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(Names in italics refer not to Parishes but to Chapels existing within Parishes)
GROWTH OF PARISHES: IN BOMBAY CITY

THE growth of the parishes on the island of Bombay (today, Bombay City, stretching from Mahim and Sion in the north to Colaba in the south) may be seen to be largely related to the Padroado-Propaganda struggle that took place on the island between 1774-1928. The truth of this statement emerges when one compares the growth of the Bombay parishes with that of the Bassein and Salsette parishes.

Bassein was untouched by the Padroado-Propaganda conflict: it passed peacefully from the single jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Goa (1534-1886) and the Archbishop-Bishop of Damaun (1886-1928) to that of the Archbishop of Bombay (1928). Of the 19 Bassein parishes, 9 were founded when Bassein was under Goa, 2 when under Damaun, and 8 when under Bombay.

Salsette was affected by the Padroado-Propaganda struggle, but insignificantly. Of the 49 parishes in Salsette, 20 were founded before 1794, the year in which the Double Jurisdiction was introduced, and 21 were created after 1928, the year in which the Double Jurisdiction was abolished. Of the remaining 8 parishes established between 1794-1928, 5 were related to the Padroado-Propaganda question, 3 were not.

In comparison, of the 25 parishes of Bombay, 9 were created in the course of the Padroado-Propaganda conflict, and 7 future parishes had their foundation laid, as it were, during that period.
That leaves only 9 parishes founded outside the struggle: 3 (St. Michael, Gloria and Salvacao) before the conflict began, and 6 (St. Paul, Dadar; St. Stephen, Cumballa Hill; St. John, Fort; OL of Fatima, Sewri; OL of Lourdes, Sion; and St. Dominic Savio, Antop Hill) after the conflict ended. And the three parishes of St. Michael, Gloria and Salvacao were intimately involved in the conflict!

Hence, the history of the Bombay parishes may be seen to fall into three periods:

1. Parishes founded before the Double Jurisdiction began: 1534-1794
2. Parishes founded during the period of the Double Jurisdiction: 1794-1928

The historical sketch of each of the 25 parishes that follow will observe this three-part division.

I PARISHES FOUNDED BEFORE THE DOUBLE JURISDICTION BEGAN (1534-1794)

Spreading out from Bassein, the enterprising Franciscan missionaries not only proclaimed the Gospel on the island of Salsette, but they came to the Bombay group of islands as well. There were a few Catholic families that had already settled on the island from the very beginning of the Portuguese occupation. For the land had been parcelled out and granted on a quit-rent basis, according to some kind of feudal system, to individuals, mostly Portuguese, who agreed to occupy the land and see to its defence. These would have needed the ministrations of a priest, at least from time to time. But we do not know when exactly the Franciscans settled in Bombay. When they did do so, they began to draw their first converts from among the Kolis, fisherfolk for the most part, who were the original inhabitants of Bombay island.

In the course of the 16th century, the Franciscans founded four parishes in Bombay, nicely spread out from the north to
the south of the island: St. Michael at upper Mahim, Our Lady of Salvation at Lower Mahim, Our Lady of Glory at Mazagaon, and Our Lady of Expectation in the Fort. Of these, the first three have survived to this day.

When the British came to Bombay in 1665, the four parishes had already been established. From 1665-1794 however, not a single new parish was founded on the island! On the other hand, the troubles of the Church in Bombay had begun: the Franciscans were expelled in 1720, and their parishes passed into the hands of the Carmelites (Propaganda); the parishes were handed back to the Portuguese (Padroado in 1789 and then returned to Propaganda in 1791; finally in 1794, the British introduced the Double Jurisdiction in Bombay.

ST. MICHAEL, Mahim (Before 1585)

Mahim, one of the original seven islands of the Bombay group, was, after the island of Bombay proper (Girgaum-Mahalaxmi), the most important village during the Portuguese period (1534-1720). On this island, the Franciscans built two churches: St. Michael (Upper Mahim) and Our Lady of Salvation (Lower Mahim).

