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ABSTRACT

**CHURCH GROWTH IN THE KHASI-JAINTIA
CONFERENCE, MEGHALAYA, INDIA**

by

Khrawbor Kharbteng

Adviser: Nancy Vhymeister

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: CHURCH GROWTH IN THE KHASI-JAINTIA CONFERENCE,
MEGHALAYA, INDIA

Name of researcher: Khrawbor Kharbteng

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Nancy J. Vyhmeister, Ed.D.

Date completed: January 2001

The population of the Khasi-Jaintia Conference territory is made up of 80 percent Khasis and 20 percent other ethnic groups. The Khasis, an accepting and happy people, are receptive to the Christian message. This receptivity comes from their monotheistic concept of God and their admiration for the dedicated missionaries who brought the gospel but did not attempt to modify their culture, except for their refusal to accept social evils such as drinking, gambling, and sexual promiscuity.

Seventh-day Adventism came to the Khasi region in 1915 with the arrival of E. G. Hardinge and family. The actual work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church started around 1933 with the arrival of the regular missionaries such as the Burgesses, the Barlows, the Ashlocks, and the Langes. The establishment of the Assam Training School

provided a center for spreading the Seventh-day Adventist message throughout the Northeastern region of India.

The church grew slowly until 1996, when the Khasi-Jaintia Conference became a separate administrative unit. Earlier, funds, programs, and personnel had to be distributed among all fields. As of the year 2000, the church membership is more than double what it was in 1990. Major factors in the growth of the church during the period were public evangelism in areas where churches and companies already existed, the day-to-day witnessing of members, evangelism through the secondary boarding school, and biological growth.

In spite of the improved growth of the last few years, the task of evangelizing presents a mammoth challenge, given that the Seventh-day Adventists are only 0.3 percent of the population. To enhance the growth rate, the strategies that produced results in the 1990s should be continued and improved. In coordination with already-familiar evangelistic methods, Life Transformation Cell Groups should be developed. These groups will function in local churches, under the supervision of the pastor, with the support of the conference. The groups will provide fellowship, nurture, and an opportunity for outreach. A training program for group leaders will precede the initiation of the groups; further training of groups leaders will maximize the benefits of these groups.

Andrews University
Seventh-day-Adventist Theological Seminary

CHURCH GROWTH IN THE KHASI-JAINTIA CONFERENCE,
MEGHALAYA, INDIA

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Khrawbor Kharbteng

January 2001

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The task of acknowledgment is pleasant as well as unpleasant. It is pleasant because it provides space and opportunity to tender sincere gratefulness and thanks to all those who have had a part in the completion of this project. While some may have had a large part, some may have said only a word of encouragement, or offered a little guidance, suggestion, or a prayer on the researcher's behalf. All these deserve a thank-you for what they said and did. They have had their rightful place in the process of working and completing this project. On the other hand, the task is unpleasant because there is a great risk of missing someone who should be thanked.

In spite of the ever-present danger of missing someone, a few names deserve special mention. First of all, of course, gratitude goes to God Almighty, without whose provision this study program would not have been possible.

My thanks also go to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its leaders for the provision made for its workers to acquire advanced training. In this connection, failure to mention Dr. M. E. Cherian, the late President of Spicer Memorial College and the Southern Asia Division of Seventh-day Adventists, during whose time this Doctor of Ministry program in India was started, would be inappropriate. His noble dream for at least a hundred doctorates in Southern Asia Division is partially realized. Gratefulness is due to D. R. Watts, current President of the Southern Asia Division, for sustaining the Doctor of Ministry program in India after the untimely demise of Dr. M. E. Cherian. My

special thanks to Dr. Bruce Bauer and Dr. Gordon Christo for jointly initiating the first Doctor of Ministry program in India. Acknowledgment is also due to the administrators of the the Khasi-Jaintia Conference, for their patience and consideration in losing a worker for months at a time.

Personal thanks go to Dr. Nancy Vyhmeister, my chairperson, for her motherly interest, painstaking effort, and professional skill in bringing this dissertation into its final shape. My thanks also to Dr. Werner Vyhmeister for his fatherly encouragement and for shaping the dissertation, especially towards its completion. Equal mention on this count goes to Dr. Boxter Kharbteng (my very own cousin) for his scholarly and editorial skill in further refining this dissertation.

Mention should also be made of the different institutions in Pune that graciously provided the use of their libraries. Without their assistance this project could not have been completed: Ishwani Kendra, United Biblical Seminary, Spicer Memorial College, and the Oriental Watchman Publishing House.

This page would also be incomplete without acknowledging the typists of the project. I thank then for their skill and patience, and many times for sacrificing their pleasure and time in order to meet deadlines. They are Evonne who typed the project at the initial stage, and Giri Charles who completed the work.

Last and not to be forgotten, more than thanks goes to my wife Wanda for her moral support, and to my children Daphy, Inry, and Weiwan for their bearing the separation during months of absence while I followed the D.Min. program.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The task of this dissertation is to study the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Khasi-Jaintia Conference, with special emphasis on the last decade, i.e., 1990-1999. On the basis of this study, strategies for enhanced growth will be suggested.

Justification

No systematic study has so far been done with regard to the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Khasi-Jaintia Conference of Meghalaya, India. This study will provide a reference from which growth patterns and trends of the church can be viewed pragmatically.

The study will also provide a realistic picture of the growth of the church. This knowledge will help church leaders and members in their church growth endeavor.

The study will also equip the researcher with practical knowledge of special church growth strategies, enabling him to train church leaders and members for church growth.

Significance

It is expected that the study will provide some guidelines for planning strategies and programs that will consequently enhance the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Khasi-Jaintia Conference. In addition, the study will provide the rationale for implementing change.

Limitations

The study is limited to the examination of the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Khasi-Jaintia Conference. Furthermore, while narrating earlier history of the church, the church growth analysis will focus on the last decade (1990-1999).

Overview of the Study

Chapter 1 contains the introduction of the study. Chapter 2 deals with the description of the community of the area assigned to the Khasi-Jaintia Conference. Chapter 3 provides the history of the church, followed by chapter 4 on the growth of the church between 1990 and 1999. Chapter 5 describes strategies designed for the purpose of enhancing the growth of the church in the Khasi-Jaintia Conference. Finally, chapter 6 gives the summary, conclusions, and recommendations for further studies and necessary action.

CHAPTER 2

A DESCRIPTION OF THE COMMUNITY

This chapter presents an overview of the socio-religious scenario of the community in the Khasi-Jaintia Conference. The land and its people are described.

The Land: Topography and Climate

The Khasi-Jaintia Conference is made up of four districts: East Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills, Ri-Bhoi, and Jaintia Hills. These are four of the seven districts that make up Meghalaya State, one of the twenty-five states of India.¹

The Khasi-Jaintia Conference is in the eastern part of Meghalaya. It is bounded by the East Garo Hills on the west, the Kamrup district on the north, the Mikir and Cachar Hills on the east (both of which are districts in the state of Assam), and by Bangladesh on the south. It lies between 25° 1' and 26° 5' latitude north and between 90° 47' and 92° 52' longitude east and covers a total area of 14,262 square kilometers.²

A geological survey of India describes the topography of the area as “a picturesque landscape of plateaux, ravines, brooks, rivulets, lakes and waterfalls, besides

¹K. M. Mathew, ed., *Manorama Year Book, 1998* (Kottayam: Malayala Manorama Press, 1998), 452.

²W. L. Lyngdoh, *Pocket Statistical Handbook, Meghalaya* (Shillong: Director of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Meghalaya, 1998), 1.

the magnificent gorges exceeding 600 meters in depth in the southern part of the land mass.”¹

The central upland has the greatest elevation, with Shillong Peak as the highest point (6,446 ft. above sea level).² Pine trees contribute to the beauty of the landscape, particularly in the central upland and the eastern portion, i.e., the Jaintia Hills. The southern, the northern, and the western portions are covered with fairly thick jungles.

The area³ has the distinction of having the heaviest rainfall in the world. Cherrapunjee, with an annual average rainfall of 11,000 millimeters, holds the record of being the wettest place on earth, “although nearby Mawsynram is said to have broken the record.”⁴

The area has two types of climate. The upland area experiences a moderate and pleasant climate in the summer (March-October) and cold in the winter (November-February). The thickly wooded southern, northern, and western portions have a warm tropical climate in the summer and slightly cooler weather in the winter.

Because of the high ridges and rugged landscape with its overhanging waterfalls and lofty peaks, the area was christened by David Scott, the first agent of the governor

¹“A Geological Survey of India,” Miscellaneous Publication No. 30 (1974), quoted in J. N. Chowdhury, *The Khasi Canvass* (Shillong: Quinton Road, 1978), 6.

²Nalini Natarajan, *The Missionary among the Khasis* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1977), 4.

³“Area” refers to the four districts--East Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills, and Ri-Bhoi District--that constitute the Khasi-Jaintia Conference.

⁴Robert Bradnock, ed., *1992 South Asian Handbook* (London: Trade and Travel Publications, 1991), 596.

general in charge of Assam Province, as “The Scotland of the East.”¹

Demographics

According to the 1991 census, the four districts which make up the Khasi-Jaintia Conference have a total population of 1,115,848, comprising about 63 percent of the population of the state.² The population of the four districts is made up of scheduled tribes (958,035), scheduled castes (3,202), and those belonging to neither (154,611).³ The scheduled tribe population, which consists mainly of Khasis, accounts for 86 percent of the total population in the four districts and about 54 percent of the state’s population.

The ratio of urban and rural population is one to three.⁴ Of the urban population 83 percent reside in Shillong, the state’s capital.

Of the population in the four districts, 48 percent are in the East Khasi Hills, 19 percent in the Jaintia Hills, 19 percent in the West Khasi Hills, and 11 percent in Ri-Bhoi.⁵

There are 150,791 “occupied residential houses” in rural areas, and 47,334 in

¹Natarajan, 5.

²Lyngdoh, 1-2.

³Ibid., 3. While the Indian Constitution does not provide a definition of the term “scheduled tribe” and “scheduled caste,” the identification of such groups has been made on the basis of patent backwardness in the social, political, and economic spheres. The list of such groups and communities is drawn up by the president of India and approved by the parliament. The Constitution provides various special protections, allowances, and exemptions for such groups and members belonging to such groups. See Durga Dass Basu, *Introduction to the Constitution of India*, 18th ed. (Agra: Wadha and Co., 1997), 382-383.

⁴Lyngdoh, 11.

⁵Ibid., 1.

urban areas, with 150,795 and 50,333 households in rural and urban areas respectively.¹

There are altogether 9 towns² and 2,631 villages.³

As of 1996-1997, there were 7 hospitals and 21 dispensaries.⁴ As of 1995-1996 there were altogether 5,655 educational institutions, which include 1 university, 29 colleges, 443 high and higher secondary schools, 913 middle and senior basic schools, 10 basic and non-basic training schools, 1 teachers' training college, 1 polytechnic college, and 4,257 primary and junior basic schools.⁵ According to the 1991 census the rate of literacy in the region was about 49 percent; 79 percent among urban dwellers and 21 percent among rural people.⁶ The scheduled tribe literacy rate was 47 percent, whereas that of the scheduled castes was 60 percent.⁷

Based on the average decadal growth rate of 30 percent, which has been fairly constant since 1961, the estimated population of the four districts constituting the Khasi-Jaintia Conference was 1,437,602 in 2001.⁸

¹Lyngdoh, 9.

²Ibid., 6.

³S. C. Bhatt, *The Encyclopedia District Gazetteers of India*, vol. 11 (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1998), 459-540.

⁴Lyngdoh, 79.

⁵Ibid., 93.

⁶Ibid., 91.

⁷Ibid., 92.

⁸Ibid., 5.

Economy

Agriculture is the main occupation of the people living in rural areas. The rural population in the area constitutes about 65 percent of the total number of inhabitants.

People living in urban areas, i.e., in the headquarters of the four districts (Shillong, Jowai, Nongstoin, and Nongpoh) mostly engage in office work and business enterprises. Those who engage in business enterprises are mostly people from the plain areas of India. Those who are neither office workers nor business people engage in house construction work and other daily labors.

There are local industries, such as blacksmithing, where local spades, knives, hoes, chisels, and hammers are forged. Weaving is also carried on to a certain extent by the Bhois and Jaintias, and bamboo craft by the Wars on the southern slopes.

Two cement factories provide employment to the local people: Mawmluh-Cherra Cement in Cherrapunjee and Jaintia Cement in Moolamyliang, 3 kms from Sutnga in the Jaintia Hills. Flour and poultry feed mills, and poultry, dairy, and pig farms are also operated by both private and government agencies. A watch factory has been set up in Shillong.

The main agricultural products are potato, yam, maize, tapioca, rice, pineapple, orange, ginger, banana, papaya, bay leaf, and betel nut. Potatoes are grown in abundance in the upland area and are exported to other parts of India. Rice is cultivated mostly in the Bhoi and Jaintia areas, whereas pineapple is grown in plenty in the Bhoi and War areas. Oranges are found in both the eastern and the central portions--War-Khasi and War-Jaintia.

The area is rich in mineral resources such as coal, limestone, siliminite, and clay. Uranium is also found in the southwestern part, at a place called Domiasiat in the West Khasi district.

The Inhabitants

The Khasi-Jaintia Conference is made up of different groups of people: Khasis, Bengalis, Assamese, Nepalese, Marwaris, Mizos, Garos, and Nagas. The largest of these groups is the Khasi people. They are the indigenous inhabitants of the place and constitute about 75 percent of the entire population. There are also smaller groups such as the Biharis, Punjabis, Bhutias, Sindhis, Manipuris, Bodos, and Rabhas.

Since the Khasis constitute the largest of all the groups and the members of Khasi-Jaintia Conference belong mainly to this group, more will be said about them. Passing mention will be made of each of the other larger groups.

The Non-Khasis: The Minor Groups

The following pages provide a very brief description of the minor groups that live in the territory of the Khasi-Jaintia Conference. The first four, i.e., Bengalis, Assamese, Nepalis, and Marwaris, constitute the Hindu minority, followed by the Garos, Mizos, and Nagas belonging to the Christian minority.

The Bengalis

The Bengalis are the plains people, the majority of whom migrated from Sylhet and Mymensingh, districts of present-day Bangladesh. Others came from the state of West

Bengal. The Bengalis, particularly those from the Bangladesh area, had settled in the area even before the British came into contact with the hills of Meghalaya.¹ Fifty percent of the Bengalis in the area have settled in the state capital, Shillong.

The Bengalis are a white-collar job community who until recently monopolized most of the government posts. Even today many central government departments, such as insurance, banking, survey, post and telegraph, and accounting, are dominated by them. In the areas of teaching, medicine, engineering, and law the Bengalis are also numerous.

An equally good number of Bengalis are merchants and owners of business establishments in the area. Watch repairing as a trade is particularly confined to the Buddhist Bengalis who hail from Chittagong, Bangladesh. The population of the Bengalis in the area is estimated at 50,000, which constitutes about 5 percent of the population in the area. In Shillong the Bengali population is estimated at 25,000.² A majority of the Bengalis are Hindus, though there are those who are Muslims and Buddhist as well.

The Nepalis

The Nepalis immigrated from Nepal. They are also called Gurkalis or Gurkhas. The Nepalis first migrated to the area, along with the British Indian army, as sepoys of the Assam Rifles and Gorkha Regiment. After they were released from their military service, a number of them settled in the area. Recently, however, there has been a large illegal

¹K. S. Singh, ed., *People of India*, vol. 32 (Calcutta: Anthropological Survey of India, 1994), 157.

²R. K. Bhattachajee, General Manager of *Shillong Times*, interview by author, November 3, 2000, Shillong, Meghalaya, India.

influx of Nepalis into the area.

The Nepalis are found virtually in almost all parts of the area. The majority are economically poor and lacking in education. Those living in the rural areas engage in farming. Dairy or milking is an integral aspect of Nepali life, especially among the illiterates. Nepalis living in the urban areas are daily wage-earners, most of them porters. Some Nepalis are merchants or businessmen and some are office workers. The population of the Nepalis in the area is estimated at 22,000.¹ Most of the Nepalis are Hindus, though there are some Buddhists as well. A good number of them have also become Christians.

The Marwaris

The Marwaris migrated from the state of Rajasthan. The term Marwari derives from the name of the former princely state of Marwar. The first batch of Marwaris settled in the area between 1895 and 1905; they include well-known businessmen like the Jalans, the Geonkas, the Bawris, the Singhania, the Sarawgis, the Bajorias and the Suranas. The Marwaris live mainly in the state capital, Shillong. They are a commercial community and own major business establishments in the area. As such they are the major players in the economy.

The Marwaris in the territory of the Khasi-Jaintia Conference are mostly Hindus, Jains, and Muslims. The Jain, Bania, and Brahman Marwaris are strict vegetarians. The Kshatriyas and Muslims are non-vegetarians.²

¹D. P. Joshi, Headmaster, Nepali High School, Nongthymmai, Shillong, interview by the author, November 7, 2000, Shillong, Meghalaya, India.

²Singh, 197.

The Marwaris who have settled in the area are mostly literate. They do not seek government jobs as most of them have family businesses. The girls, however, are encouraged to pursue higher education as they do not participate in the family business. The Marwari population in the area is estimated at 8,000.¹

The Assamese

The Assamese are from the state of Assam. They migrated to Shillong around the year 1870 in connection with government services under the British. After independence, in the 1950s, there was another significant migration of Assamese into the area.² They are found mostly in the state capital, Shillong. The estimated population of the Assamese in Shillong is around 5,000.³

Most Assamese are Hindus, though many have become Muslims or Christians. The Assamese are divided into two main sub-groups: Brahmins and Non-Brahmins. The Non-Brahmin group includes the Kalitas (originally Kayastha), Koch, Keot (who are of Mongolian origin), and Kaibartas who are classed as scheduled castes.⁴

The sacred center of the Hindu Assamese is known as *namghar*, of which there are two in Shillong. One is Kristi Kendra Namghar and the other is Laban Namghar. There

¹Narayan Jhun Jhunwala, Businessman, interview by author, November 8, 2000, Shillong, Meghalaya, India.

²Singh, 203.

³Horen Chandra Das, former General Secretary of Asom Kristi Kendra, Stonyland, Dhanketi-Shillong, interview by author, November 3, 2000, Shillong, Meghalaya, India.

⁴Singh, 203.

are also two Vaishnava temples in Shillong.

The national festival of the Assamese is Bihu, of which there are three types. They are the Rongali or Bohag Bihu, celebrated in the month of April to mark the ushering in of their New Year. Second, the Magh, or Bhoogali Bihu, is celebrated in the month of January to mark the gathering of the harvest and the enjoyment of food and drink. And the third, the Kati or Kongali Bihu, is celebrated in the month of October to thank God for the good harvest.

The Garos

The Garos are the indigenous inhabitants of the western portion of Meghalaya, known as the Garo Hills. They are the second largest group in Meghalaya. Many of the Garos in the Khasi-Jaintia Conference live in Shillong, though a good number of them are found in rural areas as well. Those who live in Shillong are mostly office workers. The Garos are Christians and most of them belong to the Baptist Church.

The Mizos

The Mizos are from the state of Mizoram. Many of them have permanently settled in the area of Shillong. The majority, however, are students. A good number of them ply businesses between Shillong and Aizawl, the state capital of Mizoram. The Mizos are Christians and belong to different churches such as the Baptist Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Pentecostal Church, the Evangelical Free Church of India, and the Salvation Army. Each of these church groups has its own church buildings in the area. The Mizos have one high school in Shillong known as Mizo Modern High School. The Mizo

population in Shillong is concentrated in the locality called Madanriting. The population of the Mizos in the area is estimated at about 7,000.¹

The Nagas

The Nagas come from the states of Nagaland and Manipur in the extreme east of the northeastern part of India, bordering Myanmar. The Nagas are found mostly in Shillong. Most of the Nagas in the area are students, though quite a number of them hold government jobs or are in the military. There are at least sixteen Naga tribes represented in Shillong: Thangkhuls, Aos, Angamis, Semas, Lothas, Chakasangs, Mao, Rongmei, Maring, Maran, Anal, to name some. They have a strong association known as Naga Student Association which caters to the various needs of students in the area. Their population is estimated at 3,500. Most of the Nagas are Christians and belong mainly to the Baptist Church.²

¹Z. Renthlei, Departmental Director of Northeast India Union of Seventh-day Adventists, Shillong; until October 2000, president of the Mizo Bible Society, Shillong Branch; interview by author, November 8, 2000, Shillong.

²K. A. Shimray, Director Assam Region of Seventh-day Adventists, twice adviser of the Naga Student Union, Shillong, interview by author, August 5, 2000, Shillong, Meghalaya, India.

The Khasis: The Major Group

The Khasis constitute the largest community in the area. There are a number of sub-groups among the Khasis: the Khyntriams, the Pnars, the Wars, the Bhois, and the Lyngams. The Khyntriams live in the central uplands, the Pnars in the eastern part, the Wars on the southern slopes, the Bhois in the northern part, and the Lyngams in the western portion bordering the Garo Hills. Some of these groups are further subdivided.¹

The Khasis speak a common language known as Khasi, though in their respective subgroups they have their own dialects. Educated Khasis speak English fluently.

Their Origin

Though the Khasis have settled in the area, as Bareh puts it, “since time immemorial,”² it is clear that they “had their cradle somewhere else.”³ For some scholars the origin of the Khasis is an unsettled question.⁴ However, most agree that the Khasis are of Mongoloid stock from southeast Asia and belong to the Mon-Khmer linguistic

¹P. R. T. Gurdon, *The Khasis* (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1975), 62.

²H. Bareh, *Meghalaya* (Shillong: North-Eastern India News and Feature Service, 1974), 140.

³P. K. Das Gupta, *Life and Culture of Matrilineal Tribes of Meghalaya* (New Delhi: Inter-India Publications, 1989), 7.

⁴Gurdon points out that the origin of the Khasis remains a “vexed question.” Gurdon, 10. Chowdhury likewise observes that “to write about the very early history of the Khasis is to tread on uncertain ground.” J. N. Chowdhury, *The Khasi Canvass* (Shillong: Quinton Road, 1978), 5.

group.¹ According to Chatterjee, the Khasis appear to be Mongoloid immigrants who adopted the language of the Austriacs in their contact with them, and stayed for a time in Burma before migrating to their present habitat.²

The fact that the Khasis came from the east, from Myanmar in particular, has been underlined by many. There is a tradition that the Khasis originally came into Assam from Myanmar via the Patkoi range, following the route of one of the Burmese invasions.³

Besides the scientific view cited above, there is also the traditional view, that the Khasis came not from a particular point of the compass but straight from heaven itself.⁴ Tradition has it that in the beginning God created sixteen families, seven of which He placed on this earth to inhabit it, while nine remained in heaven. The sixteen families maintained their communication with each other by means of a tree-ladder on *U Lum Sohpethneng*,⁵ which connected heaven and earth. In course of time, the seven families on earth disobeyed God and were disconnected from heaven. Those seven families, also

¹Shadap-Sen contends that the Khasis are not pure Mongoloids, while their ancestors may have been. N. C. Shadap-Sen, *The Origin and Early History of the Khasi-Synteng People* (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1981), 14-18.

