

**HISTORY OF AMERICAN  
BAPTIST MISSION IN  
NORTH-EAST INDIA  
(1836-1950)**

**VOLUME—One**

**MILTON S. SANGMA**

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# Preface

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History involves not only a mere record of facts—it requires an interpretation of facts. A number of historical forces have been at work in the past that ultimately made the people of North-East India of what they are today. One great factor that added to the cultural dimension of the people of North-East India, especially, the hills people, was the arrival and the activities of the various Christian Missions from the West. These Christian Mission Societies were not Government Agents. The societies were formed by the individual believers and supporters of the Mission. Neither did they come to North-east India on their own. Initially, they were invited by the British Government officials in their private capacity with a view to using them as instruments of taming and controlling those fierce and untamable tribes. This would make their job easier as administrators. On the other hand, the Missionaries also, in their zeal and enthusiasm, for spreading the message of Love as taught by Jesus in the Gospels, accepted the invitations and the challenges as God-sent Opportunity, and more readily in North-East India as the Government officials promised protection of their lives and property. Thus each wanted the other in the process of carrying out their own respective missions. It was under these circumstances that the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society in USA sent their Mission to North-East India which was to play a great role in bringing about a cultural revolution, especially amongst the hill people. One object of this work is to explain in a small way, the cultural deposition of this great historical force.

Many excellent books have been published on the history of the American Baptist Missions operating in different parts of the globe since the Movement began in 1814. Each made its contributions to the treasured story of the pioneering works and

contributions of the American Baptist Missionaries in different lands. Of late, there have been also published a number of authoritative books on the works of the American Baptist Mission in North-East India, especially by Dr. Frederick S. Downs. Besides, quite a few books dealing with the works of this Mission in different States of North-East and a number of learned articles on different aspects of this Mission have been also brought out. Despite this emergence of increasing mass of literature on the subject, a fresh-telling of the story of the works and activities of this Mission is felt necessary from the point of view of historical perspective. Therefore, the other object of this work is to present the case from its historical perspective.

A mass of informations contained in the Missionary reports, papers and discussions and correspondences though consulted, have not yet been brought to light for the benefit of the general public. Hence, the other object of this work is to provide sufficient details for the understanding of the historical forces that were at work that led to the making of the people of North-East India as they are today.

Originally planned to cover two volumes, the present volume deals with the origin of the Baptist Church in Europe, its spread to different parts of the world, its developments in USA, and the coming, establishment and expansion of the American Baptist Church in different parts of North-East India till 1950 when the whole management of the church was handed over to the local Christians. The second volume will deal with the contributions of the Mission in the field of education, literature, medical and other humanitarian works.

The work is based on the original sources, such as the official reports, papers and discussions, letters and correspondences, journals and magazines. A large number of published works have also been consulted. Long years have been spent in collecting materials, consulting people, trying to understand the problem and in drafting. During these long years of patient work, my wife, son and daughter have borne with me all the inconveniences ungrudgingly, for which, I am thankful to them. I also thank Shri K.M. Mittal of Mittal Publications, Delhi, for having brought out this volume in such a short time.

MILTON S. SANGMA

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# Origin and Expansion of the Baptist Mission

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## ORIGIN OF PROTESTANT CHURCHES

Jesus Christ was the founder of the Church. He founded the Church to spread the message of Love and Peace for the salvation of mankind. He chose twelve disciples to be the leaders of the Church which he founded and the disciples began to preach Christianity and spread by leaps and bounds. One of the twelve disciples, Thomas by name, came to India in the first century A.D. and suffered a martyr's death at the hands of a Brahman at Madras. However, the Church grew in some parts of South India in course of centuries.<sup>1</sup>

One of the greatest tragedies in the history of the Church was that time and again, one scholar or some groups of believers came forward with new ideas opposing these traditional teachings and practices of the Church. Many of the dissident groups broke away from the original Church and formed separate Churches of their own. But the Cultural rebirth that Europe witnessed during the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries, which is called the Renaissance dealt the severest blow to the ONENESS and UNITY of the Church which Christ founded. The study of Greek and Latin Classics which became available to Europe for the first time, led to an appreciation of the

1. Ritcher, E., 'History of Mission in India', p. 1.

beautiful aspects of life. There was a great desire to imitate the Classical models which led to the revival of art and literature. Several of the Popes and other Church Officials actively encouraged and were even directly involved in the Renaissance movement. Thus the Roman Catholic Church lost the confidence and support of many of its own supporters. Along with this appreciation of the beauties and pleasures of life, there was also a neglect of spiritual tasks on the part of the Popes and some other Church officials. Thus beginning with the protests against such immoral activities of the Church Officials, the honest and sincere Church leaders began to question the authority of the Pope over others. Thus set a motion known popularly in Church history as the Reformation Movement, out of which, came out many independent Protestant Churches such as, the Lutheran, Calvinism, Zwinglism, Church of England, Methodists, Ana-Baptism, Pentecostal, etc. It was during this Reformation' Movement period that the Baptist Church as a separate denomination has emerged.<sup>2</sup>

### ORIGIN OF BAPTIST CHURCH DENOMINATION

In 1608, religious persecutions in England compelled a group of Linconshire separatists to seek asylum in Holland. One group settled in Amsterdam with John Smyth (1570-1612), a Cambridge Graduate, as Minister. The other contingent moved into Leyden under the leadership of John Robinson. The group at Amsterdam under John Smyth soon came to conclusion that 'Baptism' should be restricted to believers only and in 1609, John Smyth baptised himself along with 36 others. They together formed the first Baptist Church in Amsterdam. However, there soon developed some differences among them and a group of them returned to England under the leadership of Thomas Helwys in 1612, and established the first English Baptist Church in London. The parent group in Armsterdam soon disappeared.

The English Baptist Church was soon divided into three groups : (1) The General Baptist, (2) The Particular Baptist, and

2. The Shillong Diocese, Church History, pp. 31-57.



(3) The Immersion Baptist. But the particular Baptists made the greatest impact not only in England but also elsewhere in the English speaking world. Among the particular Baptists there came a revival as a result of the new surge of growth being initiated by the activity of Andrew Fuller, Robert Hall and William Carey. William Carey formed the English Baptist Missionary Society in 1792 and became its first Missionary to India in 1793.<sup>3</sup>

### EXPANSION OF BAPTIST CHURCH

Baptist Churches were first established in Australia in 1831 and New Zealand in 1854 by Missionaries of the English Baptist Missionary Society. In Canada, the Baptist beginnings dated from the activity of Ebenezer Moulton, a Baptist immigrant from Massachusetts, who organised a Church in Nova Scotia in 1763. The Baptist work in Canada was nurtured by the Philadelphia Baptist Association as it was in the other 13 colonies in the Atlantic. In Ontario, the earliest Baptist Churches were formed by United Empire Loyalists who crossed the border following the American Revolution, while other Churches were established by immigrant Baptists from Scotland and by Missionaries from Vermont and New York.