The church of St. Michael was built at the northern extremity of the island very near the Creek that separated Mahim from Bandra. A visitor to Mahim, Burrell, wrote in 1710 giving this description of the island and the church (quoted by Meersman, 1957:62): “On the northwest point of the island is Mahim seated, being a pretty large town and hath an indifferent Buzar, the buildings being brick and covered with pautile. By the river fronting the Mandove stands a large and beautiful church, being a convent of the Franciscans with a large verandah before the portal and at a small distance on the road, a large wooden Cross set in brick work pedestal.”

Various dates have been assigned to the foundation of the church (1510, 1512, 1534, 1540), but all of them have to be rejected, because in his letter to the King of Portugal, written in November 1545, the Vicar General of the North (of Goa), Fr. Michael Vaz, stated that, “there is no church anywhere in the whole land which
extends for more than 15 leagues (75 miles)." The land he was referring to was the region around Bassein, extending from Bombay in the south to Damaun in the north. Fr. Meersman tells us (1957:61) that the church of St. Michael "appears in 1585 as a fully functioning mission station, when in that year a 'Pai dos Christoos' (Father of the Christians) was appointed to look after the increasing number of catechumens and converts". Thus, after the church of Our Lady of Expectation (Esperanca) built on Bombay island proper sometime around 1570, St. Michael's was the second church erected by the Franciscans in Bombay before 1585. The Franciscans remained in charge of the parish of St. Michael till 1720 when they were expelled from Bombay by the British.

In the compulsory division of the four Bombay parishes in 1794, this was the second church chosen by the Vicar-Apostolic (the first being that of Esperanca), and it remained under the jurisdiction of the Vicars-Apostolic (Propaganda) for 59 years. In 1853 the visit of Bishop Mata of Macao to Bombay and Salsette re-ekindled the spirits of the Padroado party adherents everywhere. Among these was Fr. Joseph de Mello, the Vicar of St. Michael, who, on the occasion of a quarrel with some of his parishioners, tried to hand over the church to the Archbishop of Goa. He was resisted by the Vicar-Apostolic, Bishop Hartmann, who took personal possession of the building, and remained a voluntary prisoner in it for 14 days. For a year and three months Bishop Hartmann made St. Michael's his headquarters. During all that time legal proceedings dragged on concerning the ownership of the Church until June 20, 1854 when the Court judgment went against Bishop Hartmann and he had to surrender the church. Thus St. Michael's church and parish came under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Goa (Padroado) until 1928 when the Double Jurisdiction was done away with (Hull, Vol. I: 426-433).
In recent years, St. Michael's has become a centre that has greatly helped in the spread of devotion to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour (see Chapter on “Devotions and Shrines”). In the year of the Silver Jubilee of the Perpetual Succour Novenas, the old church, being too small to contain the huge Wednesday crowds as well as an increased parish population, was demolished and a new, modern and spacious one built in 1973, during the Vicarship of Msgr. Alfred Aguiar.

OUR LADY OF GLORY, Byculla, (Before 1595)

For well over three centuries the church of Our Lady of Glory (Gloria Church) stood in Mazagaon before it was transferred to its present site opposite Byculla Station in 1912.

The church at Mazagaon seems to have started as a private chapel attached to the great Manor of Captain Antonio Pessao around the year 1548. In 1548 when Joao de Castro parcelled out Bombay, the village of Mazagaon was acquired by Antonio Pessao who in turn passed it on to Lionel de Souza, his son-in-law. Due to the increase in the Catholic population of Mazagaon, this chapel was pulled down and a church was erected on the same site by the de Souza family. This must have taken place sometime before 1595, since in the Custodial Chapter of this year, Gloria church appears as an already established Franciscan Rectorate. At some time between 1572 (when the village of Mazagaon was given in perpetuity to the de Souza family) and 1595, the Franciscans must have come to be associated with the chapel.

