following morning, Father Chrysostomus, wearing a cope and stole and accompanied by two altar boys, and followed by a procession of orphan girls, went from the sisters' chapel to the school and solemnly blessed it.<sup>58</sup>

1914

The first number of the Salvatorian chronicles, June 1914, gives the following brief news from Assam:

“Our sisters are working with all their energy at their assigned tasks. Next winter, we hope to send three more sisters there...”

The next chronicles, sent out in November 1914, give news which is less happy and also provide one reason why we have little information on these last years in Assam:

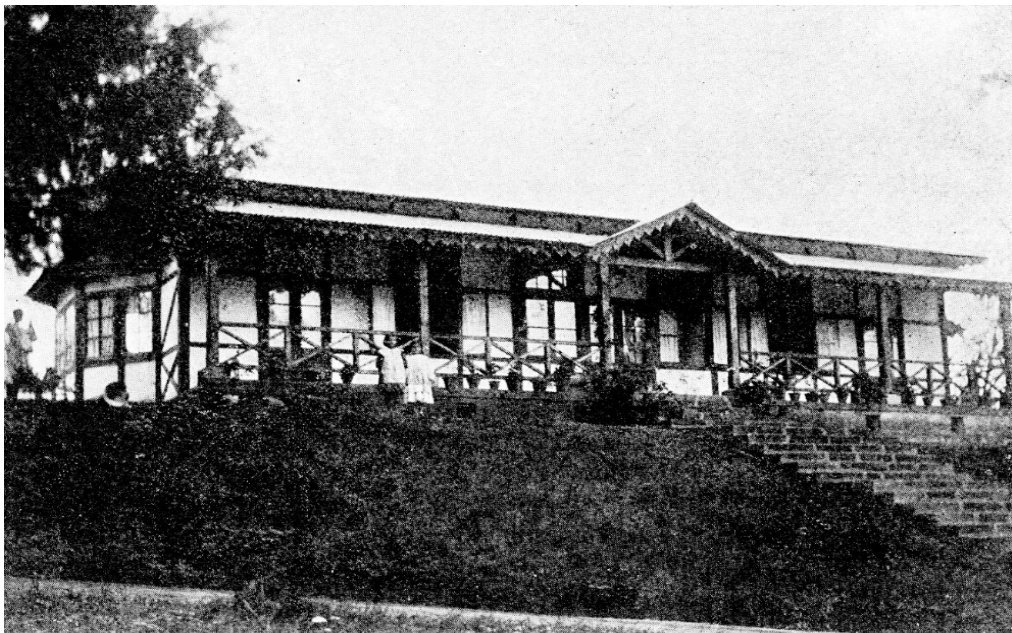
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<sup>58</sup> Depending on the content, excerpts were taken from the report of the blessing of the Khasi-girls School in Shillong, from *Missionär*, 1913, No. 8, page 254.

“Due to the censorship of letters, very little news has come in from Assam. It is quite sure that our sisters have a lot to suffer in the present circumstances, especially as they cannot receive any support from Germany...”

In 1914, the First World War had broken out. S. Evangelista had attended the General Chapter in Rome in July and was not able to return to Assam when the Chapter ended on July 29. Fighting had already broken out in Europe between Austria, Serbia, Germany, Russia, France, and Belgium and, on August 4, 1914, England entered the war as well. As England and Germany were on opposite sides, this affected Assam where the British Government had the administration of the area.

During this year, Pius X died and his successor took the name Benedict XV.



*Figure 18: Shillong, 1910: Sisters' new convent*

1915

In early 1915, the sisters bought a bungalow in Dibrugarh with thoughts of making a new foundation there, but it was not long before their situation became very uncertain. The Salvatorian priests and brothers were interned.

The Apostolic Prefect, Fr. Becker SDS, wrote from the internment camp at Ahmednagar to S. Scholastica at Shillong:

“Dear and Reverend Mother Superior,

With the greatest grief I learnt from your letter that you will have to leave the mission, too, after all the long years of devoted and self-sacrificing labour in the service of the orphans, the sick and the poor. Well, the good you have done won't be lost, though I should have wished for you also a better earthly recognition. Please, thank S. Ignatia for her letter and tell her and all the sisters, not to lose courage, but to bear also this trial with a brave and strong heart; Divine Providence will direct everything to the best.”<sup>59</sup>

The sisters in Raliang had to leave and go to Shillong. The sisters hoped that, as the substitute for the Apostolic Prefect, Father Lefebvre S.J., had applied for their exemption from repatriation, they would be allowed to stay on to continue their work in Assam. The application was refused on August 30, 1915.

The news was received with sorrow by everyone in the area. Mother Borgia, superior of the I.B.V.M. sisters at the Loreto convent in Calcutta, expressed the thoughts of many when she wrote to S. Scholastica: “I am sending you a hundred rupees to get you and the dear sisters anything that you may require for the voyage. Need I tell with what grief I heard you were to leave India where you have all worked with such heroic devotion. It is we who will be the losers by your departure for where shall we ever get more kind or devoted friends...”<sup>60</sup>

Through Fr. Lefebvre, the sisters were informed of, and complied with, the various formalities connected with their repatriation. Their photographs were taken, they handed in lists of the personal belongings they intended to take with them. They packed their luggage including, as instructed, bedding, towels, etc. for use on the voyage.

S. Scholastica wrote a farewell addressed to the Residents of Shillong and the surrounding District:

“Now that it has been decided that we are to be repatriated, I beg, on my part and on that of my Nuns, together with the orphans and the old people under our charge, as well as the sick and the suffering that we have been attending, to thank the good people of Shillong and neighbourhood for all their kindness to us, and for the many benefits we have received at their hands since I came to Shillong 25 years ago...”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Fr. Christophorus Becker to S. Scholastica, 25.08.1915.

<sup>60</sup> M. Borgia IBVM, Calcutta, to S. Scholastica, 27.08.1915.

<sup>61</sup> S. Scholastica to the residents of Shillong and surrounding areas, September 1915.



Finally, on Monday, November 15, 1915, they were standing on the road outside the convent beside their luggage, surrounded by the orphans and well-wishers, waiting for the official car to arrive to take them to the boat in Calcutta.

The sisters boarded ship in Calcutta during the afternoon of November 16, 1915, and had to wait to board for a day or two until all the passengers had arrived.

On November 18, S. Scholastica wrote to Rome: “The farewell from our dear mission was simply terrible. The poor children cried and screamed. Everyone cried: old and young, priest and people, ladies and gentlemen ... We put everything into God’s hands. So many prayers were said and still this happened; and so it must be God’s will. ...”<sup>62</sup>

The long voyage around Africa in the overcrowded SS. Golconda lasted two months, and when they arrived at Tilburg in England, the change to better conditions on a Dutch ship was most welcome. However, the night crossing over the North Sea to Blissingen in Holland was made in very stormy seas which broke over the entire ship.<sup>63</sup>

As had been promised in Assam, the sisters were met at the port and taken to the train which was to take them to Germany. Once there, most of them were assigned to nursing the war wounded.

S. Scholastica concluded her report:

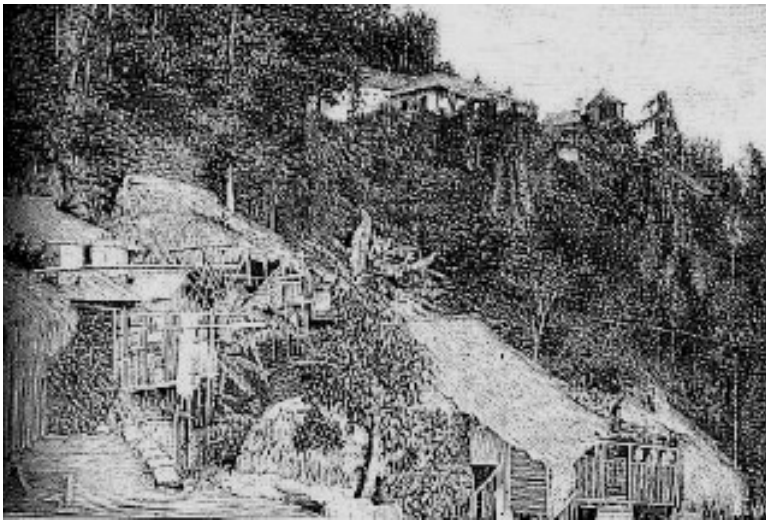
“We didn’t hear anything from the mission which we had to abandon in this way. However, we now receive frequent letters from our Christians, children and friends, in which they tell us how much they weep for us and how much they long for our return. They intend to pray and beseech God until he hears them and sends us back again. May God take the mission where we worked for 25 years into His protection. God grant that the long-desired peace may come soon and that the mission may blossom again.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> S. Scholastica to Mother Ambrosia Vetter, *Missionär*, 1916, No. 2, page 59.

<sup>63</sup> Excerpts taken from the report of S. Scholastica, *Missionär*, 1916, No. 10, page 254.

<sup>64</sup> S. Scholastica, *Missionär*, 1916, No. 10, page 254.



*Figure 19: Shella village houses before 1897*

## SHELLA-LAITKYNSEW

1896

Sisters Bernarda Reichel, Gabriela Bohnheim and Hildegard Dombrowski began their missionary activity at Shella on January 29, 1896. There had been repeated urgent requests for the sisters' collaboration in this mission station. Father Gebhard Abele, missionary at Shella, wrote a letter to the Founder on September 14, 1894, which was printed in the "Missionär" of November 24, 1895:

"As happy as I am about the results achieved, I still deplore the fact that our request for sisters has, as yet, been without success. I can only ascribe this to the fact that the particular circumstances which make a speedy arrival of the sisters necessary are not sufficiently known to you. I believe I did call your attention to one point earlier, namely: the customs of the Khasi at Shella are completely different from those of the other Khasi in that the women, in particular, are subject to the Hindu customs. In as much as this isolation of the women has its good points, it is an immense hindrance for a male missionary who is alone on the mission. They may not come to me and I may not go to them. How is it possible to give instructions in these circumstances? This difficulty has made itself felt right from the beginning but now, with the constantly growing number of converts, the situation is becoming impossible. Presently, I have 30 young men who cannot marry because there are no Catholic girls.

What shall I do? Each time Father Superior has come to Shella, the people too, have come with the request for sisters.”<sup>65</sup>

At last, the sisters had arrived. They were soon going into the people’s houses to teach them the faith.

Then, a cross came to the sisters’ community: S. Bernarda fell ill just a month after her arrival. She was taken to Shillong where she died – as had Fr. Otto Hopfenmüller and Brother Marianus Schumm – after seven months in the mission, on August 20, 1896, her nameday.

On September 10, 1896, Fr. Gebhard reported to the Founder that the remaining two sisters were both teaching religion in the village on three days a week and that they had begun to take care of the orphan children a few days previously. Asking for a replacement for the deceased S. Bernarda, he pleaded for a healthy and zealous Sister. Besides all the good qualities, she should also be able to play the harmonium well. He emphasized that it was important in the work of conversion for the religious functions to be as solemn as possible and this calls for good church music. The Khasis are greatly attracted by music, and once they come to church, the first step to conversion is made.<sup>66</sup>

The orphans mentioned by Fr. Gebhard had been brought from Shillong to Shella by S. Benedicta. She wrote the following account of the journey:

“We left at eight in the morning, the children and I were carried; the priests rode. We arrived in Cherrapunjee at nine o’clock in the evening, wet through by heavy rain. The next day was worse, I got sick and both I and Fr. Ignatius thought I wouldn’t reach Shella alive. It was raining so hard that the paths were turned into pools and rivers that were knee-deep. Outside Shella, it became impassable ... we had to turn back and make a path through the tall, thick bamboo bushes. Some men went first and tore away some of the bush, so that one could at least creep through. I was pulled through it in the carrying basket ... However, two days later, I was already very healthy again and returned to Shillong on foot.”<sup>67</sup> Sister did not mention that it is a walk of more than 45 miles from Shella to Shillong. The four orphans remained in Shella.

The work was not easy. S. Hildegardis wrote:

“If one did not have the greatest trust in God, one would often think that nothing further could be done. The devil tries every way to make one lose one’s courage. But, once the troubles have passed, one can clearly see that the experience was very good for one’s soul. ... With God’s

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<sup>65</sup> Fr. Gebhard Abele to Fr. Jordan, 14.09.1894, in *Missionär*, 1895, No. 22, page 171.

<sup>66</sup> Fr. Gebhard Abele to Fr. Jordan, 10.09.1896, in *Missionär*, 1896, No. 20, page 309.

<sup>67</sup> S. Benedicta to Mother Mary, 03.10.1896, *Missionär*, 1896, No. 21, page.324.

help, we go to give classes in the village everyday. ... it is not easy ... I think that, when we do what we can, the dear Lord will not fail to do His part.”<sup>68</sup>

Nor was it easy to move around in the difficult terrains of Shella. Yet, the missionaries did get out to the people, and the people came in to the missionaries. And soon it was Christmas 1896, the sisters' first Christmas in Shella:

“On the holy Christmas night, many children and grown-ups came to us at the orphanage for the Christmas tree-gifting and to attend the Holy Mass afterwards. When all the lights on the tree were lit, Fr. Gebhard brought the children in. In their excitement, they had forgotten to go to sleep. They greeted the dear Christ child with the beautiful carol ‘Jar, Jar Riet’ – Silent Night, Holy Night. Then came more Christmas carols, followed by the distribution of modest Christmas gifts. Around midnight, we went to the church which was filled by a pious and inquisitive crowd. The orphans sang during the Holy Mass.”<sup>69</sup>

1897

January marked the first anniversary of the sisters' arrival in Shella. Their work continued and S. Gabriela wrote happily:

“Thanks be to God, the conversion of the women is making good progress: very many are preparing for baptism and diligently attend the instructions which I give five times a week.”<sup>70</sup>

In March, S. Hildegardis went to Raliang and S. Evangelista Hofmann joined S. Gabriela in Shella. Together, they prepared for Easter. It was to be quite an experience, especially for S. Evangelista who had newly arrived from Rome. S. Gabriela described it in the letter to M. Mary:

“On Holy Saturday evening, when the good Catholics here went to confession, we decorated the little church very beautifully, especially the altar where we put candles, flowers and garlands. Then, just when everything was finished, the roaring of thunder and lightning began. There was a strong wind as well – our church roof was torn off so that the rain came in and ruined all our work. a second storm during the night damaged, in varying degrees, the roofs of Fr. Gebhard and the orphanage.

Easter Sunday was more friendly again and busy hands soon had everything put in order so that Mass could be held. Afterwards, two men and two women were baptized. On Whit Sunday, our

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<sup>68</sup> S. Hildegardis to Fr. Jordan, 29.11.1896.

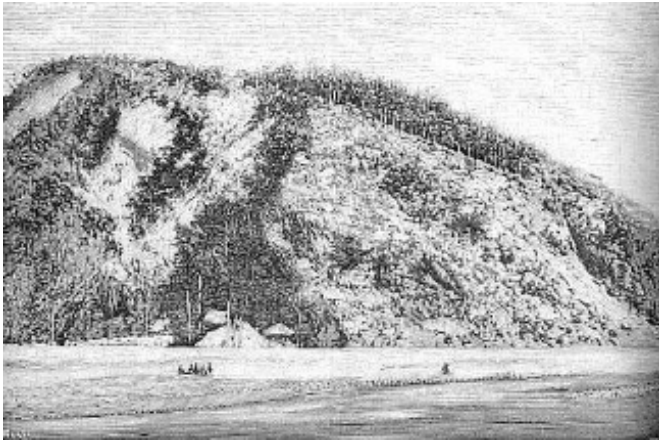
<sup>69</sup> S. Hildegardis, 07.01.1897, *Missionär*, 1896, No. 4, page 52.

<sup>70</sup> S. Gabriela to Mother Mary, 25.04.1897, *Missionär*, 1897, No. 13, page 195.

girls went to first confession and they will probably make their first communion with the boys at Pentecost. This is how the sorrows of our mission are mixed with joys.”<sup>71</sup>

The missionaries were to have a far worse experience two months later when, on June 12, 1897, the mission was completely destroyed by an earthquake. Sister Scholastica wrote to M. Mary afterward:

“The priests and sisters came out of it with their lives but all of Shella is badly affected and there are very many dead to show for it.”<sup>72</sup>



*Figure 20: Shella village after the 1897 earthquake*

## The Earthquake in Shella

There were two sisters in Shella when the earthquake occurred: the superior, S. Gabriela and S. Evangelista. There were 10 children in the orphanage. Six of these were on the way to market and were killed by falling rocks; three of the children in the house met the same fate.

It all began with a terrible crash of thunder, the earth shook and cracked open, dust filled the air so that one could hardly breathe. On an interior impulse, the superior, S. Gabriela, left the house immediately and ran down the stairs to the kitchen where S. Evangelista was working. Hardly had the superior left the house then it began to shake and collapsed in ruins down the hillside. The superior fell several times on the way and S. Evangelista, who had come out of the kitchen, also fell and was pinned down by a large rock on her arm. It was impossible for them to move this away, and so they prayed and called for help until, at last, one of the priests came.

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<sup>71</sup> S. Gabriela to Mother Mary, 25.04.1897, *Missionär*, 1897, No. 13, page 195.

<sup>72</sup> S. Scholastica to Mother Mary, *Missionär*, 1897, No. 15, page 228.

It took him two hours to free the arm, using iron bars and similar instruments to do so. Very surprisingly, only a small damage was to the skin on her arm.

The superior had sat herself down on a stone but another quake came and she slid down the hill on the stone as if on a sledge. As she recounted, she had already offered her life to God in contrite prayer for our holy faith. As she slid, she saw the house disintegrate and fall down the hillside with everything it contained. It was followed by the church, the priests' house and the orphanage. All that happened in a moment, faster than it can be told.<sup>73</sup>

It really was a desperate situation. As the sisters later wrote to M. Mary:

“There we stood. Our houses disappeared, together with the church, down the steep slope to the river. In Shella, the houses stand high up on the hill slope and extend down to the river and everything went downward. Our children, the five girls we had sent to the village to get something to eat, did not return anymore. They were killed by the rock. Little Markus was on his way to the orphanage. He too died under the stones.”<sup>74</sup>

Fr. Gebhard wrote from Shella telling of his experience:

“The place where the village stood exists no longer. The sisters' house, for example, flew in an arc many hundreds of feet down the hill; great lumps of rock followed. It has disappeared almost without trace. Only a little piece of tin is poking out of the earth ... I would have liked to bring the sisters to Shillong, but that wasn't possible, all the paths have been destroyed in this catastrophe. Climbing up and down ladders over the steep rocks, getting over the rifts in the rocks which are two feet wide and with steep slopes falling away to right and left: I couldn't risk that with the sisters. And so there is nothing else for it than that they, too, carry their mission cross in patience. Because we are fairly well again, all will be possible. We hope in God, He has protected us until now, He will also continue to protect us.”<sup>75</sup>

The violent earthquake ceased, everyone tried to pull themselves together and to search for the orphan children but there was nothing of them to be found. It was then decided to leave this place of horror and one of the priests rummaged through the debris to find the tabernacle. He found it, took out the chalice (ciborium) and placed this in his pocket. Then all three tried to reach the nearest village which was two miles away through the pouring rain. Soaked through to the bone, they came to a tumbledown hut where they spent the entire night sitting in their wet clothes.

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<sup>73</sup> Mission reports of the Sisters, *Missionär*, 1897, No. 16 and 17.

<sup>74</sup> Mission reports of the Sisters about the earthquake, *Missionär*, 1897, No. 16, page 248.

<sup>75</sup> Fr. Gebhard Abele, *Missionär*, 1897, No. 20, page 311.

One earthquake followed on another and one began to believe that everything was surely coming to an end. They were given some cold rice for breakfast and a piece of bark served as a plate. After this, they set out again on their way in heavy rain.

They arrived in Laitkynsew but found nothing there other than some empty houses and stables. Only the house of the catholic teacher was still somewhat habitable and he willingly let them use it as their home for some months. By then, they were also feeling very hungry, but there was nothing to be had other than potatoes baked on the fire. They had neither a change of clothing nor kitchen utensils nor money to buy something. For a while, they had nothing to eat but potatoes.

One great consolation remained to them in their misery: they could receive their dear Savior in the Blessed Sacrament as long as it was still available.

The Christians built themselves huts from palm leaves and lived by eating betel nuts. The Reverend Father baptized 16 pagans during these terrible days; loud praying could be heard everywhere and some, in their fear and panic, made public confession of their sins.

In the month of August, the priest built a large grass hut, divided into several sections which had to serve as both church and dwelling house for everyone for a full year. The poor living quarter, incessant rain and lack of food had as a result that the sisters were sick with fever until November.

Help came to us after some months in that the Holy Cross Sisters of Calcutta sent clothing to us. The grass hut was badly damaged by storms on several occasions. The roof of the house which was subsequently built for the sisters also had its roof taken off on several times by a storm so that it was necessary to put up an umbrella over the bed in the night to keep dry. It rained onto our very primitive cooker and this extinguished the fire so that we were often not able to cook the little food that we had. In order to keep the flame burning, we put a child with two saucepan lids by the side of it to keep the wind off. This was told by S. Gabriela. And so began the sisters' station at Laitkynsew.

The two sisters wrote to Mother Mary telling of their situation with faith and no complaints. S. Evangelista mentioned the fact that soon she would not be able to face the people anymore. The reason she narrates:

“Torn stockings, no shoes, a habit almost in pieces. Rev. Father always has to help me out with a cloak. The nice black habit from Rome, the two new white ones that Father bought recently, everything has been lost. All our books: we have only my rule book as our one consolation. The beautiful rosary I received from Reverend Father when we left has also been lost. Please, Rev. Mother, may I have again a cross from Rome for the renewal of vows? The superior also asks for the holy Rules, spiritual renewal and customs.

Oh, dearest Rev. Mother, when we were in danger of death, it would have been such a consolation for me if I had already made perpetual vows. This was my first thought. I am happy and glad that I have something to endure at last. I hope to be able to speak better Khasi soon. I now have more time to study.”<sup>76</sup>

And S. Gabriela wrote: “It makes me happy that we are poor at last as our holy Rule calls for, and I want to remain so forever, if only we have the necessary clothing. The Khasi used my black veil to bury the dead. The Lord gave it, the Lord took it away, blessed be the name of the Lord ... Greetings to all the dear sisters. We have no table, I am writing on the ground, therefore the writing is so bad.”<sup>77</sup>

The zeal and courage of the missionaries did not fail in spite of the want, illness and other sufferings caused by the earthquake and the subsequent tremors. The Christians of Shella settled in other villages; some families moved to Laitkynsew and new villages developed in the vicinity. Two sisters were teaching the girls; one also gave religion classes in the village and these were well attended, at times by 30 persons.

The first Christmas in Laitkynsew was celebrated with particular joy and gratitude as the sisters’ report indicates:

“The entire week, even on the eve of the feast, we were busy baking bread and cakes etc. a pig was slaughtered for our Christians. After that, we also decorated the little church with many branches, bouquets and flowers. Nor was the Christmas tree left out, which we did as a surprise for Father. When it was sufficiently decorated, we put it on the table with the small gifts for the children all around it.

We sisters were also remembered with little gifts and I even received a new violin. I now practice it assiduously and sometimes entertain our Christians. An appropriate poem was said at the Christmas celebration and we sang afterwards. Oh, everything was so beautiful. What joy shone from the faces of the little ones who were seeing all this for the first time. It was a pity that something most important was missing, namely: the Christ child. We didn’t have one, nor did we have a crib, because the earthquake took all our little belongings away from us. Faith in God-made-man in the tabernacle had to suffice for us and to replace whatever was missing.”

Feastdays were important for the Khasi and, in spite of their new and difficult situation ... “some people came long distances and stayed for two nights over the feastdays. Our feastday joy was increased by the baptism of a mother and her four children. In the afternoon of Christmas Day and on the following day, Vespers were sung and, again, many people attended.

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<sup>76</sup> S. Evangelista to Mother Mary, 27.06.1897, ASDS, Assam, Shella / Laitkynsew.

<sup>77</sup> S. Gabriela to Mother Mary, 18.07.1897, ASDS, Assam, Shella / Laitkynsew.



We therefore thank the good God that he let us and our Christians spend the blessed feast of Christmas so beautifully and we are happy that they showed so much zeal and also that, at last, the Khasi have come to recognize that God is a loving Father who lifts his arm in punishment only to make us better and, by doing so, wants to make his creatures happy for a whole eternity.”<sup>78</sup>



*Figure 21: Laitkynsew village*

1898

There is little information available for this year. The reason can perhaps be found in the following mission report of January 1898:

“The bad housing conditions, together with the onset of the rainy season, soon brought much illness, such as fever, influenza and dysentery etc. In almost all the mission stations, the missionaries lay sick for a time and, even now, illness breaks out far too easily.”<sup>79</sup>

In September, Fr. Gebhard reported from Laitkynsew: “The sisters have been ill for much of the time.”<sup>80</sup> And S. Benedicta wrote from Shillong to M. Mary in December: “It is very unhealthy here this year, many are sick.”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> From the “report of a sister about the Christmas celebration in Laitkynsew”, *Missionär*, 1898, No. 3, page 36.