²Natarajan, 10.

³Gurdon, 10.

⁴Kynpham Singh, "The Khasis: Their Houses and House Warming Customs," in *Khasi Heritage*, ed. Hipshon Roy (Shillong: Ri-Khasi Press, 1979), 171.

⁵Tralsing Mawthoh-Pongroop, *Ki Mawlynti Ka Jingngeit U Khasi* (Shillong: Lawjynriew Nongthymmai, 1980), 47-53.

known as *Ki Hynniew Trep*,¹ are believed by the traditional Khasis to be the progenitors of their race.

Their Appearance

Physically the Khasis are short in stature. An average male measures about 5' 2" to 5' 4".² They are strong and sturdy with big calf muscles, possibly because of the climbing and the heavy loads they often carry. The trunk is longer in proportion than the rest of the body.³ Their skin varies from "dark to light yellowish brown," depending on the locality.⁴

Hooker, among the very early writers on the Khasis, observed:

The Khasi people are of the Indo-Chinese race; they are short, very stout, and muscular, with enormous calves and knees, rather narrow eyes and little beard, broad high cheekbones, flat noses and open nostrils. . . . The hair is gathered into a top-knot, and sometimes shaved off at the forehead and temples.⁵

Their Characteristics

The Khasi people are generally sociable and friendly. In Gurdon's observation, the people are cheerful in disposition, lighthearted by nature, and, unlike the plains people,

¹*Hynniew Trep* is another name by which the Khasis call themselves today. This name points to their origin by divine design. The name evokes a sense of community and implies that they are the original dwellers of the land.

²Gurdon, 24.

³*Ibid.*, 3.

⁴*Ibid.*, 2.

⁵Chowdhury, *The Khasi Canvass*, 37.

seem to thoroughly appreciate a joke. They are generally good-tempered, but are occasionally prone to sudden outbursts of anger, accompanied by violence. They are fond of music.¹

Khasis are hard-working and normally do not want to be dependent on anybody. Perhaps this is why there are hardly any beggars among the Khasis. They have strong social bonds within the family and the clan. It is a matter of disgrace to the family or the clan if one of the members begs. Anything will be done to prevent this plight. Some support, financial or otherwise, is provided to prevent the disgrace of begging. The clan or family sees to the care of an invalid.

The Khasis are fond of amusement and merry-making.² They are not very serious about life, particularly the males, though this characteristic is changing, possibly because of the competitive living situation. The females appear to be more conscientious than the males. This could be due to the impact of the matrilineal system, with the women seeming to have more responsibility over things pertaining to the family.

The Khasis have a high sense of morality. They are basically truthful and honest. They keep the promises they make. On this, Shadap-Sen notes: "They possess two outstanding virtues: truth and honesty, and spurn the petty meanness practiced by the Bengalis."³ Gurdon similarly notes: "The inhabitants of the far interior are, as a rule, simple and straight forward people, and are quite as truthful and honest as peasants one

¹Gurdon, 4.

²Shadap-Sen, 190.

³Ibid., 191.

meets in other countries.”¹ At times people take advantage of their simple nature.

Furthermore, Khasis are not very assertive in nature and are generally satisfied with the current state of affairs, though the situation may be against their best interest. They are not very alert and conscious of the situation, therefore slow to act. Many times they become aware of problems almost too late to undo anything.

The Khasis are also known for staying in their own habitat, especially as compared to the Mizos and Nagas. Khasis do not want to move from their own land.² Perhaps this situation is due to the natural charm and attraction of the place, the local peace, and the comparative comfort they enjoy. These days, however, because of the growing competition and multiplying needs, the situation is changing.

Their Social Institutions

This section discusses some of the pertinent social institutions of the Khasis, i.e., the clan, matriarchy, inheritance, marriage, and divorce. However, many of the traditional practices and ceremonies mentioned are followed mostly by the Khasis who belong to the traditional religion and not by those who have become Christians.

The clan

The clan is known as *Ka kur* in Khasi. The clan is the first social unit in Khasi

¹Gurdon, 5.

²Natarajan, 160.

society,¹ the family being the primary unit.² The family comprises mother, father, and children. However a family can be extended to include the grandparents, the wife's unmarried brothers and sisters, and sometimes other widowed and divorced family members.³

Each clan traces its descent from a common ancestress known as *Ka lawbei-Tynrai*, literally, "root grandmother" or primeval ancestress. The descendants of the primeval ancestress form a clan which is further sub-divided into a subclan (*ka kpoh*) whose ancestress is called *Ka lawbei-Tymmen*. A subclan is further subdivided into families (*Ka ing*) whose ancestress is called *Ka lawbei-khynraw* or the young grandmother.⁴

Each clan has its triad. They are the ancestral mother (*Ka lawbei*), the progenitrix; the ancestral father (*U Thawlang*), the progenitor, the founder of the clan and institutor of the clan's religious rituals, the builder and consecrator of the clan's great ossuary (*mawbah*); and the eldest son (*U Suidnia*), the ancestral maternal uncle of the clan, the one who intercedes on the clan's behalf before God for their misdeeds. He is the priest of the

¹Helen Giri, "Social Institutions among the Khasis with Special Reference to Kinship, Marriage, Family Life and Divorce," in *Tribal Institutions of Meghalaya*, ed. S. K. Chattopadhyay (Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1985), 171.

²Kynpham Singh, "The Khasi Law on Property," in *Tribal Institutions of Meghalaya*, ed. S. K. Chattopadhyay (Guwahati: Spectrum Publication, 1985), 125.

³J. N. Chowdhury, "Kur (Clan) in Relation to Khasi Matriliney," in *Tribal Institutions of Meghalaya*, ed. S. K. Chattopadhyay (Guwahati: Spectrum Publication, 1985), 145.

⁴Gurdon, 63.

clan.¹ The tri-personal concept is reflected in the family unity: the mother representing *Ka Iawbei*, the father, *U Thawlang*, and the maternal uncle (mother's brother), *U Suidnia*.²

Members of the clan are bound to one another by belonging to one common source and by the performance of religious ceremonies which bring them together whenever these ceremonies are held.³ Those ceremonies which have a binding influence on the clan are ancestor veneration, death and disposal of the dead, birth and naming ceremony, and marriage. The last two, however may not necessarily demand that every member of the clan attend. Members of the clan cannot intermarry because they are considered brothers and sisters. Marriage within the clan is considered incest, a taboo that cannot be condoned.⁴

Matriarchy

Shibani Roy defines matriarchy thus: "Descent is reckoned through the female line and the children belong to the clan of the mother; the women have rights to property and

¹Kynpham Singh, "The Khasis," 95.

²Ibid., 100.

³David R. Syiemlieh, "Khasis," in *People of India*, ed. K. S. Singh (Calcutta: Anthropological Survey of India, 1994), 32:19.

⁴Members of the clan who commit the sin of incest are ostracized from the clan and from the community. When they die their bones are not stored in the clan ossuary. Their ashes are scattered in the air. No after-death ceremony is performed for them. Their souls are believed to linger in the air. These souls are said to assume the role of malevolent spirits.

can remarry after being widowed.”¹ Roy’s definition of matriarchy includes all the elements of the Khasi matriarchal system. Descent is through the mother. The children belong to the clan of the mother and take the mother’s surname instead of the father’s. In the case of the father’s death, as well as after a divorce, the children remain with the mother and are sustained by the mother. If the mother is not able, her parents or brothers and sisters take the children. In the case of the mother’s death, the children stay with the grandparents or in the absence of the latter, with the mother’s sisters or brothers. The father goes back to the house of his parents or youngest sister and stays there as long as he remains unmarried. The father, however, might still support his children, financially or otherwise, though he is not obligated to do so. If he does support them, he does it purely from a moral sense of responsibility.

In the Khasi matriarchal system, a woman enjoys a fairly prominent status, at times even surpassing² that of a man himself.³ Thus it is observed that a Khasi woman carries out many of the activities of a Khasi man.

The Khasi man’s position in the family is looked upon by some as somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, he appears to assume a very honorable and dignified status;

¹Shibani Roy, “Introduction,” in *People of India*, ed. K. S. Singh (Calcutta: Anthropological Survey of India, 1994), 32:13-14. The author’s observation on remarriage is somewhat inaccurate because Khasi women and men can also remarry after a divorce.

²Jacob Alukal, “Marriage among the Khasis,” *Indian Missiological Review* 2 (January 1980): 42.

³*Ibid.*, 72.

on the other hand, an inferior one--that of a mere titular figure.¹ Natarajan, however, observes that a Khasi man is not “the non-entity he is generally portrayed to be,” but as a matter of fact he plays an effective role both as a maternal uncle in his sister’s home and a father in his own.² Rymbai adds that contrary to the “mistaken idea of outsiders that women rule,” a Khasi man’s position is “doubly honored.” “In his sister’s home he is *U kni ha ka iap ka im* (an uncle in life-and-death). In his wife’s home he is *U kpa uba lah ba iai* (a father able and steadfast).”³

When a Khasi man marries the elder daughter who leaves her parents’ house, he is the head of the family. The welfare of the family depends primarily on him. In all matters within his family he holds an important place.⁴

In today’s society a Khasi man’s role is limited to his own family; he no longer plays the traditional role that he once occupied as an advisor and counselor in his sister’s home. As a matter of fact, most Khasi men today are not even aware of the traditional role they should play.

Inheritance

In the Khasi matriarchal system the youngest daughter inherits the property of the

¹O. L. Snaitang, “Christianity and Matrilineal Women of Meghalaya,” *National Council of Churches Review* 118 (June-July 1998): 365.

²Natarajan, 19.

³R. T. Rymbai, “Some Aspects of the Religion of the Khasi-Pnars,” in *Khasi Heritage*, ed. Hipshon Roy (Shillong: Ri-Khasi Press, 1979), 113.

⁴Kynpham Singh, “The Khasi Law,” 126.

parents or the ancestral property. The youngest daughter therefore enjoys more privileges than the other daughters in the family. The Khasis living in the southern portion, however, give property to both sons and daughters, though the larger portion still goes to the youngest daughter.¹ The Khasis in the eastern portion (Jaintia Hills) follow a slightly different system: the youngest daughter generally does not inherit the parents' property but gets it from the paternal uncles and brothers, as marriage among them is more duolocal² than conjugal.³

Today, however, the practice of inheritance is changing, especially among the educated ones. Shares are given to all sons and daughters, although the youngest daughter still gets the lion's share.

The youngest daughter, by virtue of inheriting the family property, looks after her aged parents, disabled uncles, brothers, sisters, nephews, and nieces in case these are orphaned or dislodged by their parents.⁴ Temporarily or permanently divorced maternal uncles and brothers find shelter in the youngest daughter's house as long as they remain unreconciled with their spouses or do not remarry. Hence the youngest daughter's house or *Ka ing khadduh*, as it is known, becomes a kind of a shelter for disabled and dislodged

¹Bareh, *Meghalaya*, 72.

²The term "duolocal" refers to a man who stays in his mother's house, works and earns for his mother's family and hardly gives anything to his wife and children. At his wife's house he becomes only a nocturnal visitor. This practice, which is virtually moribund, is followed by the Jaintia Khasis in the eastern region. In contemporary practice a man stays with his wife and children and looks after the affairs of his family.

³*Ibid.*, 71.

⁴Giri, "Social Institutions," 169.

family members. Bareh, however, observes that though the youngest daughter inherits the ancestral property, she is “strictly the custodian but not the possessor of the family property.”¹ She may dispose of some parts of the property but not of the ancestral house or land. Before disposing of any major ancestral property, she must first consult her maternal uncles and elder brothers who function as her advisors and counselors.²

Marriage

In a matrilineal society that is also matrilocal,³ a man goes to the girl’s home to live permanently if he marries the youngest daughter. But if he marries an elder sister he stays in his wife’s parents house for a few months or at most until the first child is born. Then he leaves his wife’s home to set up his own.

Khasi marriage is looked upon both as a civil and a religious contract,⁴ a sacred tie,⁵ whose purpose is to procreate⁶ or multiply and expand the clan.⁷ Marriage is

¹Bareh, *Meghalaya*, 71.

²Ibid.

³The term “matrilocal” refers to the couple’s living in the home of the wife’s mother.

⁴Gurdon, 127.

⁵Kynpham Singh, “The Khasis,” 102.

⁶Alukal, 46.

⁷Kynpham Singh, “The Khasis,” 102.

considered to bond two families,¹ a bond that remains even after death or divorce.²

Marriage may be arranged or the couple may choose each other,³ which is now the dominant practice.

Marriage among Khasis is strictly monogamous. Polygamy and polyandry are alien to the Khasi mentality.⁴

Cross-cousin marriage is generally not practiced. However a man may marry his maternal uncle's daughter. Traditionally this could happen only after the death of the uncle, perhaps because in ancient times an uncle (*Kni*) was regarded more as a father than an uncle.⁵ Today, however, the practice of waiting until the uncle dies is no longer followed. In the past, stray cases of a man marrying his father's sister's daughter have been permitted, but "such union is looked upon with disfavor."⁶ The Khasis have numerous prohibitions of marriage between near relations on paternal as well as maternal sides.⁷

¹Alukal, 44.

²Ibid., 46.

³Bareh, 75.

⁴Alukal, 46.

⁵Chowdhury, *The Khasi Canvass*, 130.

⁶Gurdon, 78.

⁷Chowdhury, *The Khasis*, 132. A man cannot marry his father's brother's daughter, his father's paternal uncle's daughter, nor his mother's sister's daughter as these are considered as sisters to him. He cannot marry two sisters simultaneously, but can marry his wife's younger sister one year after her death. Marriage contracted in defiance of these taboos, as well as marriage within the clan, is considered sacrilegious, or incestuous, *ka sang*, and is an unpardonable sin. A person committing *ka sang* is to be

Marriage among Khasis primarily is inter-clan, except when certain clans have made a bond of relationship in return for service rendered. For example the Mawrie and the Sohtun clans do not intermarry as once upon a time the two entered into a covenant with each other.¹ Gurdon has given a long list of exogamous clans that are prohibited to intermarry.² No bride price or dowry is practiced among the Khasis.

Divorce

Divorce is common among Khasis, a fact that has been observed practically by all scholars writing on them.³ The causes for this may be barrenness, adultery, ill-treatment, intoxication which results in inability to support a family, incompatibility of temperament, lunacy, or leprosy. Bareh attributes this phenomenon to the non-existence of rigid rules against divorce.⁴ Snaitang, on the other hand, attributes it to the matrilineal system.⁵

When divorce happens, both parties must consent.⁶ If one party does not consent to the divorce, the one desiring the divorce must pay a fine to the unwilling party; this is known as *Ka mynrain* or *Ka thnem*. No divorce is to be executed during pregnancy.⁷

expelled from the clan and community.

¹H. O. Mawrie, *U Khasi Bad La Ka Niam* (Shillong: Ri-Khasi Press, 1973), 20.

²Gurdon, 216-220.

³Ibid., 79.

⁴Bareh, *Meghalaya*, 75.

⁵Snaitang, "Christianity and Women," 367.

⁶Gurdon, 79.

⁷Alukal, 49.

This practice is now followed by the Khasis who belong to the traditional religion and not by those who have embraced Christianity.

The children of the divorced couple belong to the woman. No compensation or maintenance fee is demanded of the man.¹ Once the divorce has taken place the couple is not supposed to remarry each other again² nor marry anyone within the family of the divorced husband or wife.³

Religion

The religious makeup of the population in the area includes Christians (66.83 percent), Hindus (13.38 percent), Muslims (0.81 percent), Sikhs (0.22 percent), Buddhists (0.19 percent), Jains (0.04 percent), and the Khasi religion (*Ka Niam Khasi*) (18.38 percent). A small percentage (0.16) claim to belong to no religion.⁴

Christianity

Christianity was first introduced to the Khasi Jaintia Hills around 1813. The Baptist Mission from Serampore (West Bengal), through the initiative of William Carey, sent Krishna Chandra Pal, the first Protestant convert in India, to preach the gospel in

¹Syiemlieh, 20.

²Alukal, 49.

³Gurdon, 80.

⁴S. C Bhatt, *The Encyclopedia Gazetteers of India*, 11 vols. (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1998), 502-545.

these hills. Pal baptized seven Khasis.¹ But by 1838 the Serampore Baptist Mission withdrew from the Khasi Jaintia Hills because of its merger with the Baptist Missionary Society.²

It took several decades before Christianity found acceptance among the Khasis. Today there are a number of Christian groups or denominations in the region. Some have their origin with foreign missionaries who came to the area; others sprang up indigenously. While a few of these denominations have existed in the area for a number of years, others are of recent origin.

Churches of Foreign Origin

The Presbyterian Church

In 1841, at the recommendation of Jacob Tomlin, the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Mission (later known as Welsh Presbyterian Church)³ sent its first missionaries, Thomas Jones and his wife, who arrived in Cherrapunjee on June 22, 1841.⁴

Before taking up any real missionary activities, Jones converted the local Cherrapunjee dialect (which later became the official language of the Khasis) into written

¹O. L. Snaitang, *Christianity and Social Change in Northeast India* (Shillong: Vendrame Institute, 1993), 65.

²O. L. Snaitang, "Christianity and Tribal Solidarity in Meghalaya," *Indian Church History Review* 28 (June 1994): 27.

³Snaitang, *Christianity and Social Change*, 68.

⁴Natrajan, 62-63. While enroute to China, Jacob Tomlin spent nine months in Cherrapunjee. When he perceived that the Khasi Hills offered possibilities for missionary activities, he recommended sending a missionary.

form, using the Roman alphabet.¹ Jones established schools at various places for moral and spiritual teaching but his first eight converts did not come until March 8, 1846.²

The first decade of missionary efforts by the Welsh Presbyterian Mission yielded very little result. One of the reasons for this was that the missionaries laid down strict rules, which the people found difficult to obey: the prohibition of drinking, gambling, and freely engaging in sexual activity.³ But as time went by, the missionary effort of the Presbyterian Mission began to yield results. By 1866, there were sixty-five mission schools with some two thousand pupils distributed in almost all parts of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills.⁴ Snaitang adds that by the end of the nineteenth century there were schools and churches in almost all twenty-nine Khasi states.⁵

Snaitang attributes the growth of the Welsh Presbyterian Mission to the following factors: (1) the involvement of the indigenous membership in missionary outreach rather than totally depending on the activities and financial investment of the missionaries; (2) the emphasis of the missionaries on local leadership; (3) the establishment of schools, hospitals, church organizations, and the publication of literature; (4) the revival movement

¹Ibid., 63.

²Natarajan, 64-64.

³Snaitang, *Christianity and Social Change*, 72.

⁴F. S. Downs, *Christianity in North East India: Historical Perspectives* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1983), 218.

⁵Snaitang, *Christianity and Social Change*, 74.

of 1905-1906, which was inspired by the Welsh Revival of 1904-1905.¹

The Presbyterian Church is the oldest and largest of Christian denominations in the Khasi Jaintia Hills. In 1999 it had a total membership of 399,109.²

The Roman Catholic Church

The second oldest and largest Christian denomination in the area is the Roman Catholic Church. The work of the Catholic Mission started in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills with the arrival of the German Salvatorian Missionaries in 1890. Towards the end of 1891 the first converts were baptized.³

Initially, the work of the Catholic Mission was disrupted due to the outbreak of the First World War, which led to the deportation of the missionaries. In the meantime the work began by the German Salvatorians was supported by the Jesuit order from Calcutta until the arrival of the Salesians of Don Bosco in 1912.⁴

The Salesian missionaries took up missionary activities in new areas of both hills

¹Snaitang, *Christianity and Social Change*, 63.

²Khasi Jaintia Presbyterian Synod, "Report of Khasi Jaintia Presbyterian Synod for the Year 1998-2000," Khasi Jaintia Presbyterian Synod, Shillong, December 1999, 2. The above membership figure includes communicants (160,883) and noncommunicants (238,226). Communicants are full-fledged members of the church and are entitled to participate in communion and other sacred ceremonies of the church. Noncommunicants include those who may have been baptized but are not full-fledged members of the church and cannot participate in church ceremonies.

³M. S. Sangma, "Advent of the Pioneer Christian Missions in North-East India," *Indian Church History Review* 28 (June 1994): 5-14.

⁴O. L. Snaitang, ed., *Churches of Indigenous Origins in Northeast India* (Delhi: Mylapore Institute for Indigenous Studies, 2000), 124-125.

and plains. They expanded the existing educational work to the Khasi villages, and in many places were pioneers in various trades and handicrafts, including tailoring, carpentry, shoe-making, printing, composing, motor-mechanics, book-binding, and electrical engineering. In 1931 the Catholic membership was 15,056 and ten years later had increased to about 50,000.¹

The Catholic Church today maintains the best educational, medical, and technical institutions, not only in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills but in the entire North-Eastern Region of India. As of 1999 the total membership of the Roman Catholic Church in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills was 335,066.²

The Anglican Church

The Anglican Church or the Church of England began its work in 1866 when Bishop Cotton from Calcutta encouraged the establishment of a mission station in Shillong. Bishop Milan donated Rs.300 to construct a church building that was dedicated on August 18, 1872.³

The purpose of the establishment of the Anglican Church in Shillong was primarily to provide for the spiritual needs of the British community living there. Hence it did not undertake any missionary activities and as a result did not grow. Today the Anglican

¹Snaitang, *Christianity and Social Change*, 79-81.

²Roman Catholic Church, Office of the Archbishop's House, *Statistics of Shillong Archdiocese for the Year 1999* (Shillong: Roman Catholic Church, 1999), 1. The above membership figure includes baptized adults and children.

³Sangma, "Advent of Pioneer Christian Missions," 12-13.

church has a membership of approximately 3,000 in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills.¹

The Seventh-day Adventist Church

The work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church started in the early 1930s with the arrival of L. J. Burgess, W. A. Barlow, C. A. Larsen, J. F. Ashlock, and O. W. Lange. Initially, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the territory of the Khasi-Jaintia Conference experienced a slow growth. However, of late the church has made a comparatively good advance. As of 1999 the membership was 2,951, counting only the baptized members from the age of thirteen onwards. The church runs two high schools: the Brookside Adventist School, which is a day school in Shillong, and the Adventist Higher Secondary School (AHSS) in Thadlaskein, Jowai, a boarding school. The church also runs a number of elementary and middle schools. In 1999, the government recognized the AHSS. A seminary is attached to the boarding school.²

Churches of Indigenous Origin

Besides the churches which owe their origin to the work of the missionaries who came into the area, several others came into existence after Christianity was introduced into the area. These churches, spearheaded by local members, were the Church of God, Restoration Movement (Churches of Christ), the Christ National Church, the Assembly Church of Jesus Christ (Full Gospel), the Church of Christ (Mawlai Nonglum), the Church

¹R. M. Kharmawphlang, Treasurer of All Saints Church, interview by author, August 8, 2000, Shillong, Meghalaya, India.