The first Baptist activity in Africa was initiated in 1819 by Negro Baptists of Richmond and the total communicant membership in the late 1960s was more than 450,000. There was Baptist Community of nearly 5000,000 in Latin America.

The pioneer Baptist on the continent of Europe was John Gehardt Oncken, who organised a Church at Hamburg in 1834. Oncken has become acquainted with Barnas Sears of Colgate Theological Seminary who was studying in Germany and six others he was baptised by Sears. From this centre of evangelistic activity was extended throughout Germany and missions were established in Austria, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Poland and Russia. Baptist activity was initiated independently in

France, Italy and Spain. Swedish Baptists beginnings date from 1844. From Sweden Baptists penetrated into Norway and Finland. Excluding British Isles and Russia there were in late 1960s nearly 870,000 European Baptists.

The most notable Baptist growth occurred in Russia where a Russian Baptist Union was formed in 1884. This was as a result of the influence from Oncken. Another Baptist Body, the Union of Evangelical Christians was organised in 1908 by a Russian who had come under the influence of English Baptists. The Soviet Constitution subjected them to pressure but however in the late 1960s, two groups, combined in 1944 to form the Union of Evangelical Christian Baptists in USSR reported 545,000 baptised believers.

Penetration in Asia was led by William Carey in India, Adoniram Judson in Burma and Timothy Richard in China and by the late 1960s there was a Baptist community of nearly 1000,000 adherents in Asia, chiefly in India, Burma and mainland China.<sup>4</sup>

#### DEVELOPMENTS IN U.S.A.

The first Baptist Church in America was established by Roger Williams in 1638. The modern era of Christian Foreign Missions was thus the product of a series of religious awakenings which broke out spontaneously in many quarters within the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. In such a setting, an evangelistic concern developed among the Baptists in America like their British cousins.<sup>5</sup> The Philadelphia Baptist Association, the first to be organised in U.S.A. in 1707, sent out missionaries. Between 1743 and 1762, they established four Churches in Charleston and South Carolina. Similar evangelistic activities were carried on by Baptists in New England and Virginia.<sup>6</sup>

In 1802, Baptists in Boston founded the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society for the evangelization of new

4. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

5. Robert Torbet, 'Venture of Faith', pp. 6-8.

6. Robert Torbet. 'A Social History of Philadelphia Baptist Association', 1707-1940, p. 19, Philadelphia, 1944.

settlements on the frontier. Five years later, this Society cooperated with the New York Baptist Missionary Society in support of a Missionary among the Tuscarora Indians in North-Western New York.<sup>7</sup> In all these formative stages, William Carey undoubtedly exerted a great influence in shaping the pattern of the Protestant Missionary Movement.<sup>8</sup>

During the initial period in Baptist Foreign Missions, there were considerable correspondence between leaders in England and America. The Philadelphia Baptist Church Association, for example, received frequent reports concerning Carey's work in India and encouraged the Churches to contribute financial assistance. Typical of this affiliation between America and English Baptists is the work of Dr. William Staughton. He was an Englishman by birth and education. In 1792, he had been present at Kethering in England on the occasion of the organisation of the English Baptist Mission Society that sent William Carey as its first Missionary to India and manifested an intense interest in the enterprise. This interest he brought with him to America three years later. As the Pastor of the First Baptist Church at Philadelphia, he found a congenial company of like-minded Calvinistic Baptists. He advocated their support of the East India Missionary Enterprises. In order to raise funds for the support of the Baptist Missionaries, he wrote a book entitled "Baptist Mission in India". Through an extensive correspondence with Baptists in England and those in India, he was able to be an effective Promotional Agent in America.<sup>9</sup>

Other Associations in America also manifested a lively interest in Carey's work at Serampore by observing special seasons of Prayer and by making generous contributions to its support. In 1806, Baptists along the Atlantic Coasts from Boston to Charleston gave 2500 dollars to that Mission. When the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was established in 1812 by the Congregationalists, the Baptists collected 3000 dollars to assist in sending Luther Rice and Adoniram Judson and Ann Judson to India. In the twenty

7. The Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine, Vol. II, p. 314.

8. Robert Torbet, 'Venture of Faith', p. 10.

9. Philadelphia Association Minutes, 1707-1807, pp. 360 and 412.

year period prior to organisation of their own Society in 1814, American Baptists gave between seven and eight thousand dollars.<sup>10</sup>

### FORMATION OF THE AMERICAN BAPTIST FOREIGN MISSION SOCIETY

In September, 1809, Adoniram Judson read a sermon by Claudius Buchanan, a Chaplain for the British East India Company and the sermon appeared in the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary magazine. The sermon was preached at St. James Parish Church, Bristol, England, for the benefit of a "Society for Missions to Africa and the East" entitled "The Star in the East", and the sermon presented a new and compelling idea to Judson. Its appeal for missionaries in India gripped his imagination as nothing had ever done before. For five months he did not come to a decision. Then one cold day in February, 1810, he was walking alone in the woods behind the Seminary building, when suddenly the great commission came to his mind. Now it held a permanent meaning for his own life. That was the decisive moment when he resolved to become a Missionary to peoples beyond the seas.<sup>11</sup>

Adoniram Judson was not alone in his dedication to Mission. At William's College, there was already a Missionary Fellowship of youngmen who were accustomed to meet at night beneath a haystack near the College ground. Of this group, Samuel J. Mills, Luther Rice and James Richards joined the Andover Seminary in 1810.<sup>12</sup>

The first meeting of the American Board of Commissioners was held in September, 1810. All that was accomplished was preparation of a message to the Churches and appointment of a Prudential Committee to explore ways and means of equipping and sending forth missionaries. On December 25, 1810, Judson,

10. Albert L. Vail, 'The Morning Hour of American Baptist Missions', Philadelphia, 1907, pp. 244, 250-251.

11. Stacy R. Warburton, Eastward ; 'The Story of Adoniram Judson', p. 18, New York, 1937.

12. Edward Judson, 'The Life of Adoniram Judson', p. 17, New York, 1883.

Newell, Nott and Hall were examined and approved for appointment and received definite appointment as missionaries to work in Burma or in Surat or in Penang.<sup>13</sup> The salaries were fixed at 666.66 dollars, if married or 445.45 dollars, if unmarried, with outfit money equal to a year's salary. A sum of 3000 dollars was appropriated for books for missionaries. The vote was taken on the strength of a promised bequest of 30,000 dollars from the widow of John Norris. The bequest was designated for recruitment of missionaries.

Later, Luther Rice was also added to the list. On Thursday evening, February 6, 1812, before a congregation between 1500 and 2000 people, who filled to overflowing the Tabernacle Church in Salem, the five youngmen were ordained. Soon after the ordination of the five men, Ann and Adoniram Judson, and Harriet and Samuel Nowell were married. On Wednesday, February 8, 1812, they sailed on the caravan from Salem to Calcutta. On February 24 of the same year, Samuel and Roxana Nott, Gordon Hall, Luther Rice, and three couples of English Baptist Missionaries sailed from New Castle, Delaware. They too were on their way to India. The American Foreign Mission was thus begun.