<sup>79</sup> Fr. Angelus Münzloher, SDS, 28.01.1898; see also *Missionär*, 1898, No. 5, page 68 f.

<sup>80</sup> Fr. Gebhard Abele, SDS, 25.09.1898; *Missionär*, 1898, No. 23, page 358 f.

<sup>81</sup> S. Benedicta to Mother Mary, 14.12.1898.

However, the sisters at Laitkynsew now had a modest new convent and orphanage next to the priests' house on top of a hill on the outskirts of the village.

At the beginning of July, S. Kunigilde joined the community as its third member. And the mission work continued: a number of Christians were accepted into the Confraternity of the Scapular.



*Figure 22: Laitkynsew: church, convent, priest's house*

1899

In her letter of April 23, S. Gabriela tells the Founder that a new church is being built, though they do not expect it to be completed before Christmas because of the frequent rains. Three children had been baptized that Easter and four orphans had received their first Holy Communion on the following Sunday. Thirteen adults were preparing to receive the Sacrament of Baptism at Christmas. If only the children would come to school, it would be possible to teach them many good things, but ... the parents go to work and leave the children to play on the road. On going into the village to instruct the women in the faith, she always invites the children to come to her in the school, but they don't want to. Only the baptized children came daily.<sup>82</sup>

There were difficulties: We repeatedly have earthquakes, brief tremors, strong winds, rain and thunderstorms and above all, a lack of funds for the construction of the church.

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<sup>82</sup> S. Gabriela to Fr. Jordan, 23.04.1899.

And there were feastdays in the community: On June 9, 1899, S. Evangelista renewed her vows for three years. In September, S. Constantia came to the community as the superior.



*Figure 23: Laitkynsew: Salvatorian missionaries with orphans*<sup>83</sup>

And for Christmas 1899, a special joy: the new mission church was completed! “At half past eleven, the mission bell sounded out for the first time from the new tower into the quiet evening air, the church was soon full and the midnight vigil could begin.

The following day, the orphans were happy and overwhelmed with their Christmas gifts, namely music instruments. With enthusiasm and full of energy they tried to play the notes of the Christmas songs on the various instruments with more or less success the entire day. The result was such loud noise that one could hardly understand his or her own word.<sup>84</sup>

1900 – onward

The few letters sent to Rome from Laitkynsew indicate that the work of the mission, with its joys and difficulties, went forward. Salvatorian visitors came from time to time and the number of Christians grew.

In 1902, S. Evangelista was enthusiastic about a new project and wrote to M. Mary: “Now, as promised, I will tell you something about our newspaper. We get more and more work. We had

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<sup>83</sup> Fr. Dominicus, S. Evangelista, S. Gabriela.

<sup>84</sup> According to the *Missionär*, 1900, pages 107-109, “Christmas 1899 in Laitkynsew”.

eight pages in the first number, then twelve, then sixteen. In the most recent copy there were even twenty pages with an eight page supplement. In November, there will be twenty-four pages. Now, a short content description: you already know the first page, we only fill the empty space with the calendar in order to have more room for the rest. There are explanations of the Mass on the following pages of the first number (ka jingknig ka Mass), then biographies (ka jingim jong u Xaverius Bakhind), (ka Khristin Bashlur) the staunch Christians of the first centuries, then various small articles...”<sup>85</sup>

In August 1906, Fr. Christophorus Becker appealed to the Catholics in the homeland, who were ever ready to help: “The Apostolic Prefecture Assam (Northeast India) is facing at present a huge problem. The prices have gone up very much. There was a state of famine in the area. The rice harvest went very bad last year. The hope of having a better harvest this year is shattered by enormous amounts of rain. In consequence of this, the price of rice has gone up already six times as high. Cruel sellers even take advantage of it by reserving the rice as long as possible for an ever higher price. The poor people can no longer afford to buy. Rice is their daily food; if they do not have it, they do not have the most basic requirement. To avoid starvation, the people are eating wild roots and plants. This general need and rise in prices hits the Catholic mission very badly. From all sides, the missionaries are begging for help. They should help everywhere and are having difficulty in providing for their own needs and for the orphans and sick under their care.”<sup>86</sup>

Mother Mary sent a Christmas gift of money to the sisters in Laitkynsew, and as 1906 passed into 1907, S. Gabriela wrote her thanks and told of the situation: the sisters were just two, the number of orphans forty-four, including three very small ones. The sisters and children all had coughs and colds. The sisters were getting little rest. But, during the Christmas season twenty seven pagans were baptized and twenty were confirmed. These are days of joy and grace. It is a real mission here.<sup>87</sup>

S. Hildegardis went to Laitkynsew in 1907. She was to take over the orphanage and school. S. Gabriela left for a home visit in Europe. She had not travelled further than Bombay when she wrote: “I am already looking forward to coming back.”<sup>88</sup> She did eventually return, but not to Laitkynsew.

The famine had been particularly bad in the region of Shella. It was followed in 1908 by a severe outbreak of cholera, aggravated by unbearable heat and dryness. Then came storms,

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<sup>85</sup> S. Evangelista to Mother Mary, 19.10.1902, ASDS, Assam, Shella / Laitkynsew.

<sup>86</sup> Fr. Christophorus Becker SDS, Apostolic Prefect, Assam; *Missionär*, Vol 26, August 1906, pages 346-347.

<sup>87</sup> Narrated in a letter, by S. Gabriela to Mother Mary, 13.01.1907.

<sup>88</sup> S. Gabriela to the Apostolic Prefect, 13.05.1907.

heavy rain and an extremely heavy hailstorm which even brought damage to the mission church building.

The conclusion of the sisters' chronicle states briefly and with little detail the fact of the sisters' departure from Laitkynsew: the mission station was closed down in 1908 due to the lack of essentials and the ill health of the sisters. They and the orphans transferred to Shillong. There were many transfers of superiors and sisters for reasons of ill health."<sup>89</sup>



*Figure 24: The first community in Raliang<sup>90</sup>*

## RALIANG

The main account on the sisters' establishment at Raliang for the period of 1897-1912 is a detailed chronological report, written by the superior of the community, S. Ignatia Greiner.<sup>91</sup> The additional sections are taken from other sources, as indicated.

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<sup>89</sup> Chronicles of the Sisters, ASDS, Assam.

<sup>90</sup>Sr. Brigitta, S. Ignatia, S. Hildegard.

The mission station of Raliang is situated in the province of Assam to the East of India, up in the remote “Jaintia Hills”. It is 50 miles away from the main mission center of Shillong.

On completion of the two-day journey eastward from Shillong, the incoming sisters found new home surroundings very different from the Germany and Rome they had left.

“Think of a very remote area, far away over many hills and valleys. Two days journey away from a trading center, such as our main station of Shillong or one day journey from the post station of Jowai. Traffic can go only as far as Shillong. From there onward, the natives have to carry everything on their backs, including the people who cannot ride or make such a trip on foot. If the mountain streams are swollen, as during the rainy season, one has to wade through because there are no bridges. In the dry season, the stones stand out above the water and one can jump from one to the other.”<sup>92</sup>

This is how a Salvatorian priest described the area:

“No soon does one get to the top of one hill that there is another. The weather: mild winters (the best time), summer and rainy season from May to October with strong winds, heavy storms and disease, but also lush plant growth. The free ranging animals: deer, jackals, foxes, squirrels, bears, leopards, tigers (whose roaring alone makes one shiver), elephants, buffalo, wild boar, and multitudes of various kinds of monkey. Rats and mice are a special kind of plague for the house and field. Therefore, depending on the size of the house and garden, one needs to keep two or three zealous cats.

The vast number of insects, too, feel themselves to be called a special plague to humankind, especially in the summer: all kinds of beetles walk or fly about; cicadas give their concert in the evening, the blood-thirsty mosquitoes rob one his sleep in the night. White ants cause untold damage to the house and field. Another enemy for men are the snakes: many fall victim to snakebite, but more in the valleys than on the hills. On the brighter side: there are beautiful orchids everywhere and an abundance of fruit. Should it happen that a European botanist gets lost in this remote area, he for sure will look for orchids, of which there are many kinds growing wild here. ... As refreshing fruit there are pineapples, bananas, lemons, pomegranates, melons, oranges, quirnis (in a way, similar to pears) and apricots.”<sup>93</sup>

1897

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<sup>91</sup> S. Ignatia Greiner, ASDS, Assam, Chronicles 1897 – 1913.

<sup>92</sup> S. Eustachia to Mother Mary, 27.12.1906, ASDS, Assam and *Salvatorianische Mitteilungen*, 1907, No. 3, page 57.

<sup>93</sup> Fr. Pius Steinherr, *Missionär*, 1898, No. 14, page 212.

The first three sisters (S. Ignatia, S. Brigitta, S. Hildegardis) arrived there on the Feast of St. Joseph, March 19, 1897. This mission station had been opened several years previously by Salvatorian Fathers. Frs. John Gruchot and Thaddäus Hofmann began the mission station among the Synteng on December 3, 1892.<sup>94</sup>

For their work in Assam, the missionaries needed a knowledge of English, the administrative language of the country during that period. However, a knowledge of the local language was also essential. Within Assam, at least 70 different local languages are spoken and about 100 different dialects. In villages within a few miles of each other, the spoken language could be quite other. The sisters in Shillong, Shella and Laitkynsew needed to know Khasi. In Raliang, however, the local language was Synteng (pronounced S'nteng). No books had yet been printed in this language and it was predominantly a spoken language. Courageously and with great enthusiasm, in spite of the language handicap, the sisters began their new apostolic assignments.

In her annual report S. Ignatia Greiner writes: “Here we took care of the orphan boys (they are now fifteen). We taught them Catechism, Bible History, reading and writing. The children of the village attended the same lessons. We also gave the girls and women instructions in sewing, knitting and mending. Once in a while, we went to the village to look after the women.”<sup>95</sup>

The report describes further: a grass hut with very primitive furnishings provided us with a very welcome home. The necessary tables, chairs and bedsteads were there, made from raw wood without any trace of paint. Kerosene containers acted as substitute chairs wherever these were lacking. However, our joy was not to last very long.

On June 12 of that same year, there occurred a terrible, catastrophic earthquake which destroyed practically all the houses of the mission and damaged our house so badly that it had to be pulled down and rebuilt. While this was being done, we took shelter in a miserable hut until, at last, one room was erected with walls and roof made of reeds. Jokingly, we named it: “The grass palace.” There was a door and a rectangular window, it had a wooden shutter. We had to live there for nine months.

They say that troubles seldom come alone and this proved true for us. Our laundry burned down on June 29. At the beginning of August, S. Hildegardis fell from the rickety framework and broke her foot. Since there was no doctor in the place, the poor patient had to be carried on a stretcher up to Shillong. The result was that, for the next six months, until S. Hildegardis was able to return, we were only two sisters. When she did return, she continually had trouble with her foot.

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<sup>94</sup> *Missionär*, 1898, No. 18, page 280.

<sup>95</sup> S. Ignatia Greiner, Annual report 1897, ASDS, Assam.

We all faced fever by the bad living conditions. I would have liked to give some refreshment to the sick sister but there was nothing available at that time. For a long while, we did not even have any bread because the access ways had been partially wiped out by the earthquake.

There are no real roads between us and Shillong: everything has to be transported on the backs of porters. We have to pay 3 Mark (Mark: former German currency) for a load of about 80 pounds. The paths go alternatively uphill and downhill for most of the way.<sup>96</sup>

1898

S. Ignatia wrote Mother Mary on May 9, 1898: "Since April 22, we have been living, thank God, in the half-finished house. This is a true blessing. Only, sad to say, the earthquakes have been so strong recently that our walls have small cracks again."<sup>97</sup>

S. Brigitta wrote to Mother Mary in a letter: "On August 5 and 6, there was perpetual adoration. These were real days of grace for us. ... Rev. Fr. Superior [Father Angelus Münzloher] came yesterday and will administer the Sacrament of Confirmation tomorrow."<sup>98</sup>

S. Ignatia narrated again another incident of earthquake to Mother Mary in her letter of October 09: "The walls of my room have already large cracks. Still one or two such earthquakes, and the whole thing will fall down again. ... it is always as if a fast train comes, the wavering and trembling of the earth is a scary feeling."<sup>99</sup>

However, on the same day of Oct. 9, Mother Mary receives good news from S. Brigitta. She writes: "The new orphanage is practically completed. It consists of four rooms: one room is for the children, where they can cook, and is also used as the living-room, another is used for sleeping, the third as the class room and the fourth, a small room to be used for storage or for the sick in case of infectious disease."<sup>100</sup>

A month later, on November 8, 1898, S. Brigitta wrote again to Mother Mary: "14 days ago Rev. Superior [S. Scholastica] from Shillong made us happy with her visit. It was a happy meeting again. The whole village was excited, and her presence enhanced the nameday celebrations in honor of Fr. Thaddeus. He was also visibly happy and surprised. Three weeks ago we had retreat, led by Fr. Thaddeus. It was a graceful time for us. Rev. Father conducted the introduction and conclusion and held a very inspiring talk daily. He has great concern for

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<sup>96</sup> Annual report 1897, ASDS, Assam.

<sup>97</sup> S. Ignatia to Mother Mary, 09.05.1898, ASDS, Assam.

<sup>98</sup> S. Brigitte to Mother Mary, 14.08.1898, ASDS, Assam.

<sup>99</sup> S. Ignatia to Mother Mary, 09.10.1898, ASDS, Assam.

<sup>100</sup> S. Brigitta to Mother Mary, 09.10.1898, ASDS, Assam.



us, physically and spiritually. May the dear Lord reward him. Unfortunately he has been sickly for some days. The day before yesterday (Sunday), he couldn't even conduct Benediction.”<sup>101</sup>

S. Hildegard mentions in her letter to Mother Mary on November 30, 1898 that: “We now have a novena, with the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament every evening in preparation for the feast of the Immaculate Conception. As our chapel is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God, so is December 8 a great feast. ...”<sup>102</sup>

The Congregation celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Sisters' foundation in 1898.

1899

In her report about Raliang S. Ignatia continues:

(In the year 1899, we had a Visitation. This was conducted by S. Scholastica, the provincial, i.e. the delegated superior at the time.)<sup>103</sup>

1900

In October 1900, S. Brigitta became ill and had to seek medical assistance in Shillong where she was obliged to stay for five months. During this period, we were again only two sisters here.

When S. Brigitta returned, S. Hildegardis had to go to Shillong on account of her foot injury; she was provided with an iron brace. During the three months she was away, we were again only two at the mission.<sup>104</sup>

On her return, S. Hildegardis resumed work and wrote a letter to Europe appealing for help: “... As I mentioned once before, I give handwork classes in the open air. This is nice in summer but, in the rainy season which lasts half a year here, and in winter, it is very unpleasant outside. Our house is too small to provide a handwork room for the 25 students who presently attend the classes. The corridor is not really suitable because of people going in and out. As well as that, the open door creates a bad draught. I often pity the students when I see how they shiver from the cold. But, what can I do? I just have to keep them company and shiver along with them. If one or the other person who reads this would have a warm heart for my needy situation and would help me to build a classroom, something which does not cost so much here, I would be very grateful. I certainly would not omit to remember that person, especially in prayer with the

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<sup>101</sup> S. Brigitta to Mother Mary, 08.11.1898, ASDS, Assam.

<sup>102</sup> S. Hildegard to Mother Mary, 30.11.1898, ASDS, Assam.

<sup>103</sup> The sentence within the brackets is crossed out in the handwritten original.

<sup>104</sup> S. Ignatia, report from the Chronicles 1897-1913, ASDS, Assam.

students. I do give school lessons for the village children in the classroom but, as there are adults among them and the classroom is inside the orphanage, the handwork students are not permitted to use it. It would not be good for the orphans if they were in continual contact with their relatives.”<sup>105</sup>



*Figure 25: The first church in Raliang*

1902

In her report about Raliang, S. Ignatia mentions further:

In November 1902, Fr. Thaddeus Hofmann fell suddenly ill and died just 7 days later (on Nov 13), probably from typhoid fever. We have much to thank him for. We came here at his request and he was very good to us.

1903

We were then without a priest for three months. During most of this time we had Mass and Holy Communion only on Sundays and Mondays because the missionary priest<sup>106</sup> had to get back to his station.

Meanwhile, the burden of responsibility for the mission rested on my shoulders (S. Ignatia). The Lord gave me the strength to carry it.

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<sup>105</sup> *Salvatorianische Mitteilungen*, 1901, pages 27-28.

<sup>106</sup> Fr. Bernardine Jung was a zealous successor to Fr. Thaddeus (cf. Fr. Christophorus Becker, *History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1927, page 412).

Father Marcus Dombrowski was in Raliang at the end of July, and the sisters had a three-day retreat under his guidance.

In Rome, the aged Pope Leo XIII had died in July. S. Hildegard wrote to Mother Mary on August 17: “The sad news about the death of the Holy Father filled us with pain, and Father Pius celebrated a requiem for him. ... Friday, on 12<sup>th</sup> of this month I received the news that a new pope was again elected. The bells rang for a whole hour in order to announce this joy to all. ... Saturday, on the feast of the assumption of Mary, the Te Deum was sung by alternating choirs after Holy Mass, and in the afternoon by the people in the Khasi language.”<sup>107</sup>

More good news came from Rome: It had been possible to purchase a Motherhouse for the Congregation; the sisters sent Mother Mary their congratulations and expressed their joy.<sup>108</sup>



*Figure 26: Raliang: Later mission church*

1904

In the annual report S. Ignatia writes further: “In April 1904, S. Hildegardis had to go to Shillong again because of her foot injury. This time, the foot (the right one) had to be amputated. For one and a half years, there were again only two of us and dear S. Brigitta suffered very much from shortness of breath. We met with many trials during this period. However, we were of one heart and soul and this gave us the strength to bear the Cross.”

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<sup>107</sup> S. Hildegard to Mother Mary, 17.08.1903, ASDS.

<sup>108</sup> S. Ignatia to Mother Mary, 29.09.1903, and S. Brigitta to Mother Mary, 23.09.1903, ASDS.

During the rainy season, Fr. Dominicus SDS came on Visitation at the request of our dear Reverend Mother of blessed memory.

On the Feast of All Saints, there also came the Archbishop of Calcutta S.J. on Visitation, accompanied by his secretary Fr. Hipp.

1905

In 1905, I (the superior) was brought nearly to the edge of the grave by a violent fever. Because dear S. Brigitta was herself not well and had to see that the day to day work was done, I was cared for by a native girl.

On October 9 of that same year, S. Brigitta suffered a stroke during Mass. She was still able to receive Holy Communion and then one of the girls, together with me, brought her home where she received the holy oils. Her right side was paralyzed and she had lost the power of speech. I gave her treatment according to the Kneipp method and did whatever I could to help her. Thanks be to God, she gradually improved so that I could have her transported to Shillong in company of one of the girls. She improved quite a lot under the doctor's care. I was now alone until S. Hildegardis returned after having been given an artificial foot.

1906

At the end of January 1906, dear S. Brigitta returned to Raliang again as she had expressed the wish to die here. However, who would have thought that the good Lord would take her life away so soon!

After having spent nine uninterrupted years here, I (S. Ignatia) was transferred to Shillong in February as superior and our late Reverend Mother gave me the office of Commissary of the Mission.

On March 28, 1906, S. Scholastica arrived from Shillong to be superior here and brought a new addition with her: S. Eustachia Bauer from the Motherhouse in Rome.

On March 29, S. Hildegardis and I said goodbye to Raliang and left for our destination in Shillong. The dear sisters accompanied us but I told S. Brigitta to go back as she complained of feeling very unwell. We said goodbye to each other very warmly – it was to be for the last time on this earth.

On April 1, she had another stroke which led to her death on April 4. She was found in bed one morning, unable to speak and giving signs to indicate that she wanted to receive Holy Communion. She was in her 42<sup>nd</sup> year of life and had been a very pious and zealous worker in the vineyard of the Lord for 10 years. R. I. P.

And so, once again, there were only two sisters at the mission.

Father Christophorus Becker, the new Apostolic Prefect of Assam (he had been appointed on January 9, 1906) arrived in Shillong from Rome on March 17, and visited the mission station of Raliang at the end of April.

S. Eustachia informed Mother Mary of this news in her letter of May 4, 1906:

“Rev. Fr. Prefect has made us happy this week with his visit and arranged for us to have a spiritual conference on every First Friday. Thanks be to God.”<sup>109</sup>

About six weeks later S. Eustachia wrote in another letter to Mother Mary:

“... otherwise busy life prevails here. We plan to construct a small house for the orphans, and if enough help comes from Germany, later also a small hospital or a hut, whatever it may be called ... We enjoy the musical talent of our native girls ... one just has to start the melody, and they continue in their own language. The Village-Elder, the so-called King, came to have his wounded leg taken care of ...”<sup>110</sup>

And again one month later in another letter, S. Eustachia wrote to Mother Mary that during the humid season many people are sick and are treated successfully by the sisters. “Everywhere our Kneipp method has been very effective.”<sup>111</sup> The sisters treated the sick people in their homes as well as in the mission station, where an old hut was set up for this purpose. “May God bless us to get a dispensary soon.”<sup>112</sup>

Father Bernardine and the sisters pleaded with Mother Mary to send more missionaries.

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<sup>109</sup> S. Eustachia to Mother Mary, 04.05.1906, ASDS, Assam.

<sup>110</sup> S. Eustachia to Mother Mary, 21.06.1906, ASDS, Assam.

<sup>111</sup> S. Eustachia to Mother Mary, 19.07.1906, ASDS, Assam.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.



*Figure 27: S. Brigitta with orphan boys in Raliang*

1907

In March and April S. Eustachia writes to Mother Mary: “I am planning to make a Third Order habit for one of the native grown-up girls. With her, Rev. Fr. Prefect would like to introduce the Third Order. May she attract a large number of them. There is a second girl from the village with the same wish, a former orphan.”<sup>113</sup> S. Scholastica also mentioned to Mother Mary in her letter: “There are some girls who wish to remain virgins, and become some kind of sister, maybe a kind of Third Order with its own dress.”<sup>114</sup>

The sisters corresponded about this possibility with Fr. Becker,<sup>115</sup> who later in a letter to Fr. Bonaventura Lüthen mentioned that this attempt did not work out.<sup>116</sup>

Easter brought together at Raliang the Christians from the surrounding villages. On April 5, 1907, Fr. Bernardine travelled to Fr. Stanislaus’ mission station, Lamin, for the dedication of the church; most of the missionaries met there for the occasion. Two weeks later,

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<sup>113</sup> S. Eustachia to Mother Mary, 17.03.1907, ASDS, Assam

<sup>114</sup> S. Scholastica to Mother Mary, 05.04.1907, ASDS, Assam.

<sup>115</sup> S. Scholastica to Fr. Becker, 03.04.1907, Archive of the Archdiocese of Shillong, Assam.

<sup>116</sup> Fr. Becker to Fr. Bonaventura Lüthen, 03.10.1907.

Fr. Bernardine came back and brought both, Frs. Frumentius and Ansgarius with him. They were guests in Raliang for some days.<sup>117</sup>

The sisters were anxious regarding Mother Mary's health, which had been poor since a severe asthma attack in February.

S. Scholastica writes to Mother Mary on 4<sup>th</sup> July:

“Yesterday we had the first government examination in the school as, now, also the elementary schools have been placed under government and have to follow an approved program. The examiners were very pleased with the result, except for arithmetic. I hope for improvement before the winter exams, as there is an approved program now.<sup>118</sup>

On October 4, the sisters left for Shillong where a Jesuit from Calcutta preached their retreat, beginning on October 9.<sup>119</sup>

At the Mother house in Rome, during Christmas night, Mother Mary of the Apostles was called to her eternal home.

1908

The chronicles report that:

In January 1908, S. Eustachia needed medical treatment and had to stay in Shillong for three months. The superior, S. Scholastica, was alone there for a short period. She then had to go to Shillong to accept S. Eustachia's three year renewal of vows. S. Hildegardis returned from Shillong to join her in March and, before Easter, good S. Eustachia also returned having made a complete recovery. She attributed her cure to the assistance of the talented doctor Major Green and to the use of Lourdes water. After this, S. Scholastica was again called away from there to be the superior in Shillong because S. Ignatia had to go to the General Chapter in Rome and intended to visit Germany as well.

The General Chapter took place in Rome in July 1908, and Mother Ambrosia Vetter was elected to succeed Mother Mary as the second General Superior.

In November, S. Eustachia informed Fr. Becker that:

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<sup>117</sup> S. Eustachia to Mother Mary, 05.04.1907, ASDS, Assam.

<sup>118</sup> S. Scholastica to Mother Mary, 04.07.1907, ASDS, Assam.

<sup>119</sup> S. Eustachia to Mother Mary, 05.04.1907, ASDS, Assam.

“The Young Women’s Association is flourishing in a joyful way, especially in their uniforms, they added to the solemnity of the Corpus Christi Procession on Nov. 19. On every Sacred Heart Friday and as well as on Marian feast days, they all appear for the communion. Our Candidate Anna goes twice a week for hl. communion and is hoping to receive the habit before spring. Three other girls have requested acceptance. The number of orphan girls has increased and – thank God – rice has become much cheaper. ...”<sup>120</sup>

1909

In January 1909, S. Ignatia returned with S. Gabriela Bohnheim from Europe. They arrived in Raliang on January 17 and so there were, at last four sisters at this much tried station. However, this joy was not to last long.