²A detailed presentation of the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the territory of the Khasi-Jaintia Conference is given in chapter 3.

of God (Ecclesia), All-One-in-Christ Church Fellowship, and Church of the Full Gospel Fellowship.

The Church of God

This church arose out of theological differences between the Presbyterian missionaries and some Khasi Christians in matters relating to salvation, baptism, and the practice of foot washing. It was started by Wolley Mohan Roy Laitphlang, who was later joined by Joy Mohan Roy,¹ Jobin Roy Khain, and E. Dhorum.² The movement was formed in 1902 at Myllem.

The leaders of the movement derived their theology from two basic sources: the Salvation Army and the Baptists.³ Later this group affiliated itself with the Anderson Church of God, U.S.A., through the American wife of Joy Mohan Roy, who later became a principal figure in the movement. The growth of the Church of God is generally attributed to its healing ministry through prayer and fasting.⁴ Today the Church has a membership of 70,000.⁵

¹Joy Mohan Roy was later known as J. J. M. Nichols-Roy, a name that adds his wife's surname. Among the Khasis, Joy Mohan Roy is popularly known as Bah Joy.

²Ibid., 84.

³Natarajan, 84.

⁴Snaitang, *Social Change and Christianity*, 90.

⁵N. S. Iangrai, Executive Secretary, Church of God, Meghalaya-Assam, interview by author, August 4, 2000, Shillong, Meghalaya, India. Though the church does not practice infant baptism, the membership figure includes children who have been dedicated.

Restoration Movement (Churches of Christ),
Khasi Jaintia Hills

The movement splintered from the Church of God. The leader was Endren Uriah from Nongwar. The splinter was over the issue of divorce and remarriage, specifically because one church recognized the remarriage of one of its members even while her invalid husband was still alive. The movement started around 1921.¹

Christ National Church

Christ National Church was started in 1924 by Mon Lyngdoh, an ordained pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Laitumkhrah, over the issue of adultery. The dissenting group did not agree with the mother church for recognizing the divorce of eight church couples, whose marriage contract was abrogated in court, contending that marriage is not only a civil contract but divinely ordained.

When Mon Lyngdoh and his group of supporters were not successful in bringing about the proposed changes, they broke away from the Presbyterian Church. Other members from Sohryngkham and Jowai joined them. Today the membership of this group stands at 3,500.²

¹S. Bnasan Uriah, "Restoration Movement-Churches of Christ, Khasi-Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya (Assam)," in *Churches of Indigenous Origin in Northeast India*, ed. O. L. Snaitang (New Delhi: Mylapore Institute for Indigenous Studies, 2000), 40-52. The church does not believe in keeping count of its membership; therefore no numbers are available. However, in the Jaintia Hills it has a significant following.

²K. Nongrum, Head Pastor, Christ National Church, interview by author, August 8, 2000, Shillong, Meghalaya, India. The membership figure represents those who have been initiated into church membership, eighteen years of age and above.

The Assembly Church of Jesus Christ (Full Gospel)

This was another splinter group from the Presbyterian Church. The movement began in the 1920s, but the actual separation took place only in 1931, when the Presbyterian Church officially took note of their separation. The movement was led by Joseph Dkhar. The church is Pentecostal in nature, believing in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, with the speaking in tongues as a sign of being a true believer. The church has connections with organizations outside the country which strengthen its growth. The church has a membership of 12,000.¹

The Church of Christ (Mawlai Nonglum)

The church broke away from the Mawlai Presbyterian Church, led by Rajani Mohan Kharkongor. The break-away group arose out of a disagreement with certain doctrinal and biblical teachings as interpreted by the church. It did not accept its hierarchical system of administration. What further worsened the dissatisfaction of the group was the nullification of the election of the four elders (Rajani M. Kharkongor, Seringham A. Chyne, Rukia Rumnong, and Sati Raja Syiem) on November 8, 1931. Thus on April 30, 1933, the group established itself as the Church of Christ. The church practices baptism by immersion, and is autonomously managed.² It has a membership of

¹S. War, Vice-president, Church of Jesus Christ (Full Gospel), interview by the author, August 8, 2000, Shillong, Meghalaya, India. The church practices baptism by immersion, however the membership includes also the children who have been dedicated.

²Helen Giri, "The Church of Christ in Khasi and Jaintia Hills," in *Churches of Indigenous Origins in Northeast India*, ed. O. L. Snaitang (New Delhi: Mylapore Institute for Indigenous Studies, 2000), 53-65.

approximately 8,000.¹

Church of God (Ecclesia)

This is an offshoot of the Church of God and was started by W. M. Roy. The reasons for the split were “theological, structural and political factors.”² The basic issue was speaking in tongues, which was introduced by the wife of Joy Mohan Roy in the late 1920s, a practice she brought from her home church, the Anderson Church of God, U.S.A. The Church of God (Ecclesia) was founded in 1940. Today the church has a membership of approximately 5,000.³

All-One-in-Christ Church Fellowship

This group was founded by Rison Singh War, a pastor in the Church of Christ. The movement began in 1956 under the patronage of K. K. Biswas, a preacher of the church founded by H. R. Samoddar in West Bengal. The church still maintains connection with the West Bengal Church. Its membership is concentrated in the West Khasi Hills and

¹E. D. Budon, head elder, The Church of Christ (Mawlai Nonglum), interview by author, November 8, 2000, Shillong, Meghalaya, India. Membership is concentrated in the central portion of the area of the Khasi-Jaintia Conference. In Mawlai Nonglum itself (a locality in Shillong), the church has a membership of 2,754 with 1,093 baptized members. The total membership of 8,000 includes baptized and non-baptized members.

²Snaitang, *Social Change and Christianity*, 90.

³B. Kharmujai, Director of Christian Education, Church of God Ecclesia, interview by the author, August 8, 2000, Shillong, Meghalaya, India. The church practices baptism by immersion, however the membership figure includes also the children who have been dedicated.

totals approximately 4,000.¹

The Full Gospel Fellowship Church

The church was founded by Hamlet Roy Rajee in 1974 as a parachurch organization to preach the Word and encourage believers in the different denominational groups. However, as time went by, the organization grew to a proportion that required some kind of organization. Thus, from 1977 onwards, Rajee began to organize regular Bible studies in different centers. By 1985 there were seven regular Bible study centers in and around Shillong. In 1983 the fellowship framed and adopted a constitution for itself. In 1984, the need for a proper administrative setup was felt. Different departments were set up to care for the various needs of the church. The church was officially founded in 1995. Its present membership is about 4,000.²

Other indigenous movements which are of very recent origin are the Bible Believing Church (1990), Grace Covenant Church (1992), Living Word Church (1993), and the Faith Christian Church (1998).³

¹K. S. Lyngdoh, Pastor, All-One-in Christ Church Fellowship, interview by author, August 4, 2000, Shillong, Meghalaya, India. The membership figures include the children who have been dedicated.

²Barnold Wankhar, "The Church of the Full Gospel Fellowship," in *Churches of Indigenous Origin of Northeast India*, ed. O. L. Snaitang (New Delhi: Mylapore Institute for Indigenous Studies, 2000), 139-143. The church practices baptism by immersion, but the membership figure includes all the children who have been dedicated.

³O. L. Snaitang, "Churches of Indigenous Origins in Northeast India," in *Churches of Indigenous Origin in Northeast India*, ed. O. L. Snaitang (New Delhi: Mylapore Institute for Indigenous Studies, 2000), 195.

The Indigenous Khasi Religion (*Ka Niam Khasi*)

As already pointed out, 18 percent of Khasis adhere to *Ka Niam Khasi*. Its adherents accept it as a God-given and God-sent religion for the Khasi race.

Some scholars, including Gurdon, regard *Ka Niam Khasi* as animistic.¹ Its adherents, however, claim that *Ka Niam Khasi* is fundamentally monotheistic. Rymbai, an adherent and advocate of the religion, strongly emphasized that it is monotheistic² and vehemently reacted against the missionaries for labeling *Ka Niam Khasi* as animistic.³ Bareh, a Khasi but not an adherent, sees the religion in its primary stage as apparently monotheistic, but notes that it became corrupted through the years by the worship of other deities.⁴

The Concept of God

Ka Niam Khasi teaches that God is Creator and calls him *U Blei Nongthaw*, meaning God the Creator, and usually add *U Nongbuh* or the designer. Hence they say *U Blei Nongbuh Nongthaw*, meaning that God is both Creator and Designer because before he created he first planned and designed.⁵

¹Gurdon, 105.

²Rymbai, "Some Aspects," 115.

³Ibid., 114.

⁴Bareh, *Meghalaya*, 77.

⁵H. O. Mawrie, "God and Man," in *Khasi Heritage*, ed. Hipshon Roy (Shillong: Ri-Khasi Press, 1979), 83-84. The Khasis use other names for God which reveal his different functions: *U Lei Longing Lei Longsem*, meaning a God of the family; *U Leilongkur Leilongjait*, a God of the clan; *U Leilongspah Leilongphew*, a God of wealth

According to Rymbai, Khasis believe that God is omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient. He further says that the Khasis view it as a sacrilege to picture God in any shape or form.¹

Sin and Salvation

The concept of sin and evil in the Khasi religion is not quite clearly spelled out, even though the ideas of the moral fall and of the sense of committing sin are present. The origin of sin or evil is clearly illustrated in the two legends, *U Lum Sohpetbneng* and *Ka Krem Lamet Latang*.

According to the legend of *U Lum Sohpetbneng*, there was a time when this world had no sin.² Everyone was living in peace and prosperity. In the beginning of time God made sixteen families, seven of which chose to inhabit this earth and nine chose to remain in heaven. For quite some time, the nine above and the seven below had daily communication with each other by means of the tree that connected heaven and earth. Eventually the tree that grew on *U Lum Sohpetbneng* was felled.

and prosperity; *U Leimuluk Leijaka*, a God of territory and state.

¹Rymbai, "Some Aspects," 114. The gender denotations of God as *U* (He) and *Ka* (She), as well as the plural number *Ki* (They) do not imply that God has different genders and persons. God is above gender and person. In normal circumstances the Khasis address God as *U Blei*, denoting masculinity. The use of *Ka Blei*, denoting femininity is due, in Gurdon's opinion, to the influence of the matrilineal system adopted by the Khasis. See Gurdon, 105. The plural, on the other hand, is used to show respect for God. See Boxter Kharbteng, "A Study Concerning the Contemporary Revival of Khasi Religion" (M.A. thesis, Andrews University, Spicer College Extension, Pune, India, 1985), 40.

²H. O. Mawrie, *The Essence of the Khasi Religion* (Shillong: Ri-Khasi Press, 1981), 5.

The seven families lost connection with God and were left in total disarray.¹ How the tree fell is a matter of conjecture. Mawrie says that the evil one was jealous of God's mastery over man, and so he caused the tree to fall.² Others suggest that the felling of the tree was due to man's deliberate abandonment of his God-given occupation, thus breaking his allegiance with God.³ When the tree fell, another tree grew on another hill, *U Lum Diengiei*. This tree grew so large that its branches spread out over the entire earth and covered it with total darkness.⁴

The *Ka Krem Lamet Latang* legend states that in the beginning all creatures on this earth decided to celebrate together a dance festival.⁵ Every creature came to the dance except the sun and the moon, who were siblings. When everyone was about to disperse, the sun and the moon turned up and started to dance. But as the sun and the moon were dancing, there was a burst of insulting laughter because brother and sister were not supposed to dance together. The sun felt insulted, left the dance and hid in the cave, *Ka Krem Lamet Latang*. That left the entire earth in darkness. A council of all creatures was held to entreat the sun to come out of the cave to shed its light once more. Different creatures volunteered to go entreat the sun--first the elephant, then the hornbill, but to no avail. Finally the cock, using all his persuasion skills, succeeded in entreating the sun to

¹Another name for the seven families is *Ki Hynniew Trep Hynniew Skum*.

²Mawrie, *U Khasi Bad La Ka Niam*, 49.

³Natarajan, 45.

⁴Mawrie, *The Essence of Khasi Religion*, 6.

⁵Mawthoh-Pongroop, 97-112.

once more light the earth. Therefore to this day the cock is used as a sacrificial animal and is the symbol of *Ka Niam Khasi*.

Salvation is the restoration of the broken relationship between God and man as brought out in the legends of *U Lum Sohpetbneng*, *U Lum Diengiei*, and *Ka Krem Lamet Latang*. Human beings can do nothing to merit salvation, hence the symbol of a cock as an intermediary. While theologically the Khasis concede the existence of a mediator, in reality they have none. They have no priest, no Savior, but approach God directly. Their means of attaining salvation is by leading a righteous life and being at peace with everyone. The Khasis believe that man's duty is to earn righteousness and for this purpose he was born. They use the phrase *kamai ia ka hok*, meaning to earn righteousness by one's own effort and labor.¹

In this connection it is noteworthy to quote Rymbai, one of the able exponents of *Ka Niam Khasi*:

They also have no saints or martyrs or any system of established priesthood, for their creed is that each man must save himself by his own actions: living justly, observing and obeying the word of God transmitted to him through the advice of his parents, morning and evening, from his early childhood.²

Good and Evil Spirits

According to Mawrie, another strong champion of the Khasi religion, the Khasis

¹Rymbai, "Some Aspects," 111.

²Ibid., 115.

were not originally devil worshipers. It is a “Himalayan blunder,” he contends, to label the Khasi religion as a devil-worshipping religion.¹ However, Mawrie does admit that devil worship happens “at times of spiritual decay when a Khasi loses his confidence in God.” He further notes that in contemporary Khasi society there are people who have become avaricious and have no fear of sin, who keep the devils as their household deities and worship them. These deities are said to bring wealth, material prosperity, and splendor to their keepers.² However, according to Bareh, their worship was brought about by the inherent fear that fiends, ghosts, and malevolent spirits might do them harm unless propitiated. The worship of nature deities is further viewed by Bareh as coming out of the belief that these deities guard and protect the people from epidemics, foreign invasion, and bad harvests.³

Adherents of *Ka Niam Khasi* believe in different kinds of spirits, some of which are considered good and some bad. The ones in the “good” category are the spirits of the ancestors of the clans. Others are *U Leimuluk Leijaka*, the god of the state, propitiated every year; *U Lei Umtung*, the god of water, also propitiated every year; *U Lei Longspah*, the god of wealth, worshiped in order to increase prosperity; and *U Ryngkew U Basa* and *U Phan U Kyrpad*, tutelary village deities.⁴

Those in the “bad” category are the spirits of the dead and the household deities.

¹Mawrie, “God and Man,” 36.

²Ibid., 42.

³Bareh, *Meghalaya*, 77.

⁴Gurdon, 106-107.

In this category are three types. First are the spirits of those who died and whose clansmen refused to perform their death rites because of their committing an unpardonable sin, such as incest. These spirits are ferocious and horrible devils whose purpose is to torment their clan people because they were rejected.

Second come the spirits of those whose death rites could not be performed by their clansmen for reasons beyond their control and whose bones could not be deposited in the clan's stone cairn. These spirits hover over nature and are shy of human beings. They live in terrible anguish because of their sad lot of being denied burial privileges. These are normally good-natured sprits and do no harm to man.

The third group is that of spirits who dwell in the hills, the woods, the trees, the caves, the streams or rivers, or the atmosphere. They are known as *Ksuid-Lum* (hill or woods devils), *Ksuid-Wah* (stream or river devils), and *Ksuid-Suin* (atmosphere devils). Some of these spirits are called *Ki Ksuid-Mynsaw*, as they are the spirits of those who died in accidents or who were killed for their criminal behavior. These spirits are malicious and seize any opportunity to exercise their devilish power. The names of some of these spirits are *U Rih*, a malaria or fever devil; *Ka Niangriang* or *Ka Kyian*, water spirit that causes pus in the ears of the children who happen to play or use the water inhabited by the spirit; *Ka Lei Kupli*, who troubles some people who cross the river Kupli; and *U Triang* and *U Rwaibah*, who cause heartache to human beings.¹ There are yet others such as *Ka Khlam* (cholera deity), *U Thynrei*, *U Supa*, and *U Siam Niangthyliew*, that are spirits/deities of

¹Mawrie, "God and Man," 40-41.

measles and smallpox.¹

The queen of the bad spirits is *Ka Tyrut*, “the greatest foe to a Khasi family.”²

Deaths by accident and during pregnancy are believed to be caused by *Ka Tyrut*.³

Ancestor Worship

The ancestors are revered because it is believed that “the welfare of the living depends on the welfare of the dead,”⁴ that they can guide the living and bless them with a prosperous life.⁵ Ancestor worship is also believed to be a means of continued relation between the living and the dead. Such a relation is necessary because the ancestors have become supernatural beings, partners with God, and have the power to assist and bless their descendants to grow and prosper.⁶ Therefore it is the duty of everyone to honor dead ancestors. Willful neglect of this duty deprives one of the ancestors’ help and defense from the influence of numerous evil spirits. Ancestors are invoked periodically and in time of trouble. Offerings of food, called *Ka ai bam*, are made to ensure that the spirits of the dead ancestors bless the living members of the clan with peace and prosperity.⁷

¹Natarajan, 47.

²Mawrie, “God and Man,” 48.

³Ibid.

⁴Gurdon, 111.

⁵Maham Singh, “Nongkrem Festival,” in *Khasi Heritage*, ed. Hipshon Roy (Shillong: Ri-Khasi Press, 1979), 151.

⁶H. Bareh, *The History and Culture of the Khasi People* (Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1997), 333.

⁷Gurdon, 109-110.

The ancestors most revered are three: *Ka Iawbei* is the ancestral mother of the clan; *U Thawlang* is the first father and husband of *Ka Iawbei*; *U Suidnia* is the first maternal uncle, the elder brother of *Ka Iawbei*.¹

The Afterlife

Those who follow the traditional religion have a definite belief in an afterlife or life after death.² They believe that the souls of those whose funeral rites have been duly performed by their relatives go to the house of God in heaven, where there are betel-nut groves. The phrase *bam kwai ha ing U Blei* is used as a euphemism for the death of someone. Eating betel-nut is thus viewed as supreme bliss for a Khasi.³ On the other hand, the souls of those whose funeral rites have not been performed because they committed *Ka sang* (incest, breaking a taboo, or sin) or because their clan people could not do so, linger in the atmosphere and take the form of evil spirits. According to Gurdon, however, these souls take the forms of animals, birds, or insects and roam this earth; he thinks the idea is borrowed from the Hindu concept of the transmigration of the

¹To commemorate these ancestors Khasis used to erect menhirs or monoliths varying in height from 2 or 3 ft to 12 or 14 ft, erected singly or by odd numbers, up to 11. Of these the tallest is always in the middle. It represents *U Suidnia*, the maternal uncle, who stands between his conjugal family and his clan. In front of these standing stones or menhirs is a flat stone supported by three or more stones about two feet high. This flat stone is called *Ka mawkynthei*, which represents *Ka Iawbei*. These memorial stones were erected whenever the ceremony of depositing bones in the cinerarium took place.

²Natarajan, 49.

³Gurdon, 105.

soul.¹

Kynpham Singh pointed out that the Khasis who are still in *Ka Niam Khasi* believe in future reward and punishment. This is contrary to Gurdon's observation that the Khasis do not believe in punishment after death or the idea of hell.² According to Kynpham Singh:

God is ever-seeing and ever-vigilant. He is here and everywhere. He keeps track of all our words, deeds and acts. For every slip, for every transgression, for every crime which disturbs the harmony God will chastise us, will correct us and will punish us, now, soon after or at a definite future time.³

Natarajan observes that according to Rabon Singh the idea of destiny in the Khasi religion is understood in two ways: man's destination can either be in the house of God (*Ka ing U Blei*) or in the infernal abode.⁴

The three commandments which the Khasis believe to have been given to them by God do bear implications on their concept of afterlife.⁵ They are: *Kamai ia ka hok* (earn righteousness), *Tipbriew-tipblei* (know man and know God), and *Tip-kur tip-kha* (know maternal and paternal relations).

The first commandment enjoins leading a righteous life by putting forth effort and labor. This implies that one should not steal or covet that which is not one's own or do

¹Gurdon, 105.

²Ibid., 106.

³Kynpham Singh, "The Khasis," 98.

⁴Natarajan, 43.

⁵Rymbai, "Some Aspects," 111-112.

anything that is not morally and ethically right. Failure to do so brings future punishment. Man's entire life on earth is for the sole purpose of earning righteousness.

The second commandment teaches that human beings can only know God when they know their fellows. Knowing one's fellow connotes being good and helpful to one and all and not causing any harm and injury to anyone for one's own benefit or pleasure.

The third commandment implies that one respects relations from both the mother's side and the father's side of the family. The implication is that one should not marry someone within the clan or those nearest to one's father, alluding to *Ka sang* or the sin of incest, considered unpardonable among the Khasis.

The three commandments are tied to the idea of afterlife and future reward. The implication is that a person who has led a good life by obeying the above three commandments can expect a future reward which is a good life hereafter. But one who fails forfeits that life and suffers eternal punishment. Therefore it is the purpose of every Khasi to lead a good life, abiding by the three commandments.

The Khasis of *Ka Niam Khasi* also believe that the soul or spirit of the righteous dead, called *U maina*, wings its way to be with God in his house, and the body called *Ka ruh pyut* (rotten cage), returns to Mother Earth after having been purified by fire.¹

Rituals and Ceremonies

Rituals and ceremonies, as well as the festivals of the adherents of *Ka Niam Khasi*, relate to various aspects of life. Among the rituals, the most common is that of egg

¹Rymbai, "Some Aspects," 114.

breaking,¹ which always precedes a sacrifice. Especially in times past, a Khasi will not do anything without first taking recourse to egg-breaking.² This is done to ascertain answers for both auspicious and inauspicious occasions. Among the common ceremonies are the birth and naming ceremony, marriage ceremony, and the rituals surrounding death.

Birth ceremony

Among the Khasis the birth of a child is considered auspicious. Even before birth, great care is taken by the mother who carries the child. Thus Mawrie observes that it is improper for the mother to say, "I have conceived it six months ago," instead she should say, "For six months now I have cared for it honorably."³

During pregnancy a special ritual has to be performed for the expectant mother and the child to be born. This ceremony is known as *Ka tap kpoh* (consecration of the mother's womb). *Ka tap kpoh* is performed to invoke God and the ancestors for the mother's physical health and the safe delivery of the child. The common practice in performing this ceremony is to sacrifice a hen with spotless legs. The sacrificer asks for God's approval through the sign in the intestines of the hen. If the sign is not favorable

¹Egg-breaking is a form of divination used for seeking approval and solution to various problems such as the cause of the sickness; whether to undertake a journey or a business transaction, whether to marry a person. Answers and solutions are determined by the positions of the broken bits of egg shells on the egg-breaking board. If the fragment of the turmeric-died shell falls with its inside downward, this is a good sign; but if one of the fragments lies with its outside downward, it is a bad omen. A diviner presides over the egg-breaking session.