Upon arrival in India, the Judsons were busy in making efforts to secure permission to stay in India. They learned that the British East India Company was unwilling to extend hospitality to the American Missionaries. With great reluctance, the Governor finally granted them permission to proceed to the Isle of France. While awaiting passage, Adoniram Judson and his wife were invited to live in Calcutta, in the home of Mr. Rolt, an Englishman who had married to widow of Brandson, one of the English Baptist Missionaries. Judson studied about baptism and began to change his mind of being baptised again. On August 8, 1812, when Luther Rice, Hall and Samuel and Roxana Nott arrived, Judson shared his burden of being baptised again with Samuel Nott. When both agreed after independent study, Judson wrote to William Carey in Serampore, asking for believer's baptism. Then he wrote to Dr. Worcester, Chairman of the American Board of

13. Robert Torbet, 'Venture of Faith', pp. 17-18.

Commissioners. Enclosing a copy of his letter to Carey, he offered his resignation, saying that the Board would not want to support a Baptist Missionary. At the same time, he wrote to Dr. Thomas Baldwin, Pastor of the Second Baptist Church in Boston, saying, "Should there be formed a Baptist Society for the support of a Missionary in these parts, I shall be ready to consider myself their missionary".

When the Baptists in America learned that Adoniram and Ann Judson had become Baptists, enthusiasm ran high. On January 25, 1813, six days after Dr. Baldwin had received Judson's letter, offering his services to the Baptists, the Baptists of Boston began the Prayer meetings for Missions. On February 8, 1813, the "Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel in India and other foreign parts" was organised in Baldwin's home. It was intended that this Society which was to serve for Massachusetts, should join with other like organisations when they should be formed.

These developments in America were not known to the Judsons, who faced an uncertain future in Calcutta. But they were not alone, for Luther Rice had been baptised on November 1, 1812. About the middle of November, 1813, the Officials of the East India Company issued strict orders for the deportation of Luther Rice and the Judsons to England. Therefore, after long discussions, it was decided that Luther Rice should return to America for arousing interests for the Missionary cause among the Baptists in America.

After Luther's departure from Calcutta, Judson and his wife had been obliged to cast their lot at Rangoon, under Burmese rule. Rice lost no time in arousing the Churches to the need of the hour. Tirelessly, on horseback and by carriage, he travelled up and down the coast, visiting Associations and Churches. Associations began to organise Foreign Mission Societies after the pattern of the one at Boston. Among these were the Philadelphia Society which came into existence towards the close of 1813, and the Savannah Society, organised in December, 1813 to include Baptists of South Carolina and Georgia. Luther Rice kept before the Churches the need of a General Convention to organise a National Agency. He went

so far as to propose that it be held in Philadelphia in June, 1814.<sup>14</sup>

Thirty-three delegates from eleven States and Washington D.C., made their way to Philadelphia for a week of meetings that opened on Wednesday, May 18, 1814. Twenty of the thirty-three came from New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. New England sent three. The Southern States from Virginia to Georgia sent six. All these who came were leaders in their own areas.<sup>15</sup>

Richard Furman of Charleston, South Carolina was appointed President of the Convention. The Secretary was Thomas Baldwin, Pastor of the 2nd Baptist Church at Boston.

After a preliminary discussion of the purpose of the meeting, a Committee of Fifteen was appointed to prepare a Constitution for a plan of Union. Dr. Baldwin served as a Chairman. A draft presented the next day proved to be unsatisfactory. So a smaller Committee composed of Furman, Baldwin, Stephen Gano and William White was instructed to prepare another.

On Friday, the new Constitution was presented and after some slight amendments, it was adopted unanimously on Saturday afternoon. Its Preamble reads :

“We the delegates from Missionary Societies and other religious Bodies of the Baptist Denominations in various parts of the United States, met in Convention in the city of Philadelphia for the purpose of carrying into effect the benevolent intentions of our Constituents, by organising a Plan for eliciting, combining, and directing the energies of the whole Denominations in one sacred effort for sending the glad tidings of salvation to the heathen, and to nations destitute of pure Gospel light, DO AGREE to the following Rules of Fundamental Principles.”

The new organisation was called “The General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States

14. *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. 3, December, 1813.

15. Robert C. Torbet, ‘Venture of Faith’, p. 26.

of America, for Foreign Missions". Because it was to meet every three years, it soon came to be known as the Triennial Convention.

A Board of 21 Commissioners, to act for the Convention for a term of three years was invested with a power to appoint a President, the Vice-Presidents, a Treasurer, a Corresponding Secretary, and a Recording Secretary. It was to be called "The Baptist Board of Foreign Missions in the United States".

Although amendments were made at nearly every subsequent meeting, this Constitution continued to serve American Baptists for 32 years. The pattern which it set was significant for the future. For the first time, the word "Convention" was used as a title for a organization of American Baptists.

The Constituency of the new Body was also a departure. It was wholly comprised of organisations, not of individuals. Moreover, it was to be distinctly Baptist. In this new organisation had been focussed the missionary concern of a people whose zeal had been awakened first by Carey's work in India, and then by Judson's courageous venture in Burma. A scattered and weak financially, who in 1812 lacked solidarity, had in 1814 become united in purpose and spirit.

On May 24, 1814, the Board met and organised. Dr. Baldwin was elected its President. First Vice-President was Dr. Henry Holcombe of South Carolina, Pastor of the first Baptist Church in Philadelphia, second Vice-President was Dr. William Rogers, Professor of Oratory and English at the University of Pennsylvania. John Cauldwell was made Treasurer. Dr. William Staughton was elected Corresponding Secretary and William White was appointed the Recording Secretary.

Article V of the Constitution of the Convention provided that Missionary appointees were to be persons of genuine piety, talents and zeal, in good standing in some regular Church.<sup>16</sup>

Luther Rice's appointment as a missionary was made on May 25, following a report of his labours in the South. He was to serve temporarily as a Promotional Agent, interpreting the Missionary cause, and organising societies and institutions for its support. In a letter to Judson, he expressed the hope that

16. Robert C. Torbet, 'Venture of Faith', pp. 27-30.



this work could be accomplished in five or six months after which he should be free to join him in Burma.<sup>17</sup>

The next action of the Board was to appoint Adoniram Judson as its Missionary, assuming the pledge of support given earlier by the Baptists of Massachusetts, and requesting him to pursue his work in such places as in his judgment might appear most promising.<sup>18</sup>

It was voted that a sum of 1000 dollars should be sent to him by the first safe opportunity. However, the news of his appointment did not reach Judsons until September 5, 1815, more than 15 months later. On that date, he wrote in his journal concerning the Convention :

“It unites with all the Bible Societies in Europe and America during the last 20 years, in furnishing abundant reason to hope that the dreadful darkness which has so long enveloped the earth, is about to flee away before the rising Sun.”<sup>19</sup>

With statesmanlike insight, Adoniram Judson saw the organisation of the Triennial Convention as a part of the great Christian movement to evangelize the world. Thus though the fledgling Mission in Burma formed main motivating force for uniting the Baptists of America in the General Convention in 1814, there soon emerged other interests and concerns which vied with foreign missions for encouragements and support.<sup>20</sup>

Thus the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society was formed with the first flush of enthusiasm. It had begun with the dramatic challenge of two young people, Ann and Adoniram Judson in Rangoon which was very much in need of support from the Baptists of America. However, it had soon gathered momentum as a number of youngmen and women gave themselves selflessly to the great Missionary enterprise. Thus the

17. The Missionary Jubilee Issue, 1814, p. 100.

18. *The Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. 3, Appendix, p. 13.