In July 1909, S. Eustachia was suddenly transferred to Shillong and S. Hildegardis had to stay on there at the conclusion of their retreat. Only S. Gabriela and S. Ignatia could return to Raliang. S. Evangelista came there in October as a third sister but she was recalled after a few months. Just before Christmas, S. Kunigilde arrived there.

1910

In the year 1910, after their retreat (end of August), S. Kunigilde remained in Shillong and S. Gabriela also had to remain there due to illness. She came back to join them, however, in November.

In October, S. Eustachia wrote to Fr. Becker, telling him about the missionary activity:

“... At present twenty children are preparing for their first Holy Communion, some for first confession. The Feast of the Immaculate Conception shall be the great day for these children. We will celebrate this beautiful day of Our Lady with great solemnity, first because this the feast of the patron of our church; secondly, it is the foundation day of the Young Women’s Association, which will be enhanced by the blessing of a beautiful banner donated by the Convent of Ronning, South Bavaria; and thirdly, it will also be the foundation day of the Young Men’s Association which the local youth have desired for some time. Thank God, at the moment there is much zeal among our young people. Many members of the Young Women’s Association go to Holy Communion twice a week, and occasionally three times if there is a First Friday.

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<sup>120</sup> S. Eustachia to Fr. Becker, 26.11.1908, Archive of the Archdiocese of Shillong, Assam.



... It would be desirable also to build a school in the nearby pagan village of Nangai to win those young people who still run around wildly. Recently, when visiting a sick pagan in this village, I met one of the village elders who expressed this wish, and also showed me a fitting plot of land for it. Particularly necessary in Raliang would be a home for the sick. They are often brought from afar, and ask for nursing care. But where to find a place for them, how to feed them? ... If only there were 1,000 Mark, so much good could be done! Rev. Fr. Prefect, what is your opinion to that?”<sup>121</sup>

1911

S. Ignatia Greiner, the chronicler of Raliang reports about the year 1911 as follows:

“On February 19, 1911, S. Eustachia made her final vows. The Apostolic Prefect and Sister Superior from Shillong came here for this celebration.

On April 10, illness brought me (S. Ignatia) into the General Hospital at Calcutta, 600 English miles distant. I had to stay there for four and a half months and to undergo an operation. God be thanked, it had a successful outcome which we ascribed to the intercession of St. Joseph. It is perhaps good to mention the fact that the doctors and nurses belonged to the Anglican Church but they were, nevertheless, very good to me and I was even granted a free place after 20 days. My treatment would otherwise have been very expensive.

I made the long journey partly on foot, partly on a horse, partly in a car which was really more like a freight wagon than a passenger car, partly by train and boat.

After six months absence, I was able to take up my work here again. Because we were again only two sisters, it was very difficult for me that, after our retreat, S. Gabriela again had to remain in Shillong and returned only at the end of November.

At the beginning of August S. Eustachia wrote the following letter to Fr. Becker:

“Most Rev. Fr. Prefect,

With joy I share with you the news that the examination in the elementary school went well. Thank God! Babu stated that the older boys could certainly pass the exams for the English Middle School. All pupils are promoted, and one “First Class” was founded. Two of the older girls, Anna and Barbara, asked to be admitted to a Sisters’ Congregation. The latter was with us for over a year and was good during this time. Anna is any way known to us. ...

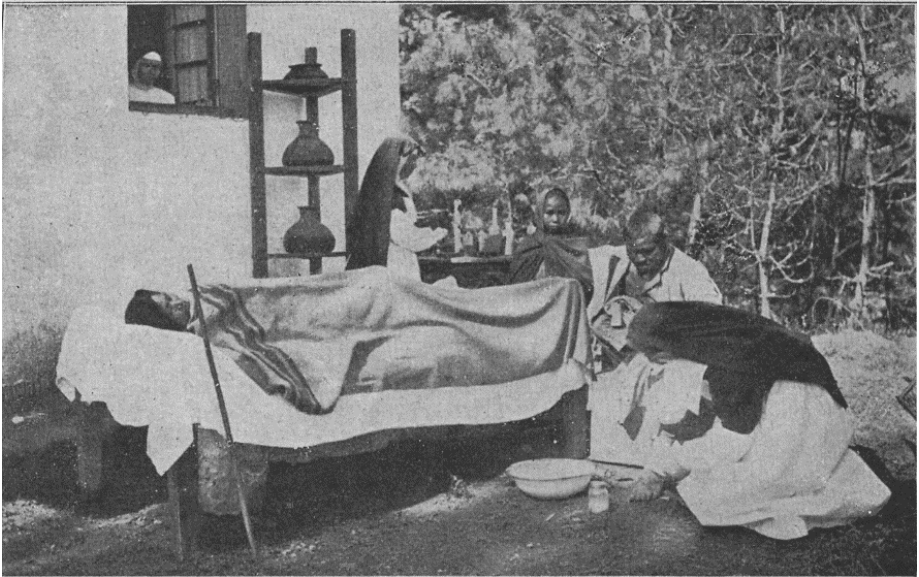
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<sup>121</sup> S. Eustachia to Fr. Becker, 20.10.1910, Archive of the Archdiocese of Shillong, Assam.

These days a sick lady died, and we are forced to keep the sick, the healthy and even the deceased in one and the same room. Has nothing happened yet that we could finally get to a home for the sick? Please help us, Rev. Fr. Prefect! ...”<sup>122</sup>

Finally, in November, the sisters had collected the necessary funds and Fr. Becker gave permission for the construction of a convent, so that the existing one could be used as orphanage and the former orphanage (which has become too small) as a hospital.<sup>123</sup>

December 17, 1911 was the great day when the first three native sisters, Anna, Barbara, and Karolina were invested by Fr. Becker. (See separate account later in this document: Part II, Section 2: The call to missionary life in the Religious Vocation among the Synteng Women, 1911.)



*Figure 28: Caring for the sick in Raliang*

1912

We get to know very little from the chronicles of Raliang about the year 1912.

On February 17, 1912, a new member arrived from Rome as a fourth sister, namely, S. Priscilla Stadler.

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<sup>122</sup> S. Eustachia to Fr. Becker, 03.08.1911, Archive of the Archdiocese of Shillong, Assam.

<sup>123</sup> Fr. Becker to S. Eustachia, 05.12.1911, Archive of the Archdiocese of Shillong, Assam.

In September, S. Ignatia had to send S. Gabriela to Shillong again because of ill health and she was to remain there this time.

Consequently, there were only three sisters working there, i.e. S. Ignatia, S. Eustachia and S. Priscilla.

Since 1907, they went to Shillong for the annual community retreat each year.

## Apostolic Activities

S. Ignatia concludes her report with a summary of the sisters' activities:

“We sisters have a large field of activity here. We visit the sick here and in the surrounding pagan villages from where the people often travel for hours in order to ask our help. We give basic education to the children and also give a great part of our time to the teaching of religion.

In addition, we take care of the sacristy, decorate the church, take care of the church linens and direct the singing.

We also maintain an orphanage for girls and a home for the elderly with 40 residents.

The orphanage for boys is also under our supervision.

After graduating from school, the girls learn domestic science and vegetable gardening with us and most of them remain at the orphanage until they get married.

Four years ago, an association for young women was started and placed under our direction.



*Figure 29: Home for orphans in Raliang*

Two years ago, 3 of our orphans decided to dedicate themselves to the Lord in the service of the mission. They were invested by the Apostolic Prefect and are now making their time of probation under the guidance of a sister.

With this, a new vocation has been opened to those girls who do not wish to marry and it will certainly bring much good with it. Up to now, every girl has felt obliged to marry since no other choice was offered to her.

Several months ago, an association for Christian mothers was started and this, too, has been placed under our care.

We have also organized a dispensary for the poor which is truly a “poor” dispensary as we depend entirely on the help of the generous friends of the mission.

In the field of nursing, many souls are saved through emergency baptism, something which we quite often have the opportunity of administering. Also the patients to whom we give temporary accommodation generally convert before they depart.

Please God, our long-standing desire to have a home for the sick will soon be fulfilled because the construction of our modest convent is nearly completed. Our present accommodation will then be used for the orphans and the orphanage can be used as a hospital.

The pagans in the surroundings are very well disposed toward us and promise us to build schools if we can undertake the teaching. Unfortunately, we have insufficient means and personnel for this. From time to time, pagans come and want to see us and say “hello” to us. They say it makes them happy and gives them joy to see us. That is surely a good sign.

Some months ago, the English official in charge of the administration of the area of the Jaintia Hills honoured us with his visit. He left us, well-satisfied in every respect, and suggested that we open a domestic school also in Jawai where he had his residence. He also sent us a letter in which he expressed his great satisfaction with the work we are doing here.

This is a brief overview of our present activity here. We have been helped in this throughout by: the Apostolic Prefect in Shillong, our Motherhouse in Rome, the Ludwigs-Mission-Verein in Munich, the Kindheit-Jesu-Verein in Vienna, the well-known friend of the mission, Mrs. M. Huch of Neisse in Silesia, the Institute “Maria Hilf” of Frankenstein in Silesia; the Marian Association of Young Women in Hamburg; and finally, all the friends and benefactors of each individual sister in her homeland. May God richly bless and reward them all!

We remember everyone in our prayer

O a M D G

(Omnia ad majorem Dei gloriam)

S. Ignatia, Sor.D.S.”<sup>124</sup>

1913

The following is an excerpt from the Annual Report of the Assam Mission, as printed in the “Missionär”:

The missionary in Raliang writes: “The three missionary sisters together with some native young women, who now also dedicate themselves to mission life, have their hands full to do. They teach the various types of needlework, educate the orphans, are teaching in the school and go to care for the sick poor in the surrounding villages, often having to travel for hours. It is a tiring, but very fruitful task, as is shown by the number of children baptised in danger of death.”

The nursing activity carried out for years by the sisters had gained recognition from the government of Assam that year: “Upon the request of the Apostolic Prefect it has been agreed to grant the sisters in Raliang an annual subsidy for the purchase of the required medicine.”<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Description of the sisters’ mission stations in Raliang, Assam, 1897-1912, report of the then Superior, S. Ignatia Greiner, ASDS, Assam.

<sup>125</sup> *Missionär*, 1914, No. 2, page 64.

The annual report of the following year mentions the great contribution of the sisters in regard to practical instruction of girls and young women, such as cooking, washing, ironing, sewing, knitting, embroidering, weaving, making lace, etc., and states about Raliang:

“The sisters of the Divine Savior have a community in Raliang and most zealously collaborate in the work of mission. Through the administration of medicine, caring for wounds, nursing the sick and aged, they attract many a soul to the Church. The orphanage which they conduct was already mentioned. They also help actively on the fields, with gardening, in the school and the church. The flourishing state of this mission station is in great part due to their dedication and zeal for the work of the missions.”<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> *Missionär*, 1915, No. 6, page 192.

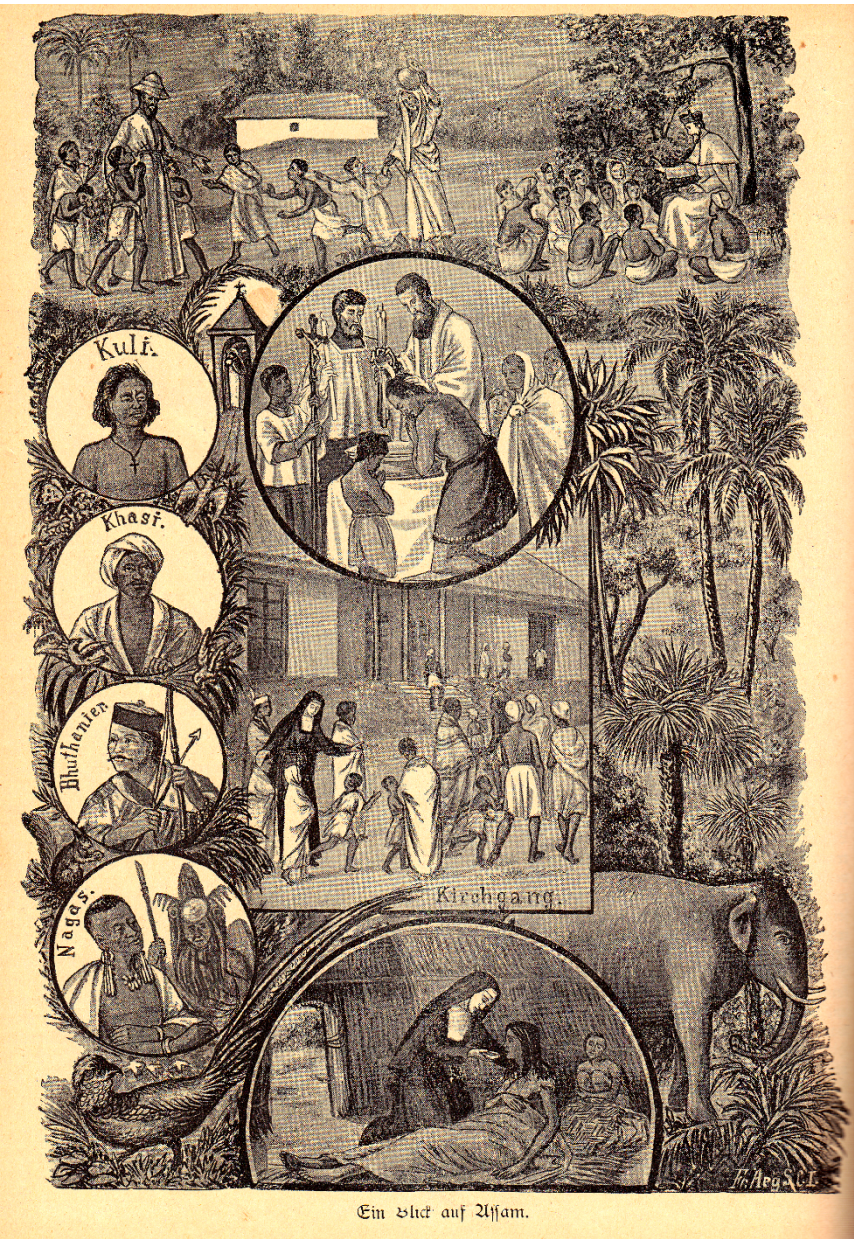


Figure 30: a look at Salvatorian apostolic activities in Assam

Then, suddenly the work of the sisters came to an end. The reason was the First World War,<sup>127</sup> in which Germany as well as England were involved. The “Missionär” informs its readers: “The missionaries of our Assam mission have been interned! ... The Salvatorian Sisters who are of German nationality, have all been brought to Shillong.”<sup>128</sup>

On August 31, 1915, the “Assam Secretariat” informed Father Lefebvre, a Belgian Jesuit, who after the internment and expulsion of the German missionaries and Sisters had become the Vice Administrator of the Catholic Mission of Assam, that the Chief Commissioner regrets that he is unable to exempt the German nuns in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills from the orders directing their repatriation.

On October 6, 1915, Father Lefebvre received this reply from the Chief Commissioner to this request:

“I am sorry that I cannot permit the two German Sisters to return to Raliang for a few days. You will easily perceive that urgent orders from the Government of India might be received at any minute, and that great inconvenience would then be caused if these ladies were at that time in Raliang. In these circumstances I cannot permit any of these ladies to leave Shillong at present.”<sup>129</sup>

On November 15, 1915, all Salvatorian sisters had to leave the mission of Assam.

The chronicles of the Salvatorian Fathers write about it:

“The Reverend missionary sisters of German nationality, who are in our Mission Assam, India, as reported to us, have been repatriated by the English People and find themselves on their journey to Europe. And, as already reported, also a number of priests were brought to concentration camps, the mission stations with their schools and orphanages are almost completely abandoned. For such kind of treatment the expression “barbaric” would rightly suit.”<sup>130</sup>

The letter of S. Scholastica to Mother Ambrosia and her detailed report about the departure from Assam illustrate the situation of the sisters in an impressive way:

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<sup>127</sup> First World War: 28.07.1914 – 11.11.1918, a worldwide conflict.

<sup>128</sup> *Missionär*, 1915, page 288.

<sup>129</sup> Letter of the chief commissioner to Fr. Lefebvre, S.J. of 06.10.1915, Archive of the Archdiocese of Shillong, Assam.

<sup>130</sup> *Missionär*, 1915, No. 2, page 59.



“Freight Steamer Golconda, November 18, 1915

Dear Rev. Mother!

You are aware of the fact that we had to leave Shillong on November 15. So we have been waiting on the ship Golconda, in Calcutta, since Nov. 16 afternoon, where we must wait till the number of Germans, supposed to be on board, is completed. ...

The farewell from our dear mission was simply terrible. The poor children cried and screamed. Everyone cried, old and young, priest and people, ladies and gentlemen. ... Let's put everything into God's hands. He knows why this happens. So many prayers were said and still it happened; so it must be God's will. First it was said that some Rev. Fathers would also come along, yet so far we have not seen any. ...”<sup>131</sup>

An excerpt from the detailed report of S. Scholastica about the “repatriation to Europe”, as the expulsion was called, describes the situation of the Sisters in an impressive way:

“... Among the 500 passengers who found a place on the Steamer Golconda which was to take us to Europe, were 20 priests, some missionary Brothers from other Indian missions and 17 Sisters. All the others were mainly Protestant Missionaries with their wives and children, some vice-councillors, businessmen, etc.

We Sisters enjoyed a special divine protection during the whole voyage. Already the government of Assam, which was forced to obey the higher authorities, had recommended us to the policeman who accompanied us to take care of us as best as possible on the long way from Shillong to Calcutta where we went on board. On the ship also, the captain and the doctor were very concerned about the sick Sisters; and in the same way, the guards of the natives.

Otherwise, the life on the overcrowded ship (besides the 500 passengers on the old steamer there were about 300 members of the staff) was rather unbearable. There was no way of moving on the deck unless a whole row got up at the same time and marched up and down in single file.

After a journey of two months we finally arrived with God's help at Tilbury near London on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1916, where we had to change to the beautiful Dutch steamer Vlissingen Mecklenburg during the night. ... At 6 p.m. we finally arrived at Vlissingen, the Dutch port, and immediately got on the train to Munich which was already waiting for us. ...

We were well accepted in our home convents, where we now help the fellow Sisters in the nursing of the wounded soldiers and other persons.

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<sup>131</sup> Letter of S. Scholastica on board of SS. Golconda, 18.11.1915; *Missionär*, 1916, No. 2, page 59.

We thank God from our whole heart for his protection on the long way and our benefactors and friends, likewise, for their prayer. ...

S. Scholastica, SDS<sup>132</sup>



Figure 31: Grave stone in Shillong<sup>133</sup>

Shillong:	S. Bernarda Reichel	+20.08.1896
	S. Benedicta Ruderich	+30.07.1900
	S. Xaveria Förstera	+21.08.1900
	S. Kunigilde Meyer	+11.08.1914
Raliang:	S. Brigitta Schneider	+04.04.1906

<sup>132</sup> S. Scholastica, *Missionär*, 1916, No. 10, page 254.

<sup>133</sup> This grave stone in Shillong bears the names of five Salvatorian sisters who gave their lives to India. Four now rest in Shillong, and one in Raliang.



*Figure 32: The S.S. Golconda*

The Salvatorian Sisters repatriated to Europe from India on this ship in 1915 were:

*S. Scholastica Hopfenmüller*

*S. Ignatia Greiner*

*S. Ursula Meyer*

*S. Gabriela Bohnheim*

*S. Eustachia Bauer*

*S. Gebharda Dietmann*

*S. Innocenza Stahl*

*S. Priscilla Stadler*

*S. Theobalda Schröder*

*S. Bertilla Fotschki*

## Part II – Our First Missionary Sisters

### Salvatorian Sisters who went to the Apostolic Prefecture of Assam between 1890-1891

01. 1890 Sister Scholastica Hopfenmüller, .....	77
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## SISTER SCHOLASTICA HOPFENMÜLLER

of the Immaculate Conception

Tivoli-Assam, December 1890



*Figure 33: S. Scholastica Hopfenmüller*

Maria Hopfenmüller was born on February 17, 1855 at Unterkammlach, Diocese of Augsburg, Bavaria, South Germany. Her mother was Barbara Hopfenmüller, née Schamberger. Her father, who is mentioned as being from Mainroth in the district of Lichtenfels”, was an elementary teacher and organist. He died when Maria was a teenager and her mother needed help to support the family. a domestic service record book indicated that the “medium-sized, brown-haired and brown-eyed Maria” worked for various families from November 1873 to February 1881. All the references praise her hard work and good behaviour.

Her uncle, Dr. Laurence Hopfenmüller, became parish priest at Seußling on January 31, 1882 and Maria became his housekeeper. He joined the Catholic Teaching Society in Rome on September 14, 1887 and received the name Father Otto. Maria’s last recorded period of domestic service after this was in Bamberg for the Cathedral Dean, Fr. Groh, from June 29 to November 21, 1888.

By then, the thirty-three year old Maria had decided to join the proposed foundation of the sisters of the Catholic Teaching Society. She, Mother Mary and four other candidates met in Munich and left together for Rome where they stayed for three days. In the evening of November 27, 1888, Maria and three other candidates went by train to Tivoli where Mother Mary met them and took them to the house on the Piazza San Francesco.

Father Jordan gave the religious habit and the name Sister Scholastica of the Immaculate Conception to Maria on December 8, 1888. She was the second novice of our Congregation; first was Mother Mary of the Apostles. But S. Scholastica did not feel well and almost immediately had to be taken to the hospital at Tivoli with smallpox. She returned to the

community on December 24, 1888, where she received her initial formation from Mother Mary who became her novice mistress. She later remarked that her uncle had been far stricter with her when she was his housekeeper than Mother Mary had been during novitiate in Tivoli.

Her uncle, Father Otto, assisted Father Jordan at the ceremony in Tivoli when S. Scholastica made first profession of vows for three years on December 18, 1889. Mother Mary noted: "Afterwards, Fr. Otto gave a short speech to the sisters and spoke enthusiastically about his imminent departure for the mission."<sup>134</sup>

S. Scholastica was permitted to make her final vows in Tivoli on November 28, 1890, and one month later followed her uncle to the mission in Assam. He had, however, already died there on August 20, 1890.

She arrived in Shillong on January 12, 1891, and in autumn 1892 was appointed as Superior. She held that office almost continuously from then on in either Shillong or Raliang until 1915.

S. Scholastica knew the English language quite well and had contact with the European Community. She quickly learned Khasi and became fully involved in the work of the mission through prayer, work and suffering. She was, someone said, "the soul of the enterprise."<sup>135</sup>

In 1893, she welcomed the first orphans into the new orphanage at Shillong. And in 1895, when the new mission of Shella was due to open, she was there beforehand to make the convent ready for the sisters who were to arrive there from Rome in the beginning of 1896.

She was involved in the terrible earthquake of 1907 but – luckily for the orphans and four sisters and the mission itself – she was not injured by the collapse of the house in Shillong. She had run out just in time, still carrying the flower-vases she was arranging. Many of the orphans and sisters became ill due to the unavoidably inadequate housing, wet conditions and lack of food.

S. Scholastica as superior was responsible for seeing that, somehow, all were cared for. She herself slept on the open veranda, then in a wet tent and, finally, in an equally wet and unroofed room in the unfinished convent. This continued for a period of five months, from June to October 1897.

In 1899, she conducted an official Visitation of the sisters' convents in Assam as superior of the mission.

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<sup>134</sup> Mother Mary, *Diary*, book 2, page 26/1889.

<sup>135</sup> ASDS – S. Stanislaus's memories about S. Scholastica, in personal file of S. Scholastica Hopfenmüller

In November 1905, she met Mother Mary again at the first General Chapter of our Congregation. The trip was long and S. Scholastica arrived at the Motherhouse in Rome after the Chapter had begun.

She returned to Assam to be the superior in Raliang and was welcomed there on March 28, 1906. S. Brigitta Schneider, the third sister of the community, died a few days later and S. Scholastica had to carry the work of the mission, with only the newly arrived S. Eustachia Bauer to help her, from April 1906 to January 1908.

S. Scholastica encouraged religious vocations among the Synteng girls of Raliang and, in 1907, she wrote to the Apostolic Prefect, Fr. Becker, that she was planning for the acceptance of the first three girls who wished to begin their formation.

From January to March 1908, S. Scholastica was completely alone as her companion needed medical care in Shillong. During this time, she made a visit to Shillong to receive S. Eustachia's renewal of vows. In March 1908, she again had two companions in the community at Raliang. This situation did not last long, as S. Scholastica was called back to Shillong to substitute for the superior there while she was away in Europe. She remained in Shillong and, as vicaress, took care of the business affairs when the commissary left for Rome in January 1910. On January 13, 1912, S. Scholastica was again appointed as superior and officially took over the duties of the commissary.