²Gurdon, 119.

³Mawrie, "God and Man," 74.

the sacrifice is repeated until the desired sign is obtained.

The ceremony of *Ka tap kpoh* is to safeguard the expectant mother from *Ka iap tyrut ka lap smer* (death caused by *Ka Tyrut*). The belief is that prenatal and postnatal deaths are caused by *Ka Tyrut* (the most ferocious spirit) and any family struck by this misfortune has to perform the *Ka mait tyrut* ceremony, literally meaning “to chop off” *Ka Tyrut*. The purpose of the ceremony is to cleanse the family from *Ka Tyrut* and its onslaught on the family. Unmarried and pregnant women are not allowed to attend the funeral of one whose death is believed to have been caused by *Ka Tyrut* lest they be caught by the ferocious spirit.¹

Naming ceremony

The naming ceremony or *Ka jer khun* takes place the day following the child's birth. Close relatives and neighbors attend. Soaked rice is pounded in wooden mortars until it is reduced to flour. The rice flour is then kept in a bamboo winnower (*U prah*).

Three names are generally chosen by *Ka meikha* (husband's mother).² The three names are repeated one after the other while the rice beer from the gourd drops on the floor. The name which synchronizes with the last drop from the spout of the gourd is taken as the favored name for the child. The performer invokes God to grant good luck to the child.

If God, the ancestress, the ancestor, the ancestral uncle, or the dead close relatives

¹Ibid., 75-76.

²Giri, 168.

of the child is not happy with the name given, the name will not bring good fortune to the child. When not certain about the favor of God and the ancestors with regard to the name given to the child, a confirmation ceremony (*Ka tap lubri*) is performed at a later time. If the child is well and healthy, it is taken that God and the ancestors are happy with the name, which is confirmed during the *Ka tap lubri* ceremony. During *Ka tap lubri* the male child is presented with a *Ka jymphong* (sleeveless hand-woven jacket) and the female child with a *Ka jain kyrshah* (apron).

If after *Ka tap lubri* is performed the child does not grow as a healthy child should, it is believed that there is discontent on the part of God, the ancestors, and other dead relatives. In this case a new name is chosen, and a new garment is given to the child, symbolizing the start of a new life for the child. But if after this the child continues to be unhealthy, the family then surrenders the matter to the paternal grandmother (*Ka meikha*) of the child. The paternal grandmother takes total responsibility over the child, gives the child a new name, purchases new clothes, and earnestly prays to God for the child's welfare. This surrendering of the child to the paternal grandmother's care is known as *Ka kyrbah nongkha*.¹

Some of these rituals and ceremonies vary from area to area, slightly or greatly. For example, the naming ceremony among the *Jaintias* is entirely different from what has been mentioned above, which mainly relates to the central upland *Khasis*.²

¹Mawrie, "God and Man," 77-78.

²Among the *Jaintias*, for example, an elderly woman (aunt), instead of an elderly man (uncle), takes two sticks, one on each hand, and after raising them to shoulder height drops the sticks to the ground. If the fallen sticks cross each other, it is taken that the

The birth of twins among the *Khasis* is considered a taboo or *ka sang*. The taboo is considered even more serious if the twins are one boy and one girl. The birth of twins in the family is regarded as a visitation from God for some *sang* or transgression committed by some member of the clan. The bones of the twins are not placed in the clan's cairn after their cremation.

Marriage ceremony

There are three types of marriage ceremonies among the *Khasis*: *Ka pynhiarsynjat*, *Ka lamdoh*, and *Ka iadih kiad*.¹ The first and second are celebrated by the rich and the well-to-do, and the third by the poor who cannot afford to enjoy a feast. The first and second are more or less identical, as Gurdon observes, except that while in the first there is an exchange of rings between the parties, as well as the sacrifice of pigs after the ritual ceremony; in the second there is neither an exchange of rings nor the sacrifice of pigs, and meat is usually bought at the market.² The first ceremony is more complicated and elaborate than the second.³

spirits have approved the name. If the sticks do not cross each other the process is repeated until the required position of the sticks is achieved. The process is not so reliable, as there is room for manipulation. Just before the process begins, an egg taken from a basket in the center of the room is broken. And just before a woman drops the sticks to the ground she shouts, "What name do you give this child?" As the name is mentioned she drops the sticks. If the sticks do not cross each other, a new name is given and another egg is broken.

¹Gurdon, 127; Mawrie calls them *Ka pynhiar sati-synjat lat*, *Ka lam ja lam doh*, and *Ka suit ka shor*. Mawrie, "God and Man," 60.

²Gurdon, 131.

³Shadap-Sen, 223.

Death and disposal-of-the-dead ceremony

The death ceremony is very elaborate and extremely complicated.¹ Shadap-Sen observes that “the funeral ceremonies clearly indicate the strong belief of the people in the connection between the living and the dead and the influence which the dead were supposed to exercise on the living members of the family.”²

The funeral rites for the dead are very important. According to MacCormack, full rites must be performed for the dead to ensure their place with their ancestors in the house of God in heaven, for their place in heaven depends on receiving proper death rites at the hands of their clan members. Therefore elaborate ceremonies for the dead are conducted, lasting sometimes five days, for it is believed that when the individual’s bones are finally resting in the cairn with those of his ancestors, his place in heaven is assured.³

Revival of the Khasi Religion (*Ka Niam Khasi*)

In recent years the Khasi religion has been asserting its presence. The reason for this resurgence is the urge of those belonging to the traditional religion to preserve Khasi traditional values that are allegedly being threatened by the forces of Westernization and Christianity. Adherents of *Ka Niam Khasi* approached the task by conducting regular seminars and meetings to woo back the people to the religion of the ancestors. Current

¹Gurdon, 132.

²Shadap-Sen, 227.

³Natarajan, 49.

meetings, unlike those in the past, attract large numbers of the adherents.¹

With Christianity as the major religion (nearly 67 percent of the population) and *Ka Niam Khasi* as the second religious system (18 percent), there is little room for the influence of Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism which are present in the area. Their impact upon the Khasis is negligible.

Festivals

There are three main festivals among the Khasis: *Ka Shadsuk Mynsiem*, *Ka Shad Nongkrem* or *Ka Pomblang Nongkrem*, and *Ka Behdeinkhlam*. The first two are performed by the Khasis who live on the western side and the third by those who live on the eastern side, the Pnars or Jaintias. The festivals portray both the social and religious aspects of life among Khasis. The festivals are fervently adhered to, especially by those still in *Ka Niam Khasi*. Festivals are also an expression of gratitude and happiness.²

Ka Shadsuk Mynsiem Festival

Ka Shadsuk Mynsiem literally means “the dance of a peaceful heart.”³ This a thanksgiving dance performed once a year for three days. Rymbai notes, “It is a dance of

¹An extensive treatment and evaluation of the recent revival of the Khasi religion appears in B. Kharbteng’s M.A. thesis, “A Study Concerning the Contemporary Revival of Khasi Religion.”

²R. T. Rymbai, “The Festivals of a Khasi and Their Influence on His Life,” in *Khasi Heritage*, ed. Hipshon Roy (Shillong: Ri-Khasi Press, 1979), 125.

³Khongphai’s English rendering, “dance for peace of mind,” could be construed as an interpretation and not as a translation. See A. S. Khongphai, “Shadsuk Mynsiem (Thanks-giving Dance),” in *Khasi Heritage*, ed. Hipshon Roy (Shillong: Ri-Khasi Press, 1979), 131.

thanksgiving to God for all the blessings of the past year. It is a dance of devotional prayer for the blessings yet to come.”¹ It is held during spring, usually in the month of April, at a place called *Weiking*, in the northwest end of Shillong, which is the reason why it is popularly known as *Ka Shad Weiking*.² Though the festival fosters social integration and good will among all Khasis, in its traditional setting it does not involve ceremonial acts of propitiating the Creator.³

The festival is likewise a joyous occasion that brings together people from the whole Khasi community, thus fostering unity and integration. Rymbai states that it is a dance of virgins glorifying innocent maidenhood; of men, young and old, praying for strength and vitality and exulting in the virility already given them. Traditionally, it is an occasion when young men select their life partners from among the maidens who display themselves in the dance.⁴ The dance is organized by *Ka Seng Khasi*,⁵ a patron organization of *Ka Niam Khasi*.

Ka Shad Nongkrem Festival

The *Ka Shad Nongkrem* is an annual religious festival associated with *Ka*

¹Rymbai, “Some Aspects,” 125.

²*Ka Shadsuk Mynsiem* is also held elsewhere in the Khasi Hills.

³P. R. G. Mathur, *The Khasi of Meghalaya* (New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1979), 91.

⁴Rymbai, “Some Aspects,” 125.

⁵*Seng Khasi* was organized in 1899 for the purpose of safeguarding the traditional customs of the Khasis from the influence of Christianity and Westernization.

Pomblang Nongkrem, a ceremony which involves the sacrifice of goats whose heads should be severed at one stroke of a knife. It is a ceremony performed to ask God for a rich and plenteous harvest as well as for the prosperity of the people.¹ The ceremony is performed by the *Syiem* (chief) of the *Khyrim syiemship*, “the home of Khasi customs,”² at a place called Smit, 15 kilometers from Shillong. The festival lasts for five days. It used to be celebrated in spring, but now is celebrated in the month of November. The *Nongkrem* festival is the most ancient and renowned of the Khasi festivals.³

Ka Behdeinkhlam Festival

The *Ka Behdeinkhlam* festival is celebrated in at least three places in the Jaintia Hills: Jowai, Tuber, and Ialong.⁴ The largest celebration is at Jowai. The festival is held annually during the monsoon, which is usually in the month of July, and lasts for three days.

The primary purpose of the *Ka Behdeinkhlam* is to drive away pestilence or plague. The literal meaning of the name is to drive away the plague or pestilence with sticks. Therefore men beat the roof of their house with a stick, representing the driving out of evil spirits who cause sickness and misery.

Women do not take part in the public celebration of this festival. Their role is to

¹Bhatt, 497.

²Rymbai, “Some Aspects,” 126.

³Maham Singh, “Nongkrem Festival,” 146.

⁴Bhatt, 510.

offer prayers to the departed loved ones, acknowledging their dependence on those who are watching from above over the affairs of those who are still alive. Prayers are offered on behalf of the departed loved ones so that all may go well with them. The festival is jointly celebrated by the *doloi* (administrative head of the community), the high priest, and the elders.

This description of the community in the territory of the Khasi-Jaintia Conference provides an understanding of the situation in which the Seventh-day Adventist Church has grown. The next chapter deals with the history of the Adventist Church in the region.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORY OF THE KHASI-JAINTIA CONFERENCE

The Beginnings

The SDA Church in the Khasi-Jaintia Conference (KJC) may be said to have had its beginning with E. G. Hardinge, an officer in the Survey Department of British India who came to Shillong in 1915 as officer-in-charge of the Assam Survey and Traverse Party. Hardinge and his family had not too long before accepted the Adventist faith. The first contact the Hardinges had with Seventh-day Adventists was in Calcutta in 1908, through the witness of an Adventist woman colporteur who sold a vegetarian cookbook to Mrs. Hardinge. This contact eventually led Mrs. Hardinge, and then her husband and two of their children, Phyllis and Ivan, to accept the Adventist faith.

When E. G. Hardinge and his family arrived in Shillong in 1915, he found that they were the only Seventh-day Adventists in the capital of Assam, which then comprised the entire northeastern part of India. However, this did not deter the missionary-minded Hardinges. He and his family faithfully witnessed for the Lord. Consistently, the Hardinges met every Friday evening and Sabbath morning, first inviting the friends of their children and then their neighbors. Anxious that the message should reach every home and village, Hardinge wrote a tract in English which was in turn translated into Khasi by one of

his employees.¹

This effort of the Hardinges was not in vain. F. A. Wyman, reporting in 1920, mentions two sisters who “stepped forward and were buried with their Lord in baptism” as a result of the faithful witness of the Hardinges.²

In 1928, there was yet another baptism by Pastor Keller. Mr. Matthews, an 84-year-old man, and two other children of the Hardinges--Leslie and Mervyn, were baptized.³ Later E. E. Doram, a native Khasi, accepted the Adventist faith⁴ and subsequently became a colporteur. Unfortunately, he later left the faith.⁵

The Hardinges retired from government service and left Shillong permanently in 1933. Before leaving Shillong they gave a portion of the proceeds of the sale of their property towards the fund for establishing a boarding school. This school was later to be known as the Assam Training School⁶ and today is known as Adventist Higher Secondary School.

Prior to the arrival of the Hardinges in 1915, F. O. Raymond had come to Shillong

¹Miriam Hardinge, “Beginnings of SDA Work in Assam,” *Southern Asia Tidings*, October 1983, 4-5.

²F. A. Wyman, “News from Shillong,” *Eastern Tidings*, May 15, 1920, 4.

³Hardinge, 5.

⁴Ibid.

⁵G. J. Christo, former president of Southern Asia Division to the author, September 23, 1998.

⁶Hardinge, 5.

on at least one occasion in 1913 to sell Adventist literature.¹ He wrote: "I leave the silent messengers to tell of the Savior's soon coming and the special preparations necessary, and to make known the remnant people represented by the Stranger Missionary."²

Some time after the Hardinges came to Shillong, E. H. Guilliard and his family from Australia spent about a year in Shillong fostering the interest that had developed. This was about 1922.³

Others who came to Shillong during this period were workers from the mission office in Calcutta to provide spiritual nurture to the Hardinges and to foster the interest created by them. Besides Wyman and Raymond, pastors Wilson and Wellman visited Shillong.⁴

Early Development

Before the Hardinges left Shillong permanently in 1933, Pastor and Mrs. L. J. Burgess had arrived in 1931.⁵ The Burgesses were the first regular missionaries to settle

¹F. O. Raymond appears to have been a colporteur. F. O. Raymond, "Among the Tea Gardens of Assam," *India Union Tidings*, July 15, 1917, 2.

²F. O. Raymond, "Assam," *Eastern Tidings*, April 1913, 11.

³Hardinge, 5.

⁴Ibid.

⁵The year that Pastor and Mrs. L. J. Burgess came to Shillong cannot be exactly ascertained. The year 1931 is inferred from Pastor Burgess's statement which appeared in *Eastern Tidings*, September 15, 1932: "Having spent one year in this station, it is perhaps time that we gave the *Tidings* a brief report of the progress of the work in this new field." In the early period of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the present Khasi-Jaintia conference was only one district of Assam, known as the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills. Assam, with its capital in Shillong, was one state which comprised the entire northeast of India, now divided into seven states (Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya,

and work in Assam.¹ They spent the last part of their active service in Shillong.² They chose this place for two reasons: First, it was an attractive field for gospel work, which had “heretofore no work established”; and second, the climatic conditions were congenial to their health, particularly for Mrs. Burgess, whose health was deteriorating.³

The Burgesses learned the Khasi language and published a number of tracts in Khasi.⁴ Four of these were “The Second Coming of Christ,” “Obedience,” “Searching the Scriptures,” and “The Bible Sabbath.”⁵

On September 16, 1934, Pastor Burgess had the pleasure of baptizing R. E. Rajee and his wife.⁶ After E. E. Doram, these were the first indigenous people to be baptized and to join the mission work.⁷

Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura). When Meghalaya was carved out of Assam as a separate state on January 21, 1972, the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills and the Garo Hills district formed the state.

¹A. F. Tarr, “Gleanings,” *Eastern Tidings*, July 1, 1946, 8.

²E. M. Meleen, “Half a Century Progress: A Brief Survey of the Work of Seventh-day Adventists in the Southern Asia Division,” October 1958, Southern Asia Division of SDA, Pune, India, 128.

³L. J. Burgess, “Shillong,” *Eastern Tidings*, September 15, 1932, 7. The house in which the Burgesses stayed, named “Pisgah,” still stands and is situated on a slope of a hill in the Golden Estate locality, in Nongthymmai, in the southern part of Shillong. See E. M. Meleen, “Half a Century Progress,” 128.

⁴W. A. Barlow, “Shillong,” *Eastern Tidings*, September 15, 1934, 5.

⁵W. A. Barlow, “Literature Distribution in Shillong,” *Eastern Tidings*, July 15, 1933, 7.

⁶G. G. Lowry, “The First Baptism in Assam,” *Eastern Tidings*, December 1, 1934, 7.

⁷G. G. Lowry, “Notes from the Northeast,” *Eastern Tidings*, November 1, 1934, 6.

In spite of their plan to settle in Shillong for the rest of their life,¹ the Burgesses had to leave for America because of Mrs. Burgess's illness which required immediate medical treatment.² That was sometime in December of 1934.³ Pastor Burgess passed away in 1946,⁴ while Mrs. Burgess died on September 19, 1948.⁵

About 1933 W. A. Barlow, after retiring from active mission service, settled in Shillong. Barlow had worked as a missionary among the Santhals before coming to Shillong. Barlow is known and remembered for his faithfulness in selling and distributing books, periodicals, magazines, and tracts by the thousands. He gained the reputation of being "the Bible-and-tract man."⁶ Reporting for the *Eastern Tidings* in 1933, he wrote: "Since our arrival in Shillong about two months ago I have had a great pleasure in giving thousands of pages of our spirit-filled literature in English and Khasi."⁷ Barlow was also known for his beneficent character. It is told that he would keep coins and rice to distribute to any passerby who was in need. Barlow died in Shillong on October 20, 1942, and was buried in the Shillong Adventist Church Cemetery. His wife returned to Calcutta

¹Meleen, 128.

²Sylvia Lange, "Beginning of Adventist Training School and Work in Mizoram," E. G. White Estate, Spicer College, Pune, India, 1.

³Meleen, 204.

⁴Tarr, "Gleanings," 8.

⁵L. G. Mookherjee, "Mrs. Georgia Burgess--Pioneer Missionary to India," *Eastern Tidings*, October 15, 1946, 6.

⁶C. A. Boykin, "President's Report of Assam Section of Seventh-day Adventists," presented to the Northeast Union Constituency, December 30-January 4, 1966, 1.

⁷Barlow, "Literature Distribution in Shillong," 7.

to be near her grandchildren.¹

In 1934 Pastor C.A. Larsen and family came to Shillong to help advance the interest of the work.² The Larsens learned the Khasi language and conducted evangelistic meetings and Bible studies for interested parties in some of the villages in the Khasi Hills.³ It is not known how long the Larsens stayed in Shillong, but it seems that it was only a matter of two or three years.⁴

Based on the aforementioned baptisms and including those of E. G. Hardinge and his wife, the membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the KJC area up to 1934 seems to have been no more than 10.

The Ashlock-Lange Foundational Period

The time Pastor and Mrs. J. F. Ashlock worked in Assam could be termed the foundational or organizational period, as it was from this time onwards that the real foundation and organization of the SDA work took shape. The work before this may be termed seed-sowing years.

Pastor and Mrs. J. F. Ashlock came to Shillong on June 27, 1935, which coincided

¹O. W. Lange, "The Work in Shillong and Khasi Hills," *Eastern Tidings*, December 1, 1942, 5.

²W. A. Barlow, "Shillong," *Eastern Tidings*, August 1, 1934, 4.

³G. G. Lowry, "The First Baptism in Assam," 7.

⁴H. G. Woodward, "Report of the Northeast Mission," *Eastern Tidings*, January 15, 1937, 6.

with Mrs. Ashlock's birthday.¹ The Assam Mission was then organized with Pastor J. F. Ashlock as the first superintendent.² Thus the year 1935 marks the beginning of organized work in Assam, which was then "almost entirely restricted to the Khasi Jaintia Hills."³ H. G. Woodward termed the Ashlocks the "apostles to the Khasi people."⁴

The Ashlocks learned the Khasi language, spoke it fluently and even preached in it. Pastor and Mrs. Ashlock superintended the work in Assam till 1942 when they left on furlough. They came back in 1946 when Ashlock resumed as the superintendent of the Assam Mission but stayed only a short while. In June 1948 they had to return to America on account of Mrs. Ashlock's eyes. She injured one eye on their return from furlough while on board the SS *Brazil*, and the other eye when the jeep they were traveling in to the village of Mawkaiew fell from a small bridge.⁵

The Ashlocks returned to India in 1950. Ashlock served as Secretary of the Southern Asia Division until 1954. From 1954 to 1966, the year he retired, Ashlock worked as a Missionary Volunteer leader and General Field Secretary of the Division. Upon retirement the Ashlocks settled in Collegedale, Tennessee. Pastor Ashlock passed

¹T. M. Ashlock, eldest son of J. F. Ashlock, interview by author, Shillong, September 22, 1998.

²O. A. Skau, "From India's Northeastern Frontier," *Eastern Tidings*, December 15, 1946, 1.

³O. W. Lange, "News Notes from the Khasi Hills," *Eastern Tidings*, November 15, 1942, 3.

⁴Woodward, 6.

⁵E. M. Meleen, "Gleanings," *Eastern Tidings*, February 15, 1949, 8.

away on June 17, 1984,¹ and Mrs. Ashlock on November 10, 1997.²

Pastor Ashlock was an evangelist. Reporting for the *Eastern Tidings*, he mentioned six evangelistic meetings that he conducted in three years, from 1937 to 1939.³ Two of these were held in Shillong. In the July 12-September 4, 1937, meetings, he was assisted by Pastor and Mrs. O. W. Lange and Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Barlow.⁴ In the second meeting, in 1939, Pastor Ashlock was assisted by Pastor and Mrs. O. W. Lange and Pastor and Mrs. C. A. Boykin.⁵ These evangelistic meetings were not confined to Shillong, but spread to the villages as far as Mawkaiew⁶ in the Jaintia Hills, about 60 kilometers from Shillong.⁷

Ten baptisms resulted from these six evangelistic meetings.⁸ Ashlock reported that by the close of 1939 the membership of the Shillong Church (which at this time more or

¹D. W. Hunter, "Till He Comes," *Southern Asia Tidings*, September 1984, 15.

²J. G. Warjri to the author, Vice Principal, Hong Kong Samyuk Secondary School, July 11, 2000.

³J. F. Ashlock, "Assam Notes," *Eastern Tidings*, February 1, 1940, 6.

⁴J. F. Ashlock, "Shillong Notes," *Eastern Tidings*, October 15, 1937, 7.

⁵F. H. Loasby, "Northeast Notes--Shillong," *Eastern Tidings*, November 1, 1939, 6.