19. Ann H. Judson, ‘A Particular Relation of the American Baptist Mission to the Burman Empire’, p. 23, Washington, 1823.

20. Robert C. Torbet, ‘Venture of Faith’, pp. 81-90.

newness of the cause not only aroused the imagination of Baptists, north and south America, but it drew them together into a national organisation which did much to strengthen the Baptist witness in America and to enlarge the vision of Baptists for a world Mission. It must, however, be noted that the Plan for a world-wide mission was made on voluntary basis and the Government of America had nothing to do with it.

# Early Christian Missions in India and in North-East India

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## (1) EARLY CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN INDIA

The foundations of Christianity in India were laid by St. Thomas, the Apostle, though there is another view ascribing the first arrival of Christianity in India to the enterprise and merchants of the East-Syrian or Persian Church.<sup>1</sup> According to Western tradition, St. Thomas, following the well-established trade routes, reached India sometime in the middle of the first century. He preached the Gospel in Parthia and India, converted many to Christianity, including members of royal families, suffered martyrdom in India, and was buried there; later his mortal remains were transferred to the West (to Edessa) where they were deposited paying due respect and venerated.<sup>2</sup> According to Indian tradition, St. Thomas came by sea, and first landed at Cranganore about the year A.D. 52; converted high Caste Hindu families in Cranganore, Palayur, Quilon and some other places; visited the Coromandel Coast, making conversions; crossed over to China and preached the Gospel; returned to India and organised the Christians of Malabar and erected some public places of worship. Then he moved to Coromandel, and suffered martyrdom on or near the Little

1. A.M. Mundadan, 'History of Christianity in India', Vol. I, p. 21.

2. *Ibid.* p. 25.

Mount. His body was brought to the town of Mylapore and was buried in a holy shrine he had built.<sup>3</sup> The next contact was with the Persian or the East-Syrian Church whose Bishops were said to have evangelised the Indian people between 250 and 300 A.D.<sup>4</sup> These Missions were followed by the Portuguese Missionaries starting from the close of the 15th Century A.D.<sup>5</sup> Next Christian Mission to have arrived at India was the Danish Mission. But all these Missions carried on their activities outside the geographical boundaries of North-East India and their activities had no bearing on the region.

## (2) EARLY CHRISTIAN CONTACTS WITH NORTH-EAST INDIA

The earliest recorded visit by the Christian Missionaries to North-East India was made in 1626 by two Jesuit Missionaries, namely, Frs. Stephen Cacella and John Cabral, who were probably looking for a passage to Tibet and China. They travelled as far as Pandu, a few miles west of Guwahati, which was the border between the Ahom kingdom and the Moghul territories. In his letter written from Bhutan dated the 4th October, 1627, Cacella gives an account of their visit to Goalpara and Kamrup in Assam. This letter, however, does not contain any mention of any local Christian at that time.<sup>6</sup>

In 1635, a Feringhi was arrested by the Ahoms when he inadvertently stayed into their territory.<sup>7</sup> He was a European associated with the Moghul army and not a Missionary.<sup>8</sup> There are also references to the visit of four Europeans to the Ahom

3. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

5. E. Ritcher, 'History of Christianity in India and Assam', p. 1.

6. F.S. Downs, Rangamati, *Indian Church History Review*, Vol. XII, No. 2, 1978, *vide* also Sir Edward Maclagan, 'The Jesuits and the Great Moghul', pp. 21 and 434. Also C. Wessels, 'Early Jesuit Travellers in Central Asia', 1603-1721.

7. E.A. Gait, 'History of Assam', (1963 Ed.), pp. 115-116. Also S.K. Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese Relations 1771-1826* (1974 ed.), p. 59.

8. F.S. Downs, Rangamati, 'Indian Church History Review', Vol. XII, No. 12, 1978.

capital at Rangpur in 1739, who presented interesting articles to the reigning king Siva Singha.<sup>9</sup>

### (3) CHURCHES AT RANGAMATI IN GOALPARA, ASSAM

In 1682, the Chronicle of the Augustinian Friars of Bandel, near Hooghly in Bengal, makes reference to a flourishing community of 7,000 Christians at a place called Rangamati in Goalpara district of Lower Assam. In 1696 an Augustinian, Frey Sicardo, made further reference to a Christian community of Rangamati :

“In the Camp of Bencomatis on the confines of Assam, in the country subject to the king of the Mugh, there are two Churches, one dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary, the other, to Our Lady of Guadelupe.”

In January, 1715, Bishop F.T. Laynez of S. Tome-Mylapore spent 25 days at Rangamati. Fr. C.A. Barbier who accompanied the Bishop Laynez said that the Bishop had confirmed 1,000 persons during his visit. Fr. Barbier also makes reference to a Church at Rangamati dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary, thus confirming the writing of Fr. Sicardo.

Regarding the location of Rangamati, we have the following letters :

Fr. Frey Sicardo says, “it is in the camp of Bencomatis on the confines of Assam, in the country subject to the king of the Mugh”.

According to Hambye, it is at “the place where the river Jumuna branches off from the Brahmaputra”. Fr. Barbier says that it is “at the farthest limits of the states of the Great Mogal, and is situated on the 27th degree north Latitude”. Padre Marco della Tomba, writing between 1758 and 1769, says “Between the lands of Cambo and those of Industan towards Daka, there is another Raja, called Raghmati, who would seem to be to the east of Nepal, beyond the lands of Kirat, where they say there are many Christians.” Fr. Joseph Tieffenthaler, writing to Fr. Duperron in the second half of the 18th century, says,

9. S.K. Bhuyan, ‘Early British Relations with Assam’, p. 3.

“Rangamati was formerly a populous town, with a Church. It is situated on the northern bank of the Lakia, 2 miles from the banks of the Bremapoutar. It has 5 m. in length, 2 min breadth, is situated on sandy hills and in valleys ; 20 m. from Gohati which separates the district of Daka from the country of Ascham.”<sup>10</sup> Thus Rangamati was the place to have been first inhabited by a Christian community in the north-eastern regions.