She was still superior of the sisters during the difficult days between the confirmation of their repatriation on August 13, 1915, and November 15, 1915, when they all had to leave Shillong for Calcutta to board the ship for Europe. She received 200 Rupies from the District Commissioner's office for the expenses of her community during the voyage and she and the other nine sisters of the Divine Savior left Assam. They were never to return.

Before leaving, S. Scholastica left a note of thanks and appeal to the people of Shillong and the surrounding districts: thanks for all the kindness and for all the many benefits that she, the sisters and those in their care had received during the 25 years she had been in Assam; and an appeal that the work of the mission would be continued under the French nuns who would replace the Salvatorian sisters.<sup>136</sup>

Back in Europe, S. Scholastica made herself useful in the house, kitchen and sewing room of various convents. She died in Meran, South Tyrol, Northern Italy, where the community knew her as a real religious who had a heart of gold and was always ready to help and to give joy to others.

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<sup>136</sup> Letter of S. Scholastica, September 1915, ASDS, Shillong, Assam.

Sr. Scholastica was 83 when she died on November 24, 1938, just three days before her own 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of entrance into our Congregation and two weeks before the Golden Jubilee of her investment and of the foundation of the Congregation.



SISTER BENEDICTA RUDERICH  
of Jesus  
Tivoli-Assam, December 1890



*Figure 34: Sister with orphans, Shillong*

Margaretha's father, John Ruderich, was a day-labourer by occupation. She was his only child, and her mother was his second wife, Ursula, née Auer, a farmer's daughter from Sassanfahrt.

The child was born at Sassanfahrt in the Diocese of Bamberg, Bavaria, on May 11, 1864. She was baptized with the name Margaretha on the following day in the parish church of Sassanfahrt by the parish priest, Father Keller.

Margaretha made her first communion on April 23, 1879, at the age of twelve in the parish church at Seußling. She was confirmed two months later at Eggolsheim on June, 24 1876, by Archbishop Friedrich von Schreiber, with Maria Schumm of Hirschaid as her godmother. Margaretha's connection with the parish of Seußling was to have some influence on her life. From 1882-1887, before he entered the Catholic Teaching Society, the future Assam missionary Father Otto Hopfenmüller was assigned to Seußling as parish priest.

Margaretha lived at home until the year 1887. She was twenty years old when her mother died on March 19, 1884, and, from then on, Margaretha looked after her father as best as she could until his death on January 15, 1887.

She then went into domestic service at Hirschaid but returned to her home village half a year later. She lived there in the household of a Mr. Meth until she left to enter the religious life just one year after Fr. Otto had entered the Society in Rome. It was his successor in Seußling, Fr. Joh. B. Schramm, who wrote the required testimonial for Margaretha on November 20, 1888.

Margaretha travelled via Munich to Rome with Mother Mary and the other first members, and finally arrived at Tivoli in the evening of November 27, 1888. She is registered as the fifth young woman to enter our Congregation. On December 18, 1888, ten days after the foundation of the sisters' Congregation, Margaretha received the religious habit and the name S. Benedicta of Jesus from the Founder, Fr. Jordan. He encouraged her and the others to "follow the dear Saviour in carrying the Cross and let yourself be consumed like a candle in his service."<sup>137</sup>

On the same day, one year later, S. Benedicta made her first vows for three years together with another future missionary to Assam S. Scholastica. Fr. Jordan accepted their vows; Fr. Otto assisted him at the ceremony, full of enthusiasm for his own departure for Assam.

During 1890, S. Benedicta lived in the sisters' community at Tivoli. She is remembered as a quiet person but, at the same time, as one who was very attentive and caring toward the situation and persons around her. She studied English zealously in preparation for her assignment to Assam. She was busy in other ways as well. Mother Mary made a note in her Diary of the fact that "S. Benedicta made twenty wreaths for the May procession" of 1890.<sup>138</sup> S. Benedicta was also preparing for her final vows which she made on November 28, 1890, together with two other sisters destined for Assam. They heard Fr. Jordan speak to them of fidelity, love of the Cross and the need for acceptance if they did not see results in India.

S. Benedicta arrived in Shillong on January 12, 1891, and spent the rest of her life at the mission station. Initially, she was involved in treating the sick who came to the mission. As she needed to use English in her work, she made efforts to improve her knowledge of that language. She also studied Khasi.

When plans to open an orphanage at Shillong were realised in 1893, S. Benedicta was assigned to care for the orphans.

The conditions which followed the earthquake of 1897 left a lasting effect on her health which had never been strong and, from then on, she was never completely well. She continued caring for the orphans but, toward the end of 1899, she was confined to bed for what proved to be a nine-month long illness. At that time, she had sewn 18 dresses and crowns for the girls to wear at the Corpus Christi procession held in November and was making new clothes for the children to wear at Christmas. On July 30, 1900 at 12.00 midday, S. Benedicta died in Shillong at the age of 36 years.

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<sup>137</sup> Mother Mary, *Diary*, SHS 2.13, Book 2, page 4/1888.

<sup>138</sup> Mother Mary, *Diary*, SHS 2.13, Book 2, page 31/1890.

Mother Mary, who was in Hungary when she received the news of S. Benedicta's death, cast a thought back to the first days of foundation when she wrote to S. Clara: "... I want to tell you the sad news of the death of our dear missionary sister Benedicta<sup>139</sup> – my first companion."<sup>140</sup>

Father Angelus Münzloher, SDS, the Apostolic Administrator in Assam when S. Benedicta died, wrote: "The good sister's death is really a great loss for the orphanage. She was known here only by the name of 'the orphans' mother' and she always tried to be just that. She felt happy among the little ones and devoted all her strength to them. She was still the 'orphans' mother' on her sickbed. As far as this was possible, she supervised the orphans from her room and took an interest in all their varied problems. It was in this same room that she died, surrounded by the little crowd of children. It is, therefore, not surprising that the orphans' tears don't come to an end. They are sorrowing for their loving mother."<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Mother Mary's different ways of writing names.

<sup>140</sup> Mother Mary, Letter to the Sisters, SHS 2.15/1, page 109, Letter to S. Clara, 31.08.1900.

<sup>141</sup> Salvatorianische Mitteilungen, 1900, No. 3, page 41.

SISTER LAURENTIA HEILMEIER  
of the Help of Christians  
Tivoli-Assam, December 1890



*Figure 35: S. Laurentia Heilmeyer*

When Theresia Heilmeyer arrived at the Piazza San Francesco in Tivoli on November 13, 1889, our Congregation was not yet one year old and Theresia became the eighth member of the little community there. At the time of her entry, Mother Mary described her as a “good country girl.”<sup>142</sup> Theresia had been born 22 years previously, on March 25, 1867, at Langenpreising in the diocese of Munich, Bavaria. Her father, Johann Heilmeyer, had a small holding in the area; her mother’s maiden name was Eichner and she had the same Christian name as her daughter: Theresia.

For just over a year before her entry into our Congregation, Theresia had been working in a mental institute at Ecksberg and she received an excellent testimonial from her employers when she left in order to go to Tivoli.

One month after her arrival in Tivoli, Theresia received the religious habit and her new name of S. Laurentia of the Help of Christians from the Founder. Three other people there in the chapel on that occasion were, like her, to have close connections with the new mission of Assam: Fr. Otto Hopfenmüller who was there to assist Fr. Jordan, and Sisters Scholastica and Benedicta who were making their first vows that same day, December 18, 1889.

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<sup>142</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 2, page 25/1889.

The following year, on November 28, 1890, the three Sisters Laurentia, Scholastica and Benedicta were together again in that chapel in Tivoli to make their final vows; for S. Laurentia, these were also her first vows. All three were to go as the first sisters to the new mission of Assam that same year.

S. Laurentia was then 23 years old, S. Benedicta 24 years old and S. Scholastica 33 years old. Although S. Laurentia was the youngest in age and religion of the group, she was appointed as superior. The little community left for Assam on December 12, 1890. Eight days later, S. Laurentia's elder sister, Maria entered our Congregation in Tivoli and Mother Mary wrote of her: "Maria is very pious and capable like her sister."<sup>143</sup> The two sisters were not to meet again. Maria, then S. Josefa, died in 1895 at the S. Giacomo Hospital in Rome while S. Laurentia was still in Assam.

The three mission sisters arrived safely at Shillong on January 12, 1891, but S. Laurentia's health was affected and she was frequently ill. In autumn 1892, S. Scholasticawas appointed to replace her as superior of the community. S. Laurentia remained in the mission of Assam until 1905. Her accounts of her early experience in the Khasi villages reflect something of the apostolic work and the people among whom she lived. Both the following extracts date from the year 1896:

June 6, 1896: "Last week, there was a very interesting Khasi dance festival arranged by the King in Nongkrem. Up by the King's square, where two great elephants guarded the entrance, the King's servants waited for the invited guests and took them into the fine tent from where there was a good view. 35 girls took part in the dance, the youngest were about six to seven years old; all of them were dressed in silk or velvet and wore a hand's breath of arm-rings and necklaces of large gold beads. The princesses had golden crowns on their heads, the others had silver ones.

The men, who dance apart from the girls, were each clothed in a silver-embroidered jacket with long silver tassels. Over this, they wear a large, wide gold necklace, a silver girdle and dagger, a silk turban on their head topped by a large bunch of feathers. The value of such a Khasi dancer's clothing often reaches some thousands of Marks. The dancing is not like that of Germany: the girls (married women may not take part) move first one foot forward and then the other and so they go slowly and alone, with downcast eyes, around the circle. The King of Laitkumkhra, who arranged for this dance, takes reading and writing lessons from me and, besides that, in our holy religion for which he has a great liking."<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 2, page 45/1890.

<sup>144</sup> Missionär, 1896, No.14, page 211.

October 1, 1896: “Very many people have influenza in the village where I teach and so, in addition to the school work, I do nursing which I enjoy very much. The sick Khasi like us very much; they say that they already feel better only when they see us.”<sup>145</sup>

S. Laurentia continued her work in and around Shillong until 1905. Her health was still not good, so she left for Europe in November 1905 to take a period of recuperation in her homeland. After some months there, her health improved and she went to Rome, arriving at the Motherhouse in the Salita Sant’Onofrio on April 19, 1906.

She was not re-assigned to the mission in Assam but was sent, as one of a group of four other sisters, to the United States of America and arrived there on August 3, 1906. She worked as a nurse at St. Mary’s Nursing Home in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and in home nursing, until a stroke confined her to bed. Even there, she continued to make herself useful by doing small pieces of handwork until, at the age of 63, she died in Milwaukee on May 5, 1930.

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<sup>145</sup> Missionär, 1896, No.21, page 324.

SISTER IGNATIA GREINER  
of the Queen of the Apostles  
Tivoli-Assam 1891



*Figure 36: S. Ignatia Greiner*

Rosina, or Rosa as she was sometimes called, was born on September 2, 1867 at Eger in Bohemia to Johanna Greiner, an unmarried seamstress. Johanna took her daughter back to her homeland of Bavaria when the child was seven months old and they lived at Altglashütten near Amberg. Here, Rosina grew up and attended school from May 1873 to May 1878.

When Rosina was about eleven years old, she went to Burglengelfeld, where she lived with the teacher's family in the school house; her cousin was a cook there. She completed school in 1880 and then attended school on Sundays and feast days until August 1883. She helped with the domestic work in the school, house and gardens; she cleaned the classroom, collected wood, kept the heating going, etc.

She remained in domestic service, first with the pensioned school teacher in Amberg and then, after his death, with other employers in Würzburg and Amberg. Finally, in August 1885, she started work as a grocery shop assistant, a work which she continued up to the time of her entry into our Congregation. In between periods of employment, Rosina lived with her cousin, helping her and other women in the area with domestic tasks. In her free time, she enjoyed knitting, crochet and sewing and was a member of the Marian Congregation for girls in Amberg.

Before her entrance, Rosina had at least two friends in the Catholic Teaching Society: S. Aloysia Fischer and Frater Alphons Übler. She prayed much about her own future and, once she had made her decision, she wrote to Fr. Jordan asking to be accepted into our Congregation.

Several letters passed between Rosina, Fr. Jordan and Frater Alphons between March and August of 1890. Rosina was busy obtaining the needed documents and was also eager to plan her journey to Tivoli. She asked Fr. Jordan for information on a number of topics; should she go first to Rome or straight to Tivoli, how was she to address her luggage, which class should she travel on the train and how much German money should she bring with her.

Finally, Rosina gave notice to her employer and left her homeland. She was the thirteenth candidate to arrive at the house on the Piazza San Francesco to enter our Congregation. Mother Mary was there in Tivoli and wrote in her Diary: “On August 22, Miss Rosa Greiner, born in Bohemia, until recently a shop assistant in Amberg, a friend of S. Aloysia, 22 years old, entered here. She brought us a death-notice of the Father Superior in Assam, our zealous Father Otto, perhaps martyred,<sup>146</sup> certainly blessed. May God console us and help the mission.”<sup>147</sup>

The future Assam missionary, Rosina, began her novitiate in Tivoli on October 23, 1890. Fr. Jordan was there to give Rosina the religious habit and the name of S. Ignatia of the Queen of the Apostles. One year later, in November 1891, Mother Mary again wrote in her Diary: “On the 29<sup>th</sup> [Nov.] ... the Sisters Ignatia and Xaveria made final vows. ...”<sup>148</sup> and not even one month later, on Christmas Day, 1891, S. Ignatia received her mission cross. On January 24, 1892, she arrived at Shillong in the mission of Assam.

S. Ignatia was assigned to Shillong for her first years in Assam, going from there for a while to make the house ready for the incoming sisters at the new mission of Shella in 1895. She left Shillong in 1897 to start out at the new mission in Raliang as superior of the community there. After a somewhat uncomfortable journey – she fell off the horse into the water and got thoroughly wet – she arrived in Raliang on March 19, 1897, the feast of St. Joseph. This was just a few months before the disastrous earthquake and, as a consequence of it, she had to carry much extra work and responsibility. Injuries and ill health affected the little community, so that S. Ignatia was often alone at the mission with one other sister in the years that followed. In 1898, she received news from home of the death of her 24 year-old sister and the ill health of her mother. In 1903, another letter told of the death of her mother who had been totally paralyzed toward the end. S. Ignatia commended her dear ones to God and to the prayer of her sisters and continued with her work in the mission.

In her early years at Raliang, S. Ignatia wrote that she was involved in work in the chapel, kitchen, teaching catechism, sewing, mending and knitting. She knew the local Synteng language better than the Khasi language as time went on and she loved Raliang.

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<sup>146</sup> He died in Assam on 21.08.1890; in fact, overworked, not martyred.

<sup>147</sup> Mother Mary, Dairy, SHS 2.13, Book 2, page 38/1890.

<sup>148</sup> Mother Mary, Dairy, SHS 2.13, Book 2, page 55/1891.



She nearly died in her beloved village in 1905. At the time of her illness, there was only one other sister in Raliang to do the work of the mission. One of the local girls nursed S. Ignatia back to health.

She had to leave Raliang on March 29, 1906, to be the superior in Shillong. When she left, she was ‘homesick for Raliang’. While in Shillong, she also accepted the appointment as Commissary for Assam, a responsibility which involved much concern for the business and day to day affairs of the sisters there.

In March 1908, S. Ignatia went to Rome via Bombay and Naples to attend the Second General Chapter of our Congregation and have a home visit. On her return to Assam, she asked to be assigned to Raliang again and, on January 17, 1909, she was welcomed there as the superior of the community. There was much to be done and S. Ignatia was fully occupied with work in the kitchen, in the girl’s orphanage, the garden and in giving handwork and sewing classes. There was also a great deal of correspondence to be completed. With the exception of some months absence from Raliang for needed medical treatment in the hospital at Calcutta from April to September 1911, S. Ignatia remained in this mission until forced to leave Assam with the other sisters in 1915.

In 1915, S. Ignatia returned to her German homeland. In the years that followed, she became superior of the sisters’ community at Hamberg near Passau and worked in various other houses of the German Province, mainly doing household tasks.

She passed her final years in the convent at Bõrwang, where she died at the age of 75 years, one year after her golden jubilee of profession. Her jubilee candle, which she was holding at her deathbed, went out at the precise moment of her death; 10.45 p.m. on Saturday, November 28, 1942.



*Figure 37: Sisters with orphans, Raliang*

SISTER URSULA MAIER  
of the Visitation of Mary  
Tivoli-Assam, December 1891

Elisabeth Maier was born at Altmannshof near Sulzbach, in the diocese of Regensburg, Bavaria, South Germany, on December 28, 1853. Her parents, Georg Koller and Margaretha Maier, were unmarried; Elisabeth used her mother's surname.

She was educated by the Poor School Sisters of Our Lady at Mielpoppenricht and Hahnbach for seven years from May 1, 1859, to May 14, 1866. When she left at the age of thirteen, her certificate, signed by S. Maria Perpetua, stated that Elisabeth had many talents, she had attended school regularly, worked hard and obtained good results. Her marks were 'very good' in religion and reading and 'good' in maths, language, general knowledge and writing. She continued classes on Sundays and feast days in Hahnbach and Amberg for a further three years from October 1866 to July 1869 with similar good results.

Elisabeth was confirmed at the age of eleven years by Bishop Ignatius of Regensburg in the parish church of Sulzbach. The parish priest, Fr. Grässmann, former hospital curate in Amberg and now the parish priest at Sulzbach, and also Elisabeth's confessor, signed the certificate.

It was he, who testified in February 1890 to her good character and suitability for religious life when she decided to enter the Catholic Teaching Society.

Elisabeth's journey from Bavaria ended at the convent on the Piazza San Francesco in Tivoli near Rome on May 29, 1890. She was the 14<sup>th</sup> young woman to enter our Congregation. Mother Mary noted in her Diary: "On May 29, Elise Maier from Amberg entered here. She is 36 years old and has much practice in nursing – she also brings a very good dowry."<sup>149</sup>

The records show that Elisabeth brought as her dowry the sum of 2.913,35 Lire. An undated entry in the Diary that same year of 1890 tells us: "On the 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Feast of the Visitation of Mary, Ven. Father would come to invest Elise Maier; she should now start her retreat." This entry is followed immediately by a further note: "Thank God, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> therefore, Ven. Father came to invest Sister Maier as Sister Ursula."<sup>150</sup> The actual full name which Elisabeth received from Fr. Jordan on July 2, 1890 was: S. Ursula of the Visitation of Mary.

In October or early November 1890, there is again a mentioning in Mother Mary's Diary about S. Ursula: "Through S. Ursula's efforts, we received a crucifix from Amberg, a beautiful statue

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<sup>149</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 2, page 33/1890.

<sup>150</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 2, page 35/1890.

of Our Lady, and six candlesticks as a gift for our altar.<sup>151</sup> They were used to decorate the chapel when the first three sisters destined for Assam made their final vows in Tivoli on November 28, 1890.

As Superior, Mother Mary kept a watchful eye on the progress of her community and, one week after the first sisters had left for Assam, she wrote to the Founder: “Ven. Father, all is well with the sisters. ... S. U. Maier must first become more of a religious, then she too can be useful – if she wants, she will become good (it seems to me that she was so taken up with her practical knowledge, thus calm good. – )”<sup>152</sup>

Seven months later, on July 2, 1891, S. Ursula made her first vows for three years. Mother Mary wrote in her diary: “In the afternoon, S. Ursula made her vows and was, at the same time, appointed to the Assam mission ... (in October). They are studying much to learn English.”<sup>153</sup>

If “October” indicated the departure date, then it was put off for a few months. S. Ursula was still in Tivoli in December. On December 8, 1891, Mother Mary accepted an invitation from Fr. Jordan to attend a celebration on the occasion of the “10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our dear Society.” S. Ursula went along as Mother Mary’s companion and they heard Fr. Bonaventura Lüthen give “a beautiful address.”<sup>154</sup>

A few days after that anniversary celebration, on December 21, 1891, Fr. Jordan was in Tivoli to receive the final vows of S. Ursula. Four days later, she and Mother Mary were in the chapel of the Society’s Motherhouse in Rome where, in the evening of Christmas Day, S. Ursula and the other departing missionaries received their mission cross. It was the start of S. Ursula’s 24 years of service in the mission of Assam, just one year and seven months after her arrival as a new candidate in Tivoli.

S. Ursula’s arrival in Assam with two other sisters on January 24, 1892, increased the number of sisters in the Assam mission to six. On June 9, 1892, Mother Mary could write to Fr. Jordan: “I had good news from Assam – S. Benedicta and S. Ursula are already teaching school.”<sup>155</sup>

S. Ursula’s experience in nursing and education was surely very helpful to her after the earthquake of 1897. She was one of the four sisters who slept with 40 orphans in one room of the only house, a small one, still standing at the mission. Two sisters had been injured in the

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<sup>151</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 2, page 41/1890.

<sup>152</sup> Mother Mary to Fr. Jordan, 19.12.1890, SHS 2. 16/1, “Letters from Mother Mary of the Apostles to Fr. Francis of the Cross Jordan and leading Salvatorians, 1882-1907”, Letter 13, APS, E 607.

<sup>153</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 2, page 51/1891.

<sup>154</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 2, page 56/1891.

<sup>155</sup> Mother Mary, Letters to Fr. Jordan, SHS 2.16/1, letter 27, 09.06.1892, APS E 614.

earthquake, S. Xaveria in Shillong and S. Hildegard in Raliang. S. Ursula was taking care of both of them and organized for them a place to sleep in the bakehouse at Shillong.

In December 1906, she was bitten by a rabid dog. The British authorities helped the sisters and enabled them to send S. Ursula to the medical centre at Kausali in the Himalayas. S. Kunigilde went with her. However, S. Ursula did not develop rabies and she returned to Shillong in January 1907.

For most of her years in the mission, S. Ursula was assigned to Shillong, apart from a short period in Laitkynsew which had ended in illness. Her main work was looking after the orphans but she was also involved in various other tasks connected with this. She had a good knowledge of garden and field work and was able to train the local people in these skills.

At the age of 62, S. Ursula had to leave Assam with the other sisters in 1915. She was assigned to join the community at Stockern in Austria (the temporary residence of the Generalate during the war). Although her health had given her trouble in Assam, she lived for a further 21 years in Austria until she died at the age of 83 in Vienna-Hacking on August 26, 1936. She had been very ill for the last six years of her life.



*Figure 38: Fr. Ignatius and orphans, 1904, Shillong*

SISTER XAVERIA FÖRSTERA  
of the Immaculate Conception of Mary  
Tivoli-Assam, December 1891

Gertrud was the daughter of Johann Förstera and his wife Marianne, née Molek. Her parents were farmers at Friedrichsthal in the diocese of Breslau in Silesia; Gertrud was born there on March 15, 1869 and baptized in the parish church of Budkowitz.

The family moved to Königshütte in search of a higher income in 1870 and Gertrud grew up there. From the age of seven to fourteen years, she attended the elementary school at Königshütte. She was about 14 years old when, in 1883, she made her first communion. Gertrud was confirmed in 1888 at Königshütte and, at Christmas 1889, she was received into the Third Order of St. Francis.

When Gertrud was eleven years old, her father died as a result of an accident at work and her elder brother assumed responsibility for the family. In order not to be a burden to him or to her mother, Gertrud went out to work immediately after leaving school. The conditions met with by young working girls were not good and to avoid this, Gertrud's mother gave her fifteen and a half year old daughter permission to leave home for domestic service with a family in Ratibor. She worked for this family in Kattowitz, Zulenze and Sohran from June 1885 to July 1889, except for a short stay at home in early 1887. From July 1889 up to the time of her entrance, she worked in Ratibor.

By the time Gertrud wrote to Fr. Jordan asking to be accepted into our Congregation, she had been certain of her vocation for about two years, i.e. since 1888. Poverty had seemed to her an obstacle and she had not applied to enter any Congregation during that time. However, she read in "Der Missionär" that poor girls could enter the Catholic Teaching Society and gained the courage to apply there. "I am an uneducated and unlearned servant girl, but I hope that God will give me the grace to achieve my goal." And Gertrud's goal, as she informed Father Jordan, was to be a missionary sister. She reached it as the 19<sup>th</sup> young woman to enter our Congregation.

Her employer in Ratibor released her from their service for October 1, 1890; she went home to Königshütte to make the necessary arrangements for entrance. Fr. Albrich of Königshütte, formerly her confessor in Sohran, gave her a testimonial; her mother gave her permission to enter; her brother Adalbert had already offered to pay the dowry by the time she would enter novitiate. (Adalbert was a labourer and not able to completely fulfil his promise until 1911, after S. Xaveria's death, when he faithfully sent the remaining sum to Fr. Jordan).

Gertrud's date of entrance into the convent at Tivoli is given as October 19, 1890. Mother Mary's Diary entry regarding the event says only: "On the 19<sup>th</sup>, Miss Gertrud Förstera from Ratibor, 20 years of age, greatly longing for the missions; speaks Polish and German."<sup>156</sup>

Gertrud moved quickly toward her missionary goal after that. She received the religious habit from Fr. Jordan on November 28, 1890, together with her new name: S. Xaveria of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. On this same day, the first three sisters destined for the Assam mission made their final vows.

S. Xaveria's own destiny as a missionary to Assam had already been decided by July 2, 1891. On November 29, 1891, in the presence of Father Jordan and Mother Mary, she and her future travelling companion, S. Ignatia, made vows for the first time. These were, with permission, their final vows.