⁶The name has now been changed to Mowkaiaw, which is precisely how the occupants of the village call it.

⁷R. B. Thurber, "Circuit-Riding in the Northeast--II," *Eastern Tidings*, January 1 1942, 4.

⁸J. F. Ashlock, "Assam Notes," 1940, 7.

less comprised the membership of the entire mission field) was 50,¹ which was exactly double the number when the church was organized on June 4, 1938.²

Property for the Shillong Church, as well as for the mission headquarters, was purchased on December 21, 1937.³ The church was dedicated in 1941.⁴ By the time the Ashlocks left for furlough in 1942, R. S. Fernando reported that the church membership was 59 and the Sabbath school membership was 231.⁵ A little later L. G. Mookherjee reported: "In Assam we have a church membership of sixty-three with one organized church and four companies, and interests in about half a dozen villages. Five Sabbath schools are being conducted in this local mission."⁶

Besides presenting evangelistic meetings, the Ashlocks used literature as a method of evangelizing. Pastor Ashlock reported: "There are interests in twenty villages, largely as a result of this literature ministry."⁷

Another milestone in the work in the Khasi-Jaintia Conference was the arrival of

¹J. F. Ashlock, "Assam Notes," 1940, 7.

²J. F. Ashlock, "Assam Notes," *Eastern Tidings*, September 1, 1938, 7.

³J. F. Ashlock, "Assam Notes," *Eastern Tidings*, February 15, 1938, 6.

⁴Worleyson Kharbteng, one of the first students of Assam Training School, told the researcher that once O. W. Lange entrusted to him the care of the school while Lange and the rest went to Shillong for the dedication of the Shillong Church some time in March or April 1941. At that time the school was at Mynthong, Jowai, seven kilometers from its present location.

⁵R. S. Fernando, "Northeast-O-graphs-Assam," *Eastern Tidings*, June 15, 1942, 5.

⁶L. G. Mookherjee, "In the Khasi and Lushai Hills," *Eastern Tidings*, November 15, 1943, 2.

⁷J. F. Ashlock, "Assam Notes," 1940, 7.

Pastor and Mrs. O. W. Lange in Shillong in August 1939.¹ They stayed in Shillong only about one and a half years in a house named “Swiss Cottage,” situated by the present Marbaniang Petrol Service Station, opposite the present office of the Northeast India Union of Seventh-day Adventists.

During their stay in Shillong, Mrs. Lange started a small church school² in the Khasi language³ for the children of the church members and the “regular attendants.”⁴ The school was initially housed in a small building on the mission property⁵ and subsequently shifted to the basement of the church.⁶ Solington Kharmawphlang, Chad B. Israel,⁷ and Islora Rajee⁸ (later Mrs. C. B. Israel) were the earliest teachers of the Shillong Church School, as it was then known.⁹ Other early teachers of the school were O. Gatphoh, Jerlie Tariang, and Ivorine Rynjah (Mrs. J. I. Khonghat).¹⁰

¹Sylvia Lange, 1.

²O. W. Lange, Founder of Adventist Higher Secondary School, to H. Dkhar, September 24, 1984.

³Sylvia Lange, 1.

⁴O. W. Lange to H. Dkhar.

⁵Loasby, “Northeast Notes,” 6-7.

⁶Mookerjee, “In the Khasi and Lushai Hills,” 2.

⁷O. W. Lange, “The Work in Shillong and Khasi Hills,” 5.

⁸Fernando, “Northeast News-O-Graphs--Assam,” 5.

⁹O. W. Lange, “The Work in Shillong and Khasi Hills,” 5.

¹⁰O. A. Skau, “Assam Mission--From India’s Northeast Frontier,” *Eastern Tidings*, December 15, 1946, 2.

In March 1941 Pastor and Mrs. Lange moved to Jowai to establish the Assam Training School (ATS),¹ which became the training center “to prepare workers for the cause of God in Assam.”² Initially, Lange had in mind to establish a school in Barapani, a site 16 kilometers north of Shillong. The Deputy Commissioner told Pastor Lange that under no circumstance was he to start a school in Barapani because of the presence of “a very bad type of malaria,” which might be detrimental to the Khasi children. The Deputy Commissioner instead suggested that Lange go to Jowai and meet a Sub-Divisional Officer by the name of Perry. A Catholic, Perry responded positively and sent one Mr. Hamilton, the surveyor, to help find a location for the school.³ The land, consisting of 320 acres, was then leased from the government.⁴

Though Lange can rightly be called the founder of ATS, yet the desire and vision of starting a “training school” for “the youths of Assam” was in the mind and heart of those like E. G. Hardinge,⁵ J. F. Ashlock,⁶ and F. H. Loasby.⁷

In 1941 the school was started in rented houses in Jowai, at a locality named Mynthong, 7 kilometers southeast of the present location. The following year (1942), the

¹Ibid., 1.

²O. W. Lange, “Looking Back,” *Eastern Tidings*, April 1, 1948, 6.

³O. W. Lange to Dkhar.

⁴O. A. Skau, “Baptisms in Assam,” *Eastern Tidings*, February 1, 1947, 7.

⁵Hardinge, 5.

⁶J. F. Ashlock, “Assam Notes,” September 1 1938, 7.

⁷F. H. Loasby, “Northeast Union Report--1938,” *Eastern Tidings*, February 1 1939, 7.

school was moved to its permanent location.¹ However, in 1942 Lange had to move to Shillong to take the place of Ashlock, who went on furlough. For that year the school was directed by Pastor C. J. Jensen, with O. Gatphoh, P. S. Prasada Rao, E. N Simon, and Mrs. C. J. Jensen as the staff.² The following year Lange returned to ATS while Jensen went to Shillong to take charge of Assam Mission³ until the return of Ashlock in 1947.⁴ Lange was principal of ATS until April or May of 1948.⁵ Then Pastor D. S. Larsen took over as principal.⁶ Lange retired from mission service in 1972 and passed away on May 19, 1987, in Asheville, North Carolina, U.S.A.,⁷ after a stroke he had suffered five days earlier while fixing a tire.⁸

From Ashlock and Lange to Indigenous Leadership

Ashlock was superintendent of the Assam Mission only a short while, from 1947

¹Skau, "Assam Mission--From Northeastern Frontier," 1.

²O. W. Lange, "The Work in Shillong and Khasi Hills," 5.

³Mookherjee, "In the Khasi and Lushai Hills," 2.

⁴P. K. Simpson, "Gleanings," *Eastern Tidings*, April 15 1947, 8.

⁵O. W. Lange, "Looking Back," 7. At the time of the publication of this article, Lange was still the Principal of the Assam Training School.

⁶Lal T. Zauva, "Assam Training School News," *Eastern Tidings*, June 1, 1948, 6. Zauva reported: "Our principal Mr. D. S. Larsen is helping the ninth and tenth standard boys in their preaching class."

⁷F. E. Spiese, "Life Sketch of O. W. Lange," E. G. White Centre, Spicer College, Pune, India, 1.

⁸J. M. Fowler, "Till He Comes--O. W. Lange, 1904-1987," *Southern Asia Tidings*, July 1987, 14.

to 1948. N. O. Dahlstein took over as superintendent of the Assam Mission¹ from 1950 to 1952.² When Dahlstein left to become president of the Ceylon Union, W. C. Rick took over as superintendent from 1953 to 1954.

After Rick, Pastor H. T. Burr was superintendent from 1955 to 1957. Then, during his absence due to health problems, R. H. Broderson served as acting superintendent.³ B. J. Williams took Burr's place and was followed by C. A. Boykin from 1961⁴ until 1965. Boykin then went to Assam Training School as principal, and Pastor R. N. Baird became president from December 1965 to June 1971,⁵ when Pastor D. Nongtdu took over as the first indigenous president of the Assam Section.⁶

¹Meleen, "Gleanings," 8.

²L. J. Larsen, "Miscellany," *Eastern Tidings*, April 1 1953, 7.

³M. D. Spicer, "Assam Section News," *Southern Asia Tidings*, July 15, 1957, 2.

⁴O. W. Lange, "News," *Southern Asia Tidings*, May 1, 1961, 8.

⁵J. M. Fowler, "Meet Your Workers," *Southern Asia Tidings*, March 1990, 11.

⁶L. K. Neitham, "Assam Members Study Stewardship," *Southern Asia Tidings*, September 1971, 14. The name "Assam Mission," as already pointed out, was given when Ashlock took over as the Superintendent in 1935. The name remained until 1954 or 1955, when it was changed to Assam Section, as it was felt that the word "mission" had a "negative connotation" for Christian work (see Christo, to the author). As of September 30, 1953, "Assam Mission" still appears as one of the mission fields of Southern Asia Division. In the September 30, 1955, statistical report the name "Assam Section" appears instead. This shows that the change of the name must have occurred between October 1953 and August 1955. "Statistical Report of the Southern Asia Division of SDAs for Quarter Ending, September 30, 1953," 14; see also "Statistical Report of the Southern Asia Division of SDAs for Quarter Ending, September 30, 1955," 8.

From 1971 until 1999

Just a few months after D. Nongtdu took over as president of the Assam Section, the four unions of the division (Northwestern India Union, Northeast Union, Western India Union, and South India Union) were realigned. The number was reduced to three: South India Union, Central India Union, and Northern India Union, in which the Assam Section is located.¹

At the beginning of 1972, with the granting of full statehood to Manipur, Meghalaya, and Tripura, which heretofore were part of Assam, the name Assam Section was changed to Northeast India Section. D. Nongtdu continued as president, with L. Hmingliana and J. I. Khonghat as secretary and treasurer, respectively. These two appointments took effect at the realignment of the unions.²

The name Northeast India Section remained until 1983 when it was changed to Northeast India Union, brought about by the bifurcation of the Northern India Union, through the action of the Division year-end committee meeting in November 1983.³

In January 1, 1984,⁴ when the Northeast India Union was created,⁵ the Meghalaya

¹Cecil B. Guild, "India Unions Are Re-aligned," *Southern Asia Tidings*, January 1971, 1.

²G. J. Christo, "Northern Union," *Southern Asia Tidings*, March 1972, 13.

³Edwin Charles, "Northeast India Union Constituency," *Southern Asia Tidings*, May 1984, 1.

⁴J. R. L. Astleford, "Northern Union Re-organization," *Southern Asia Tidings*, January 1984, 11.

⁵C. Pherim, "North East India Union: The Message Spreads," *Southern Asia Tidings*, May 1990, 4.

Section¹ was born, with the Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Circles as its components. It joined the Mizoram and Manipur-Nagaland sections, already formed in 1975 and 1982, respectively.

On February 25, 1996, in the fourth Northeast India Union Constituency Meeting, the Meghalaya Section was divided into the East Meghalaya Section, and the West Meghalaya Section, the former comprising the Khasi-Jaintia Circle and the latter the Garo Circle.²

On January 24, 1998, the East Meghalaya Section became a conference³ under the name Khasi-Jaintia Conference, with Pastor Lionel Lyngdoh as its first president and Shillong as its headquarters.

The following indigenous pastors have been presidents of the field:

D. Nongtdu	July 1971 – June 1980
J. I. Khonghat	July 1980 – December 1983
D. Nongtdu	January 1984 – December 1989
J. M. Dkhar	January 1990 – December 1990
D. Marang	January 1991 – December 1991

¹The name Meghalaya Section was given because its two components, the Khasi-Jaintia Circle and Garo Circle, make up the state of Meghalaya.

²“President’s Quadrennial Report of Meghalaya Section, 1992-1995,” to the Fourth Northeast India Union Constituency Meetings, January 16-20, 1996, 1.

³The term conference denotes the status given to a unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on the basis of financial self-sufficiency. A conference is governed by rules and bylaws framed by the members of its constituency, and is guided by the working policy of the higher organization.

W. S. Dkhar	January – March 1992
J. M. Dkhar (acting)	March – May 1992
M. M. Rimsu	May 1992 – February 1996
L. F. Lyngdoh	March 1996 –

Church Growth 1934-1965

Table 1 shows the growth of the church from 1939 to 1965. As can be seen, the growth was slow until 1950. After 1950 membership began to climb gradually until 1962. Membership dipped in 1963 but picked up again from 1964 onwards. The information given in table 1 is presented graphically in figure 1.

Against the background of the history of the church in the early years, chapter 4 analyzes the recent development and growth of Adventism in the Khasi-Jaintia Conference.

TABLE 1

MEMBERSHIP GROWTH, 1934-1965

Year	Membership	Year	Membership
1934	10	1952	507
1938	25	1953	670
1939	50	1954	887
1942	59	1955	1,015
1943	63	1956	1,200
1945	103	1960	1,775
1946	120	1961	1,893
1947	136	1962	2,058
1948	168	1963	1,706
1949	187	1964	1,851
1950	234	1965	2,012
1951	368		

Source: The figures for 1934 to 1939 are based on my research; from 1942 onwards they come from the following sources: Assam Section of Seventh-day Adventists, "Secretary-Treasurer's Report of the Assam Section of SDAs for the Triennial Period, January 1, 1954-December 3, 1956"; "President's Report of the Assam Section of SDA," presented by C. A. Boykin to the Northeast Union Constituency, ATS, December 30, 1965-January 4, 1966, 3.

Figure 1. Membership growth, 1934-1965.

CHAPTER 4

CHURCH GROWTH OF THE KHASI-JAINTIA CONFERENCE

This chapter describes and analyzes the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Khasi-Jaintia Conference from 1990 through 1999. The period is divided into two phases. The first covers the pre-reorganization period from 1990-1995, when the Khasi-Jaintia Conference territory was still a part of the Meghalaya Section, which then comprised two circles: the Khasi Circle and the Jaintia Circle. Second is the post-reorganization period from 1996-1999, when the Khasi-Jaintia Conference was separated from the Meghalaya Section and became a separate administrative entity, first as the East Meghalaya Section (1996-1997), and then as the Khasi-Jaintia Conference from 1998 onward.

An Overview: 1990-1999

This section presents an overview of the church in the Khasi-Jaintia Conference from 1990-1999. After the general statistical overview, the two parts are described and analyzed. In this section the growth of the church is shown in tables and figures.

Table 2 shows the beginning membership at 1,245 and the ending membership at 2,951. The overall growth of the decade was 150 percent. The official record of membership, as maintained in the office of the Executive Secretary of the Khasi-Jaintia Conference, was 3,879 as of December 1999. However, the base figure for this number at the time of bifurcation in 1996 (when the Meghalaya Section was divided into the East and West Meghalaya Sections) is only an approximation.¹

TABLE 2
MEMBERSHIP OF KJC, 1990-1999

Years	Membership
1990	1,245
1991	1,304
1992	1,413
1993	1,465
1994	1,528
1995	1,683
1996	1,692
1997	2,379
1998	2,648
1999	2,951

Table 3 shows the detailed information for each year of the decade. The lowest average annual growth rate (AAGR; 3.68 percent) occurred in 1993, and the highest

¹For details, see the section "Pre-organization Period, 1990-1995."

AAGR (21.25 percent) was achieved in 1997. The reasons for these figures are given in the analysis.

TABLE 3

CHURCH GROWTH IN THE KHASI-JAINTIA CONFERENCE, 1990-1999

Years	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Members	1,245	1,304	1,413	1,465	1,528	1,683	1,962	2,379	2,648	2,951
Baptisms		59	109	52	63	155	279	417	269	303
Deaths								2379	3	16
Apostasies								18	20	43
Total Loss								29	23	59
Total Gain	67.00	59	109	52	63	155	279	388	246	244
AAGR	5.68	4.74	8.34	3.68	4.30	10.14	16.57	21.25	11.30	11.44
% Growth	5.38	4.53	7.72	3.55	4.12	9.21	14.22	17.53	10.16	10.27

Figure 2 represents graphically the membership growth during the decade. It shows that the membership of the conference in the pre-reorganization period, i.e., 1990-1995, was more or less stagnant. The growth was mainly from baptisms in the existing churches and companies. Mostly, these were members' children and immediate relations of members (spouses, parents, and siblings).

However, in the post-reorganization period, i.e., 1996-1999, there was a much

Figure 2. Membership growth of KJC, 1990-1999

larger growth. One of the reasons for this sudden climb was the reorganization itself.

Within the new administrative scheme, the church in the Khasi-Jaintia Conference grew better.

Figure 3 shows the number of members added each year between 1990 and 1999. The lowest was clearly 1993 and the highest was 1997.

In figure 4 the growth in the Khasi-Jaintia Conference is shown in terms of annual growth rate. This is practically the same information as that given in figure 3.

Figure 5 shows the two growth rates separately, as well as the average growth rate for the decade. The decadal growth rate for the first period was 42.9 percent, while for the second period it was 159 percent.

Figure 3. Members added each year to the KJC, 1990-1999.

Figure 4. Percentage of growth of the KJC, 1990-1999.

Figure 5. Three perspectives on the decadal growth rate.

Pre-reorganization Period, 1990-1995

Since the Khasi-Jaintia Conference was part of the Meghalaya Section during this period, statistical records were not maintained separately. Therefore, the membership figures during this period could not be based on any official statistical record but on the individual membership record cards maintained in the office of the Executive Secretary of the Conference. These records are supposed to be the permanent records of membership maintained by the conference, but whether these cards have been strictly maintained through the years is uncertain.

Based on the membership record cards, the membership of the KJC in December

1990 was 1,245. This number included a growth of 67 during the year.¹ These 67 baptisms came from various existing churches and companies as a result of the members' children, friends, and family joining the church. Of the above baptisms, the single largest baptism was of 6 persons. The growth during this year could be said to be more or less biological. The AAGR for 1990 was 5.68 percent.

By the end of 1991 the membership stood at 1,304, with a growth of 59. As in the previous year, many of these baptisms came from the various existing churches and companies, except one place (Thadrang), where an evangelistic meeting was conducted and 7 were baptized. Another evangelistic meeting was held in an existing church (Thynroit), adding 6 members. Thus the growth during this year can also be said to be biological. The AAGR for 1991 was 4.74 percent.

The year 1992 ended with a membership of 1,413, with a net growth of 109. The larger increase during this year came from four places: Shillong Church (15), Adventist Higher Secondary School (AHSS, 36), L yniong (14), and Monai (16). Together they added 81 new members and accounted for 74 percent of the year's total increase of 109. Baptisms in the Shillong church were due to a number of members' children joining the church. In L yniong, a revival and evangelistic meeting was held. In Monai, a new area, another evangelistic meeting was conducted. The baptisms from AHSS came from the students of the school as a result of "boarding school evangelism."² The remaining

¹In December 1989 the membership was 1,178.

²The baptisms in AHSS are brought about by the year-long spiritual activities such as daily morning and evening worships, weekly worship services, baptismal classes, biannual weeks of spiritual emphasis, and the witness of Adventist teachers and students.

increase of 26 percent came from the baptisms in 10 existing churches and companies.

The growth during this year can be attributed to three factors: biological growth, public evangelism, and “boarding school” evangelism. The AAGR for the year was 8.36 percent.

At the end of 1993 the membership stood at 1,465, with a growth of 52. Baptisms again resulted from various existing churches and companies, the largest of which took place at the Shillong Church, with 23 candidates. One reason for this comparatively large baptism was the leadership provided to the church beginning in the latter part of 1992. The new pastor was a dynamic individual with an M.A. in Religion from Spicer Memorial College. However, the overall AAGR for 1993 was only 3.7 percent.

In 1994 the total membership was 1,528, with a growth of 63. The highest number of baptisms (19) came from AHSS, and the next highest from the Umkyrpong Church (14). The baptisms from AHSS were due to “boarding school evangelism,” and the one from Umkyrpong church was the result of the energetic youth leadership the church enjoyed. The rest of the baptisms came from existing churches and companies as a result of members’ children and immediate relations joining the church. The growth for this year was due to three factors: biological, “boarding school evangelism,” and energetic leadership. The AAGR for the year was 4.3 percent.

In 1995, the membership went up to 1,683, with a growth of 155 during the year. The larger baptisms for the year took place at the Shillong Church (34), the ATS Khasi

All these constitute what the researcher terms “boarding school evangelism.”

Church¹ (18), the Mukoh Church (16), the Umkyrpong Church (15), and the Thangshalai Church (11). Jointly these added up to 94 baptisms and accounted for 60 percent of the year's total increase.

The results from the Shillong Church can again be attributed to the dynamic leadership the church continued to enjoy; whereas the reason behind the 18 baptisms from the ATS Khasi Church cannot be ascertained. The baptisms of the Umkyrpong Church were because of revival and evangelistic meetings conducted in the church by the researcher. The baptisms in the Mukoh Church were brought about by evangelistic meetings held there, adding 12 members to the church. The 11 members who joined the Thangshalai Church were the fruit of evangelistic meetings conducted in Thangshalai and Jaroit. The rest of the baptisms came from the existing churches and companies, such as Mukoh (9), Mynska (8), Mowkaiaw (8), and Thadrang (7). The main growth factors in 1995 were dynamic leadership, public evangelism, and biological increase.

The growth during these six years (1990-1995), as can be seen from the figures, was somewhat sluggish except for 1992 and 1995. The largest portion of baptisms for these six years came mainly from the existing churches and companies because of members' children and immediate relations joining the church. Other factors also contributed to growth: public evangelism, "boarding school evangelism," and young dynamic leadership. The AAGR for 1995 was 10.14 percent and the overall growth rate

¹The name ATS or Adventist Training School is the former name of the Adventist Higher Secondary School. The ATS Khasi Church is a local-language church for Khasi-speaking believers living around the school.

for the six years (1990-1995) was 42.9 percent.

Post-reorganization Period, 1996-1999

The period between 1996-1999 saw a major organizational change with the bifurcation of Meghalaya Section into East and West Meghalaya Sections. The eastern section later became the KJC, and the western, the Garo Section.

At the time of bifurcation, the Meghalaya Section had 16 organized churches, 47 companies, and 55 regular workers (33 of whom were connected with the schools as teachers and staff).¹

1996

By the end of 1996 the membership stood at 1,962, with an annual growth of 279, surpassing the conference's annual baptismal goal of 200.² The baptisms for this year were from evangelistic meetings, "boarding school evangelism," members' witnessing, and members' children and immediate relations. During the year some twelve evangelistic meetings were conducted, but not all yielded baptisms. The large baptisms for this year were the following: 59 from Lynciong, 58 from AHSS, 24 from Myllem, 24 from the ATS Khasi Church, and 16 from Umkyrpong.

The largest baptism of 59 from Lynciong and its surroundings came from three series of evangelistic meetings. The first was conducted by the researcher (April 8-21,

¹"East Meghalaya Section Report to the Fourth North East India Union Constituency," Shillong, January 16-20, 1996.

²Khasi-Jaintia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "Minutes of the East Meghalaya Section Year-end Executive Committee," Shillong, March 6, 1996, 23.