#### (4) CATHOLIC COMMUNITY AT BONDASHILL IN CACHAR, ASSAM

Next Christian influence in North-East India was in Bondashill village of Cachar district in Assam. Bondashill was situated on the left bank of the Barak river. Throughout the present North-East India, this was the only settlement of the Catholics at that early period, but the origin of this Catholic settlement is wrapped in obscurity. According to tradition of the Catholics of Bondashill, their ancestors were Christian soldiers who, around the year 1790, immigrated from Meerut (U.P.), under the leadership of a petty Prince. Their number was about 500 and about 600 Muslim soldiers. While the struggles were going on between the Moghuls and the British, these Catholics emigrated into the Surma valley and settled down at Bondashill. The still common family names of Pinero, Fernandez, etc., indicate their Portuguese origin. It may be also that these Catholic soldiers of Bondashill were under the Service of the Moghul Emperor and were sent by him from Meerut to Bengal and Sylhet to fight against the British, but when in 1765, Bengal and Sylhet were finally transferred to the British, they found refuge in the kingdom of the Raja of Cachar, who, allotted to them this area which may be the beginning of the Catholic Christian village of Bondashill.<sup>11</sup> This Catholic community still exists today.

Thus, from the above, it is clear that the earliest Christian

10. F.S. Downs, Rangamati, *Indian Church History Review*, Vol. XII, No. 2, 1978.

11. C. Becker, 'History of Catholic Missions in North-East India', pp. 99-103.

contacts with North-East India were made by the Roman Catholic Missionaries and the first Christian Communities in North-East India were also the Roman Catholics.

#### (5) THE SERAMPORE MISSION, 1793-1838

Modern Missionary work in India and in North-East India dates from November 11, 1793, the day upon which William Carey landed in Calcutta.<sup>12</sup> Hence, it was William Carey, who, first set in motion the influence of Christianity in North-East India.

With the passing of the Charter Act of 1813, which permitted the Missionaries to preach the Gospel in India, the Missionaries of Serampore took the first opportunity to extend their missionary activities to the North-Eastern Frontiers of India.<sup>13</sup> Carey founded the Serampore College in 1818 with a view to train the Indians for missionary works.<sup>14</sup> Though the Serampore Mission had been set up by the Baptist Missionary Society of England, it operated independently of that Society from 1816 to 1838. Serampore Mission began to take interest in the Khasis early in 1813, when William Carey received a letter from W.N. Garrett, Judge at Sylhet<sup>15</sup> suggesting that some one be sent to evangelize several hundred Khasi tribesmen who had taken up residence in Company territory. These Khasis were probably the refugees from inter-tribal warfare in the adjoining hills. Garrett proposed that "two or three hundred of the fugitives should be made Christians at once by baptism and instructed afterwards".<sup>16</sup> Carey replied that the procedures of the Judge was just the reverse, nevertheless, he would send Krishna Chandra Pal, the first Serampore convert, who had recently expressed his desire to undertake the work of evangelization in the remote borders of Bengal.<sup>17</sup> Thus having been

12. E. Ritcher, 'History of Christianity in India and Assam', p. 2.

13. J.P. Marshall, 'Problems of Empire, Britain and India', p. 72.

14. Danniell E. Potts, 'British Baptist Missionaries in India', p. 33.

15. J.H. Morris, 'The History of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists' Foreign Mission, 1910, p. 71.

16. Baptist Missionary Society, 'Periodical Accounts related to Serampore Mission', No. IX Series, Jan-March, 1822, p. 7.

17. J.H. Morris, 'History', p. 70.

baptised in 1800, Pal was the first Missionary to the Khasi Hills.<sup>18</sup>

Early in March, 1813, Pal, taking with him a local Christian as his assistant, named Gora Chand, reached Sylhet on 20th March, 1813, and on the 7th April, wrote that he was proceeding to Pandua located at the foot of the hills below Cherrapunjee, but within the Syiemship of Cherrapunjee.<sup>19</sup> During the period of eight months of his stay at Pandua under the protection of the military, Pal baptised four sepoys, two Khasis and one Assamese. This baptism was interestingly conducted under the strict supervision of the British Government officials, as the baptism ceremony was not conducted until Garrett and Mathew Smith (another British official at Sylhet and a friend of Carey) had arrived and examined the candidates themselves. This was quite clear from the letter Pal wrote to a man in England, saying :

“The Jemadar entertained me very kindly. I had many opportunities of making known the Gospel there; and I have great hopes that four sepoys, two natives of Khasis, and one of Assam, were brought to believe in the Lord Jesus. A few days after, Mr. Smith and the other two gentlemen of the Station (Sylhet) arrived there, and having called the seven individuals, enquired whether they believed in the death of Christ, and that He suffered for sinners, and were willing to be baptized in His name. On their replies to all these questions, in the affirmative, they desired me to give them Christian baptism”.<sup>20</sup>

The official patronage of the whole function is also evident from the following description of the occasion :

“For the baptism of his first seven converts . . . the magistrate welcomed them to his house, and set a silver bowl before him, expecting the baptism indoors. But Krishna Pal

18. Memoirs of Krishna Pal, ‘The First Hindu Convert’, pp. 84-85.

19. J.H. Morris, ‘History’, p. 70.

20. J.H. Morris, ‘History’, p. 71, also F.S. Downs, ‘History of Christianity in North-East India’, p. 89.



said he knew naught of such a mode, and led them to the river, where eight native Princes and six hundred Khasis assembled. The magistrate watched the ordinance with reverent surprise, had cannon fired to mark the importance of the occasion, took Krishna back to his bungalow, and wrote a full record to Carey".<sup>21</sup>

After eight months of stay at Pandua, Pal returned to Serampore and never came back again. After his departure the Khasi converts, U Duwan and U Anna being unable to bear the persecutions remained inactive. As such, the work of Krishna Pal could not have impact on the lives of the Khasis. However, though this first Mission was short-lived and ineffective, it did lead to the inclusion of one of the languages into which Serampore translated the Bible.<sup>22</sup>

The work of Krishna Pal was not completely given up. In 1815, an effort was made to revive the work by sending a Portuguese brother named John De Silva to Sylhet with a young Brahmin convert, Bhavat, a local Serampore convert, and to re-establish contact with the Khasis. However, unfortunately, Silva died in 1817 and the Sylhet Station was abandoned in 1818.<sup>23</sup>

Another attempt was made by the Serampore Mission to renew contact with the Khasis when they sent a Missionary to Cherrapunjee in the person of Alexander B. Lish, an Anglo-Indian in 1832.<sup>24</sup>

Cherrapunjee was selected as the site for the Mission Station as the Government had recently established a Sanatorium there and the Syiem was one of the friendliest to the British. He opened a school for the boys but it was not successful. But before the end of the year, he prepared a short reading lessons and had revised most of the Gospel of Mathew. When he went to Calcutta, he took with him some

21. S. Pearce Carey, 'William Carey', p. 357 ; also F.S. Downs, 'History of Christianity in North-East India', p. 89.

22. J.H. Morris, p. 72.

23. J.H. Morris, pp. 71-72.

24. *Ibid.* p. 73.