Less than one month later, on Christmas Day, December 25, 1891, S. Xaveria, S. Ignatia and S. Ursula received the mission cross at the altar of the motherhouse of the Society in Rome, together with three priests and one brother. "May they glorify the holy Cross in India!" was the wish Mother Mary noted in her Diary.<sup>157</sup>

The missionaries arrived in Shillong on January 24, 1892. There S. Xaveria began her work in the mission, teaching the children and grownups in the school and in their homes. This she did in Shillong and in the villages, first in Laitkor and from early 1895 in Maukhar. She made herself useful in other ways as well and had a talent for preparing convent and church celebrations with the children.

She was covered in the ruins of the convent at Shillong during the earthquake of 1897. At that time she sustained serious injury to her lungs and suffered much from the consequences of this injury for the rest of her life. It was a great sorrow to her that she could not do as much as formerly, but she accepted the situation with patience and did what she could when she felt better.

Toward the end of 1898, she informed her superior general that, although she had a continual cough and frequent fever, she could sometimes work the whole day. Not long afterwards, S. Xaveria contracted tuberculosis and was confined to bed. She died in Shillong at the age of 31 on August 21, 1900.

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<sup>156</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 2, page 41/1890.

<sup>157</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 2, page 57/1891.



*Figure 39: First Communion in Shillong*

SISTER BERNARDA REICHEL  
of the Immaculate Conception of Mary  
Rome-Assam, January 1896



*Figure 40: S. Bernarda Reichel*

The daughter of Wilhelm Reichel and Anna Rosa, née Mücke, was born at Wanowitz near Leobschütz in the diocese of Olmütz, Silesia, on October 6, 1872, and baptized with the name Ottilia three days after her birth in the same village on October 9, 1872.

Her schooldays were spent at the catholic elementary school in her home village from April 11, 1878, until October 1, 1886. She was a well-behaved student and very good in all her subjects as the head teacher, Hartel, testified on signing her final school report.

Ottilia was 14 years old when she left school and she was then expected to help with the work in the house; her father ran a guest-house or inn. When she was sixteen, her parents decided to send her to Leobschütz to learn cooking. She went there in 1888 to stay for six months at the house of Carl and Antonie Engel. However, her helping hands were missed and needed for the work at home, and in the spring of 1889, her parents brought her back again to Wanowitz. She lived at home from then on, with the exception of some months spent with her brother and relatives in Berlin during 1889.

Ottilia had been considering religious life for quite a while but did not take any definite steps towards this goal. Only after she had read some articles about the Catholic Teaching Society published in the “Apostelkalender” of 1891, 1892 and 1893, she felt sure that she should join the sisters of this community. Toward the end of 1892, she sent in the required entrance papers.



Ottilia arrived at the Piazza San Francesco in Tivoli in the evening of October 21, 1893. On December 10, 1893, she already received the religious habit and the name S. Bernarda of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. She spent the first months of her novitiate in Tivoli. In June of the following year, S. Bernarda and eight other novices were sent to Rome and arrived in the evening of June 26, 1894, at the convent on the Via Lungara. The transfer was thought necessary due to the outbreak of Typhus in Tivoli. The novitiate, however, could not get permission from the Church to remain permanently in Rome at that time, and on September 14, 1894 the novices returned to Tivoli in little groups of three. Among them was S. Bernarda.

Mother Mary was at the ceremony during which S. Bernarda made vows for three years on December 26, 1894. On January 28, 1895, Mother Mary went again to Tivoli and, in accordance with Fr. Jordan's wish, sent S. Bernarda and four other sisters to Rome. They were to study in Rome at the Teacher Training School begun at the convent. S. Bernarda attended the first classes on February 11, 1895.

Ten months later, on the morning of December 9, 1895, Mother Mary went to the Cardinal Vicar in Rome to get permission for S. Bernarda and nine other sisters to make their final vows. It was gladly given. So, still in the afternoon of that same day, S. Bernarda and the others, in the presence of Fr. Jordan, made final vows.

Farewells followed soon after, and, on January 1, 1896 S. Bernarda left for Assam. She arrived at the new mission of Shella, where she was to be the superior, on January 29, 1896. News by mail takes a while to travel and, although Mother Mary in Rome wrote on March 3 that there was "good news from the new foundation in Shella (Assam) – (Superior there: S. Bernarda) = orphans and catechism,"<sup>158</sup> all was not so well in Shella. S. Bernarda had felt ill already on the ship but hoped that this would pass. However, she did not recover and finally had to be brought, in a serious condition to Shillong. An English doctor there diagnosed galloping consumption and S. Bernarda was already beyond help. She died in Shillong at the age of 24 years on August 20, 1896, not quite three years after entering the Congregation.

S. Bernarda was the first Salvatorian Sister to die in Assam. Like Fr. Otto Hopfenmüller, on whose sixth death anniversary she passed to eternal life, and Brother Marianus Schumm, who died ten days after Fr. Otto, S. Bernarda had been in Assam for just over six months.

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<sup>158</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 3, page 13/1896.

SISTER BRIGITTA SCHNEIDER  
of the Immaculate Conception of Mary  
Rome-Assam, December 1895



*Figure 41: S. Brigitta Schneider*

The Congregation was just four years old when Ottilia Schneider left Bavaria to become the 67<sup>th</sup> young woman to enter our Congregation. She was 27 years old and had been born to Peter Schneider and his wife Anna Maria, née Volpert, in the little village of Unterpleichfeld in the diocese of Würzburg on February 22, 1865.

Ottilia arrived at the sisters' convent on the Piazza San Francesco on October 30, 1892.

She received the name of S. Brigitta of the Immaculate Conception of Mary when she began her novitiate together with ten other young women on November 30, 1892, just one month after her arrival. She and the rest of the community had just completed the first preached retreat to be given in our Congregation. It was held by Fr. Marcus Dombrowski, SDS, from November 19-30. Fr. Jordan gave Ottilia her new name and the religious habit. Mother Mary noted in her Diary that he “gave a beautiful sermon”.<sup>159</sup>

S. Brigitta made her first vows in Tivoli for three years on December 10, 1893. In 1895, she was given permission to make her final vows in Rome on December 9, and left the following day for a home visit in Bavaria before leaving for Assam.

She arrived in Shella on January 29, 1896, and after a few days there she went on to Shillong. She stayed there until her new assignment brought her to Raliang on March 19, 1897. Barely

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<sup>159</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 2, page 70/1892.

three months after the sisters' arrival in Raliang, all the work that had been done to build up the mission was destroyed by an earthquake. S. Brigitta and her companions had to live for nine months in a very poor hut and suffered from the bad conditions and lack of food as well as the sacrifice needed to build up the mission activities again. As a result, S. Brigitta began to suffer from asthma which did not leave her for the rest of her life.

In October 1900, she had to spend five months at Shillong for health reasons and, by 1904, her asthma was noticeably worse. However, she and S. Ignatia worked well together to manage the work at the mission. S. Hildegardis' absence from the mission for one and a half years, due to illness, meant that there was much to do.

In 1905, S. Brigitta had to carry the work of the mission even alone for some time as S. Ignatia fell seriously ill.

On October 9, 1905, S. Brigitta suffered a stroke during Mass. She received Holy Communion and was then brought home by S. Ignatia and one of the girls, where she received the holy oils. The stroke paralysed her right side and caused a loss of speech. S. Ignatia gave her a Kneipp treatment and she improved sufficiently to go to Shillong for medical treatment, where the improvement continued.

At the end of January 1906, S. Brigitta asked to go back to her beloved Raliang saying that she wished to die there. She returned, but her health gradually deteriorated, so that she could often not walk more than a few steps without stopping for breath.

On March 28, 1906, Sisters Scholastica and Eustachia arrived to form the Raliang community with her, and Sisters Ignatia and Hildegardis left for Shillong the following day. S. Brigitta wanted to accompany them for part of the way. However, she felt so unwell that S. Ignatia asked her to return to the mission.

On Passion Sunday, April 1, 1906, S. Brigitta had a second stroke which left her completely paralyzed and unable to speak. She remained unable to communicate with anyone until she died at 12:15 midday, on April 4, 1906, with two priests and two sisters at her bedside.

The news of her death was sent to Mother Mary who wrote in her Diary under the date of April 4, 1906: "Today Sister Brigitta Schneider died in Raliang, Assam, after a second stroke. She was a good sister; but had formerly suffered from tuberculosis."<sup>160</sup> Her death "is a painful loss to our mission station," Fr. Bernardin wrote to Mother Mary, "but her memory will remain

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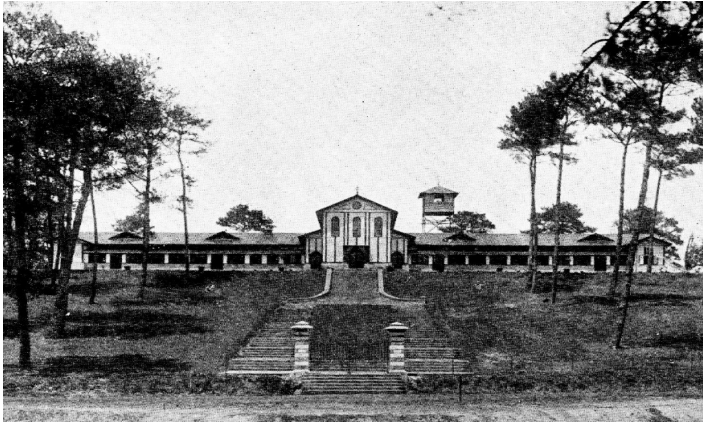
<sup>160</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 3, page 120/1906.

alive, for she was a model of true piety. ... She lived completely for her holy vocation and spent herself in it totally.”<sup>161</sup>

Sr. Brigitta was buried in Raliang in a grave next to that of Fr. Thaddeus who had called our sisters to the Raliang mission in 1897. From then on, the sisters and the children from the orphanage always went to her graveside in the little cemetery after Mass on Sundays to pray for her.



*Figure 42: Fathers, one Sister, and Khasis*



*Figure 43: Church and Mission House in Shillong*

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<sup>161</sup> Letter of Fr. Bernardin Jung, SDS, to Mother Mary, 04.04.1906.

SISTER GABRIELA BOHNHEIM  
of the Help of Christians  
Rome-Assam, December 1895



*Figure 44: S. Gabriela Bohnheim*

Max Bohnheim and his wife Ursula, née Huber, lived at Mauerkirchen in the diocese of Munich when Apollonia, the future S. Gabriela, was born there on October 15, 1868. Her father was a railway signalman.

Apollonia remained with her parents until she left with her elder sister for Tivoli, where they entered our Congregation at the convent on the Piazza San Francesco on April 29, 1891. Mother Mary then wrote: “On April 29, two dear postulants from Soyen near Wasserburg entered: Katharina, 25 years old and Appolonia Bohnheim, 23 years old. They are sisters of Rev. Brothers Corbinian and Efrem, SCI, in Rome.”<sup>162</sup> She noted later on: “...four of one family in our Society – a very special grace.”<sup>163</sup> Apollonia was the 28<sup>th</sup> young woman to enter.

She and her sister entered together, began novitiate together and, through the years, made and renewed vows together in Tivoli. Apollonia received the religious habit and the name of S. Gabriela of the Help of Christians from Fr. Jordan on May 24, 1891, and one year after, her

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<sup>162</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 2, pages 48-49/1891.

<sup>163</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 2, page 84/1893.

brothers, Corbinian and Efrem, assisted Fr. Jordan on the occasion of her first vows on May 25, 1892.

In September of the following year, 1893, Mother Mary went from Tivoli to Rome with S. Gabriela and her sister, now S. Raphaela, to attend the priestly ordination of their brother Efrem. Not long afterwards, both sisters were allowed to go home for Fr. Efrem's first Mass; their brother Corbinian was also there.

S. Gabriela was working within the convent and, in May 1894, Mother Mary lists her duties as: "... ironing, ringing the bell for community events, securing the door, supervision of the sacristy work together with two other sisters."<sup>164</sup> That same month, Mother Mary suggested her name as a possible missionary to Assam. She was not yet sent, however, at that time.

S. Gabriela arrived at the Via Lungara on November 8, 1894, sent there in response to Mother Mary's request to have some healthy sisters from Tivoli. The two Bohnheim sisters made final vows conditionally in Tivoli on May 28, 1895. In that year, too, the community was informed that S. Gabriela would be going to Assam. In June, Mother Mary had given her assessment to Fr. Jordan: "S. Gabriela – firm in her vocation, very good, pious, practical in handwork = ironing, etc, knows German, English and Italian well."<sup>165</sup>

Farewell took place in December. Together with a group of other sisters destined for Assam and Burma, S. Gabriela confirmed her final vows on December 9 and, after a little gathering at which Fr. Efrem spoke very movingly of attachment to the Motherhouse. She left for a home visit in Soyen on December 16.

On January 29, 1896, S. Gabriela arrived at the mission station of Shella in Assam, where she was to live and work. It was a beautiful but hilly location. Later in the year, she wrote to Fr. Jordan: "If you could see me going down over the stones, dear Rev. Father, you would laugh a lot. The whole pathway is always wet, as water flows continuously from a bamboo pipe and is used by everyone for drinking and cooking. It cannot be turned off, so it runs like a stream over the stones. The stony steps are very high, so that one has to jump instead of walk; I always have to be helped by the Khasi teachers for a great part of the way, so that I don't fall. ... It is my great joy to go into the village and to teach the orphans." The needs of the women were also a special concern of S. Gabriela; she often visited and taught them in their homes.

S. Gabriela must have felt it very much when, seven months later, the earthquake of June 1897 destroyed the entire village of Shella and killed the orphans. As quickly as they could, the

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<sup>164</sup> Mother Mary to Fr. Jordan, SHS 2. 16/1, letter 40, May 1894, APS E 797.

<sup>165</sup> Mother Mary to Fr. Jordan, SHS 2. 16/1, letter 71, report about the individual sisters, 05.06.1895, APS 651.

missionaries moved, in conditions of great need and discomfort, to Laitkynsew. When mission work resumed again in Laitkynsew, S. Gabriela worked in the kitchen, taught religion in the village and instructed the orphans and village children in the school.

In 1907, she and Fr. Corbinian planned to go to Europe after Easter. Due to the unavailability of places on the ship, they could not leave until May and arrived in Rome in June. She had to have some treatment for health and, after spending a year in Germany for this purpose, S. Gabriela began the trip back to Assam in January 1909 and went via Shillong to Raliang. (Her former mission station, Laitkynsew, had by that time been closed). The Raliang community went to Shillong every summer for retreat and, in both 1910 and 1911, S. Gabriela had to remain there for a while after retreat for health reasons. Finally, in September 1912, she was transferred to Shillong on the permanent basis and remained there until she had to leave Assam in 1915.

Back in Europe, S. Gabriela did domestic tasks within the convent: in South Tyrol at Meran, in Germany at Steinfeld and in Austria at Vienna-Kaisermühlen. In 1946, at the age of 78, she was assigned to the community at Börwang in Germany. She retained great interest in the affairs of the Congregation. At the age of 83, the ex-missionary wrote a letter to her superior general in German, Italian and English, and expressed one wish: *“I would like to be the portress at the Motherhouse. I was often on duty at the door in Tivoli and Rome. I am keeping happy and busy doing needlework. It would be a great pleasure to see our new Motherhouse and the holy Pope, but it will have to remain a wish.”*<sup>166</sup> The “busy ant of Assam”, as she had become known, could no longer travel.

The following year, 1952, S. Gabriela became the first in the Congregation to celebrate her 60<sup>th</sup> Jubilee of profession and she enjoyed the occasion. However, her health deteriorated and by November 1952, she was confined to bed. Three days after a wished-for visit from her priest brother, S. Gabriela died at Börwang on December 30, 1952.

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<sup>166</sup> S. Gabriela to the General Superior, Mother Olympia Heuel, 11.02.1951.

SISTER HILDEGARDIS DOMBROWSKI  
of the Immaculate Conception of Mary  
Rome-Assam, December 1895



*Figure 45: S. Hildegardis Dombrowski*

In 1893, in the evening of October 21, the 77<sup>th</sup> young woman to enter our Congregation arrived in Tivoli. Mother Mary wrote in her diary: “Miss Fanny Dombrowski, the sister of Rev Fr. Marcus... arrived from Ratibor (30 years of age...)”<sup>167</sup>

Fr. Marcus Dombrowski was already a priest and member of the Society when his sister Fanny decided to join our Congregation. They were children of Johannes Dombrowski and his wife Anna, née Paspiech. Fanny was born on March 9, 1863, at Ratibor, Silesia, in the diocese of Breslau. The archives of our Congregation give no other information of her life at home before entry.

Fanny was one of a group of 13 young women who received the religious habit in Tivoli on December 10, 1893. She received the name of S. Hildegardis of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, a name which was sometimes shortened to S. Hildegard.<sup>168</sup>

During her novitiate, S. Hildegardis was at least twice in Rome with Mother Mary: she accompanied M. Mary to the closing ceremonies of the Jubilee on February 18-19, 1894, attending the Holy Father’s Mass in St. Peter’s and receiving his blessing among the crowd who were endlessly shouting: “Evviva!” she was called to Rome on May 17, 1894, to act as a witness in court regarding Mass stipends received in Ratibor. M. Mary acted as translator

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<sup>167</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 2, page 85/1893.

<sup>168</sup> S. Hildegardis, in various documents also: S. Hildegard.



during the several hours of proceedings and S. Hildegardis' brother, Fr. Marcus, accompanied them.

As the time for vows drew nearer, the novice mistress expressed her doubts about S. Hildegardis; she was sure that this novice should be dismissed from the Congregation. M. Mary wrote her own opinion regarding the dismissal to Fr. Jordan; "S. Hildegardis – I would be glad because of one thing – otherwise, I think she could be useful in the missions; she seems to be pious and of good will – it is true that some things are more difficult for her than for others."<sup>169</sup>

S. Hildegardis was admitted to vows and the ceremony was held on December 26, 1894. Two novices<sup>170</sup> of the original group of 13 had died of typhus in Tivoli on June 28, 1894, so that only ten of S. Hildegardis' novitiate companions made vows with her.

On January 28, 1895, M. Mary again made the trip from Rome to Tivoli and, on the following day, took S. Hildegardis and seven other sisters back to Rome with her. S. Hildegardis started work in the sewing room at the convent on the Via Lungara.

At the end of that same year on December 9, 1895, S. Hildegardis made final vows and soon afterward left for Assam. She arrived in Shella on January 29, 1896, where she remained for over a year.

On March 3, 1897, she was called to Shillong and left from there with two other sisters on March 17, to begin the 50-mile-journey to the new mission which they were to open in Raliang. They arrived in Raliang on March 19, 1897, the feast of St. Joseph, and took up residence in their new home. Their main work was to look after orphans and to teach catechism.

Their little convent was destroyed, like the others, in the earthquake of 1897, and temporary accommodation was built for them. It was at this time that S. Hildegardis had an accident; she fell and broke her foot. There was no doctor at Raliang, so she had to be carried the 50 miles to Shillong over the difficult hill-tracks. This injury caused her much trouble and, in 1901, she had to go to Shillong again for a while to be fitted with an iron brace. The trouble worsened, however, and in April 1904, she had to have the foot amputated and from then on wore a wooden artificial foot. She was away from Raliang at this time for one and a half years. It was not easy for her to work and travel in the wet and hilly conditions of the mission after that.

In February 1906, S. Hildegardis was in Raliang giving afternoon handwork classes to the orphans, but in March she was transferred back to Shillong. In the years that followed, she

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<sup>169</sup> Mother Mary to Fr. Jordan, SHS 2. 16/1, Letter 45, 27.09.1894; APS 625.

<sup>170</sup> S. Paula Huber and S. Theodora Grandinger.

alternated between Raliang and Shillong with a brief period spent in Laitkynsew. She supervised the workmen at the mission, cared for the children, gave handwork classes and did sewing. From 1907 onward, the sisters made their yearly retreat in Shillong and after the retreat of 1909, S. Hildegardis remained in Shillong.

In 1912, she left Assam to return to Europe, where she worked in Rome, Meran, and Stockern, mostly in the sewing room. While she was living in Rome at the Salita Sant'Onofrio in 1914, she again had contact with the affairs of Assam when the purchase of the Mountain View Bungalow at Dibrugarh was placed in her name together with that of S. Scholastica.

Her final years were lived in Austria. On June 24, 1941, S. Hildegardis began the yearly retreat with her sisters at Vienna-Kaisermühlen. In the early morning of June 26, the sister in the room next to S. Hildegardis' heard a noise and found her unconscious and dying when she went in to see what was wrong. The retreat priest was called, but although he was in the same house, S. Hildegardis died so quickly that he was able to give her the holy oils only after her death. She was buried in the main cemetery of Vienna, Austria.

SISTER KUNIGILDE MEYER

of St. Joseph

Rome-Akyab, Burma, December 1895

Akyab-Assam, November/ December 1896



*Figure 46: S. Kunigilde Meyer*

Mother Mary noted in her Diary: “On January 17, 1894, Postulant Elise Meyer from Hildesheim, 27 years old, arrived. (For some time she had been in the Mission House for Africa, St. Ottilien).”<sup>171</sup>

This postulant was the daughter of the building foreman Hermann Meyer and his wife, Justina Ossenkopp. She was born in the evening of March 2, 1866, at Ochtersum near Hildesheim, Hannover. Her birth and her baptism on March 11, 1866, were registered at Moritzburg. Her parents were, as she later told Fr. Jordan, pious, poor, willing to let a child of theirs enter religion and wanting nothing but their child’s happiness now and forever.

Elisabeth lived with her parents at Ochtersum and attended school there from the age of 6 to 14 years when she was confirmed in the Cathedral of Hildesheim on May 17, 1880. After leaving school, she stayed with her parents and learnt some sewing. When she was 16, she went into domestic service, at first with the cathedral organist, Liste. In winter 1886, she got a bad arm

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<sup>171</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 2, page 88/1894.

and had to discontinue work for some months on doctor's advice. The arm healed, she learned laundry work, ironing and cooking and then went out to work as a cook. She was living in the Holy Cross parish at Hildesheim when she decided to enter religious life at the convent of St. Ottilien. She left work on August 1, 1890, to enter that community and remained with them until November 1893.

In December 1893, Elisabeth wrote to Fr. Jordan from the Marien-Institute in Munich asking to join our Congregation. In her letter, she told him that she had read the Apostelkalender, that the missions were everything to her and that she was not afraid of any sacrifice connected with them. If accepted, she had only one wish: to pray soon at the tomb of the Apostles Peter and Paul, to make vows and to die in religious life. She also told him that she could do housework but found study difficult.

Elisabeth was accepted and, two months after her arrival at the Piazza San Francesco in Tivoli, M. Mary remarked: "On March 18, our Ven. Father came; ... he invested Miss Meyer with the name of Sister Kunigilde of St. Joseph"<sup>172</sup> (*It must be noted, however, that the sisters wrote variations of this name: Cunihilde, Cunigildis, Cunhildis, Cunihildis and Kunigilde; this last name is used in the official register of the Congregation's membership. She herself always used Kunigildis.*).

Due to the same epidemic of typhus which caused M. Mary to leave Tivoli, S. Kunigilde spent part of her novitiate in Rome. She completed it in Tivoli. In autumn that year, 1894, the novice mistress felt that three novices should be sent home, among them S. Kunigilde. This fact caused M. Mary to write to Fr. Jordan: "...She was always good, a capable nurse as well, etc. (she was formerly in St. Ottilien). Now I will leave the decision to you, dear Rev. Father and Founder."<sup>173</sup> The decision was favourable and on April 5, 1895, M. Mary was present in Tivoli when S. Kunigilde made first vows for three years. Afterwards, she took S. Kunigilde and three other sisters back to Rome with her.

On April 21, 1895, S. Kunigilde had to attend an interview and Mother Mary communicated the result to Fr. Jordan that both sisters, S. Kunigilde and S. Constantia were gladly accepted<sup>174</sup> and on April 29, the sisters began their duties at the hospital of S. Giacomo in Rome.

A little later, a sisters' list went from M. Mary to Fr. Jordan which reported: "Sr. Cunigilda (Hannover), 28 years – was in St. Ottilien – firm – capable – directs the sisters in the hospital – good for the missions (also as superior there)."<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 2, page 91/1894.

<sup>173</sup> Mother Mary to Fr. Jordan, SHS 2.16/1, Letter 45, 27.09.1894, APS E 625.

<sup>174</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 2, page 125/1895

The decision was made and openly announced: “For Assam ... S. Cunigilda” with an added note for Father Jordan after her name: “(superior, but this I did not say).”<sup>176</sup>

On December 9, 1895, “the ten sisters who are appointed for India took their perpetual vows ... in our nicely decorated chapel in Rome”<sup>177</sup>, as Mother Mary wrote in her diary. S. Kunigilde, who was one of the ten, made a speech at the farewell celebration on December 30, 1895, and, still that day, set out with the other missionaries for her new home: Akyab, Burma.