1996), resulting in 8 baptisms; the second, by Pastor J. M. Dkhar, a retired Northeast India Union President (July 7-20, 1996), yielding 24 baptisms; and the third by Pastor V. Thansiam, Division Temperance Director (October 1-20, 1996), ending with 27 baptisms. Other baptisms resulting from evangelistic meetings were held at Umkyrpong (16), Sohsarat (4), Wahlong (4), Saphai (4), Nonghali (2), and Mawpyrshong (1).¹

The second highest baptism of 58 was from AHHS, brought about by “boarding school evangelism.” The third highest baptism of 24 was from Myllem Church, made possible by the witness of the active members of the church through Bible studies and home visitation.² Similar baptisms due to members’ witnessing were seen in other places: Mawryngkneng (16), Mowkaiaw (13), Jongksha (8), and Thangshalai (5). The rest of the baptisms from other churches and companies were mostly children and relatives of members.

The increase contributed by the evangelistic meetings added up to 35 percent of the total growth; the members’ witnessing, 25 percent; the “boarding school evangelism,” 20 percent. Baptisms from the rest of the churches and companies comprised another 20 percent.

The factors contributing to church growth for 1996 were public evangelism, members’ witnessing, “boarding school evangelism,” and biological growth. The AAGR for the year was 16.57 percent.

¹This information is based on membership record cards kept at the office of the Executive Secretary, Khasi-Jaintia Conference.

²Khasi-Jaintia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “Meghalaya Section Report to the Fourth North East India Union Constituency,” January 16-20, 1996, 3.

1997

By the end of 1997 the membership of the Khasi-Jaintia Conference was 2,379 with a growth of 417, not counting the loss of 29 due to 11 deaths and 18 apostasies.¹

The number of organized churches remained at 16, while the number of companies went up by 5, making a total of 52.² The number of regular workers was, however, reduced to 48 on account of retirement.³

The large increase of baptisms (417) for the year was mainly the result of nine evangelistic meetings. This included one city evangelistic meeting (Shillong, March 2-29, 1997), conducted by a dynamic Khasi Pastor-evangelist, Baxter W. Fanwar.⁴ This series

¹Khasi-Jaintia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "Secretary's Statistical Report," 1997, 1. The reasons for apostasy were reversion to a former faith and marriage to a spouse not belonging to the church, for which one's membership is customarily dropped. The second reason accounts for the major share of apostasies in the conference. Among the Khasis a couple that lives together even without a legal ceremony is considered married. When church members follow this marriage pattern they are censured and asked to marry legally. If they continue in this common-law marriage, they are disfellowshipped.

²Ibid.

³Khasi-Jaintia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "Minutes of the First Constituency Meetings of Khasi-Jaintia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists," January 21-24, 1998, 10.

⁴A Khasi by birth, Baxter W. Fanwar was brought up in the Khasi Hills. He worked as a pastor and evangelist in the Khasi Hills for a number of years. At one time, he also served as a departmental director of the then Northeast Union of Seventh-day Adventists whose headquarters was at Karmarter. Later Fanwar worked as a teacher in Raymond Memorial Secondary School, Falakata, and also worked as a personal assistant to the president of Spicer Memorial College. Thereafter, he went to the U.S.A. where he worked at Columbia Union College, during which time he was also involved in conducting Bible studies for the employees of the World Bank. Retired three years ago, he now makes his home in Grenada, West Indies.

of meetings contributed about 40 percent of the total baptisms in the conference for the year. Two baptisms were conducted following the Shillong meetings. The first (March 29, 1997) had 88 candidates, and for the second (April 19, 1997) there were 70, bringing the total to 158.¹

Subsequent baptisms in other churches surrounding Shillong were also the outcome of the city meetings that caused revival in those churches. The members who attended went back to their respective communities, invited their relatives and friends to the meetings, and gave Bible studies to them. For example, church members from Mawryngkneng went back to their village, invited their relatives, friends, and backsliders to the meetings. As a result many of those who attended the meetings responded to the message and, after further Bible studies, 70 of them were baptized. The same can be said of the Sohryngkham church. Its members also visited their relatives and friends and that brought about a number of interests. Consequently, J. M. Dkhar was invited to conduct an evangelistic meeting in the church May 9-24, 1997. The meeting resulted in 18 baptisms.²

Other surrounding churches also experienced the fire of revival from Fanwar's meetings. Similar baptisms were reported at ATS Khasi Church, Lymiong, Nongpoh,

¹Khasi-Jaintia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "Half-Yearly Report of East Meghalaya Section," presented during the North East India Union Mid-year committee, July 1, 1997, 3.

²KJC, "Half-Yearly Report of East Meghalaya Section," July 1, 1997, 3.

Thynroit, and Mukhla.¹

The revival, which led to the enthusiastic participation of the members in this city evangelistic meeting conducted by Fanwar, was described by I. R. Wann as follows:

The church members had experienced a great spiritual revival. No revival like it has ever occurred since the church was established in Shillong. So tremendous was the revival. During this time it was seen that even women folks were participating in the crusade. . . . They took part by inviting their friends and relatives. . . . The men folks too were busy during the crusade. . . . A good number of pastors were involved in visitation before and after the crusade.²

Many felt that the success of Fanwar's evangelistic meeting was because of a special manifestation of the Holy Spirit's work on the speaker and the members. The emphasis on prayer played an important role in this meeting. Before the meetings, a group of believers had met daily at noon to pray for evangelistic meetings in Shillong, since there had not been any for a long time.³ During the meetings daily prayer sessions were held at noon and before each evening meeting, with many church members taking part. The speaker himself spent much time in private prayer and meditation. It was generally held that the meetings themselves came about as an answer to prayer. Participants believed that the Lord heard their prayers and touched the heart of the speaker thousands of miles away. When an invitation was made to Fanwar to conduct the evangelistic meeting in

¹H. Nongkhlaw, "Baptisms in 1997," *Ki Khubor ka Balang Basah*, April-June 1997, 14.

²Khasi-Jaintia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "First Constituency Meeting Report of Khasi-Jaintia Conference," January 21-24, 1998, 14.

³The first city evangelistic meeting ever conducted in Shillong was in 1955 and 1956 by D. K. Down; the second by Peter Cooper in 1964; and the third and last, by G. J. Christo and W. G. Jenson in 1972.

Shillong, he readily accepted, despite apprehensions regarding the outcome of the meeting.

Needless to say, Fanwar's evangelistic meetings were the main contributing factor and catalyst for the spurt of church growth in the Khasi-Jaintia Conference in 1997, the highest in the decade.

Other baptisms were reported as a result of other evangelistic meetings conducted by workers and a few lay members in the conference: Mukoh (17), Sohmynting (15), Mawlong/Umwai (14), and Nongkhlaw (2). Another large baptism of 50 candidates occurred at AHHS in October 18, 1997, as a result of the witness of staff and students. The rest of the baptisms for the year came from various churches and companies and the boarding school. The AAGR for 1997 was 21.25 percent.

1998

On January 24, 1998, the East Meghalaya Section became the Khasi-Jaintia Conference. This was more a status change than an organizational modification. It did not have a major effect on the growth of the church as had happened when the territory was organizationally and administratively separated from the Meghalaya Section at the beginning of 1996.

By the end of the year 1998 the membership of the conference stood at 2,648, showing a growth of 269 for that year. There was, however, a loss of 23 due to 3 deaths and 20 apostasies.¹ The number of organized churches remained at 16, while the

¹Khasi-Jaintia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "Secretary's Statistical Report," Shillong, 1998, 1.

companies increased from 52 to 56. The number of regular church workers also increased from 48 to 53.¹ The growth for the year came mainly from some fifteen evangelistic meetings and the “boarding school evangelism.”

Some of the places where evangelistic meetings were held and baptisms reported were Myllem (24), Tyrsad (23), Thynroit (15), Jowai (12), Thangbuli (7), and Mynska (6). A few more baptisms came from other smaller evangelistic meetings.

The baptisms in Myllem resulted from a two-week evangelistic series (May 28-June 13, 1998) conducted by an active lay evangelist, C. Kharkongor. The success of the series is attributed to two factors: (1) the Daniel and Revelation lectures during the entire series, which attracted a good audience because the topic was new to most; and (2) the unity of the church members, characterized by their total support of the meetings.

The Tyrsad baptisms came from an evangelistic meeting conducted by the researcher November 1-14, 1998. In this predominantly non-Christian area, health lectures were used to communicate the message to the audience. A couple from the area and backsliders and members’ children from the Lyniong Church (5 kilometers away from Tyrsad) were baptized.

The Thynroit baptisms were due to the revival meeting conducted by the researcher October 20-24, 1998. Those baptized were mostly backsliders and members’ children. There were also a few new members.

The Jowai baptisms came from an evangelistic meeting conducted by the Quiet

¹Khasi-Jaintia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “Khasi-Jaintia President’s Report to the North East India Union Mid-Year Committee,” Shillong, June 9-10, 1998, 1.

Hour team, April 10-25, 1998. The meetings attracted a large crowd, in part as a result of children's meetings conducted two hours before the evening meetings, the health and family lectures, and the clear presentation of the Bible. The baptisms from the meetings, however, were below expectations: Only 12 new members joined the church.

The baptisms at Thangbuli were brought about by two evangelistic meetings conducted in those villages by W. Lapasam and I. R. Wann. Most of the baptisms, however, were of backsliders.

The largest baptism of the year, however, came from the AHSS, where a two-week evangelistic series was conducted by C. Pherim, then president of the Northeast India Union, August 3-September 5, 1998. The series resulted in 68 baptisms.¹

In 1998 evangelism contributed 40 percent of the baptisms. "Boarding-school evangelism" contributed another 25 percent. The remaining baptisms came from the existing churches and companies, where members' children and immediate relations joined the church. The AAGR for 1998 was 11.30 percent.

1999

In 1999 the membership stood at 2,951, with a net annual growth of 303. Yet there was a loss of 59, the highest during the decade, due to 16 deaths and 43 apostasies. The large number of apostasies for this year was because members married non-members (in common-law marriages). One church alone accounted for about 30 percent of those disfellowshipped.

¹H. Nongkhlaw, "Ki Khubor Lyngkot," *Ki Khubor ka Balang Basah*, July-September 1998, 18.

The number of organized churches remained at 16, while the companies rose to 59. The number of regular workers was 52, plus 15 contract workers, 12 teachers, and 3 evangelists.¹

About 40 percent of the total membership growth for 1999 was the result of some 15 evangelistic meetings conducted..² The Quiet Hour team from the United States, with Andrew Fleming as speaker and Charles Edwards and James Burgess as team members, held meetings at Lymiong, April 2-17, 1999, resulting in 33 baptisms. G. J. Christo, former President of the Southern Asia Division, assisted by "The Commissioned," a student singing group from Spicer Memorial College, conducted evangelistic meetings in Jowai, April 2-10, 1999. Ten were baptized. Baxter W Fanwar conducted three series of revival meetings in Shillong, Sohryngkham, and Mawryngkneng, which together resulted in 85 baptisms.³ Thirty new members were baptized on February 28, 1999, in Shillong. The remaining 47--including candidates from Sohryngkham, Mawryngkneng, Jowai, and Nongpoh--were baptized in Lymiong on April 17, 1999, along with the candidates of the Quiet Hour evangelistic meetings.⁴

¹Khasi-Jaintia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "President's Report to the North East India Union Year-end Committee, Aizawl," Shillong, Khasi-Jaintia Conference, March 24-25, 1999, 1.

²H. Nongkhlaw, "Ka Jingialap ha Jowai, Thadrang, Nongwar, Lymiong," *Ki Khubor ka Balang Basah*, April-June 1999, 6-7.

³In 1999 Fanwar intended to conduct an evangelistic meeting in Mawlai, one of the localities in Shillong. This plan did not materialize due to his sudden illness, which forced him to return to Grenada, West Indies.

⁴H. Nongkhlaw, "Ki Parabangeit na ri Nongwei ha Lymiong," *Ki Khubor ka Balang Basah*, April-June 1999, 6-7.

Another factor in the 1999 growth was the implementation of a Ten-Village Program, an evangelistic program introduced by the Southern Asia Division. The program entailed the selection of ten receptive villages in close proximity to each other. From each of these ten villages two or three interested persons were chosen and brought together for a ten-day teaching program on the doctrines of the church and other related matters. After the training they went back to their respective communities and witnessed to their relatives and friends and invited them to the meetings. Following the ground preparation by these selected people, an evangelistic meeting was conducted. Accordingly, ten villages were selected and different speakers were assigned to the ten villages. Some sixty were baptized as a result of the program, thus accounting for about 20 percent of the total increase.

The growth for the year came from evangelistic meetings, existing churches and companies, and the Ten-Village Program. The AAGR for 1999 was 11.44 percent.

As indicated, the post-reorganization period (1996-1999) presents a more dynamic scenario. The number of evangelistic meetings rose due to teams and personnel from outside the state and country. Fanwar's meetings in 1997 and 1999 made a great impact on soul winning in the Khasi-Jaintia Conference.

During the pre-reorganization period, the annual growth rate was 6 percent, while in the post-reorganization period it was 13 percent. Further, the average annual numerical growth was 83 in the first period and 317 in the second. Growth in the post-reorganization period (1,268) doubled the membership of the conference at the beginning of the decade (1990).

The main factors contributing to the growth during the post-reorganization period were evangelistic meetings, followed by “boarding school evangelism,” and members’ witnessing. The baptism of members’ children and immediate relations continued to be a growth factor during the period.

Growth Factors, 1990-1999

In conclusion, the factors contributing to the growth during the decade (1990-1999) are as follows:

1. Public evangelism in existing churches and companies accounted for the largest portion of growth.
2. The witnessing of members to the community or to their immediate family accounted for the second largest portion of the growth.
3. “Boarding school evangelism,” which comprises the year-long religious activities and witnessing of teachers and students, was another major growth factor.
4. The organization of the conference indirectly contributed to the membership growth during the post-reorganization period.
5. The dynamic and youthful leadership enjoyed by certain churches in the conference resulted in church growth.
6. The revival of members invariably led to witnessing to relatives and friends and ended in church growth.

Productive Areas for Evangelism

Based upon the above study the productive areas for evangelism are as follows:

1. Existing churches and companies serve as effective areas for evangelism. In the existing churches and companies the groundwork has already been laid as a result of the members' daily witness through their personal lives and sharing of their faith. In such units, public evangelism revives the members and invariably leads them to witness to their relatives and friends, who ultimately join the church. Training of church members can contribute to evangelism in the church setting.

2. Another productive form of evangelism is "boarding-school evangelism." How to achieve retention of the students when they leave school needs further study.

Chapter 5 analyzes these methods. It also maps out strategies to maximize church growth in the KJC.

CHAPTER 5

STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCED CHURCH GROWTH

Based on the analysis of the church growth of the Khasi-Jaintia Conference and on the reading of church growth principles and methods, a comprehensive strategy is set forth in this chapter to enhance the growth of the church in Khasi-Jaintia Conference. The comprehensive strategy includes the implementation of existing strategies (public evangelism, members' witnessing, and "boarding-school evangelism"). It also presents another strategy that is new to the KJC: Life Transformation Cell Groups (LTCG).

Continued and Improved Strategies

This section reviews existing strategies for church growth in Khasi-Jaintia Conference--public evangelism, members' witnessing, and "boarding-school evangelism." It also makes suggestions to improve the existing strategies.

Public Evangelism

From this study it has been discovered that public evangelism is about the only intentional and widely used strategy for church growth in the KJC. Other strategies, e.g., members' witnessing and "boarding-school evangelism," have been natural and somewhat haphazard.

Public Evangelism Where Local Churches Exist

From the study of the growth of the KJC it has been discovered that public evangelistic meetings conducted where local churches exist brought the best results. A district pastor or any other designated speaker will conduct the campaign. These meetings were either conducted in the local church buildings or in a locality surrounding the local church. One reason for the success of these evangelistic meetings is the connection of church members with their non-believing family members. When an evangelistic meeting is conducted in a place where there is a local church, the members feel compelled to invite their own family members to the meetings. Another reason has to do with the day-to-day witnessing of church members to their own relatives and friends. An evangelistic meeting therefore provides an opportunity for the church members to bring relatives and friends with whom they have shared their faith through the years. Familiarity is another contributing factor: people are already familiar or acquainted with the message of the church. They have seen and known what it is. They cannot say: "This is the first time we have come across such a church and such a teaching; we have to first think about it." The presence of local church members in the meeting place encourages others to attend the meetings. This cannot happen in meetings in a new area, where people wait for someone to enter first for fear of being noticed by others.

Public Evangelism Where No Local Churches Exist

Public evangelism in new areas or where there are no members produces far fewer results than evangelistic meetings conducted in areas where there are local churches or

where the presence of the local church members is felt. Sometimes the result has been nil. The main reason for this phenomenon is the lack of good ground preparation. Most people are taken unawares. As a result, they do not readily respond the first time they hear the message. Therefore it is imperative that public evangelism conducted in any new area be preceded by a thorough ground preparation, including visiting and praying with the people, giving Bible studies, and distributing tracts. The ground preparation must include an advance team of two or more who live in the area, no less than three months. Those participating in the ground preparation must look for opportunities to witness to the people, such as praying for the sick or rendering humanitarian services.

Advantages of Public Evangelism Where Local Churches Exist

1. Local church members can be trained to witness. Their participation can cut down the number of full-time personnel needed to successfully conduct an evangelistic meeting.
2. Local church members can participate in visitation, introducing the evangelist and other team members to prospective new members, since they know the people well.
3. Financial expenditures can be reduced because of members' participation in the preparation for the meetings; for example, they can prepare the *pandal*, the structure in which the meetings will be held.
4. There is a better prospect for results. First of all, church members' children, as well as relatives and friends, are highly possible prospects for baptisms. Those to whom members have witnessed are also highly probable prospects.

Drawbacks of Public Evangelism in the KJC

1. There is a lack of good music in evangelistic meetings, yet music plays a very important role in public evangelism. That is, there are no singers to present special music, no good leaders to lead out in public singing, and no musical instruments, such as keyboards or guitars, to add interest to the musical aspect of the evangelistic meeting.

2. The evangelistic team is generally too small. In most cases it is limited to a speaker and one or two to assist him. As a result, the team is overworked and the public is not attracted to the meetings.

3. There is a lack of young people to assist in public evangelism. Young people naturally attract the public by their inherent enthusiasm and youthfulness.

4. There is a lack of coordination with, and participation of, the lay members in public evangelism. The participation of lay members in public evangelism will revive them and make them zealous for soul winning.

5. There is a lack of variety in the way the meetings are conducted. Usually there are no health or family presentations, and very few visual aids.

6. There is a lack of dynamic, spirited speakers. As a result, evangelistic meetings do not attract much public.

7. Altar calls are seldom made. Adventist speakers do not seem to be quite familiar with making altar calls in their evangelistic meetings.

8. Prayer and fasting by church members is not emphasized as part of the program during evangelistic meetings.

9. The meetings last too long, sometimes three or four weeks. This tires the speaker and the members of the team. The public often cannot attend all the meetings.

Improved Public Evangelism in the KJC

The following suggestions are offered for improving public evangelism.

1. There should be good music in every public evangelistic meeting: special music, public singing, and the playing of musical instruments. Music should be a supportive ministry to the evangelistic meetings. The music must be impressive enough to attract the public to the meetings. Everyone, but especially the young people, is very much attracted by music. Good music in the evangelistic meeting softens the heart of those who attend the meeting.

2. There should be a greater involvement and participation of young people in public evangelistic meetings conducted in the conference. Young people can fill many needs in the evangelistic meetings: the presentation of special music, leading out in public singing, ushering, and inviting the people to the meetings. By their very nature young people are exuberant and can attract the public to the meetings.

3. There should be thorough ground preparation before any public evangelistic meeting is conducted in a new area. The ground preparation should not be less than three months, if not six months or even a year. The ground preparation includes door-to-door visitation of each home in the community, and praying and studying with those visited whenever opportunity arises. It is best that those who do the ground preparation stay in the target area.

4. Involve lay members in the public evangelistic meetings. This will help to equip the members for witnessing and will revive their spiritual life. Their revival will be contagious to other members and even to members in other churches in the conference.

5. Make a special effort to find enthusiastic and spirited speakers for each public evangelistic meeting conducted in the conference.

6. Hold a one-week evangelistic series in places where there is already the presence of a local church and hold a ten-day or a two-week series of meetings in places where there is no church. Short series will enable lay members to participate in the evangelistic meetings as they cannot invest too many days since they have to make a living. When the evangelistic meetings last too long, the interest of the people cannot be sustained. Indeed, the enthusiasm of the speaker and his team may also dwindle.

7. Altar calls should be frequently made, especially in the latter part of the meetings, to help people make their decisions. People in the KJC area are familiar with altar calls, as other denominations use this method of calling people to accept Christ. Asking people to remain for special prayer after the meeting has proved to be an effective means to contact people and to find out their individual needs. It creates rapport with those individuals and may eventually lead them to make a decision for Christ.

8. A strong follow-up program should be planned by the conference for those who have accepted or are interested in the message in places where there is yet no organized church. The follow-up program will include a month of ongoing Bible study, during which time all the fundamental doctrines of the church will be covered. Thereafter the conference should delegate someone on a weekly basis to visit and worship with the new

group of believers for at least six months to a year. The weekly meeting will take the form of an LTCG to teach new believers how to grow in their faith.

9. Each public evangelistic meeting conducted in the conference should be made interesting by the inclusion of talks on topics such as general health, food and nutrition, cleanliness, family planning, drugs, smoking, alcohol, or other social problems. Relevant film strips and video tapes could also be shown.

10. Sufficient time should be allotted for prayer and fasting during the evangelistic meetings.

11. The meetings should be conducted in a manner that shows concern for detail and thorough organization.

Members' Witnessing

As already pointed out, church growth resulting from members' witnessing in the KJC happens almost naturally, without training to equip lay members to witness.

Members have witnessed to their relatives and friends out of their own knowledge and experience driven by their love for souls. There is need for regular training of members to do witnessing. As Carlos Martin says, "Being an effective witness doesn't just happen. Training is involved."¹ Equally, Marlin L. Nelson comments: "One of the most important principles for church growth is training the laymen."²

The areas of witnessing can include personal evangelism, lifestyle evangelism, how

¹Carlos Martin, *Witnessing: Adult Sabbath School Quarterly*, July-September 2000 (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2000), 83.

²Marlin L. Nelson, *Principles of Church Growth* (Bangalore: ACTS Trust, 1995), 77.

to give Bible studies, praying for the sick, and deliverance ministry. Other topics that should be taught are health evangelism and how to care for the sick, felt-needs evangelism, techniques for witnessing, friendship evangelism, Sabbath-school evangelism, house evangelism, establishing new members, church planting, and leadership training. The importance of maintaining a personal devotional life and prayer in witnessing and soul winning should also be stressed.