Khasi boys who were present at his ordination in 1833 at the Lal Bazar Baptist Chapel, Calcutta.<sup>25</sup>

Lish returned to Cherrapunjee in January, 1833 along with a Bengali Preacher named Jan to work among the Bengalis of the area and Joshua Rowe, a former English Tutor at Serampore to open an English Boarding school. Lish opened three schools at Cherrapunjee, Mawsmal and Mawmluh and made a beginning in the development of Khasi literature. However, despite his busy six years' work in Cherrapunjee and surrounding areas, Lish was not able to establish a Khasi Christian community. The only continuity of his work and the later Welsh Presbyterian Mission was that two of his pupils, U Duwan and U Jungkha served as language pandits to the first Welsh Presbyterian Missionaries, and Lish is still honoured by Khasi Christians as one of the benefactors of the tribe.<sup>26</sup>

With the departure of Lish to Calcutta due to ill-health and an amalgamation of the Serampore Mission with that of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1837, the work in Khasi Hills was closed.<sup>27</sup>

## THE GAUHATI STATION

The earliest interest of Carey in this region was evinced when an Assamese Pandit, Atmaram Sarma of Kaliabar in the Nowgong district was employed in 1811 for translating the Bible. The Assamese New Testament was published in 1819 and the whole Bible in 1833, although the translation was not found intelligible to the Assamese people themselves.<sup>28</sup>

A concrete step was, however, taken by the Serampore Mission when they opened a Mission and a school at Gauhati in 1829, at the instance of David Scott, the Commissioner of Assam. James Rae was the first Missionary to this Mission Station. Rae served for several years as Superintendent of

25. P.R.G. Mathur, 'Khasi of Meghalaya', p. 14.

26. J.F. Jyrwa, 'A Historical study of the growth and development of the Khasi and Jaintia church in 20th cent', p. 20.

27. F.S. Downs, 'Christianity in North-East India', p. 96.

28. F.S. Downs, 'Christianity in North-East India', p. 87.

Public Works. He came out to India as a soldier and was stationed at Dacca, and while he was there, he had a deep religious experience and subsequently offered himself for Missionary service. He, however, felt that he was not qualified for the profession, and so in 1827 and 1828, he entered Serampore College to prepare himself for the Missionary service, after which, he was ordained. In July 1829, he and his wife and a little child were on their way to Gauhati accompanied by an Indian assistant Ram Chundra Nath. In the beginning, he was quite enthusiastic in the work and in 1830 he reported that he had under his charge "twelve interesting youths, three Khasis and nine Garos, committed to his care by Mr. David Scott, Commissioner of Assam."<sup>29</sup>

He also prepared a place for preaching where everyone could hear. Many were willing to accept Christianity but could not openly confess due to fear of persecution and social ruin. Rae was, however, visited by many inquirers who were interested in the new religion. He also toured extensively and distributed New Testament in Assamese language and a number of Bengali tracts among the Bengalis. His aim was to place a copy of the New Testament in every Hindu Temple. He reported that people were friendly and that the work was quite successful. In 1836, Rae was encouraged by the baptism of six individuals and by the formation of the first Christian Church in the Assam valley. The Church was formed of twelve individuals including the missionaries and he reported that for sometime much prosperity was enjoyed by it. But the Church did not survive more than a year as two of the members were suspended from communion because of immoral living. The people who listened attentively to the preachings had also become accustomed to the White Preachers, and Rae was discouraged and disgusted as he said, "They make sport of the whole and declare they care not for hell or God's wrath."<sup>30</sup>

Though another Missionary was sent to reinforce the Gauhati Mission, Rae was already discouraged due to the return of his assistant Ram Chundra Nath, due to his ill-

29. J.H. Morris, p. 72.

30. Victor Hugo Sword, 'Baptists in Assam', p. 38.

health, and most of all, due to the demise of his wife. Therefore, soon after the arrival of the American Baptist Missionaries into Assam, Rae retired from the Missionary work and took up the educational work under the British Government.<sup>31</sup>

In response to various pleas, a second Missionary named William Robinson was sent to Gauhati and after his arrival, several schools were opened. Robinson toured extensively in Nowgong district and urgently pleaded for funds to establish an English school and a Mission Station there. This enthusiasm, however, did not last long due to the discouragement at Gauhati or lack of reinforcement, the disinterest of the Church members, and the closure of the school and the work there came practically to a standstill.<sup>32</sup>

In 1837-38, when the Serampore Stations were amalgamated with the Baptist Missionary Society, and it was agreed to relinquish the Assam and Arakan fields to the American Baptist Mission, Robinson also left Assam for work in Bhutan but later came back to Assam and finally became the Superintendent of the Government schools. The Serampore Mission Station at Gauhati was eventually handed over to the American Baptist Mission. Strenuous efforts were made to persuade the American Baptist Mission to man the [entire Brahmaputra valley, but the financial stringencies of the Home Board in America and shortage of Missionary personnel in the field stood in the way of covering the entire valley.<sup>33</sup>

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

32. Victor Hugo Sword, 'Baptist in Assam', p. 39.

33. *Ibid.* p. 39-40, *vide* also F.S. Downs, 'Christianity in North-east India', pp. 93-94.

# The Shan Mission in Upper Assam

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## PROPOSALS FOR THE MISSION

The American Baptist Mission occupied Assam in 1836 simply as a step towards entering China from the West. Assam's location as a highway to Tibet and Western China was taken as a matter of great strategic importance from Missionary point of view. Another important fact was the proximity of Sadiya to what was believed to be a practical Pass from India to China. The American Baptist Mission of Burma decided to enter Assam as it had long been a cherished wish of the Board at Home to introduce Christianity among the Shans in the North-East, and through them to enter China by inland routes, as her sea-ports were then closed to foreigners. Dr. Judson of Burma Mission also had a strong desire to establish several Mission Stations in the areas north of Burma and south of China, and when the plans for opening the work at Sadiya was in the offing, he expressed his great delight in a letter home saying, "My heart leaps for joy to think of brother Brown at Sadiya and all the intervening Stations between there and Bangkok, Siam. Happy lot to live in these days."<sup>1</sup>

1. Nettie Pursell Mason, 'These Seventyfive Years : An Historical Sketch of Mission Work in Assam', March 31, 1911, pp. 31-32.

Meanwhile in America, the interest to establish Mission Station in China was further stimulated by the publication of a book in 1834 entitled "Journal of Two Voyages along the coast of China in 1831 and 1832" by Charles Gutzlaff. Gutzlaff expressed that the Chinese would respond to the Missionary activities.<sup>2</sup>

The American Baptist Mission Home Board thought that as the eastern Chinese coasts are guarded closely, it could be entered from the south, through Thailand. So they wrote to their own Missionary resident at Bangkok, J.T. Jones in 1834. But when Jones informed the Home Board that such an approach was not possible through Thailand, they turned to Burma as a possible base for a China Mission. Though the Missionaries in Burma were keen in the project, they felt that it was not practicable to launch a China Mission from Burma as well.<sup>3</sup>

It was at this moment that the American Baptist Mission in Burma received an official invitation from the Commissioner of Assam, Captain Francis Jenkins in early 1835 to work among the Shans in upper Assam. It appeared to them that this was an opportunity for both evangelizing the Shan tribes of northern Burma and gaining entrance to China. Thus it was this double interest in the Shans of northern Burma and as a means of entering China over its interior borders that made the invitation of Captain Jenkins so impressive.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, it was A.C. Bruce, an evangelical Anglican and later a Baptist in-charge of Tea experimental Plantation near Sadiya, who suggested to the Commissioner of Assam to invite the Missionaries to work in Assam. Bruce and his wife became interested in the Khamtis and the Singphos whom they believed to be closely related to the Shans of Burma. Mrs. Bruce opened a school for their children and even claimed to have converted some of them to Christianity. In 1834, Bruce persuaded the Commissioner of Assam, Captain Jenkins and the

2. F.S. Downs, *Indian Church History Review*, Vol. V, No. 1, 1971, also F.S. Downs, 'The Mighty Works of God', pp. 14-15.