She was the superior of the new mission and its community of six sisters. Toward the end of April 1896, Mother Mary could write: “All six sisters in Akyab sent good news. – Thank God!”<sup>178</sup> a later entry in her diary reads, however, “From Akyab I heard today, that the Most Rev. Bishop of Dacca during his visit there had deposed Sister Kunigilde from her office of superior and appointed Sister Veronika instead. Ven. Father had asked the Bishop to take care of things there according to his judgment. ... on 19/8 1896.”<sup>179</sup>

The change of superior in Akyab occurred on August 19, 1896, and, several months later, S. Kunigilde arrived at Shillong to take up mission work there. It seems that her health did not acclimatize too well at the beginning; one of her companions wrote to Mother Mary that S. Kunigilde was always sick – often had a very high temperature and could not eat anything.

Luckily, S. Kunigilde came safely through the earthquake of 1897. Her health improved and she made herself useful over the years so that the Apostolic Prefect, Fr. Becker, could write of her in 1910 that she was one of the most capable sisters they had. She had the most talent in handwork. She knew nursing, choir work, etc. She could be used at any time for the school or orphanage.

On May 30, 1906, S. Kunigilde was transferred to Laitkynsew.<sup>180</sup> One of the reasons for transfer was that someone was needed there who could play the piano. But already in December of that year, she was called on to accompany S. Ursula for medical treatment to Kausali. The first part of the journey, in particular, was a work of love: in her concern, S. Kunigilde walked from Laitkynsew to Shillong continuously, from 08.00 a.m. to 02.30 a.m. the following morning, being carried just once in a while. They reached their destination via Gauhati and Calcutta and once there, were destination via Gauhati and Calcutta and once there, they were given hospitality by a Capuchin priest from Florence, Fr. Columban.

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<sup>175</sup> Mother Mary to Fr. Jordan, SHS 216/1, 05.06.1895, Letter 71, (No. 60), APS E 651: report about individual Sisters.

<sup>176</sup> Mother Mary to Fr. Jordan, SHS 216/1, Letter 58, 1895, APS E 638.

<sup>177</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 3, page 9/1895.

<sup>178</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 3, page 16/1896.

<sup>179</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 3, page 23/1896.

<sup>180</sup> Chronicles, May 1906.

The two sisters returned to Laitkynsew in January 1907, but S. Kunigilde was soon transferred to Shillong for reasons of health and was sent from there to her homeland of Germany for convalescence. She returned to Shillong on January 14, 1909, with five other sisters.

During 1909, the sisters considered making a foundation in a tea plantation. S. Kunigilde spent one month at Moheema in September-October 1909, nursing coolies<sup>181</sup> and experiencing the situation. It was decided not to proceed with the foundation and S. Kunigilde was re-called.

She then went to the mission station of Raliang and, as S. Ignatia wrote on November 30, 1909: “S. Kunigilde likes it here – she teaches the bigger children, does handwork and sewing and has the choir and sacristy. However, she hopes to return to Shillong as she knows English.” S. Kunigilde did not know, and found it difficult to learn, the local Synteng language. She did eventually go back to Shillong in August or September 1910, although her superior at Raliang wrote that she did her work and was of a lot of help. She had the sacristy, singing, school, boys and the supervision of those who looked after the cows and sheep.

At Shillong, S. Kunigilde had been well-known and liked, especially among the English community, in her early years in Assam. This time, she was to stay with them forever. S. Kunigilde became ill; she died in Shillong of abdominal cancer on August 11, 1914, at the age of 48 years. She was the 90<sup>th</sup> young woman to enter our Congregation and had belonged to it as a professed sister for 19 years.

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<sup>181</sup> Kuli: daily wager, a human carrier.

## SISTER EVANGELISTA HOFMANN

of the Help of Christians

Rome-Assam, February 1897



*Figure 47: S. Evangelista Hofmann*

Barbara Hofmann came from a farming family. She was born to Nikolaus Hofmann and his wife Ursula, née Rausch, on October 4, 1872, at Järkendorf near Stadelschwarzach in the diocese of Würzburg.

Many of the sisters had moved from Tivoli to Rome by the time when Mother Mary noted in her Diary: “On March 22 ... Babette Hofmann and Luzia Barthelmes from Würzburg entered. They are all young in age. The latter two have been recommended by Rev. Pastor Faulstich.”<sup>182</sup>

Barbara received the religious habit and her new name, S. Evangelista of the Help of Christians, in Tivoli on May 28, 1895. During her novitiate, she and the other sisters and novices moved from the Piazza San Francesco into a house on the Via Maggiore down near the river Aniene. It was there that she made retreat in preparation for her first vows. The ceremony was held on June 29, 1896, in the little chapel dedicated to St. Anthony, the Hermit, which was attached to the convent.

In January 1897, S. Evangelista bade farewell to the community at the Via Lungara in Rome and left for Germany to say goodbye to her family and friends at home. She joined the ship for Assam in Triest on February 3, 1897, together with two priests of the Society and two sisters destined for Akyab. S. Evangelista herself was going to Assam and she arrived at the mission station of Shella, exactly one month after boarding the ship on March 3, 1897. That was about three months before a terrible earthquake destroyed the mission of Shella in June 1897. At that

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<sup>182</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 2, page 123/1895.

time, S. Evangelista had a particularly alarming experience; when the earthquake began, she ran out of the kitchen, fell, and her arm was trapped under a rock. It took a priest of the Society some two hours of work with an iron bar before he could free her. Luckily, the arm was not seriously hurt.

The missionaries then went to nearby Laitkynsew where, in July 1897, they were able to move into a new home. There S. Evangelista made her final vows in our Congregation on June 2, 1902, and later became the superior of the little community. Due to poverty and the ill health of the sisters, they had to leave Laitkynsew in 1908; together with the orphans they transferred to Shillong.

S. Evangelista's main work in the mission was care of the children and handwork classes. She took care of the orphans in Shillong until 1914, with the exception of a few months spent in Raliang from October 1909 onward, when she looked after the sacristy and the school for the boys. In 1914, she went to Rome as the delegate from Assam to the third General Chapter of the Congregation. Once there, she was unable to return to Assam due to the outbreak of the First World War.

She went home for a while for a needed rest and recuperation and then asked to be assigned to nursing the war-wounded. She was sent to work at the military hospital in Munich, Germany, where already Salvatorian sisters had been working in two military hospitals.

But her health was no longer equal to the task. S. Evangelista needed care herself and she went to live at the then novitiate house at Pingsdorf, Rheinland. The sisters lived in conditions of much sacrifice and need during the war years and S. Evangelista's health became worse. She eventually died in Pingsdorf, not quite three years after leaving Assam, on January 31, 1917, at the age of 45 years. Some 22 years before, she had been the 125<sup>th</sup> young woman to enter our Congregation.



## SISTER CONSTANTIA EBERT

of the Child Jesus

Rome-Akyab, Burma, December 1895

Akyab-Assam, March 1898



*Figure 48: Sr. Constantia Ebert*

Theresia Ebert was born at Matzenbach, diocese of Rottenburg, Württemberg, on May 31, 1874. Her father, Anton Ebert, was a blacksmith. He died when Theresia was about eight years old and her brother took on responsibility for the family. Her mother, Katharina Ebert, née Weinschenk, gave the written permission for the 18 year-old Theresia to enter the convent in 1892.

At the age of 14 years, after seven years of schooling, Theresia received a good report and left school to remain at home until the following spring, when she went to work in Ellwangen, where she worked in the kitchen, laundry, house and garden.

As a young girl, she tried to keep a regular spiritual hour and was attracted by the idea of sisters and missionaries going to teach pagan children. She wrote in her words: “Already from my youth on I longed for a religious life, and felt envy of the Merciful Sisters and missionaries, as I heard that they would go to the pagan children and teach catechism.”<sup>183</sup>

While she was in Ellwangen, she decided to enter religious life and applied to the Vincentian Sisters at Untermarchtal, where she was accepted for entry by October 1, 1892.

Theresia went home on August 1, 1892, to prepare for this step and there, quite by chance, she picked up and read a copy of the ‘Apostelkalender’. She immediately felt that her real vocation was with the Catholic Teaching Society, whose publication this was, and wrote to Fr. Jordan

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<sup>183</sup> ASDS, personal documents of S. Constantia Ebert.

asking for a quick reply to her request for acceptance. Theresia's mother and her five brothers and sisters all agreed to her entrance.

On November 27, 1892, Theresia was accepted into the convent on the Piazza San Francesco in Tivoli, the 69<sup>th</sup> young woman to enter our Congregation. She began her novitiate on January 4, 1893, after receiving the religious habit and her new name of S. Constantia of the Child Jesus from the Founder.

She made retreat from January 13-23, 1894 and made her first vows for three years on January 23. On February 8, 1894, S. Constantia was among the new students of the Sisters' Teacher Training Institute in Tivoli when it opened with the singing of the Veni Sancte Spiritus.

The institute had to interrupt its activities with the outbreak of the typhus epidemic in Tivoli. When it re-opened in Rome on October 11, 1894, S. Constantia was no longer among the students. On April 5, 1895, M. Mary took her and four other sisters from Tivoli to Rome and in that same month, S. Constantia took up the work of nursing.

In December 1895, S. Constantia travelled with another sister to Germany on a last visit before departing for the missions. She was assigned to the new mission of Akyab in Burma, which was opened on February 1, 1896. The climate was difficult and she spent at least one short period in the hospital at Rangoon. Finally, in 1898, the sisters were withdrawn from Burma; the climate was affecting their health and work.

After a journey interrupted by illness at Calcutta, S. Constantia arrived in Shillong, Assam, in March 1898 and was assigned to Raliang. The following year, on July 22, 1899, she was appointed as the superior of the community in Laitkynsew and started there in September. She remained in Assam until 1904, but then had to leave for Europe on account of poor health.

With financial assistance from the Ludwig-Missionsverein (Munich), she took a health cure at Jordanbad, but the doctor gave the opinion that she should not return to India as planned. After a period of convalescence, she made retreat at Untermarchtal and a collecting trip to Neckarsulm and then returned to Rome on October 7, 1905. Mother Mary noted in her diary: "Today at last, our good Sister Constantia Ebert (formerly superior in Laitkynsew, Assam) arrived here from Germany – unfortunately she is still somewhat weak."<sup>184</sup>

At the beginning of the New Year, she left with a group of nine other sisters for America on January 12, 1906. Sister Constantia was assigned to the community at Watertown, USA.

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<sup>184</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 3, page 115/1905.

In the United States, S. Constantia worked as a nurse. For the last eighteen months of her life, she was bedridden with lung trouble. She died on September 7, 1927, at the age of 53 years, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA.



*Figure 49: Handwork class for girls and young women*

SISTER EUSTACHIA BAUER  
of the Presentation of Mary  
Rome-Assam, February 1906



*Figure 50: S. Eustachia Bauer*

Barbara Bauer was born on November 3, 1872, at Eitelbrunn, diocese of Regensburg, Bavaria. She was the first of the ten children, (six girls and four boys) born to the blacksmith Joseph Bauer, and Franziska, née Amann, his wife. a close acquaintance described them as a really holy family and the father as a wonderful, pious man who greatly appreciated the religious vocation. Nine of the children entered religious life, though one boy had to leave the Capuchin due to heart trouble and became a veterinarian. The eldest son, Joseph who was ten years younger than Barbara, became a blacksmith like his father.

Barbara attended school in Eitelbrunn. She was a good student and her leaving certificate bore the praise: "In every respect an exemplary student." For some years after leaving school, she helped her parents in the family home and farm and also learnt sewing and cooking in Regensburg. When she was 18 years old, she went into domestic service, but had to go home again a year later as her mother had died at the age of 38 and, as the eldest girl, Barbara took over the household tasks. In spite of her duties in the house, she found time to attend church frequently and to act as the president of local Association for girls.

By the time she was twenty-three, Barbara knew that she wanted to enter the convent, though, at this point, she had not discussed the matter with her father since she knew she was needed at home. The time for discussion came when her youngest sister reached the age of 19 and could take her place. Joseph Bauer agreed to his eldest daughter's plan and she applied to enter a missionary community in Belgium. She wanted to go to the missions.

A trip to Rome, however, was to change her plans; Fr. Vincenz gave her information regarding the Catholic Teaching Society and she returned to Bavaria to get her father's opinion. She discovered that he would rather she went to Rome than to Belgium and so, with his blessing, she applied to Fr. Jordan to enter our Congregation.

Before leaving for Rome, she made sure of a good home in Altötting for the two protestant boys, aged three and four, whom she had been looking after in her father's home and also arranged for a responsible person to take over her duties as a Promotor of the Catholic Teaching Society. As usual, the arrival of a new candidate was noted in M. Mary's diary. The entry regarding the arrival of the 27 year old Barbara at the house on the Via Lungara on October 1, 1903, was the last to be written personally by M. Mary. From October 10 onward, M. Mary could no longer see well enough to write the entries herself.

Barbara received the religious habit and her name, S. Eustachia of the Presentation of Mary, from Father Jordan in the chapel of the new house on the Salita Sant'Onofrio 11, Rome, on February 8, 1904. She then went to Tivoli to make her novitiate at the house on the Piazza Colonna. In April, M. Mary stayed in Tivoli for three days and attended the first communion of the children of the town – 200 of them. The Bishop, Mons. Scaccia, asked our sisters to supervise and direct the singing on this occasion.

In November 1904, the official permission was given for our mother house and a novitiate to be established in Rome and, on November 21, the novices left Tivoli for Rome. In the evening, S. Eustachia and her companions, holding lighted candles and accompanied by Mother Mary, entered their new novitiate accommodation in the Salita Sant'Onofrio and sang the Magnificat to complete the day.

S. Eustachia's first vows on February 9, 1905 and those of her three companions, made history in our Congregation; it was the first time that novices made vows in Rome.

S. Eustachia was in Rome when the first General Chapter was held in December 1905, and met S. Scholastica, the delegate from Assam. They were to be travelling companions to Assam the following February. Father Christophorus Becker, the newly appointed Apostolic Prefect of Assam, took the place of Father Jordan, who was unwell, and officiated at the ceremony on February 12, 1906, when S. Eustachia renewed her vows for one year. A few days later, on the 18<sup>th</sup>, S. Eustachia and S. Scholastica boarded the ship "Raff. Rubattino" for the voyage to India. S. Eustachia wrote on March 19, 1906 from Shillong to inform M. Mary and the sisters in Rome that she and S. Scholastica had arrived there safely. They reached their final destination in Raliang on March 28, 1906.

The mission superior in Shillong, S. Ignatia, wrote soon afterwards to Mother Mary, giving her opinion that S. Eustachia seemed to be very capable. And this opinion was shared through the

years by the sisters and priests of the Assam mission; not only that, she was truly dedicated and profoundly apostolic.

Like that of the other sisters, her mission work was varied. Almost her very first work was the nursing of the dying fellow-sister, S. Brigitta. The sick often came for help to the mission, and S. Eustachia regularly went to visit the sick in the surrounding villages, preparing the way for the Good News. On the mission, she was involved in the supervision of the boys, gave handwork classes, did sewing, worked in the sacristy, the garden, did work on the fields, was involved with the Young Women's Association that had been started there, with the Boy's Association and – together with S. Scholastica – planned for the establishment of a Native Sisters' Group.

In January 1908, S. Eustachia had to go away from Raliang for three months' medical treatment. The sisters and local people were glad to have her back and well again before Easter.

In early 1909, the new Commissary, S. Antonia, made known her intention to transfer S. Eustachia to Shillong, which she did in August. This caused disturbance among the people of Raliang, and the mission priest was also greatly disappointed at losing her.

On January 8, 1910, S. Eustachia accompanied S. Antonia to prepare for an intended new foundation in the Assam Valley. By January 24, she was in Calcutta and on February 2, she left for a course of study at the Loreto Convent in Morobai. She planned to spend the vacation month of May in Shillong and returned there later in the year.

Sometime in October 1910, after the community retreat in Shillong, S. Scholastica and S. Eustachia again set out together on the trip to Raliang. Not long afterward, in February 1911, also Fr. Becker and the superior from Shillong, went there for a joyful occasion: on February 19, 1911, S. Eustachia made her final vows in Raliang. Sometime earlier, Fr. Becker had written regarding her that she was very conscientious and observant; combined decisiveness with modesty, love and wisdom. She understood the natives and knew how to deal with them better than the other sisters. The natives followed what she said and were attached to her, even though she didn't give in to them at all. She knew what it meant to live in the missions.

S. Eustachia continued her work in Assam until 1915. After having had to leave the mission with the other sisters, she worked as a nurse at Nagyikikinda in Hungary and with the wounded in Vienna, Austria.

In 1909, S. Eustachia once told the Apostolic Prefect, she had a dream before she entered and understood that she would die before completing the forties' age group. And it did happen that way. S. Eustachia died on her 49<sup>th</sup> birthday, November 3, 1921, in the convent at Meran, South Tyrol. She had been professed for 17 years.

SISTER ANTONIA KREPELT  
of the Queen of the Apostles  
Rome-Assam, December 1908



*Figure 51: S. Antonia Kreppelt*

In 1895, when Mother Mary was in Rome writing about the sisters appointed to a new foundation, she gave a rather accurate description of S. Antonia: “S. Antonia – 27 years old, from Forchheim, diocese Bamberg – final vows 25.05.1894 – healthy here – had typhus etc. in Tivoli – you heard about her long ago. Formerly attended the course for teachers ... Very capable for housework and altogether very talented – knows German well – Italian (and therefore French will be easy) – English – harmonium – wants to be very pious, but it seems she likes to command a lot; always attached and good with me – but if with some sisters who have the same temperament as hers things get difficult. I hope she will do well there.”<sup>185</sup>

Kunigunde was the 13<sup>th</sup> young woman to join our Congregation. She did so on May 11, 1890, at the convent on the Piazza San Francesco in Tivoli. She was born on November 11, 1868. Her parents were Burkhard Kreppelt and his wife Margaretha Stiefler. Other than the fact that Kunigunde helped the Carmelite community at Roermond for one and half years before her entrance, our archives give no information regarding her life at home.

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<sup>185</sup> Mother Mary to Fr. Jordan, SHS 2, 16/1, Letter 59, 1895, APS E 639.

On May 24, 1890, about two weeks after her entrance, Kunigunde began her novitiate and was known from then on as S. Antonia of the Queen of the Apostles. She made her first vows in Tivoli on May 24, 1891, for a period of three years. In May 1892, Mother Mary suggested her name as a possible pioneer for America and, two years later in May 1894, put her name forward for the new mission of Assam.

S. Antonia was to remain in Tivoli, however, until 1895. Some details are known to us about this time. In 1891, she began praying the Office with the first group of sisters to do so. In 1893, she attended Fr. Jordan's name day celebration together with Mother Mary. In January 1894, S. Antonia was given responsibility as procurator and assistant to the superior in Tivoli, and in 1894, she began studies at the newly opened Teacher Training Institute. Her studies were discontinued four months after her final vows as in August 1894, she caught typhus and was very sick. The Teacher Training Institute continued in Rome without her.

A few months later, on May 28, 1895, Mother Mary took S. Antonia with her to the convent on the Via Lungara in Rome. In June, they both attended the first Corpus Christi procession to be held in the Motherhouse of the Society in the Borgo Vecchio. In November 1895, S. Antonia was appointed as superior of the new foundation at Drogens, but it did not go well for long. S. Antonia was replaced as superior and returned to Rome on May 27, 1896.

From July to the end of September 1897, S. Antonia was at home in Bavaria. She returned to Rome on October 1 and in spring of the following year, on March 3, 1898, she was sent to join the community at the Via Maggiore in Tivoli. From there, she went out to nurse the sick in the town.

One year later, on February 20, 1899, Mother Mary brought S. Antonia back to Rome and she left Rome once more for Bavaria on February 27. She went directly from home to Amsterdam, where she boarded the ship for America on March 23, 1899. She arrived in Milwaukee on April 5, and at her final destination, the convent in St. Nazianz, on May 8, 1899. She remained in America until 1908, returning once to Rome as a delegate to the General Chapter of 1905.

In 1908, the newly elected Superior General, Mother Ambrosia Vetter, wrote to the Apostolic Prefect of Assam, Fr. Christophorus Becker, regarding the appointment of S. Antonia as Commissary in Assam, a position of some authority. It indicates that she, too, knew S. Antonia's character and her talents and was hoping that all would be well. She wrote:

“For Assam, we have selected a sister who has great talents, a good religious spirit, good will and energy. She may perhaps in the beginning meet with non-acceptance, even fear and dislike from the sisters. She has been in our Congregation one of the longest. S. Antonia, who formerly made herself felt for a time through sharp criticism and a forceful temperament, but has now, since she is older, become quieter. She has been the superior in Watertown, America, since



1907, and the Commissary there says that the religious spirit is good in the house under her direction. In the early years, there were complaints because of her strictness, but in recent years the sisters are quite content. I think that, if she is met with trust on the part of the sisters, she can be of great use to the mission in Assam. I write this, asking you to be so good as to help the sisters lay aside their prejudice somewhat. S. Antonia speaks English and, with her good talent, will soon be perfect in it; she also knows music, housekeeping, nursing and handwork.”<sup>186</sup>

S. Antonia arrived in Shillong, as Commissary for Assam and superior of the local community, on January 14, 1909. Mother Ambrosia’s hopes that she would do well in Assam, were to be disappointed. S. Antonia’s good intentions were over-shadowed by her domineering and independent way of acting, and she was the cause of dissatisfaction among the sisters, priests and local people.

S. Antonia resigned as superior of the community in Shillong, though not as Commissary, and left Shillong on January 8, 1910, intending to prepare for a new foundation at Dibrugarh. This did not work out and, finally, she returned to Shillong. From there, after a disagreement with the Apostolic Prefect, she left Assam and went to Rome.

S. Antonia was transferred from Rome to Austria and eventually, at the age of 45 years, she left our Congregation in Vienna- Hacking on May 15, 1913. She had been a professed member of the Congregation for 22 years.

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<sup>186</sup> Mother Ambrosia Vetter to Fr. Christophorus Becker, 15.08.1908 – ASDS.

SISTER GEBHARDA DIETMANN  
of the Presentation of Mary  
Rome-Assam, December 1908



*Figure 52: S. Gebharda Dietmann*

Ottilia Dietmann was born on June 16, 1876, as the youngest of thirteen children. The family home was at Großlangheim near Kitzingen, in the diocese of Würzburg, Bavaria. Her father, Adam Dietmann, died at the age of 34, when Ottilia was 3 years old. Her mother, Margaretha Dietmann, née Häfer, died at the age of 56 years. After her mother's death, Ottilia went into domestic service and, at the time of her entrance, had been working for five and a half years. When she applied to enter our Congregation, Ottilia informed Fr. Jordan that she had wanted to enter religious life for a long time, but had not been able to do so before, and that she could not bring much with her, though she had earned enough money for necessary things, but nothing more.

Ottilia had companions on the way to Rome. The entry in Mother Mary's diary for September 25, 1897, reads: "Four postulants from Großlangheim near Würzburg arrived today: ... Ottilia Dietmann (all in their twenty's, healthy, strong, and pious – let us hope for efficiency)."<sup>187</sup> They were welcomed into the community of the house at the Via Lungara in Rome. Ottilia was the 157<sup>th</sup> candidate to enter our Congregation.

Ottilia's investment took place in Tivoli on February 20, 1898. As neither Fr. Jordan nor the superior of the Society's house in Tivoli were available, the Bishop of Tivoli agreed to officiate at the ceremony to be held in the little chapel of St. Anthony at the convent on the Via

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<sup>187</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 3, page 40/1897.

Maggiore. Mother Mary took the four postulants from Würzburg to see the Bishop on 19.02.1898, the day before the ceremony.

Ottilia, now S. Gebharda of the Presentation of Mary, spent her novitiate in the house on the Via Maggiore and, one year after investment, made her first vows in the same chapel of St. Anthony. This time, Fr. Barnabas, the superior in Tivoli, officiated at the ceremony on February 19, 1899.

Just over one month later, S. Gebharda left the Via Maggiore with the rest of the community and moved into the newly rented house in Tivoli: Piazza Colonna, 1. She stayed there for four months.

On July 3, 1899, Mother Mary went to Tivoli and brought S. Gebharda and two other sisters back with her to Rome. a new foundation was being planned in Austria, and S. Gebharda was appointed to go there. Before leaving, she renewed her vows in the Via Lungara, Rome, in the presence of Fr. Jordan, on November 21, 1899.

On November 26, S. Gebharda and six other sisters left Rome for their new apostolic work at the hospital in Vienna-Feldgasse. Mother Mary wrote a description of her at around that time: “Sister Gebharda – about 24 years (Würzburg) – cheerful, agreeable and pious – good – well-built – for nursing.”<sup>188</sup> S. Gebharda renewed her vows in Vienna on February 2, 1905. She did prove to be an excellent nurse and was superior of the community in Vienna for a number of years.

In March 1907, S. Gebharda travelled to Rome. She made retreat there and met Mother Mary for the last time. There was need of a nurse in Assam; S. Gebharda was appointed and, toward the end of 1908, made preparations for the trip. She arrived in Shillong on January 14, 1909, and worked quietly and efficiently there in the apostolate of nursing until she had to leave in 1915.