The conference and the local pastor will cooperate in training lay members. The training can be done at two levels: The first level will be on a conference-wide basis, in which resource personnel from the division or union, together with conference personnel, will conduct the training. In this case, delegates or selected members from each church and company will be brought to one place for the training session. The training session may last three days to one week. The second level will be at the local church; conference resource personnel will assist the pastor in training lay members in their churches and companies. Churches at close proximity will be gathered in one place for expediency. The training will be done annually. A plan with regard to the time and personnel has to be well laid out so that the entire conference will be covered within the calendar year. The expenses involved in the training will have to be included in the annual conference budget. As the training will be conducted mostly in the local churches and companies, expenses will be low, except for the resource personnel travel expense and materials to hand out. In case the conference faces financial constraints, it can always work with the local church members, whose resources are yet to be tapped.

The third level of training will be within the LTCGs. The local pastor, who will

have been trained for this purpose, will regularly train the LTCG leaders in his church. Once a year the conference will sponsor a special training session for all LTCG leaders. The LTCG leaders will in turn train their respective LTCG members.

Boarding-School Evangelism

Evangelism in the boarding school is the third major factor in the church growth in the KJC. The presence of the AHSS, the only boarding school in the conference, has made this possible. Evangelism has been productive in the boarding school because of the year-long religious and evangelistic activities, such as the weekly baptismal class and bi-annual spiritual emphasis week which are aimed at evangelizing the unchurched or those who have not accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

Boarding-school evangelism could be enhanced by introducing LTCGs as part of the boarding-school evangelism strategy. This will require a yearly training program for LTCGs leaders. The training program will be conducted by the district pastor with the cooperation of conference personnel. The training will be given to teachers and selected student leaders.

Advantages of Boarding-School Evangelism

Several positive points can be listed regarding boarding-school evangelism.

1. This type of evangelism is inexpensive as compared to evangelistic meetings conducted elsewhere in the conference. Baptisms at the boarding school usually occur at the end of each spiritual emphasis week, for which a guest speaker has been invited. The school covers the expenses, which are minimal.

2. The groundwork for boarding-school evangelism has already been done throughout the year by means of the year-long religious and evangelistic activities. For this reason boarding-school evangelism is a productive area for evangelism.

3. Boarding-school evangelism makes teachers aware of their responsibility and accountability to the gospel commission of making disciples. Thus they become committed to soul-winning activities.

Drawbacks of Boarding-School Evangelism

While evangelism of students at AHSS is productive, boarding-school evangelism does present some negative aspects.

1. Boarding-school students from non-Adventist families who are baptized while away at school may face opposition when they return home. Away from school, without adequate support, and facing family opposition, a significant number may leave the faith.

2. It is difficult to keep an up-to-date list of members of the church at AHSS. Students may leave without requesting that their membership be transferred to churches in their new location. In some cases, membership transfers are processed, but students' names are not removed from the AHSS church records. Apostasies occur but are not reported. Consequently, the membership of the AHSS Church appears to be much larger than it is.

Ways to Rectify the Drawbacks of Boarding-School Evangelism

1. A study should be conducted to determine the rate of spiritual survival of both

Adventist and non-Adventist students after they leave AHSS. On the basis of this study strategies could be developed to strengthen the students spiritually while they are at school. In addition, ways should be developed to keep students well tied to the church after leaving school, thus preventing apostasy as much as possible.

2. The AHSS Church should make a sustained effort to keep its membership records up to date. Graduating students and others who indicate that they will not return the following year should be asked to transfer their membership. During the first part of each new school year, students who do not return to school should be contacted and encouraged to request membership transfers.

3. The AHSS Church can encourage churches where students are transferring their membership to be especially attentive to the spiritual needs of these individuals.

New Strategy: Life Transformation Cell Groups

The implementation of the Life Transformation Cell¹ Groups² is a strategy that has not yet been widely used in the KJC. However, LTCGs were tried in a few places such as in Lyiong, Jongksha, and Thynroit, with apparent success. It is felt that if the right conditions are provided for the implementation of the LTCGs, their efficacy will prove to

¹The word “cell” is intentionally incorporated as part of the term for the strategy in order to convey the idea of growth by the division of the LTCGs. Just as in the healthy human body growth occurs by the division and multiplication of cells, in a healthy church spiritual body growth takes place by the division and multiplication of LTCGs.

²The name LTCG was chosen to emphasize the idea of spiritual transformation, which is the need of every believer. It is anticipated that when the lives of believers are transformed, witnessing will be the natural result. Alternate names for LTCGs could be “Home Cell Groups” or simply “Cell Groups.”

be a means of tremendous church growth in the conference.¹

Definition of LTCGs

LTCGs are groups of some seven to fourteen believers and non-believers meeting in homes or at any convenient place for the purpose of spiritual fellowship, caring, and witnessing. The meetings include sharing with one another, caring for one another, studying God's Word together, praying for and with one another, and witnessing God's love to others.

Purpose and Objectives of LTCGs

Schilt lists five purposes and objectives of small groups.² They are as follows:

1. "To honor our Lord and God." This is the very aspect which is frequently forgotten. There can be no meaningful horizontal fellowship with one another unless there is first a vertical relationship with the Lord.
2. "To minister to each other by knowing and being known in a supportive environment." This has to do with genuinely loving and supporting each other emotionally, financially, and in other ways.
3. "To provide a context for spiritual growth." The small group is to provide or create an atmosphere where the spiritual life of each member can grow.

¹It is not the purpose here to write a manual for LTCGs, but rather to provide basic information that will help administrators understand the organization and significance of LTCGs.

²Schilt, 25-26.

4. “To provide a place for developing lay leadership, as well as for discovering and employing spiritual gifts.” The Holy Spirit has given gifts to each Christian for ministry. A basic function of all small groups is to discern the members’ gifts and make use of them.

5. “To be a center for Christian ministry.” Becoming a ministry center helps the small groups to look beyond themselves to the needs of others.

Two Focuses of LTCGs

The two focuses of small groups are edification and evangelism, inreach and outreach. Edification has to do with the members’ spiritual growth helped by the group’s mutual support and encouragement. Evangelism has to do with sharing with others the joy and the love of God experienced through the small group. Neighbour calls these two focuses “poles.”¹ The life of the small group is suspended between these two “poles.” Should either of them “give in,” the small group would collapse. Neighbour points out that in most small groups there is a tendency to emphasize edification and to neglect evangelism. When this happens, he observes, such groups create “ossified people,” where no true discipleship takes place because believers focus on one another and ignore the suffering world around them.² Cho agrees with Neighbour when he says, “Groups that meet without evangelism as a goal do not produce growth in the church. There is a great danger that they will only feed on themselves.”³

¹Neighbour, 9.

²Ibid.

³Cho, 118.

LTCGs in the Literature

Life Transformation Cell Groups provide the atmosphere needed by a believer to grow. The Bible and Ellen White speak of small groups; so do church growth specialists.

A Biblical Basis for LTCGs

The idea of small groups is not new. The small group concept is suggested in a specialized form in Exod 18:13-26. When Jethro saw Moses serving long hours as a judge, he advised him to appoint elders over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens in order to lighten Moses' administrative load. Only matters that could not be solved by the elders were to be brought to Moses.¹

In the New Testament Jesus set a model for small groups in the calling and training of His twelve disciples (Mark 3:13-19). The concept of small groups took the form of house meetings following the Pentecostal experience (Acts 2:42-46). Homes such as those of Lydia (Acts 16:40), Priscilla and Aquila (1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:3), Philemon (Phlm 1-2), and Nympha (Col 4:15) are examples of house churches.² Further, the apostles, including Paul, taught and preached from house to house (Acts 5:42; 20:20).

Ellen White on LTCGs

Ellen G. White did not use the modern term "small group." However, the term

¹Karen Hurston, *Growing the World's Largest Church* (Springfield, Missouri: CHRISM, 1995), 84.

²Ibid., 83-84.

“small companies,” which she employed repeatedly, points to the same concept.

The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort has been presented to me by One who cannot err. If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, to work not only for the church members, but for unbelievers. If in one place there are only two or three who know the truth, let them form themselves into a band of workers. Let them keep their bond of union unbroken, pressing together in love and unity, encouraging one another to advance, each gaining courage and strength from the assistance of the others.¹

Note that White says the formation of “small companies” is not her idea but was given to her by God Himself. That White encouraged even two or three isolated members to form themselves into a “band of workers” suggests the significance of small groups. The purpose is fellowship and mutual support, which is based on the biblical injunction of bearing one another’s burden (Gal 6:2).²

White also foresaw the day when the large church structure would be non-functional because of persecution. The only way that the church would be able to survive would be in small groups.³

Another relevant statement of White on small groups reads as follows:

Let small companies assemble in the evening, at noon, or in the early morning to study the Bible. Let them have a season of prayer, that they may be strengthened, enlightened, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. This work Christ wants to have done in the heart of every worker. If you yourselves will open the door to receive it, a great blessing will come to you. Angels of God will be in your assembly. You will feed upon the leaves of the tree of life. What testimonies you may bear of the loving

¹Russell Burrill, *The Revolutionized Church of the 21st Century* (Fallbrook, California: Hart Research Center, 1997), 130.

²Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1948), 7:21-22.

³White, *Manuscript Releases*, 17, 350.

acquaintance made with your fellow workers in these precious seasons when seeking the blessing of God. Let each tell his experience in simple words. This will bring more comfort and joy to the soul than all the pleasant instruments of music that could be brought into the churches. Christ will come into your hearts. It is by this means only that you can maintain your integrity.¹

Church Growth Specialists on LTCGs

Paul Yonggi Cho, founder and pastor of the largest church in the world, the Yoido Full Gospel Central Church, Seoul, Korea, with a membership of over 800,000, saw early in his ministry the great value of cell groups.² Cho further realized that cell groups are not only the answer for pastoral care, but also the primary method of church growth.³ Cho expresses absolute certainty that cell groups will work anywhere in the world.⁴

Win Arn saw small groups as the purifying and praying element of the church. They are the dynamics of the church. He further observed that the church needs small groups as the loaf needs the yeast. In small groups there can be strength, power, and outreach to change and move the church, and to change and move the community and the world.⁵

¹White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 7:195. For further statements on small groups, see E. G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1946), 111; idem, *Lift Him Up* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1988), 358; idem, *Testimonies for the Church*, 7:21.

²Paul Yonggi Cho, *Successful Home Cell Groups* (Plainfield, New Jersey: Logos International, 1981), 64 ff.

³Ibid., 58.

⁴Ibid., 104.

⁵Donald A. McGavran and Win Arn, *How to Grow a Church* (Ventura, California: Division of GL Publications, 1985), 103.

Christian A. Schwarz conducted a study of more than 1,000 churches in 32 countries to discover the “distinctive quality characteristics” which are most developed in growing churches. Eight were clearly identified. Schwarz concludes: “If we were to identify any one principle as the ‘most important,’ . . . then without a doubt it would be the multiplication of small groups.”¹

Rick Warren promotes various kinds of small groups in his church to meet its various needs. Some of these are the “Seeker Groups” for evangelism; “Support Groups” for congregational care, fellowship, and worship; “Service Groups” for specific ministries, such as orphanage and prison ministry; and “Growth Groups,” which are dedicated to nurturing, discipleship training, and in-depth Bible study.²

C. Peter Wagner, a leading authority in church growth, recognizes the significance of small groups even though, as he honestly admits, he himself by nature is not “a small group person.” He points out that the small groups exhibit a family situation; thus he calls them “Kinship Circles.”³

Ralph W. Neighbour Jr., one of today’s leading consultants on small group ministry, in his years of struggle with what he calls “the misery found in the traditional

¹Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development* (Carol Stream, Illinois: ChurchSmart Resources, 1996), 33.

²Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 146.

³C. Peter Wagner, *Leading Your Church to Grow* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1984), 107.

church structures,”¹ discovered that cell groups are the only answer to the traditional church system of worship and ministry. “The cell group is the place where people are evangelized, nurtured, equipped to serve, and where members build up (edify) one another. It is a community where believers are called to be accountable and totally transparent with one another.”²

W. Clarence Schilt, a Seventh-day Adventist minister who has emphasized small groups in his pastoral and teaching ministry, observes: “The small group is one of the best vehicles for enabling us to be what God intends us to be--a people sharing Christ's life together, meeting each other's needs, and reaching out in love to the world.”³

Further, Schilt is convinced that “God's Church on earth prospers best when it recaptures its vision of the personal, dynamic faith that flourished in the small group setting of the house church of Acts 2:46 and many other places in the New Testament.”⁴

Ritchie Way, another Seventh-day Adventist Church pastor who has experimented with “small groups,” confirms that small groups help in church growth and are one of the most successful, time-tested Christian support systems. He outlines at least three reasons why small groups result in church growth:

1. The small group setting provides more fellowship than the regular church

¹Ralph W. Neighbour Jr., *The Shepherd's Guide Book* (Houston, Texas: TOUCH Outreach Ministries, 1996), 7.

²Ibid., 13.

³W. Clarence Schilt, *Dynamic Small Groups* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 1992), 17.

⁴Ibid., 16.

setting. The church setting barely meets the definition of fellowship which requires sharing, warmth, caring, and healing.

2. The informal and relaxed environment of the small group setting provides a non-threatening atmosphere, congenial for free and open discussion and involvement, which even those who have not yet identified themselves with the church feel comfortable with.

3. In a very personal way, the small group meetings care for three areas of human spiritual needs: inreach, God reaching to the people through His Word; outreach, people reaching to other people through witnessing; and upreach, which is people reaching up to God through prayer and worship.¹

Lastly, Russell Burrill, commenting on E. G. White's concept of small groups, affirms: "To oppose a small group ministry in the Adventist Church is to reject the counsel that God has given us through the inspired pen of Ellen White. It is time that the Seventh-day Adventist Church restore the small group ministry to its proper place as the central organizing principle."²

The Need for LTCGs

This section shows the need of organizing LTCGs in the traditional church, which appears to have lost the purpose for which it was established. It also provides justification for organizing the LTCGs in the KJC.

¹Ritchie Way, "Home Group Ministry Helps Your Church Grow," *Ministry*, February 1992, 10.

²Burrill, 138.

In Traditional Church Life

When members first join the SDA Church, they are happy about their new-found faith. They are excited and filled with new hope for a new walk with Christ. They seek to make new friends since they have left the old ones because of changes in lifestyle. Many Christians in the church shake hands with them; some even call them by name and encourage them to be regular in church attendance. But none of them invites the newcomer for lunch. During the week there is no contact, not even by phone, with any of the members, except perhaps the pastor, if he happens to remember or has the time.

So if the new member has problems, there is no one to turn to except the pastor, who may not be able to respond immediately due to other pressing duties. This situation persists and the new member feels that the church is not the place for him or her and stops attending church and eventually drops out.¹

In the KJC

Small groups were started in the Lyniong church of the KJC in the latter part of 1998. The church members were divided into four groups, based on geographical considerations. Two groups had ten to fifteen members, whereas the other two had between fifteen and twenty. Each group had a leader and an assistant leader. A not-so-well-planned training program was given on how to lead. Emphasis was given to sharing, study of God's word, and prayer. The witnessing or outreach component of small group life was not emphasized due to the researcher's limited knowledge and experience in

¹Adapted from Neighbour, 89-90.

conducting small groups. No further training was given and no proper follow-up was done except for occasional contacts with the leaders or members, whenever possible.

In spite of this, one small group was a success. This small group was responsible for a number of baptisms during the Quiet Hour evangelistic meeting in Lyniong, April 2-17, 1999. The following factors contributed to the success of this small group:

1. The group was small (it was one of the two that had between ten and fifteen), close to the recommended maximum of twelve members per group.
2. Both the leader and the assistant leader were new members. They were enthusiastic in their new-found experience and very serious about their responsibilities.
3. The leaders of this group focused on outreach (even though the outreach aspect was not emphasized as much as the fellowship aspect). First they invited their own relatives and then their friends in the community. Eventually a prebaptismal Bible study developed.

The basic reasons for the failure of the other three small groups were:

1. They were too large (except for one which more or less had the recommended size).
2. They were led by old, unenthusiastic members.
3. Some leaders were enthusiastic, but their effectiveness was undermined by their preoccupation with their work. As a result, they were not regular and punctual in attending the meetings. When group members observed the irregularity of the leaders, they too became slack.
4. There was no follow-up in terms of further training and supervision. Thus

there was no sense of accountability among the members and no motivation from the leader.

In addition to the implementation of small groups in Lyniong Church, the small group concept was promoted in Jongksha and Thynroit. Members of these churches endorsed the idea with enthusiasm. However, just as in the Lyniong Church, there was no proper training, follow-up, or supervision.

From these experiences with small groups in the KJC, the researcher strongly feels that the LTCGs which he intends to implement in the churches and companies in the KJC will work, provided proper steps are taken.

A further indication of the viability of small groups in the KJC is the implementation of the Sabbath School Action Unit (SSAU), which was introduced in the conference in 1996. Marked success was noticed in churches such as Shillong and Lyniong in the units or groups that properly followed the steps outlined in the program. Unfortunately, just as the SSAU program was beginning to take hold, there was a change of leadership at the division level. Another person, who was not fully oriented to the program, took over and today the SSAU program in the KJC, as in other places in the division, has come to a standstill.

Cho's observation in this connection is valid:

There is only one way that the home cell group system will be successful in a church, if that system is to be used as a tool of evangelism. The pastor must be the key person involved. Without the pastor, the system will not hold together. It is a system, and a system must have a control point. The controlling factor in the cell groups is the pastor.¹

¹Cho, 107.

Cho underlines proper leadership, the controlling factor as he terms it; this is the pastor responsible for introducing and supervising the program. This element was missing in the KJC in the implementation of the small groups of the SSAU program.

Organization of the LTCGs

This section deals with the proposed organization of the LTCGs in the KJC. Structure, training, and organization are required.

Training Program and Organization of LTCGs

The training program will be done at two levels. At the conference level, someone who is well versed in the function and organization of LTCGs will train all the district and church pastors regarding the organization of the LTCGs in their districts and churches. At the local church level, the district and church pastors will train the LTCG leaders in their own districts and churches. They may seek the help from conference personnel in the training of small group leaders.

An important suggestion, particularly in the first year of the LTCGs, is to “Start small.” District pastors who oversee a number of churches and companies should begin by selecting only one of their most active churches to organize LTCGs. Church pastors will organize the LTCGs in their own churches.

The concept of “starting small” is to be applied further even in the organization of LTCGs in the respective churches. That is, the pastors should not try to involve all the members of the selected churches to join LTCGs in the first year. The district and church pastors are to look for the most able and active members in those churches, those most

enthusiastic about the concept. The first cell group in a church should have only between ten and twelve members. Once they are trained, they will be ready to lead five or six additional cell groups in their church.

After consulting the ten to twelve members involved, district and church pastors should arrange for a suitable weekly time and place for the training. Thorough instruction on how to organize and conduct LTCGs is to be imparted and modeled by the pastor for three to five months.

After the three-to-five-month training period, the members who were trained are organized in pairs to become leaders of five or six new cell groups to be established in their church. One member of each pair will take the role of cell leader and the other of an associate leader. The appointment of leaders and associate leaders is at the initiative of the pastor, who will take names to the church board for approval.

Each LTCG should have seven to ten members to begin. Warmth and fellowship are better achieved by starting small. On the other hand, since groups are expected to grow by attracting nonbelievers, starting small avoids a premature need for cell division. Within six to nine months, each LTCG is expected to give birth to a new LTCG, which is a sign of a healthy and growing cell group. The associate leader of each existing LTCG becomes the leader of the new LTCG. Associate leaders for the resultant LTCGs are then chosen from among the most able and enthusiastic regular members of existing LTCGs.

Supervision of LTCGs

Since the LTCGs are a conference program, the first-level supervisory body will be the conference administration itself. The conference should delegate someone or even

create a department for small groups so that there is adequate personnel to supervise and promote the organization of LTCGs in the ensuing years. The conference supervisor shall deal directly with the district and church pastors, keeping track of the functioning of LTCGs in the conference and helping in whatever way possible. In turn the district and church pastors are accountable to the conference supervisor regarding the functioning of the LTCGs in their respective areas.

The second level of supervision is in the hands of the district and church pastors. They are responsible for the functioning of all LTCGs in their districts. For the purpose of more effective supervision, the district and the church pastors should select one capable individual from among the experienced LTCG leaders as associate director for LTCGs in his or her own church. These associate directors shall assist the district and church pastors in overseeing the effective functioning of the LTCGs in their respective churches. This is needed when, after two or three years, churches have a number of LTCGs functioning.

At least once a month the pastor and the associate director of LTCGs of each church or district should meet with all the cell group leaders. At this meeting they will hear reports, evaluate the process, provide additional instruction, answer questions, and discuss other LTCG-related issues.

Organization of the LTCGs in the Local Church

This section deals with the organization of the LTCGs at the local church level, the logical steps to be followed before the organization and the implementation of the LTCGs. It also deals with the post-organization stage.

Before regular LTCGs start functioning

1. **Personal Preparation:** Pray for God's leading and guidance. Share the idea and intention with a few others and ask them to join in this. The ones who do not yet know how to start small groups, must read, attend workshops, and/or consult with those who have expertise in the area.

2. **Communication:** Convey the plan of starting small groups through personal conversations with specific individuals, by means of the church bulletin, bulletin boards, pamphlets, handouts, and worship services.

3. Select ten to twelve active lay members as prospective leaders for LTCGs in the church. Train them for three to five months. Then, with the approval of the church board, appoint them as leaders and associate leaders of the first five or six regular groups to be started. Involve them in recruiting church members and others as core members of their respective new cell groups.

After regular LTCGs begin functioning

1. A weekly meeting for LTCG leaders of about one hour will be scheduled for consultation, training, and prayer. This will be for the first three months. After this the sessions will be held monthly.

2. Training for LTCG members will be conducted with regard to various areas of witnessing. A survey based on members' needs will determine the areas of training to be conducted.

3. A monthly fellowship meal will be encouraged in each LTCG. This will take place besides the regular weekly meetings.

4. A quarterly meeting and potluck meal or weekend retreat of all LTCGs may be arranged.

5. Time for testimonies by different group members will be provided during the Sabbath worship service to inspire and encourage those who have not joined the LTCGs.

6. At the end of the covenant period, i.e., about nine months, a special meeting of all LTCGs will be arranged, during which a recognition ceremony for active members of LTCGs will be conducted.

7. At the end of nine months an evaluation of all LTCGs will be made and necessary actions such as reorganizing or disbanding stagnant groups will take place. This evaluation will be in addition to possible monthly evaluations (see appendix 3).