3. F.S. Downs, 'Early Christian Contacts with North-East India', Vol. V, No. 1, 1971, p. 74.

4. *Ibid.*

Company officials in Calcutta to invite the Missionaries to Sadiya for the purpose of opening schools for the tribals. Following this suggestion, Captain Jenkins, Governor-General's Agent and Commissioner of Assam, wrote to Charles Trevelyan, a Civil official in Bengal, to invite the English Baptists to do Christian work "in the north-east district of Assam occupied by two tribes of the great Shan family, the Khamtis and the Singphos."<sup>5</sup>

William H. Pearce, Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, Calcutta, informed Captain Jenkins that while the Baptist Missionary Society was not in a position to undertake a new work, the American Baptist Mission of Burma might be interested in the work. Captain Jenkins, who had great respect for Adoniram Judson, an American Baptist Missionary pioneer in Burma, thought this to be a practical solution.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, Captain Jenkins wrote to the American Baptist Mission in Burma saying that the Mission would be under "the protection of our Government and would not be liable to those checks which the Rangoon Mission had constantly suffered from the jealousy and barbarity of the Ava Government."<sup>7</sup> William H. Pearce also wrote to the Mission at Rangoon saying, "It appears evident that an effective door is opened for the establishment of a branch of your Mission to the North-east of Assam. I must confess I shall feel truly happy if you feel inclined to enter it. Its geographical situation with relation to your mission seems to render it particularly desirable."<sup>8</sup>

The Home Board in America seems to have been moved by the enthusiasm on the part of the Burma Missionaries and also by the invitation of Captain Jenkins, who is represented as a "man of activity, intelligence and benevolent feeling, whose character and exertions stand very high in the estimation of the Government,"<sup>9</sup> and further by the generous offer of Captain Jenkins made in connection with the opening of a Station at Sadiya. He wrote, "No attention of mine should of course be

5. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1835, Vol. 16, p. 19.

6. F.S. Downs, 'The Mighty Works of God', p. 16.

7. *Missionary Magazine*, 1835, Vol. 16, p. 19.

8. *Missionary Magazine*, 1835, Vol. 16, p. 21.

9. *Missionary Magazine*, 1835, Vol. 16, p. 21.

wanting to make the place comfortable to any missionaries and I will be willing to contribute my mite to their establishment. You may mention that I will subscribe 1,000 rupees, if a family is settled as a missionary at Sadiya ; and whenever they have had a Press at work for six months, I will be happy to double that sum, if I remain in-charge of the Province."<sup>10</sup>

Charles Trevelyan also wrote to the Burma Mission saying, "The Shan language which is near akin to the Burmese and Siamese, and belongs to the Chinese family, furnishes a ready means of intercourse with perhaps a greater number of people than any other language in the world, except Chinese itself."<sup>11</sup>

As a matter of fact, the first attempt to reach Sadiya from Burma side was made by Eugenio Kincaid of Ava, and a Burmese Christian, Moungh Shway Moungh in 1835 and with great difficulty reached Mogoung, 350 miles away from Ava but being unable to procure men and supplies were compelled to retreat to Ava.<sup>12</sup>

Now, with the receipt of letters from Captain Jenkins, Pearce and Trevelyan, the Burma Mission designated two of its Missionary families, the Nathan Browns and Oliver Cutters for the Sadiya Station. Cutter, a printer, was included as Jenkins offered Rs. 2000, initially Rs. 1000 and the rest after a year if the installation was successful, towards the expense of setting up a Printing Press.<sup>13</sup> Nathan Brown, when contacted "embraced the proposal with instant enthusiasm". On December 16, 1835, the American Home Board wrote to Captain Jenkins accepting the invitation and informed him of their action regarding the appointment of Brown for the task. "It is probable you will have been appraised before this letter shall have reached you of the measures we have adopted for the immediate location of a Mission at Sadiya, the place recommended in your letter to Mr. Trevelyan."<sup>14</sup> The Home Board further recommended Mr. Brown to Captain Jenkins as being a man of

10. *Missionary Magazine*, 1835, Vol. 16, p. 21.

11. *Missionary Magazine*, Vol. XVI, p. 21, 1835.

12. Mrs. A.K. Gurney, 'History of the Sibsagar Field', Jubilee Report, 1886.

13. F.S. Downs, 'Early Christian contacts with North-East India', *Indian Church History Review*, Vol. V, No. 1, 1971, p. 76.

14. Victor Hugo Sword, 'Baptists in Assam', p. 43.



“strict integrity, enlarged views and truly Christian kindness, and will prove himself deserving of your favourable regard”. Mission was thus started with Sadiya as the frontier Station and the doorway into the celestial empire. By this, it was expected that C.T. Jones at Bangkok, and other Missions in Siam would be of easy access. Brown wrote, “You will easily see, by inspecting the map, that brother Jones can ascend the Siam river about two-thirds of the distance to Sadiya.” That was the knowledge Brown had of the geography of the region which had caused him later the most painful missionary experiences recorded in human history.<sup>15</sup>

The objectives of the Mission in establishing the Sadiya Station is also clear from the Home Board’s report : “(Sadiya’s) principal recommendation is the bearing which it seems to have upon adjacent countries and the missions already in progress in Siam and Burmah. From Sadiya the communication is open with Yunnan in China, and by this route a corps of scientific gentlemen were intending the last season to penetrate the interior of that country for the purpose of inquiry respecting the Tea plant. It lies near the head waters, it will also be recollected, of the Kiangku, or Nankin river, which runs through the centre of China. “I hope” says Mr. Brown, “the Board will avail themselves of this opening of Providence, and immediately send out one or two missionaries with a view to enter China. They might leave their families at Sadiya, while they went to explore the country, previous to making a permanent settlement and, in case they should at any time be driven from China, they might find a safe retreat and a fine field of labour among the Shans. . .” “An equally direct communication is presented on the north with Bootan and Thibet, countries under the sway of the Grand Lama, and to the Seat of the Shaman religion, hitherto unvisited by the Christian Missionary. Lassa, the capital of Thibet, and the residence of the Grand Lama, is situated near the Burrampooter, which flows thence through the whole extent of Assam, and might easily be reached, it is believed, from Sadiya. The Chinese, too have considerable trade with Lassa and it is not improbable

15. Victor Hugo Sword, ‘Baptists in Assam’, p. 43.

that Sadiya lies on, or near, one of their thoroughfares.”<sup>16</sup> Thus it was not North-East India that prompted the Missionaries to plunge into the mission work in this region but only as a means of entering into northern Burma and China.