On her return to Europe, S. Gebharda was assigned to Hungary where she still worked for 20 years and served as superior in Nagykikinda and Gödöllő. On February 4, 1935, S. Gebharda died in Budapest, Hungary, at the age of 59 years.

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<sup>188</sup> Mother Mary to Fr. Jordan, SHS 2.16/1, letter 111, 1899; APS E 683.

SISTER INNOCENZA STAHL  
of the Queen of the Apostles  
To Assam, January 1912



*Figure 53: S. Innocenza Stahl*

Elisabeth Stahl was born at Lengfeld near Würzburg, Bavaria, on October 14, 1876. Her parents were Hieronymus Stahl, a farmer, and Margarethe Stahl, née Rummel. At the time of her entrance they were, respectively, 78 and 70 years old.

Our Congregation was fourteen years old when Elisabeth (Elise) joined it as the 202<sup>nd</sup> young woman to enter. She lived at the convent on the Via Lungara in Rome from May 6 to November 2, 1902, and was invested there as S. Innocenza of the Queen of the Apostles on November 2, 1902. That same day she was taken to Tivoli by Mother Mary to begin her novitiate in the house on the Piazza Colonna.

After making her first vows in Tivoli one year later, on November 3, 1903, S. Innocenza studied at the Congregation's Teacher Training Institute in Rome and renewed her vows in the chapel of the Salita Sant'Onofrio, Rome, on November 1, 1904, in the presence of Mother Mary and Fr. Jordan.

Immediately afterwards she was getting ready to leave for the United States of America. On November 3, 1904, Mother Mary wrote in her diary: "With much effort and dedication, already on November 3, eleven Sisters were ready and left (three of them for another foundation in America). They boarded the ship "Hohenzollern."<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 3, page 105/1904.

S. Innocenza's own destination in the USA was Bloomer, described by Mother Mary as a "lovely town, where the Sisters will be able to do much good."<sup>190</sup> Once there, S. Innocenza studied to improve her own qualifications and taught in the school. She renewed her vows in Bloomer in 1905 and 1906. When it was time for her final vows in 1909, S. Innocenza wrote to her superior general in Rome, asking for permission to make them. She made her perpetual profession in Almena on November 4, 1909.

In 1912, S. Innocenza went to Assam but due to the outbreak of war, her stay was not a long one. She arrived in Shillong on February 10, 1912. She shared in the celebration for the opening of the new school in 1913 and taught there for further two years until she had to leave with the other sisters in 1915.

S. Innocenza was 40 years old when she left Assam and she lived to be more than 90. In the intervening years, she served in various communities and countries – Germany, China, South Tyrol, Italy and, finally, at the International Motherhouse of the Congregation in Rome. She held positions of responsibility for most of her religious life, as superior in several houses and as novice mistress in Meran and Pingsdorf. As a delegate of the German Province, at the General Chapter of 1933, she was elected to the General Council as the 2<sup>nd</sup> General Councillor, an office which she held until 1947. In addition to this, she was superior of the motherhouse community from 1935 to 1947.

At the age of 79, S. Innocenza took up a new service – caring for the aged sister, S. Germana, which she did with love and apostolic care until the sister's death in 1961. S. Innocenza herself remained quite active and participated fully in community life until, after a short illness, she died at the age of 92 in Rome on April 19, 1968.

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<sup>190</sup> Mother Mary, Diary, SHS 2.13, Book 3, page 107/1904.

SISTER PRISCILLA STADLER  
of the Visitation of Mary  
To Assam, January 1912



*Figure 54: S. Priscilla Stadler*

Walburga Stadler grew up, as the youngest of five children, at Sulzdorf, near Donauwörth, diocese of Eichstätt, where she had been born on December 24, 1889. After leaving school, she helped her parents, Joseph Stadler and Margaretha, née Rössner, on the family farm. She did this until she entered the convent, except for the three years she was employed by others in the same type of work.

On December 13, 1909, two years after the death of Mother Mary, Walburga arrived at the convent on the Salita Sant'Onofrio in Rome. She was twenty years old. Fr. Jordan gave her the habit and the name, S. Priscilla of the Visitation of Mary, on July 10, 1910. One year later, on July 10, 1911 – not long before our Congregation received its pontifical approval on August 18, 1911 – she made her first vows in the presence of Fr. Jordan.

After a year, while she was assigned to nursing in Vienna, she was called to go to the mission in Assam. She and S. Innocenza travelled together to their mission and came to Shillong on February 10, 1912. There they parted and S. Priscilla went on to Raliang, where she arrived on February 17.

She renewed her vows in Raliang on July 10, 1912, and on the same date in the following two years. In 1914, S. Ignatia gave the report: “I am very happy about her. She is a great help to us ... very zealous and diligent in every respect.”<sup>191</sup>

Like the other sisters, S. Priscilla had to return to Europe in 1915 and she made her final vows in Vienna, Austria, on July 10, 1917. She worked in various communities in Austria, Belgium and Germany, but her longing for the missions did not leave her.

When S. Innocenza was assigned to the China mission in 1925, S. Priscilla wrote to the superior general, hoping to be assigned there as well. “Reverend Mother can determine that I will do the will of God always. ... No-one can take my mission vocation away from me.”<sup>192</sup> However her wish was not fulfilled and she consoled herself with the thoughts, which she expressed in a second letter: “Let the will of God happen even if it is painful! My mission is here with the youth in Germany now. ... I will pray all the more for the pagans.”<sup>193</sup>

S. Priscilla remained in Germany and died in the convent at Börwang on April 26, 1967, at the age of 78 years.

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<sup>191</sup> Testimonials from S. Ignatia, 1914, Renewal of Vows, ASDS – Sisters’ records.

<sup>192</sup> S. Priscilla to the General Superior, Mother Liboria Hansknecht, on 06.01.1925.

<sup>193</sup> S. Priscilla to Mother Liboria Hansknecht, on 15.03.1925, ASDS Sisters’ records.

These were the last two sisters to go to the mission of Assam before the Salvatorians had to leave in 1915.

Both of them entered our Congregation within a week of each other in the autumn of 1911 at the Salita Sant'Onofrio in Rome. They began their novitiate on the same day, January 3, 1912, and both received the title 'of the Child Jesus' after their religious name. They made their first vows at the conclusion of their novitiate in Meran on January 3, 1913, and then received their apostolic assignments. S. Theobalda remained in Meran and S. Bertilla went to Austria. During this time, they both renewed their vows, on the same day January 3, 1914, but this time in different places.

They met again soon afterwards, in order to go together to the mission of Assam. From the chronicles we get to know that:

“On February 25, two of our sisters, namely Sister Bertilla Fotschki ... and Sister Theobalda Schröder left from Triest on the Austrian steamship ‘Graz’, in order to go to India, to the mission of Assam, where more missionaries had been wanted for a long time. Just as both sisters were courageous and happily travelling to the “land of their longing,” as they have written to Reverend Mother as farewell from the port of Triest, so we hope that the dear Lord grant them a safe arrival there and a grace-filled mission work for his glory, and for the good of our holy religion.”<sup>194</sup>

As far as we know, they were both assigned to the mission of Shillong. S. Theobalda wrote to Rome from Shillong on January 10, 1915, giving the information that she and S. Bertilla had made retreat in September and a three-day preparation for their renewal of vows in Shillong on January 3, 1915. Fr. Christophorus Becker, the Apostolic Prefect, had officiated at the ceremony. They were in Shillong later that year and were repatriated to Europe with the other sisters. Nothing further is known at present regarding the life and work of Sisters Theobalda and Bertilla in Assam, as very little material has been collected so far regarding these last few years of Salvatorian life and work in this mission.

The following details concern the life of these last two Assam missionaries before and after their service in Assam.

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<sup>194</sup> Salvatorianische Mitteilungen 1914, No. 5, page 3.



SISTER THEOBALDA SCHRÖDER  
of the Child Jesus  
To Assam, February 1914



*Figure 55: S. Theobalda Schröder*

Josephine Schröder was born on April 30, 1890, in a German town which, over the years, has been blessed by many Salvatorian vocations: Sundern, in the diocese of Paderborn, Westphalia. Her mother was named Josephine, née Schulte, and her father was a factory worker, Fritz Schröder.

After leaving the elementary school, which she attended in Sundern, Josephine went into domestic service and, at some point, shared with S. Theresia Becker, SDS, her long-standing desire to enter a missionary congregation. Encouraged by Theresia's assurance that poverty was no hindrance to entrance into the Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Savior, Josephine made her application and was accepted. She was still in domestic service and her employer made difficulties about releasing her in time to travel to Rome with S. Theresia. Josephine arrived at the Salita Sant'Onofrio on September 27, 1911, and – no doubt – welcomed Albertine, the future S. Bertilla, when she entered there a few days after her.

In February 1914, Josephine – by then called S. Theobalda – went to the Mission of Assam, where she had lived and worked for barely two years, and had to return together with the other sisters.

After that, her assignments took her to Austria, Belgium and Germany. For the last 17 years of her life, S. Theobalda lived in Berlin-Waidmannslust and worked there in the laundry and garden.

Innumerable were the works of charity she did for her Sisters in spite of her many physical sufferings.

She was nearly 70, when she became ill and had to be taken to the hospital “West-Sanatorium”, where our Sisters worked. Two days later, on March 9, 1960, she died there. She had been professed for 49 years and had been the 352<sup>nd</sup> candidate to enter.

## SISTER BERTILLA FOTSCHKI

of the Child Jesus

To Assam, February 1914

Albertine Fotschki was born at Koppen, diocese of Ermland, East Prussia, on November 21, 1877. Her mother, Anna Geisler, had one child by her first marriage; Albertine was one of the five children born of her second marriage to Johann Fotschki. Albertine's father was a labourer and died in 1909, two years before her entrance into our Congregation.

After leaving school, Albertine lived in Germany, Belgium and Italy, doing house and farm work and nursing. She came to the house on the Salita Sant'Onofrio from Germany and entered there on October 2, 1911, just a few days after the 21 year old Josephine Schröder, who was to be her future companion in Assam. Albertine herself was 33 years old when she entered as our 354<sup>th</sup> candidate and, in those days, this required a dispensation from the Holy See. Mother Ambrosia Vetter and Fr. Pancratius Pfeiffer took care of this formality for her. She began her novitiate and made vows in our Congregation as S. Bertilla of the Child Jesus.

When S. Bertilla and the other sisters had to leave Assam in 1915, S. Bertilla returned to Austria. She was a dependable religious and a good nurse and she continued her nursing in Vienna. On January 3, 1919, she made her final vows in Vienna- Hacking.

Twenty-five years later, while the Second World War was in progress, S. Bertilla died in Vienna-Hacking at the age of 67 years on April 5, 1944.

# The Call to Dedicated Missionary Life among Young Synteng Women

One of the beautiful initiatives of the missionaries in Raliang was to correspond to the longing of young women to consecrate their lives to God and dedicate their strength and energies to the work of the mission. It does speak of the witness of faith and selfless zeal of our sisters which, in spite of human weakness and limitation, attracted young persons, not only to the church but also to a dedicated life according to the evangelical counsels. The following pages try to trace the development of the Auxiliary Sisters by quoting from documents presently available to us.

We found the first mention of such an initiative in S. Eustachia's letter to Mother May written on March 17, 1907:

“I am just in the act of sewing a Third Order dress for one of our older girls. Rev. Father Prefect will probably introduce with her the Third Order in this area. May she attract many to follow her. a second girl from the village shares this desire with her; she was previously with us as an orphan girl ...”<sup>195</sup>

Sister Scholastica also writes about it to Mother Mary on April 5, 1907:

“Here, some young girls want to remain virgins, become some kind of sisters, may be a Third Order with a distinctive dress.”<sup>196</sup>

Two days previously, Sister had written to Father Becker:

“We shall send the dress along with Rev. Father. Kindly let us know what you would like to be changed. It is now meant for our cook; then there are two other girls who are of good will and would like to follow within a few months. Should we let all three wait a while yet? Would it be easier for Your Reverence to be free around Pentecost? How should we do it?”

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<sup>195</sup> S. Eustachia to Mother Mary, 17.03.1907, ASDS, Assam, Raliang.

<sup>196</sup> S. Scholastica to Mother Mary, 05.04.1907, ASDS, Assam, Raliang.



*Figure 56: Young Synteng women missionaries*

I have reflected on a number of things and would like to hear your opinion. Of course, we only make plans which may end up being castles in the air. Will the girls (sisters) be given new names? One could read with them something from the Imitation of Christ daily and make some mediation. Maybe, let them make only the vow of chastity for the time being. When we leave for retreat in fall, they could also come along, and during our 10 days retreat, a Rev. Father could give them a three-day retreat in Khasi. I think we reach more with them if we start slowly and are not too strict in the beginning, until they have grown into it a bit. We would also like to take them along to Shillong, so that the young girls there see them and, with God's grace follow them in time... Rev. Fr. Bernardin can also discuss all this with you...."<sup>197</sup>

Father Becker responds to S. Scholastica on April 15, 1907:

“Father Bernardin brought me your letter to Jowai. He will have told you about the dress. It is better not to bring in too much that is foreign; therefore, instead of a hood, the simple veil worn by the Khasi women, which really looks quite good, too. The girls have to be regarded at first only as a kind of (as an association of) pious women who dedicate themselves to the work of the mission. For the beginning it is good to be careful. We shall then see how everything develops in time.

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<sup>197</sup> S. Scholastica to Fr. Becker, 03.04.1907, Archive of the Archdiocese of Shillong, Assam 1906-1909; ASDS, Assam, Raliang.

Regarding the spiritual exercises, daily Holy Mass, the rosary, spiritual reading and a visit to the Blessed Sacrament suffice entirely. They should make the vow of Chastity only for one year; only after a longer probation and not before the completed 25<sup>th</sup> year of life could they be permitted to make it for life.

As to retreat, we could see about that later. Take particular care that those who join this association of pious (dedicated) women are very obedient and that they will be trained for the various works.

Do not forget that you have to call down God's blessings upon this undertaking through the cross and through prayer."<sup>198</sup>

On May 23, 1907, Sister Scholastica writes to Mother Mary:

"It is very encouraging to know, dear Reverend Mother, that you are rejoicing with us that some native girls wish to live as virgins. But, how can this be considered a completed fact, from which we can expect help? This is just a first thought which, when it became known, met with opposition everywhere (from parents and relatives). Even if they have good will and help with the work one has to consider that they do not have by far sufficient spiritual understanding for religious life. For this very reason, in order to do a good job in supervising and instructing each of the various sections (orphans, girls, i.e. young women, the sick, schools, etc.), both as to the life and the work, we would need sufficient sisters if something good is to come of it. ...

If something develops, these girls will for the time being only be called 'Virgins' similar to the China-mission; ... only after years will they be able to become sisters. It is necessary here to do it like that; we can only proceed slowly. ..."<sup>199</sup>

S. Scholastica S.D.S.

On August 5, 1907, also the Commissary, S. Ignatia, informs Mother Mary from Shillong that a young girl in Raliang wishes to dedicate herself in virginity. However, on October 3, 1907, Father Becker writes to Father Bonaventura Lüthen that it is about 10 years too early to speak of admitting 'Third Order Sisters'; an attempt to do so in Raliang, made half a year previously, has not worked out.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> S. Scholastica to Fr. Becker, 15.04.1907, Archive of the Archdiocese of Shillong, Assam 1906-1909; ASDS, Assam, Raliang.

<sup>199</sup> S. Scholastica to Mother Mary, 23.05.1907, ASDS, Assam, Raliang.

<sup>200</sup> Fr. Becker to Fr. Bonaventura Lüthen, Archive of the Archdiocese of Shillong, Assam 1906-1909, ASDS.

About four and half years later, the Salvatorian publication ‘Salvatorianische Mitteilungen’ recounts the important event:

“The First Fruits of Indigenous Sisters of our Mission

December 17, 1911, was a beautiful feastday for the mission station of Raliang. Through God’s grace, three of our orphan girls have reached the decision to consecrate themselves to the Lord in the service of the mission. For a long time it had been a great desire of ours to have such a help, for native sisters understand the customs and language of their people best and therefore easily find access everywhere.

Before their reception, the three candidates made a three-day retreat. These were the first spiritual exercises they ever made in their life, and it was very edifying to see their earnestness. The Apostolic Prefect made the two days’ journey from the main station of Shillong especially in order to conduct the ceremony.

At 09.00 on Sunday morning, before High Mass, in the presence of all the faithful, the candidates were accompanied to the sanctuary by our Sister Superior and by two members of the Young Women’s Association, one of whom carried the banner of the Immaculate Conception. a decorated kneeler was prepared for them there and on a small table lay the simple brown cotton dresses, the small crosses to be worn around the neck and the rosaries to be worn on the belt. a light brown cloth is worn as a veil. After the singing of the Veni Creator, each received the dress which had been blessed, and went to the sacristy to change. The people were quite excited to see how their daughters would look, and you could hear some whispers: “*Itysmad Shibun* – oh, how beautiful! The Young Women’s Association, present in uniform, all received Holy Communion, together with the three chosen ones. At the end of the service, the Te Deum was sung. The choir was directed by an excellent organist, Father Corbinian Bohnheim, who also was present for the celebration.

The three fortunate ones, who left the church after thanksgiving with faces shining for joy, were being awaited impatiently by the crowd of children and adults who inspected them from head to toe. There were some who said: ‘We thank the Lord who has brought such a blessing to our area. God grant that my children, too, will choose this life.’ That very day, one of our orphans went to the Apostolic Prefect and asked to be accepted as a candidate. We have hope that others, too, will decide to take this step. ...”<sup>201</sup>

And, who were the three native sisters? An article in the ‘Salvatorian News’ of 1912 gives us some details:

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<sup>201</sup> Salvatorianische Mitteilungen 1912, No.5, page 84.

“**Anna**, the senior of the sisters, who has laid the foundation for this work through her perseverance in the many difficulties put in her way by relatives, has been a candidate for three years already. She was finally able to find two companions and so see her long-standing desire fulfilled. As she recounts, this desire had already been awakened in her when she was still at school through Rev. Father Thaddäus Hofmann, who died eight years ago. She is doing an excellent service when visiting the sick, as she is highly esteemed by the pagans in the surroundings, due to her descent from a chief’s family. Also because of this, other young girls are attracted to follow her.

“**Karolina**, the youngest of these new sisters, is truly a favoured child of God. Two years ago, she came to us as pagan, together with her three younger sisters, offered to us by her mother for money.

We bought the three small ones for a little sum of money; we did not have more, otherwise we would also have kept the bigger one. For her, the mother asked 70 Mk, as she was already able to work. Luckily, she was bought by Protestants in the neighbourhood, elderly people who like us very much. She used to come to us to see her sisters. Once she asked us to buy her out, so that she could become Catholic. a noble benefactor from Germany was generous enough to send us the necessary sum of money immediately. There was no problem negotiating with the neighbour.

When we had Karolina with us, a child who had grown up neglected and without discipline and instruction, we had quite some difficulty with her because of her unruly manner. Nevertheless she was very zealous in preparing for baptism and afterwards for the reception of the sacraments of reconciliation and the Eucharist. She was noticeably changed after her first Holy Communion and became, so-to-say, the guardian angel of her younger sisters. ... The grace of God has visibly worked in Karolina. Following discreet encouragement, she is presently preparing for activity in the school, something for which she is very gifted. May she persevere!”

“The third, **Barbara**, was baptised four years ago in St. Xavier, one of our outstations, where we go on pilgrimage with the orphan girls every year on December 3, to celebrate the feast of St. Francis Xavier. On this occasion, we visit the sick in their huts. On one of these visits, we found a seriously ill, grown-up pagan girl. We consoled her and gave her the necessary assistance before returning home. On the next day, the feast of St. Barbara, a Christian from that village came to the Rev. Father and asked him to go with him since the sick girl desired to receive baptism. This was then given her. Her younger sister came to us at the death of their mother, while Barbara remained with her relatives until, two years ago, she again fell ill.



Having recovered, she decided to ask to be admitted by us. She is very calm and unassuming and makes herself very useful in kitchen and garden.”<sup>202</sup>

An article by S. Eustachia SDS, published in the ‘Missionär’ under the title ‘Vocation to Religious Life among the Khasis’ tells more about these native sisters:

“Some native vocations originated from one of our mission stations. ...

For the time being, they are not admitted to the holy vows until they have proved themselves for a number of years. They are a great support to the missionary sisters in the school, in visiting the sick and in the domestic work, and a great help to the missionary priest as well, since they know the customs of the people best and therefore facilitate the work of conversion. In the church, too, they give the best example to the faithful. They receive Holy Communion daily and also encourage others to do so. They take part in the singing of the choir, lead the prayer of the rosary and supervise the school children who have their place in the benches in front of them.

Now Anna is the pride of her family, as together with a companion she is the only support of the missionary, a Belgian Jesuit, who took responsibility of the mission station when we, as German citizens, had to leave the country. She is responsible to care for the church, the sacristy, the kitchen and garden, to visit the sick and, in case of need, to administer the sacrament of baptism.”<sup>203</sup>

We do not know, as yet, anything about the further development of this small group of native missionaries after our German Sisters had to leave Assam in 1915.

We cannot but thank God enough for the marvels he works in human hearts!

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<sup>202</sup> Salvatorianische Mitteilungen 1912, No.5, page 84.

<sup>203</sup> “Vocation to religious life among Khasis “ from S. Eustachia Bauer in Missionär, 1921, Nr. 8, page 156.

**Our whole life is apostolic.  
It is the expression of Christ,  
urging us to spend ourselves,  
like the apostles  
that others may have life.**

Rule of Life, article 29

## Part III - The New Beginning in India, 1984



Figure 57: India: States and Union Territories

Today, after 27 years of New Start in India, our sisters work in four southern states of India, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu and in the first mission area of our Congregation, Meghalaya.

## A Dream Becomes a Reality

The first edition of the book about the Salvatorian Sisters in northeast India from 1994 concludes with the report about the vocation of Synteng-Women to the consecrated life in the mission. It was the dream of the first sisters that one day native women would become enthusiastic about the mission work and join them. The pioneers were however realistic enough to know that they could reach this goal only gradually under those contemporary circumstances.

Apart from the need for survival and the overburden of daily work, there was a shortage of sisters, who could have taken over this task of the religious formation.<sup>204</sup> Moreover, in pagan surroundings, it would have been unimaginable to have an understanding of religious life. How great was then the joy with the “investment” ceremony of the three orphan girls in the mission station of Raliang who decided to offer themselves to God in the service of the mission on 17 December 1911, as described in the report. And how sad then was the farewell, which was suddenly enforced by the outbreak of the war, when the sisters had to leave Assam in November, 1915. It witnessed an unshakable trust in God, when S. Scholastica could write to Mother Ambrosia after this bitter experience: “Let’s put everything into God’s hands. He knows why this happens. So many prayers were said and still it happened; so it must be God’s will.”<sup>205</sup>

The letters which the missionary sisters received from the Christians of the so called abandoned work territory, confirm how much the sisters were treasured and loved. It should be repeated here what S. Scholastica writes about Assam after her return: “Now more often letters come from our Christians, children, friends, in which they narrate, how much they have cried for us, and how much they long for our return. They want to pray to God and beg him till he hears them and send us again to them. May God keep the mission in which we were working over 25 years under his mighty protection and after the desired peace allow them to experience new blossoming.”<sup>206</sup>

And this “new blossoming” was the new beginning in India, for which the grace-filled foundation was laid by the pioneers a hundred years ago.

Meanwhile today’s Salvatorians are privileged to be happy about the growing region in India. They have returned to their first mission country, where their pioneers with great challenges and difficulties, in poorest conditions, with self-sacrifice and “sweat built the church”. a young missionary, S. Cincy Manavalan from India writes about these true witnesses of the Gospel:

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<sup>204</sup> S. Scholastica to M. Mary, 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 1907.

<sup>205</sup> S. Scholastica to M. Ambrosia, 18.11.1915, Missionär, 1916, No. 2, page 59.

<sup>206</sup> Letter of S. Scholastica, Missionär, 1916, No. 10, page 254.

“Though it was a great loss for the society at that time, we are happy to see the growth of the church, where Jesus our Saviour is known and, where also people remember the Salvatorians who brought Jesus to them. From the time we heard and read about our pioneers, it was our great dream to come back to our homeland. And now the historical moment has become reality”.<sup>207</sup>

## New Beginning in India<sup>208</sup>

The adventurous mission reports and the heroic and inspirational life and work of our pioneers, who began their mission in Northeast India more than hundred years ago, were always in the thinking of the congregation. The general administration tried to find ways and means to make a new start.

In April 1973, Rev. Mother Demetria Lang, Mother General of the Salvatorian Sisters, sent her councillors S. Bonaventura Fürhacker and S. Adelinde Krukenmeyer to Kerala, India, with the intention of finding a possibility of how and where the second start could take place. In those days it was not possible to get visas for the foreign sisters. So the thought of opening a convent was not realised.<sup>209</sup>

In the year 1982 another attempt was made by the then General Superior, S. Irmtraud Forster and her team. They sent S. Sylvia Vanek<sup>210</sup> to India in order to find out the possibility of a new start.<sup>211</sup> On January 6, 1982 S. Sylvia arrived in Cochin, Kerala, the most southern state in India.