Who were the original parishioners of Mazagaon? Fr. Paulo da Trindade gives us the following information (quoted by Meersman, 1957:64): “This village of Mazagaon was entirely made up of Hindus, but through the preaching and industry of our Friars, they were all converted together and baptized at a solemn baptism, more than three thousand souls and the fervour and enthusiasm with which they received the baptismal waters (was so great) that each one tried to be the first to receive (baptism)...” It would appear that most of these converts of Mazagaon were of the Koli community.

At the division of the churches in 1794, Gloria church fell to the share of Padroado, but a section of its parishioners separated from it and in that very year built a church for themselves also
at Mazagaon (Rosary Church) which was under Propaganda. Attached to Gloria church was the Antonio de Souza school founded in 1797. The church was once more enlarged in 1803, then finally re-built in 1810, and consecrated by Archbishop Torres of Goa on February 14, 1844. During all the time of the Double Jurisdiction in Bombay, Gloria church had the distinction of being the chief church of the Padroado party.

In 1912 the Gloria church property at Mazagaon was acquired by Government, and the church, parochial house and school were demolished to make room for the expansion of the Bombay Port Trust. Prior to that, land was secured opposite the Byculla station and the foundation stone of the new church was laid on January 29, 1911 by His Excellency Dom Matheus d’Oliveira Xavier, Archbishop of Goa and Patriarch of the East Indies. Through the efforts of Msgr. L. C. Pera, Vicar General of the Diocese of Damaun, the church was nearly completed in 1912 and blessed in 1913. It was consecrated on the occasion of its Silver Jubilee celebrations on November 12, 1938 by Archbishop Roberts of Bombay. The church is in English Gothic style, in the form of a Latin cross, with a lofty tower and four turrets that rise to a height of 160 ft.

Within the boundary of Rosary parish, Mazagaon, is a cross which marks the site of the old Gloria church before it was transferred to Byculla in 1912.
OUR LADY OF SALVATION, Dadar West (Between 1595-1610)

The church of Our Lady of Salvation (Nossa Senhora da Salvacao) was built by the Franciscans towards the southern end of the island of Mahim sometime between 1595 and 1610. According to Meersman (1957:67) evidence for this is found in the fact that “the Dadar-Church is not mentioned in the Custodial Chapter list of 1595, whereas we do encounter it on the list composed around 1610 for the General Chapter of 1612. Hence we must admit it was founded somewhere between these two years i.e. between 1595 and 1610.”

The ancient church registers and tombstones give its location as Mahim; but with the growth of the population of Mahim, the area in which the church was located was designated as “Lower Mahim” in distinction to “Upper Mahim,” where St. Michael’s church was situated. Subsequently, on account of its proximity to the two Dadar Railway stations, its location came to be known as Dadar, and latterly, Dadar West. The Portuguese Franciscans carried on as Vicars of Salvacao until 1720 when they had to quit Mahim and Bombay.

At the time of the introduction of the Double Jurisdiction in 1794, Salvacao church was given to the Archbishop of Goa. In 1813, the parishioners clashed with the Vicar General of the North over the appointment of a Vicar to Salvacao. They appealed to Government expressing the desire to transfer themselves and their church to the jurisdiction of the Vicar-Apostolic. Government sustained their appeal and thus Salvacao came under Propaganda from 1813 to 1851 (Hull, I:161-167), when trouble broke out again.

For 20 years (1828-1848), Fre Aloysius Fortini was Vicar of Salvacao, and when he became Vicar-Apostolic in 1840, he appointed Fr. Braz Fernandes as the acting Vicar of the parish. Fortini died in 1848 and was buried at Salvacao “by the request of the people to whom he had endeared himself.” Fr. Fernandes was already two years in office when Bishop Hartmann visited the church on October 13, 1850, found that the accounts were badly kept, and told the Vicar to get his books in order. The Vicar regarding this episcopal rebuke a preliminary step towards his dismissal, made an offer of his priestly services and of Salvacao church to the Padroado Vicar General. When Bishop Hartmann heard of this
he suspended the priest and thus began a three days’ tragedy which finally ended with the transfer of Salvacao back to Padroado in June 1851 (Hull: I: 409-420). The parish remained under Padroado until 1928 when the Double Jurisdiction in Bombay came to an end.