The Weekly LTCG Meeting

Various components of the LTCG weekly meetings are explained in this section. Meetings should include the following components: (1) getting acquainted or ice-breaking, (2) praise and worship, (3) study of God's Word, (4) sharing of experiences or testimonies, and (5) prayer. Neighbour condenses these to what he terms the four Ws: Welcome, Worship, Word, and Work.¹

Getting acquainted or ice-breaking

This is done at the very start of the meeting. Beginning with the leader and associate leader to set the tone, each member will say just two or three sentences, no more than one minute each. Neighbour calls this "Warming up time." It is a psychological need

¹Neighbour, 170-177.

just as those who participate in sports need some “warming up” before they enter into the actual events. Neighbour sees psychological danger in digging “right into the session without any warming up time.”¹ This is a time of refreshing each other with simple sharing questions or activities. It is an opportunity for people to get in touch with each other. The session opens the way for deeper involvement and sharing in the time that follows. Ice-breaking questions should not be childish or threatening so as to make people feel uncomfortable and draw back about answering.

Sample ice-breaking questions are as follows:

1. What was the happiest moment of your life?
2. Tell us about your first date.
3. What is the greatest regret of your life?
4. What was the greatest disappointment of your life?
5. What is your favorite spot in your home or yard?
6. Using weather terminology, how would you describe your week: stormy, sunny, partly cloudy, foggy, etc.?
7. If you had to live your life over again, what would you change?
8. If you were to go to live on the moon and could carry only one thing, what would it be?
9. If you could be doing anything you wanted at this time next year, what would it be?
10. You have been granted one hour with the leader of our country. What

¹Ibid., 151.

question would you ask? What advice would you offer?

11. If you had an all-expenses-paid trip to anywhere in the world, where would you go? Why?

12. What would you do if you were to see . . . a person being robbed? Or drowning? Or a house on fire?¹

13. How was your day today?

Only one question is to be used at each ice-breaking session. Some questions can be used in more than one session. One does not have to use these questions at all in the ice-breaking sessions. A simple question such as "How was your day today?" can be asked at every ice-breaking session. The idea, as the word suggests, is to break the ice, to break the psychological, emotional, and mental tension, and bring group members in tune with each other. A simple activity or games can be substituted for questions.

Some guidelines for framing ice-breaking questions:

1. Do not ask questions that will require yes or no answers.
2. Ask questions that call for personal sharing of the self.
3. Ask questions that can be answered briefly.
4. Ask non-threatening questions or questions that will not require members to confess their sins or share only negative things about themselves.
5. Ask questions that call for information not readily available to other group members: for instance, "What is a typical Tuesday like for you?" "What do you like most and least in your day?"

¹Ibid., 186-187.

6. Ask questions that relate to the group, questions that will help every member to get to know each other better. These questions can relate to history giving, sharing the present, and looking to the future.¹

Praise and worship

This part of the meeting is to connect the group members to God through songs, Scripture reading, and prayer. The purpose is to recognize and welcome the presence of Christ in the group. Although this part of the group meeting is usually simple and short (10-15 minutes), it is extremely important.

The songs used in this session should be simple and familiar. Avoid looking at song books or sheets. However it will be good to have song books or typed songs for the sake of those who may not know the words, especially visitors, lest they feel left out. Do not use time between songs to preach or talk. It is appropriate to appoint a praise and worship leader, especially one who is familiar with songs or choruses.

Study of God's Word

The study of God's Word is central to the life of the cell group in order for the relationship inside the cell group to deepen. Thus Schilt observes, "For Christian community to evolve, there needs to be an intentional focus around Scripture and prayer. Without this center, things rather quickly deteriorate into the limitations of groupie life, and true spiritual community is cheated."² For the cell group to experience meaningful

¹Schilt, 88-90.

²Ibid., 29.

fellowship, the members must filter their lives through the grid of God's Word. Applying God's Word deepens the fellowship and turns on the spiritual light. The basis for values, thoughts, actions, and attitudes is God's Word. Therefore, if the members are to have true fellowship among themselves they must study God's Word.¹

However, the study of God's Word by the group should emphasize the application rather than the learning level, the "affective" more than the "cognitive."² Questions should be: "What does this verse mean to me personally?" "What message does it have for me?"

Discussion topics should draw more from the experiences of the cell group members than from their knowledge.³ The goal is personal growth. This means that personal sharing should be a major part of Bible study time. The leader should be a facilitator and not a guru or lecturer. He or she should help the group share among themselves what they are learning and hearing from God's Word. Questions asked by members of the group should be redirected to the group rather than answered by the leaders.⁴

A cognitive question, dealing with observation, could be "How would people in the first century have understood what Jesus was saying?" Examples of application questions are:

1. What stands out to you in the passage?
2. Can you illustrate this truth from an example in your own life?

¹Neighbour, 158.

²Schilt suggests the "Encounter and Enable Bible Study"; see Appendix 2.

³Neighbour, 172.

⁴Schilt, 75.

3. In what area of your life do you struggle the most in applying this truth?
4. What is God saying to you through this Scripture?
5. Where do you need God's help right now?
6. If you could ask God for anything right now, what would it be?¹

In leading a Bible study, questions are extremely important. A leader should consider the following instructions on asking questions.

1. Do not use questions that can be answered yes or no. These stop discussion. If it happens by accident, add a "Why?"
2. Do not use too many questions. Be selective. If the questions are developed carefully and prayerfully, oftentimes three or four questions are sufficient to fill the time allotted.
3. Spend more time on application than on observation questions.
4. Be grateful for every answer given. Invite more than one answer to each question.
5. Avoid a purely intellectual approach.
6. Be careful not to give merely superficial treatment to the text.
7. Let study result in action, not just talk.²

Sharing time

This part of the meeting can include the sharing of personal joys, blessings, and

¹Neighbour, 175-176.

²Schilt, 76.

disappointments. It should include experiences in witnessing and whatever has to do with the outreach of the group.

Way points out that this part of the meeting is the time to reach out to one another for help and with help. It acts as a relief valve for emotions and tensions, and creates empathy within the group. Way suggests that the sharing time could be a natural way to begin each meeting.¹

This is a time for sharing testimonies, prayer requests, reviewing the group's outreach plan and strategy, or planning for the group reaching out and building relationships with unbelievers. This is the time for telling the story of the group's life, and the group's plans. It is the time to report the names of unbelievers who are being cultivated. This is also the time to review or refer to the purpose statement or the covenant which the group had agreed upon at the beginning of the group life and consider how far the objectives of the group have been reached?²

Neighbour sees that the outreach aspect of the group life is very important and should not be eliminated from the agenda of the group meeting. He observes that this time aims not only at enjoying the presence of Christ and experiencing His power, but also at extending the purpose of Christ. It is a shift from God ministering to us, which is the aim of the study of God's Word, to God ministering through us.³

An important aspect with regard to the outreach aspect of the cell groups is goal

¹Way, 11.

²Ibid., 192.

³Neighbour, 176.

setting. An evangelism goal should be set. This goal will help the group place outreach in focus and guard from neglecting it.

The sharing time can be between fifteen and twenty minutes. Following the sharing time comes the session of prayer, which is the closing part of the meeting.

Prayer

Schilt sees prayer as the most important and meaningful aspect of group life.¹ He suggests that prayer can be placed just before Bible study time. The reason for this is to avoid prayer time being absorbed by other parts of the meeting, which frequently occurs. He also suggests that prayer time can still come at the end of the meeting if the group members agree that ten to thirty minutes will always be allotted to spend together in prayer.²

Prayer can take many forms: It can be in groups of twos or threes, or one person can pray on behalf of the group. All can take part by praying one after the other, short specific prayers of a few sentences, so as to avoid distraction. The chain prayer is another form of prayer. Each member prays (without saying amen) one or two sentences, until the last person, who pronounces the amen or benediction. Another form of prayer which Schilt recommends is conversational prayer. Instead of one person praying once and covering many subjects, each one prays briefly for one particular subject at a time. Each time that the prayer leader moves to another topic, each person may briefly pray again,

¹Schilt, 83, 87.

²Ibid., 86-87.

until the prayer session ends.¹

Intercessory prayer, in which members plead and struggle with the Lord, is most effective. Group members should pray for one another, for the sick to be healed, for a nonbeliever who is struggling to accept Christ, for the outreach plan and goal. Prayer should be specific. For example if the group is praying for those who are struggling to accept the gospel, specific names should be mentioned. Or if they pray for healing, the person and the illness should be mentioned. Being specific implies that the petitioners are serious about what they are asking for.

Other types of prayer are adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. Praying and placing hands on the sick and the demon possessed should not be forgotten. Healing or miracles can take place. These are avenues for strengthening the spiritual life of the group.

According to Schilt the purposes of prayer in cell groups are (1) to help each person realize the presence of Christ in the group, (2) to develop an awareness of unity in Christ, (3) to help sift selfish desires from real needs and our own will from God's intentions, and (4) to provide an opportunity for members to pray with and for each other.²

Suggested format for the weekly LTCG meeting

The total time suggested for the meeting is approximately 90 minutes. It is

¹Schilt, 85.

²Ibid., 84.

difficult to sustain interest for longer than this. The following activities can take place.

1. Sitting in circle to facilitate eye contact
2. Introduction of newcomers or visitors (less than one minute for each)
3. Ice-breaker or get-acquainted session (10 to 15 minutes)
 - a. The leader or associate leader starts the ice-breaking question or activity
 - b. Around the circle, people answer the question
4. Singing and praise time led out by a praise leader (10 minutes)
 - a. Singing songs or choruses
 - b. Scripture reading--by leader or member of the group or by one who prays
 - c. Opening prayer
5. Study of God's Word (30 minutes)
 - a. Leader introduces the discussion topic or questions¹
 - b. Leader facilitates the discussion
 - c. Leader draws conclusions and sums up the discussion
6. Sharing of experiences and discussion of outreach plans and goal (20 minutes)
 - a. Personal joys and burdens
 - b. Witnessing experiences
 - c. Outreach plan--its progress and difficulties
7. Prayer session (20 minutes)
 - a. Pray for each other

¹It is good to give the Bible passages to be studied a week in advance and ask members to come prepared for discussion and reflection in the next meeting.

- b. Pray for outreach program
- c. Pray for sick and other needs that may arise.

The first meeting

The agenda for the first meeting will include: (1) A get-acquainted session; (2) fixing of a permanent time for the group's meeting and the place or home for the next meeting; and (3) developing a purpose statement, the group covenant, and a plan for the group.¹ If the whole agenda is covered, the following meeting follows the pattern given above. If not, time is taken to complete the unfinished task.

The get-acquainted session can include introductions of the participants or an ice-breaker question if members already know each other well, in order to set a cordial atmosphere for the meeting. The get-acquainted session may be preceded by refreshments, this being the first meeting in the leader's house. The timing of the group's meeting may need seasonal adjustments. The place of meetings may be on a rotating basis, from one group member's home to another. The places can be decided at the first meeting or the group can decide meeting by meeting where the next session will be.

The development of the group covenant will use most of the time of the first meeting. The covenant should include the purpose of the group--why it comes together. The purpose responds to the expectations of the members--what benefit they will derive from the meetings. The topic for study is determined as part of the covenant, which also includes a commitment from the members to attend regularly for a predetermined length of

¹For purpose statement and group covenant, see Appendix 5.

time, usually no less than twelve weeks. Included are details such as where and when the group will meet, and how long the meetings will last. An important question that should be considered and answered is whether or not there will be refreshments at the regular meetings.¹

Someone from the group should be asked to write down the proceedings and prepare the group covenant, which is to be distributed in typed copies to all the group members at the next meeting. After the development of the group covenant the meeting is to be closed with a session of prayer.

Coordination of Old Strategies and the LTCGs

In churches where LTCGs are being organized, a one-week evangelistic meeting can be conducted to provide an opportunity for decision for those who have not yet made a decision for Christ in their respective LTCGs. The evangelistic meeting will also be a means of confirming those who have already made their decision. While the evangelistic meeting is being conducted, the LTCG meetings will be temporarily suspended. The reaping campaign will be conducted by the district or church pastor. However, guest speakers may also be invited.

Lay training sessions could continue for all church members as one group, as it has normally been done. However, the year-long continuous training of leaders and of LTGC members will be of great importance. The participation of lay members in the evangelistic

¹Refreshments can create problems of competition and may be embarrassing to those who have less money. If refreshments are included, they should be simple and easily prepared. The monthly meal together should not be omitted.

meetings conducted from time to time in the conference will further equip lay members for witnessing.

Boarding-school evangelism could be enhanced by introducing LTCGs as part of the boarding-school strategy. In fact, the organization of LTCGs will not only enhance the number of baptisms in the boarding school but will also bring revival to the students who are already part of the church. The district pastor, together with the conference personnel, will conduct the training for the LTCG leaders in the boarding school.

A Brief Summary of the Chapter

A review of the main strategies currently employed to fulfill the mission of the church in the KJC is accompanied by a critical evaluation and a number of recommendations on how to make them more productive. Most of the chapter was devoted to the Life Transformation Cell Group strategy, not yet well known in the area. Its inherent merits are described, and the possibility of using to significantly enhance the strategies currently employed is explored.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The population of the area that comprises the Khasi-Jaintia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is heterogenous. However, the Khasis are the majority in the community, and most Seventh-day Adventists are Khasis. Some 80 percent of the Khasis are Christians of different denominations, while the remaining 20 percent practice the traditional religion or *Ka Niam Khasi*, as it is locally known. Seventh-day Adventist membership constitutes a negligible 0.3 percent of the Khasi population. The majority of those who embraced Seventh-day Adventism came from other Christian denominations, though some came from the traditional religion.

The Khasis are believed to have migrated to their present habitation from Southeast Asia. Of mongoloid stock, they are generally good natured and friendly, with an adaptable nature. The Khasis are a jolly and fun-loving people. They crack jokes, especially when they meet at social gatherings. They have festivals which are both social and religious in nature.

Theirs is an independent spirit, as was seen in their struggle against the British. Even today, they do not like to follow orders and bear hardships, but want an easy way

out in life. Not many Khasis are found in the military because of their dislike of strict discipline and order.

The Khasis have a strong belief in one God, though they also revere the spirits of their ancestors and believe in other malevolent spirits which they appease for fear of being troubled. The Khasi monotheism could help explain why Christianity found fertile soil among them. The benevolent characteristics and humanitarian activities of the missionaries could be another reason why Khasis were attracted to Christianity.

The Seventh-day Adventists (SDA) Church came to the Khasi-Jaintia Conference area in 1915 with the arrival of E. G. Hardinge and family, a recent convert to the SDA faith. He came to Shillong as a survey officer of the British-India government. Though the Hardinges did what they could to share their faith, their efforts did not meet with great success. Permanent missionaries only came to Shillong about the time when the Hardinges left Shillong permanently in 1933. The first were the Burgesses and the Barlows. The Ashlocks and the Langes came a little later and stayed about ten years each. They contributed much to laying the foundation of the church in the area. During the Ashlock and Lange period (1935-1948) the work of the SDA Church in the region began to gain momentum and spread out from Shillong to nearby villages and to other far-flung areas, such as Mizoram and Manipur. Until 1971 the work of the SDA Church in Meghalaya, as well as Mizoram, Manipur, and the Garo Hills, was under the leadership of foreign missionaries.

Until 1975, when the Mizoram field was organized as a separate section, the entire Northeast region of India was one mission field, the Northeast India Section. In 1982 the

Manipur Section was carved out of it. This left Meghalaya with two circles, Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills, still known as the Northeast India Section until 1984, when the Northeast India Union was born and the two Meghalaya circles became the Meghalaya Section. This section continued until 1996 when it was divided into East (Khasi-Jaintia Circle) and West (Garo Circle) Meghalaya sections. In 1998 the East Meghalaya Section achieved conference status under the name Khasi-Jaintia Conference (KJC).

The growth of the KJC was slow during the years when it was part of the other mission fields. Its growth started to accelerate as soon as it became a separate unit, from 1996 onwards.

Church records for what is today the KJC are not easily traceable until 1990. Membership information of the last decade is divided into two parts: the first half (1990-1995) and the post-reorganization period (1996-1999). Church growth from 1990 to 1996 was about 42 percent. The cumulative net membership growth of the four years (1996-1999) nearly doubled the membership figure at the beginning of the decade. The impulse for the acceleration of membership growth appears to have come from the organization of the territory into a separate administrative unit, the East Meghalaya Section, in 1996. The highest growth rate in the post-reorganization period was in 1997; it was brought about by evangelistic meetings that impacted not only Shillong, where the meeting was held, but the surrounding areas as well. In addition, to this series of meetings, other evangelistic series were held the same year. A number of baptisms came from "boarding-school evangelism" at the Adventist Higher Secondary School.

The comprehensive strategy chosen to enhance the growth of the church in the

KJC emphasizes the introduction of Life Transformation Cell Groups. It also includes the improvement of existing strategies, such as public evangelism, members' witnessing, and "boarding-school evangelism." Part of the improvement envisioned will be achieved by coordinating the existing strategies with the Life Transformation Cell Groups (LTCG). Not only will the organization of LTCGs enhance growth, it will also contribute to establishing an amiable relationship between Seventh-day Adventists and other Christian groups.

Conclusions

Considering the life span of the church, over half a century, the SDA Church in the KJC has not grown satisfactorily. This slow growth could be attributed to a number of factors such as unsharpened focus on or vision for mission and evangelism, lack of aggressiveness in evangelism, and the employment of conventional methods for evangelism.

The task of evangelism requires innovative methods to reach those who live in the territory of this conference. The use of the LTCGs is such a method. It is not costly and yet it responds to the needs of church members and others who are interested in knowing God.

Recommendations

1. Because public evangelism in existing churches is a successful approach to church growth in the KJC, each existing church and company should arrange for an annual evangelistic meeting to be conducted. In order for these meetings to be successful, lay

members should participate. To do this, they need training in various areas of witnessing. Thus, seminars and workshops should be provided by the pastors, with the support of the KJC.

2. Life Transformation Cell Groups should be implemented in the Khasi-Jaintia Conference as an effective method of church growth. Appropriate training at the conference level and in the local churches must be given.

3. The work of LTCGs and other evangelistic strategies should be coordinated so as to bring about maximum church growth in the conference.

4. The boarding school has produced church growth in the KJC. The conference and the school should maximize this growth by planning for better membership retention. They should also consider the establishment of another boarding school.

5. Public evangelism in new areas, where there are no church members yet, is not productive. More preparation and more thorough groundwork must be done before an evangelistic campaign is initiated.

APPENDIX A
FORMS FOR KEEPING RECORDS AND EVALUATING LTCGs

CELL GROUP ATTENDANCE RECORD

[illegible]

REPORT OF CELL GROUP MEETING		
Area	Name of Host	
Address Where We Met	Total Present	Total Visitors
Date of Meeting	Day of Week S M T W Th F S	Time
Cell Leader	Associate Leader	Praise Leader
LIST OF ALL THOSE ATTENDING If this is the first time, underline the name! Write full name, address and telephone number on back of sheet		
NAME	NAME	
INFORMATION ABOUT NEXT CELL GROUP MEETING		
Date of Meeting	Day of Week S M T W Th F S	Time AM/PM
Name of Host	Telephone	Address of Next Meeting
IMPORTANT: Return top copy to Cell Group Office within 24 hours of meeting!		

Small Group Evaluation Sheet

The list below will assist in helping you to think through the strengths and weaknesses of the group to which you belong. Check your response to each item and then go around the circle, sharing your answers with others in the group.

1 = Excellent 2 = Good 3 = average 4 = fair 5 = poor

Item	Rating				
1. Promptness in opening and closing	1	2	3	4	5
2. Faithfulness to attendance covenant	1	2	3	4	5
3. Faithfulness to other group commitments	1	2	3	4	5
4. Size of the group	1	2	3	4	5
5. Leadership	1	2	3	4	5
6. Climate of trust	1	2	3	4	5
7. Level of openness	1	2	3	4	5
8. Level of acceptance of each other	1	2	3	4	5
9. Amount of affirmation	1	2	3	4	5
10. Amount of caring	1	2	3	4	5
11. Study of scripture	1	2	3	4	5
12. Personalizing scripture	1	2	3	4	5
13. Prayer life	1	2	3	4	5
14. Outreach of the group	1	2	3	4	5
15. Individual growth within the group	1	2	3	4	5

Our group's strengths are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Our group's weaknesses are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Our group has helped me:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

APPENDIX B

SCHILT'S ENCOUNTER AND ENABLE BIBLE STUDY

Encounter and Enable Bible Study*

1. Read the passage thoroughly as a whole. Try to get the full impact of the passage. Seek to understand what the author (or speaker) is trying to communicate and why.
2. List the verse numbers on a sheet of paper. Then put one of the following symbols by each verse number. You can draw more than one symbol for each verse, but put at least one symbol for each verse.

If you understand the verse clearly

If you have questions about the meaning **?**

If you get special inspiration from the verse →

If you really get convicted about something in your life

3. Ask yourself the question: Which two verses speak most clearly to my need or situation? and circle these two verse numbers.
4. Beginning with the first verse, rewrite it in your own words. You may want to rewrite it two or three times, each time going a little deeper with the meaning as you see it. Then go a step further and think of the verse in terms of your own situation at school, at work, at home, or at church. Try to include in your paraphrase what the verse really means in the situation you face.
5. Proceed to rewrite, in the same way, the second verse you have circled, expanding on the deeper meaning for your life and situation.
6. Ask yourself the question As far as these two verses are concerned, what is the thing I must work on in my life? It can be anything from a bad attitude at work to a broken relationship with your wife, but it should be honest and specific-very specific. Whatever comes to mind as the need in your life at the moment, jot it under the word "application" at the bottom of your work sheet. It does not have to be long. Just a few words will do, such as "screaming at the children." Then under "need," put down three things you can do about it during the next week. If "screaming at the children" is the problem, you might jot down: "Tell them I am sorry when I scream at them. Ask their help. Commit the problem to God."

*Adapted from Lyman Coleman, Depth Study Method (Littleton, Colorado: Serendipity House).

Leader's Instructions for Encounter and Enable Bible Study

The leader's task is to see that the discussion stays on the subject and that the material is covered.

1. The leader asks each person in the group to explain which verses he or she picked to paraphrase-and why. (The "why" will be interesting in itself.) Then have those who paraphrased the first verse read aloud what they have written. As each paraphrase is read, the leader should listen for something that would be good for realistic discussion. The leader can then come back with a question that focuses the discussion on this area. For instance: "Bill, what did you mean by 'uptight'?" Or "Helen, would you mind giving me an example out of your own experience to clarify what you mean?"
2. After four or five minutes, move on to the next verse that has been paraphrased, and do the same.
3. Follow this procedure verse by verse through the passage until all the verses that have been paraphrased have been covered-or as many as time allows. Leave adequate time for the next step.
4. Have each person in turn share his/her application. In oneness and dependence, pray specifically for each other, using the first person, "I . . . , me, my. . ."

Source: Clarence Schilt, *Dynamic Small Groups* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 1992), 77-78.

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