Accompanied by S. Sebamalai Pieris,<sup>212</sup> she visited besides Kerala, the states of Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Maharashtra (Bombay), Delhi, West Bengal (Calcutta) and Meghalaya.<sup>213</sup> Accompanied by S. Celine Fernando<sup>214</sup>, she travelled further to Guntur in Andhra Pradesh. S. Sylvia spent six months in India, travelled far and wide, north, south, east and west, she came into contact with many people, including bishops, priests and religious, and gained experience and collected valuable information, which were useful for the future foundation. She left India on 13<sup>th</sup> June, 1982 and returned to Rome via Sri Lanka with invitations from four Indian bishops.<sup>215</sup> On 12<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> S. Cincy Manavalan, SDS, Article in *Informationes*, September 2003, page 2/3.

<sup>208</sup> Article of S. Anna Mary Bezawada, SDS, July 2009.

<sup>209</sup> ASDS - Box 144, 69-74, J 16 – No 5, page 4.

<sup>210</sup> An Austrian Salvatorian who worked in Miri, Malaysia, till the mission closed down in 1981.

<sup>211</sup> ASDS - Box 144, General Council Meeting 18.12.1981.

<sup>212</sup> a Salvatorian from Sri Lanka, who was studying theology at that time in Goa, India.

<sup>213</sup> Silver Jubilee Souvenir, India 2009, page 28.

<sup>214</sup> a Salvatorian from Sri Lanka, who was studying general nursing in Bangalore, India

<sup>215</sup> + Bishop Arul Das James, Ooty (Tamil Nadu), + Kardinal Antony Padiyara, Chengamacherry, (Kerala), Bishop Mariadas Kagithapu, Guntur, (Andhra Pradesh) and Bishop Symphorium Keeprath, Jullandar (Punjab).

August 1982 she presented her report on the experience to the Generalate. Now the general administration could plan further and undertake the necessary and concrete steps.

Sr. Irmtraud Forster with her administrative team accepted the invitation of the Archbishop Antony Padiyara, the archbishop of the Syro-Malabar archdiocese of Changanacherry, Kerala, who was already known to the Salvatorian Sisters at Salvator Mundi, Rome. S. Sylvia was entrusted the task of the new beginning. On 14<sup>th</sup> January, 1984 she arrived in Cochin, Kerala. In the beginning she stayed with the sisters of the Destitute in Chethipuzha, Kerala. In March 1984 S. Selvarani Fernandopulle<sup>216</sup> joined her.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1984 the two sisters rented a vacant house with six rooms in the parish Villoomni.<sup>217</sup> This house was originally meant for the elderly priests from the Syro-Malabar diocese of Chenganacherry, Kerala. Archbishop Antony Padiyara, who became later the Cardinal, welcomed the sisters heartily. S. Sylvia then was appointed as the first missioncoordinator.<sup>218</sup>



*Figure 58: The first house in Villoomni*

Everything was new for both sisters: new culture, new surroundings, the language and new people. In spite of it they adjusted quickly and managed even to do vocation promotion with

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<sup>216</sup> a Salvatorian Sister from Sri Lanka.

<sup>217</sup> ASDS, B 1415.1.

<sup>218</sup> ASDS, B 1410.1.

the minimum knowledge of the local language Malayalam. They were supported by local sisters and priests. Already on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1984, on the birthday of our Founder Father Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan the first group of young women joined the Congregation as candidates. Two other candidates came from the state of Andhra Pradesh two days later. They were altogether twelve, and they were from two different states, namely Andhra Pradesh and Kerala with two different languages: Telugu and Malayalam. It was the major concern of the sisters from the very beginning to have the candidates from different states, and from different cultural and social backgrounds, so that they would learn to live together in mutual respect. It was fortunate that the Salvatorian missionaries, too, came from different countries: Austria, Germany, Ireland, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and the USA. They were great examples for the candidates with their simplicity and universality. The Salvatorian community with its members from various cultures, nations and languages in this part of the world was a true witness of the charism and spirituality of our founder Father Jordan and Mother Mary of the Apostles.

More and more young women joined the Salvatorian community. But they were not able to communicate, as the candidates knew little English. So the English classes were of priority. In this foreign language they had the instructions about religious life, about the Salvatorian charism, spirituality, prayer life and community life.

It was a problem to get a visa for the foreign sisters. Every three or six months they needed to leave India and apply anew. Due to this fact there was always an uncertainty if the sisters were allowed to come back to India. The Generalate had to find the sisters who could be sent to India. Under these conditions it was impossible to provide the young women the wholistic formation and to guide them into the Salvatorian spirituality continuously. Therefore, the Generalate decided in the year 1985<sup>219</sup> to send the candidates to Vienna for their religious formation. Thus, the first group of candidates arrived in Vienna on 27<sup>th</sup> August 1985.

The Austrian province under the leadership of S. Petra Weiss was ready to accept the young women from India, Congo, Malaysia, Philippines, and to provide them the religious formation. The candidates from Belgium, Germany, Poland, and South Tyrol also joined them. They were guided by S. Amata Rindler and S. Sylvia Vanek. The Novice Mistress was S. Bonaventura Fürhacker and her assistant was S. Rita Krol.

It was a great challenge especially for the candidates from Asia and Africa. They simply were in need of more time to get to know the culture, and to get used to the cold climate, to learn a new language, German, to get used to the new food and to learn to live together with various nationalities. They stayed about 3 – 6 years in Austria. The candidates who were kept waiting for the official entrance into the candidature were given a chance to do some skill training

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<sup>219</sup> ASDS, Box 16.

which would help them in the future, e.g. family care or typewriting. The opportunities were given to the novices as well to gain an authentic view of the Salvatorian life. They were sent to various communities in Austria, Germany, and South Tyrol to take part in community life and to collect experience. As part of the novitiate programme, the young women were permitted to visit the important Salvatorian places, which are connected to the family, birth, life, mission and foundation of Fr. Jordan and Mother Mary. So they visited the places e.g. Gurtweil, Myllendonk, Neuwerk, Steinfeld, Passau, Horrem und Freiburg in Germany; Fribourg and Tifers in Switzerland, Belgium and Holland, the Motherhouse of the Salvatorian Fathers and the Motherhouse of the Salvatorian Sisters in Rome. It not only increased the knowledge but also brought them closer to the Salvatorian treasure and let them experience the spirituality of the founders.

The international Salvatorian formation centre in Vienna was for the province and for the young women a blessing, and at the same time a challenge. The young women could experience the sisters in community prayer, in the work and in the community, to provide a deep experience, which they would not get in their countries. The province was happy to experience the richness of various cultures and to prepare these young people who would be the future of the Congregation in other countries. Finally, they all could experience the authentic Salvatorian spirit of universality.

Back to India, S. Sylvia was reappointed as the Mission coordinator on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1988. She was supported by the sisters from various countries.

It was for India a joyful event when the first Indian novices made their first profession in Hacking, Vienna, Austria.<sup>220</sup> In 1989 the first sisters returned to India from Vienna. From this moment onwards the Indian mission increased gradually with members. It was a continuous welcome and farewell of members. The new candidates were brought to Vienna and they returned to India as Sisters. It was a visible sign of growth of the Indian unit, which was connected with a lot of challenges, e.g. readjustment to one's own culture, own language and own people.

A bigger house was needed. In 1989 the house with six rooms, in which the sisters had lived till then, and one acre of surrounding area, was bought from the diocese of Changanacherry. From the family of Thururthumaly the sisters bought another five acres of rubber plantation adjacent to the existing land.<sup>221</sup> Thus the Salvatorian sisters have now a bigger piece of land. The foundation stone was laid on 12.08.1990 by the Archbishop of Changanacherry, Joseph Powathil.

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<sup>220</sup> S Lilly Kurien and S. Mariyambika Philip.

<sup>221</sup> ASDS, Box 1160, 1 – 6.



Sr. Irmtraud opted to go to India and support the mission after her term of office as general superior. On 13.10.1990 she arrived in India with the second group of sisters from Vienna. S. Syliva was the main Sister in-charge of the mission and S. Irmtraud was the Junior mistress. The sisters from Sri Lanka guided the candidates together with the Indian sisters.

Meanwhile a house was built. The Archbishop Joseph Powathil inaugurated the convent during the holy mass on 16.06.1991. The candidates lived in the old house and the sisters shifted to the new house, which was named as “sayujya”.<sup>222</sup>



*Figure 59: The Regional House in Villoonni*

Vocation promotion was another priority in view of the mission work. The young sisters were sent to various studies and necessary training.

It was not always possible to send the candidates to Vienna for their formation. S. Jean Schafer, the then General Superior with her administrative team took the decision to put up the Asian formation centre in Sri Lanka for those countries which did not have their own formation centres. The region was ready to take up this task, and to provide formation to the candidates from Malaysia, Philippines and India.

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<sup>222</sup> Sayujya means in the ancient language Sanscrit ‘fulfillment’.

From 1992 onwards the Indian candidates were sent to Sri Lanka. This helped the young Asian Salvatorians in mutual enrichment and an exchange of Asian cultural and religious perspectives.

Sr. Rani Fernando was the Novice Mistress and S. Lilly Kurian from India was sent to Sri Lanka to gain experience in the field of novitiate formation.

Altogether during the years 1985-1994<sup>223</sup> seventeen Indian sisters received their initial and ongoing formation as candidates, novices and junior sisters in Vienna. Thirteen sisters completed their novitiate in Sri Lanka from 1992-1998.<sup>224</sup>

The sisters were gradually prepared to take over the responsibilities. After a reflection regarding the needs of the society it was decided to start an “Opportunity Training Centre” in Villooni for the mentally and physically challenged. On 24<sup>th</sup> October 1994 the school started with three children.<sup>225</sup>

Sr. Lucy was given the task to care for and train the children. At the beginning the parents were not ready to send the children to the school as they believed that it was a shame and curse to have such children. First the sisters had to motivate the parents to accept their children. The first apostolate was to serve the poorest of the poor of the area. The name “Opportunity Training Centre” was changed to “Sathirthy Special School”<sup>226</sup> The sisters also engaged themselves in catechism teaching and animated the prayer groups in the parish, Villooni.

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<sup>223</sup> These are Srs. Lilly Kurian, Mariyambika Philip, Malathi Kothi\*, Roslin Sebastian, Asha K.V, Suneela Polimetla, Lizy Sacarias, Anna Mary Bezawada, Deepa Joseph, Grace Mary Cherian, Mary Bezawada\*, Lucy Joseph, Elsitte Mathew, Sneha Chacko, Anthonila Kanaparthiand Vineetha Philip. (\*left the congregation later).

<sup>224</sup> These are Srs. Cincy Manavalan, Shiny Joseph\*, Molly Xavier, Juby V. Mathew, Jessy Thomas, Jaya Kolakani, Soey Michael, Roobi Andrews and Jayarani Verghese\*. (\*left the congregation later).

<sup>225</sup> ASDS, Box 1417, Chronicles.

<sup>226</sup> Sathirthy means ‘companionship’.



*Figure 60: S. Lucy Joseph in the Opportunity Training Centre, Villoonni<sup>227</sup>*

The administration of the Indian unit decided to spread to other states in India. Bishop Arul Das James invited the sisters to open a convent in his diocese called Udagamandalam (Ooty) in Tamil Nadu.<sup>228</sup> In 1994 a house was bought and was converted into a convent.<sup>229</sup> In the presence of all the priests and sisters the convent was inaugurated and was given the name “Jyothi Bhavan”<sup>230</sup> by Bishop Arul Das James during holy mass.<sup>231</sup> Two sisters<sup>232</sup> and a group of postulants formed a community there. Originally this house was meant for the formation of postulants, but the cold climate did not suit for them, they were often sick and were sent back to Kerala. The community engaged in pastoral work, health care and education of children besides learning the local language, Tamil.

<sup>227</sup> S. Lucy Joseph was the first Indian Sister to die; she died on September 7, 2009, at the age of 42.

<sup>228</sup> ASDS, Invitation Letter, 31.05.1994.

<sup>229</sup> ASDS, 1160.2.

<sup>230</sup> Jyothi Bhavan means ‘light house’.

<sup>231</sup> ASDS-In, B 1418.1.

<sup>232</sup> S. Nita Fernando (SL) S. Malathi Kothi.



*Figure 61: Sathirthya Special School, Villoomni*

One of the significant developments of the Indian unit was that it was raised from “mission” to “district” by the General Administration, S. Jean Schafer and her team. S. Sylvia was appointed as the district superior on 18 January 1995.<sup>233</sup>

Archbishop Mariadas Kagithapu invited the sisters to serve in his archdiocese Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.<sup>234</sup> On 17.12.1996 two sisters<sup>235</sup> were sent to this diocese to render social service. Initially they stayed in the rooms above St. Ann’s Co-Cathedral. After some time a third sister<sup>236</sup> joined them, who taught in the nearby St. Aloysius English Medium High School.<sup>237</sup> Besides, the sisters did vocation promotion and learned the local language Telugh.

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<sup>233</sup> ASDS-In, B 1410.1.

<sup>234</sup> ASDS-In, 453.1 invitation Letter 24.01.1996.

<sup>235</sup> S. Mariyambia Philip and S. Asha. KV.

<sup>236</sup> S. Roslin Sebastian.

<sup>237</sup> a school belongs to St. Joseph’s Sisters.



*Figure 62: Salvatorian Kindergarten in Vizag*

A separate house was needed for the candidates. a house was bought in Mannanam, 2 kilometres away from Villooni, and belonged to the parish of Kudamalloor in the archdiocese of Changanacherry.<sup>238</sup> Three sisters<sup>239</sup> along with a group of candidates went into this convent<sup>240</sup> on 14.03.1997. The convent was called ‘Samarpana’.<sup>241</sup> The sisters engaged there in teaching in a school called “Kuriakose English Medium School”<sup>242</sup> as well as the catechism teaching for the youth and pastoral work.

Sr. Sylvia was re-appointed as the district superior on 11.12.1997.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> ASDS, 1160.3.

<sup>239</sup> S. Suneela Polimetla, S. Anthonila Kanaparathi and S. Elsitte Mathew.

<sup>240</sup> ASDS, B 1410.1.

<sup>241</sup> ‘Samarpana’ means ‘offering’.

<sup>242</sup> Run by the CMI-Priests (Carmelites of Mary Immaculate).

<sup>243</sup> ASDS, B 1410.1.

The Samuddha<sup>244</sup> Sewing Centre was opened in Villoonni, Kerala on 02.06.1998 for girls and women in order to make them self sufficient and to make use of their time meaningfully. Women of all walks of life come to learn cutting, stitching and sewing.



*Figure 63: The Samuddhara Sewing Centre, Villoonni*

On 15.06.1998 St. Thomas Preparatory School<sup>245</sup> was opened in Nondimedu, Ooty, Tamilnadu.<sup>246</sup>

Originally it was meant only for children of 3-5 years. But there was a need for a primary school. Therefore the school was extended up to the age group 5-10. The students from classes 1-5 can study there. The school changed its name to St. Thomas Elementary School.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> 'Samuddhara' means 'empowerment'.

<sup>245</sup> a type of kindergarten.

<sup>246</sup> ASDS, B 1418.1.

<sup>247</sup> Nursery and primary school are a type of kindergarten; Elementary school till class 5.



*Figure 64: St. Thomas Preparatory School, Nondimedu, Ooty, Tamilnadu*

A small dispensary was opened there in Nondimedu on 15.06.1998. It was called St. Thomas Dispensary for the health care of the sick from the neighbourhood.<sup>248</sup>

For those sisters who were accommodated in St. Ann's co-cathedral in the diocese of Visakhapatnam, the bishop found a better place to stay in Muralinagar. The sisters were happy and moved there on 28.12.1998. They named it "Samipyra".<sup>249</sup> With the permission of the General Administration and the permission of the bishop this convent was also temporarily novitiate from 1999-2001.<sup>250</sup>

The General Administration, S. Jean Schafer and her team and also S. Sylvia and S. Imtraud were of the opinion that the Indian District was able to take over the leadership. Thus S. Grace Mary Cherian was appointed as the District Superior on 23.11.2000.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> ASDS, B 1418.1.

<sup>249</sup> Samipyra means 'nearness'.

<sup>250</sup> ASDS, 452.1 permission letter from the Bishop.

<sup>251</sup> ASDS, 452.3.

The sisters were prepared to take the responsibility of initial and ongoing formation. a novitiate of our own was a need. In the archdiocese of Bangalore a piece of land was bought, a house was constructed.<sup>252</sup> On 03.07.2001<sup>253</sup> Rev. Fr. Andrew Urbanski, SDS<sup>254</sup> inaugurated and blessed the novitiate house. It was named “Sarupya”<sup>255</sup>. Two sisters<sup>256</sup> and a group of novices formed this community.

Sr. Sylvia and S. Irmtraud, supported by the other missionaries, played a great role in the total development and growth of the Indian unit as well as of every individual sister. They trained the sisters in various professions, according to the needs of the Indian church and the society. They also cared for the personal development of each sister and candidate and offered them various interpersonal development programmes. They also prepared the sisters to take up leadership in their own unit and the formation of the members. S. Sylvia and S. Irmtraud could leave the country with a feeling of satisfaction and with the hope of further growth of the unit on 21.10.2001.<sup>257</sup> Altogether they were 17 foreign sisters from various countries, who in taking turns contributed to the development of the Indian Unit.<sup>258</sup>



*Figure 65: S. Irmtraud, S. Sylvia with the Sisters of the Indian District*

<sup>252</sup> ASDS, 1160.4, purchase document.

<sup>253</sup> Feast of St. Thomas, the Apostle of India.

<sup>254</sup> General Superior of the Salvatorian Fathers.

<sup>255</sup> ‘Sarupya’ means ‘transformation’.

<sup>256</sup> S. Lilly Kurien and S. Suneela.

<sup>257</sup> ASDS, B 1417.3.

<sup>258</sup> S. Sylvia Vanek, S. Irmtraud, S. Amata Rindler (Austria), S. Catherine Minihane (Ireland-Rome), S. Myriam Geissler (Germany-Austria), S. Jane Pui (Malaysia), S. Betty Vetter (USA), Srs. Selva Rani Fernandopulle, Nita Aberatne, Bernedette Perera, Leonie Wijekulasuriya, Pauline Pieris, Beatice Fernando, Nita Fernando, Mary Adaikulanayaki, Naini Fernando, Dulcie Pieris (Sri Lanka).



The Indian Unit now consists of fully native Indians who continued with the same enthusiasm and zeal. New apostolates were taken up and new houses were started.

Beside the candidature in Mannanam, a hostel for the girl-students of “Blessed Kuriakose Elias School” was constructed. The archbishop Joseph Powathil inaugurated and blessed the hostel on 02.06.2002,<sup>259</sup> the hostel was called “Suvidha bhavan”<sup>260</sup>. Three sisters<sup>261</sup> belong to this community, who take care of the girls and provide them with a good atmosphere for study. Most of their parents work abroad.

From the parish of Villoonni five families<sup>262</sup> had decided to join the Lay Associates. They were invited for a meeting in order to give them introduction to the Salvatorian spirituality on 10.08.2002. This event led to the beginning of the Lay-Salvatorians in India. Through instruction, prayer and social activities the spirituality of Fr. Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan and Blessed Mary of the Apostles is introduced to them. One sister is responsible for them. Families together with their children take part in the activities.



*Figure 66: Mother Mary Convent, Demthring, Shillong*

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<sup>259</sup> Archbishop of Chengannacherry.

<sup>260</sup> ‘Suvidha Bhavan’ means ‘house of wholistic education’.

<sup>261</sup> The first community formed by S. Anna Mary, S. Juby and S. Sheeba Jose.

<sup>262</sup> Joy Ellichira and his wife Roobi, John Ettukatti and his wife Alice, Anil Thommasseril and his wife Roshni, Sebastian Outhiyidam and his wife Rosamma, Benney Puthiaparambil and his wife Bindhu.

The archdiocese of Shillong, Meghalaya had waited for a long time for the return of the Salvatorians. a convent was opened with the request of the Archbishop Dominic Jala, with three sisters. The fourth sister joined them later.<sup>263</sup> The bishop offered them a house in Demthring, which was originally meant for the elderly priests. This house was blessed as Convent on 19.02.2003, on 170<sup>th</sup> Birth anniversary of the Blessed Mary of the Apostles. a good number of priests, sisters and the people took part in it. Almost after 88 years we could return to our beloved mission, making the dream of the Salvatorians come into fulfilment. The sisters engage here in social work, health care and education. Besides, they do vocation promotion and the learning of the local language Khasi.

On 07.04.2004 S. Therezinha Joana Rasera, the General Superior with her administration team, appointed S. Grace Mary Cherian for three years as District Superior.<sup>264</sup>

In Villoonni, a hostel has been built for the students of the Sathirthya Special School. The students come from poor families.

In Gajapathinagaram, in the archdiocese of Visakhapatnam, the Salvatorian Sisters have built a convent and a nearby school. The convent, to which in the beginning four sisters belonged<sup>265</sup>, is called "Jordan Sadan."<sup>266</sup> The name of the school is "Divine Savior School". Both buildings were inaugurated and blessed by the Archbishop Dr. Mariadas Kagithapu<sup>267</sup>. The main work of the sisters is to offer the children of this area a good education. The German and Austrian volunteers come here and help us in our activity.

Another visible sign of growth of our Indian District was that the General Superior S. Therezinha and her administrative team raised the Indian District to the level of Region on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2005.<sup>268</sup> On the same day, S. Grace Mary was appointed Regional Superior. Due to the forthcoming general chapter in November 2007, her term of office was shortened by one year. S. Lilly Kurian was then appointed as the Regional Superior.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> S. Cincy Manavalan, S. Asha K.V. S. Jessy Joseph and S. Anna Mary.

<sup>264</sup> ASDS, B 1419.1.

<sup>265</sup> S. Roslin, S. Elsitta, Sr Jessy and S. Juby.

<sup>266</sup> It means 'Jordan's house'.

<sup>267</sup> Archbishop of Visakhapatnam.

<sup>268</sup> ASDS, B 1410.1.

<sup>269</sup> ASDS, B 1410.1.



*Figure 67: Divine Savior School, Gajapathinagaram*



*Figure 68: Gajapathinagaram, classroom of Divine Savior School*

Another house was opened in the archdiocese of Shillong. It is situated in the parish of Mawryngkneng. After a solemn holy Mass the Archbishop Dominic Jala inaugurated and blessed the convent on 07.09.2006. The convent got the Khasi-Latin name “Rumpei Salvator”.<sup>270</sup> Three sisters<sup>271</sup> who are stationed there do home visiting and teaching in the parish school. The learning of the local language was most important in the beginning. With the help of the organization such as “Catholic Relief Service”<sup>272</sup> and “Individual Health Care”<sup>273</sup> the sisters support the villagers.



*Figure 69: Mawryngkneng, East Khasi Hill*

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<sup>270</sup> ‘Rympei’ in Khasi means ‘house’, house of the Savior.

<sup>271</sup> S. Anna Mary, S. Soujanya P. , S. Simi Job.

<sup>272</sup> An American organization, which give oil and wheat for widows.

<sup>273</sup> An American organization, which give oil and wheat for orphans.

On 09.04.2009 S. Lilly Kurien was re-appointed as Regional Superior.<sup>274</sup>



*Figure 70: S. Lilly lighting the Silver Jubilee Candle*

Now, 25 years are over. On 23.05.2009 the Indian Region celebrated its Silver Jubilee with the motto “Silver Stream of Blessings, 1984-2009”. Archbishop Joseph Perumthottam<sup>275</sup> celebrated the Mass in the Syro-Malabar rite.

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<sup>274</sup> ASDS, B 1410.1.

<sup>275</sup> The new archbishop of Changanacherry.



*Figure 71: "Silver Streams of Blessings, 1984 – 2009"*

Many Salvatorians, Lay-Associates, faithful of the parish, family members of the Sisters, Novices and Candidates took part in it.



*Figure 72: Holy Mass, celebration of 25 years*

The Indian Region was especially happy about the guests of honor from abroad, who represented those countries, which contributed in a wonderful way to the growth and development of the country: namely S. Rani Fernando, General Councillor, represented the Generalate, S. Bonaventura Fürhacker and S. Amata Rindler from the Austrian Province, S. Dalcie Pieris and S. Indrani Theresa Thimothias from Sri Lanka. S. Bonaventura Gödtner, mission procurator of the German Province, who helped the Indian Region generously, sent her collaborator Mrs. Maria Langemann, who came with her husband to take part in the celebration.



*Figure 73: Jubilee Mass<sup>276</sup>*

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<sup>276</sup>Archbishop Joseph Perumthttam, the Archbishop of Changanacherry, celebrated the Jubilee Mass in Syro-Malabar Rite.



*Figure 74: Continued celebration following the Mass*

The Silver Jubilee was the peak point which connected the Indian Region to look at the past with gratitude, live the present with joy and look forward into the future with full of hope and trust in God.



*Figure 75: Continued celebration following the Jubilee Mass*





*Figure 76: Entertainment during the Jubilee celebration*



*Figure 77: Entertainment during the Jubilee celebration*

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