The original Franciscan church was rebuilt in 1651 and in the course of three centuries underwent several restorations. In May 1974, this historic landmark, popularly known as “Portuguese church,” was totally demolished, to make room for a larger church that could accommodate the ever-growing population of the parish. Nothing of the “Portuguese church” has been preserved in the process.

His Eminence Valerian Cardinal Gracias laid the foundation stone of the present church on February 2, 1973, and blessed the completed edifice on February 2, 1977. This modernistic structure has been designed on rather original lines by architect, Mr. Charles Correa. Architecturally, the building is one that provides for quiet reflection and meditation as one steps into it from the busy traffic outside. The large, covered space of the baptistry, the main congregational space, the sacristy, and the oratory are inter-connected, so that the covered seating and standing accommodation of the whole structure is for well over 1,000 persons. All these areas open out on to the gardens and courtyards, which will act as overflow space for still larger congregations.

The parish which at one time extended over the whole of the north central region of the island has, since the beginning of this century, given birth to five parishes, as outlying parts developed into autonomous units: Holy Cross Lower Parel (1904); OL of Dolours, Wadala (1941); St. Paul, Dadar (1941); OL of Fatima, Sewri (1959) and Sacred Heart, Worli (1961).
CHAPELS

As in the section on Salsette parishes, two sub-sections on the Bombay parishes will conclude with a reference to the Chapels that were erected during the period in question. Again, as before, a distinction will be made between chapels that developed into parish churches at a later date, and chapels that for one reason or another did not undergo this development.

(A) Chapels which developed into parish churches

(1) Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Fort: built around 1730, filial to Our Lady of Expectation, Fort.

(2) Our Lady of Health, Cavel: built around 1750, filial to Gloria Church, Mazagaon.

(3) St. Teresa, Girgaum: built in 1773, filial to Our Lady of Expectation, Fort.

(4) St. Anne, Mazagaon: built in 1787, filial to Rosary Church, Mazagaon.

(B) Chapels which did not develop into parish churches

THE PAREL CHAPEL

More than forty years before the British came to Bombay in 1665, the Jesuits acquired a large property that stretched from Parel to Sion, the annual proceeds of which were to help the Jesuits of Agra to defray the expenses of their missionary activities. This property, acquired probably in 1620, was administered by the Bandra Jesuits. Thus the Jesuits first came to Bombay not as missionaries but as landowners. They did not interfere with the parish work of the Franciscans.

On this property was built a chapel at Parel; but it is disputed whether it was the Jesuits who put it up after they acquired the property, or the Franciscans at some earlier date before the Jesuits arrived. Fr. Hull, for example, puts forward the opinion that it was the Franciscans who built the Parel chapel which passed into Jesuit hands when they bought the property on which the chapel stood (Hull, II:281). On the other hand, Fr. Meersman holds (1957:70) that “as far as historical evidence is concerned, the only safe conclusion seems to be, that the Franciscans, though
they may have made converts in Parel, had nothing to do with the building of its Chapel.” Whoever may have been responsible for its building, the one certain point is that it was as a Jesuit chapel that the Parel chapel emerged from obscurity into history around 1620 — this justifies our mentioning it at this point of our expose.

When the British took possession of Bombay island in 1665, it did not take them very long to cast avaricious eyes on the Jesuit property in Bombay. They looked for reasons to appropriate the land. But it was not till 1719 that the Jesuits were officially deprived of their Parel property, and as a consequence, the Parel chapel was closed down. Today the chapel forms part of the Haffkine Institute at Parel (Gense, 1960: 226-245).

II PARISHES FOUNDED DURING THE PERIOD OF THE DOUBLE JURISDICTION (1794-1928)

With the introduction of the novel concept of the Double Jurisdiction in Bombay in 1794, the existing churches and chapels were divided between the Archbishop of Goa (Padroado) and the Vicar-Apostolic (Propaganda). As a result of this division, this second period of the growth of parishes in Bombay, starts off with the following ecclesiastical picture:

Under Padroado Under Propaganda

Churches Churches

(1) OL of Glory, Mazagaon (1) OL of Expectation, Fort
(2) OL of Salvation, (2) St. Michael, Upper Mahim
       Lower Mahim

Chapels Chapels

(1) OL of Health, Cavel (1) OL of Mt. Carmel, Fort
(2) The private chapel of (2) St. Teresa, Girgaum
    Sir Miguel de Lima of (3) St. Anne, Mazagaon
    Mazagaon

(With regard to the Sion chapel,
see note below on OL of Good
Counsel Church, Sion)

In the course of the 134 years of the unfortunate, to say the
least, struggle between Padroado and Propaganda, *nine parish church*es and eight chapels were generated.

**OUR LADY OF HEALTH, Cavel (1794)**

The parish church of Our Lady of Health at Cavel lies in the heart of a commercially busy and crowded section of downtown Bombay. On the site of the present church once stood a private chapel which must have been built around the middle of the 18th century. This conclusion is based on a Government document of 1813 which refers to the year when the churches of Bombay were divided between the two jurisdictions of Padroado and Propaganda.

“In consequence of the churches of Mazagaon and Salvacao being inconveniently situated for the Portuguese inhabitants of Bombay, they obtained permission from Government in 1794 to build a new church in Bombay with a burying ground and in the interim of its construction to make use of the old chapel at Cavel granted to them by Pedro Jose de Moura. This chapel being old and in a decayed state, but its position being centrical (sic!), it was determined to demolish it and build the intended church on that spot, which was completed, and the parishioners performed their religious acts and ceremonies there unmolested...” (Quoted by Hull, II:275).

According to this document, the original private chapel was in 1794 already “old and in a decayed state,” which would lead us to suppose that it was built around the middle of the century. Who were the original owners of the chapel? This the document does not say. Mr. Pedro Jose de Moura must have been the last descendant of the family with right to it.

The first priest appointed in April 26, 1794 to the new parish of Cavel was Fr. Mariano de Olivares, a Portuguese secular priest (Humbert, I:171). He, however, continued to function in the old, decayed chapel. A new church was built after his death and blessed sometime between April and September of 1812 by Fr. Francis Porras, the Vicar General of the North. It is interesting to note that the main altar of carved rosewood encrusted with gold, once belonged to the Dominican convent of Goa, and was bodily transferred by country craft to the Cavel church in 1857.
Today the parish of Cavel has one of the smallest parish Catholic populations in Bombay (about 1,300). Compare this with what Gerson da Cunha wrote (Quoted by Hull II: 256):

“In 1860, when I first visited Cavel...it was the centre of the largest Roman Catholic community in the island, to which immigrants from Bassein, Salsette, Damaun and Goa made continual yearly additions. They supplied Bombay with clerks and domestic servants...Cavel, once the seat of Christian converts of the Portuguese, had long been invaded and almost occupied, through sheer force of wealth, by the Vanias (Banias) who have replaced the old modest but airy villas, with their crosses and gay little gardens, by their high, shapeless tenements, without light or air, the hotbeds of future epidemic outbreaks.”

We must remember, though, that when da Cunha visited Cavel in 1860, the church of St. Francis Xavier at Dabul close by had not yet been built. When the Dabul parish was created in 1872, it absorbed a major portion of Cavel’s Catholic population.

The old Cavel church of 1812 was completely remodelled in 1971 during the Vicarship of Msgr. Macario Pereira. The former church has yielded place to a beautiful piece of architecture, an emblem of the Eucharistic Congress of 1964, and “an oasis” — to quote Cardinal Gracias — in the midst of a busy and crowded neighbourhood.

**OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY, Mazagaon (1794)**

The origin of the parish of Our Lady of the Rosary at the