People everywhere were greatly interested in the project; and friends, both in India and America, sent in funds to launch it. Major White Rs. 200; Mr. Bruce, a Tea Planter and Lieutenant Charlton Rs. 100 each, Mr. Bird from Allahabad Rs. 250; Captain Jenkins Rs. 3,000 and others contributed towards the launching of this project.<sup>17</sup> It appeared to them that both from commercial and religious points of view, Sadiya would give promise of becoming a great centre through which international intercourse between China and India would take place.<sup>18</sup>

### WORK AT SADIYA

Nathan Brown and Oliver Cutter along with their wives arrived at Calcutta in September, 1835, and started for Sadiya by river on the 20th November, 1835. They procured three Bengali boats, one for each family and one as a floating kitchen and store house, each vessel being some five or six feet in width, and twenty or thirty feet in length.<sup>19</sup> A Canopy of split bamboos and palm leaves, built over the center formed the shelter at night and protection during the day from the burning tropical sun for the travellers. These boats were manned by a Manji or Captain, with a six or eight men under him, who walked in a footpath along the bank of the river, pulling the boat after them by means of ropes. Where there was no path, these men would push the boats by means of poles. Sometimes their crafts would be whirled about by the current and headed down the stream which would again be dashed and torn by wind and rain. Sometimes the travellers were forced to halt due to shallow water, and were compelled

16. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. XIV, pp. 151-152, 1835.

17. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1835, Vol. 16, p. 195; *vide*, also V.H. Sword, 'Baptists in Assam', p. 43.

18. Victor Hugo Sword, 'Baptists in Assam', pp. 43-44.

19. Nathan Brown, 'The Whole World Kin', p. 109.

to transfer all their goods into small dug-outs. On January 18, 1836, nearly two months later, Brown wrote from below Gauhati, "We should have been up much farther, had it not been for shallow water in passing from Hoogly to the Ganges . . ." <sup>20</sup>

For about seventeen weeks they were pushed and pulled through dense jungles and unknown country, entirely cut off from all civilizations outside covering about 1280 kilometres. When the journey began, they were occasionally visited by British officials,<sup>21</sup> but as they proceeded up the river they no longer visited them. Thus with immense hardships which was almost unbearable to any man, only with the spirit of martyr and feeling of allegiance to another kingdom, they journeyed till they reached their destination. At long last, they arrived at Sadiya on the 23rd March, 1836, at a time when Sadiya was more or less in turmoil. The Khamtis had made several raids but the Missionaries were welcomed by the British officials at Sadiya, and the bungalow of Captain Charlton, who had gone to Calcutta for treatment of wound he had received in one of the encounters with the Khamtis, was put at the disposal of the Missionaries.<sup>22</sup> Major Jenkins also sent a Shan teacher to meet them at Goalpara, and so they worked diligently at the study of the language but to his surprise, he found out that the Shan language that he learnt was quite different from the languages of the Khamtis and the Singphos. Going out soon after their arrival at Sadiya, in company with an English officer to visit the villages, Brown discovered to his surprise and disappointment that the only Shan within reach were a few scattered Khamti hamlets, and that the main body of the people was beyond the mountains, and even they reduced in numbers. But there was no alternative. A new language must be learned in order to work among the people around them. Thus Nathan Brown settling down to cold facts writes, "This region providentially opens before us; and

20. Brown's letter, *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, September, 1836, Vol. 16, p. 208.

21. Letter of Mrs. Brown, 'The Whole World Kin', p. 115.

22. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, December, 1836, Vol. 16, p. 295 ; *vide* also Victor Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam*, pp. 45-46.

after long and tedious journeys, we have at length arrived upon the ground where we shall have no doubt spend the remainder of our days.”<sup>23</sup> His faith in Mission in Assam remained so strong that he mentioned Assam as “One of the most important and encouraging fields in all the east.”<sup>24</sup> Thus among the hostile people they began by making the axe to cut timber for dwellings and school houses; by making bricks for a chimney and burning the lime to make the mortar. So while struggling for physical existence, they picked up Assamese language without Grammar or Dictionary or interpreter. Before three months, Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Cutter were teaching girls and boys and Rev. Brown had finished a small Romanised Assamese and Khamti spelling book.<sup>25</sup>

Immediately after June 12, 1836, a site for the Mission Compound was procured on the north bank of the Kuril river, one mile from the Cantonment, about two miles from the old village of Sadiya. On December 16, 1836, they entered their new home and the routine work of preaching and teaching was begun. While Brown saw the opportunity for work among the Assamese, he was also interested in the Khamtis and the Singphos. The Abhors likewise appealed to him tremendously.<sup>26</sup> After a year on the field, he pleaded for a Missionary for each language spoken about them, saying that their work, but a drop in the ocean, would be lost in the desolate darkness unless the field were supplied with more labourers.<sup>27</sup> He devoted himself to the work of production of literature. He soon found that the translation of the Bible produced by Carey was so full of Bengali or Sanskrit words that it was practically useless.<sup>28</sup> Hence in January, 1838, he began to make a new translation, as the corrections were too numerous.<sup>29</sup> Thus twenty-seven months after their arrival at Sadiya, two hundred and thirty pages had been prepared

23. Nathan Brown, ‘The Whole World Kin’, p. 130.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

25. Mrs. N.P. Mason, ‘These Seventy-five Years’, March, 1911, p. 33.

26. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. 18, 1836, p. 5.

27. Mrs. N.P. Mason, ‘These Seventy-five Years’, p. 34.

28. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. 18, 1836, p. 5.

29. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. 18, 1838, p. 115.

and 4,850 copies, or a total of 1,35,850 pages printed, besides thirteen chapters of Mathew.<sup>30</sup> These were in Assamese, Tai and English, and a Khamti Catechism of 1000 soon followed.<sup>31</sup> In printing, one of the problems confronting them was the type of character to be used. Practically none of the local people could read or write, and Brown wrote, "We are therefore obliged to give them an alphabet of some sort, and the only question is whether it shall be the expensive and difficult Bengali characters or English."<sup>32</sup> He goes on and says, "We have been induced to choose the latter", the reason being that "from present appearances, it seems nearly certain that the Bengali character will in a few years, be abandoned throughout India."<sup>33</sup> He also felt that in the use of the Roman characters, certain letters could be employed to express the same sounds whether it were in Assamese, Khamti, Abhor or Singpho. So he concluded that a scholar who had learned to read one, can read the whole. Moreover, the local people have made no objections to the English characters, but rather prefer them. No one has asked for the Bengali characters.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to the work of Brown and Cutter, Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Cutter also started several schools in the nearby villages. The boys showed keen interest and in an incredibly short time read English very well. Brown wrote, "They can now read in their language with ease, and the class in English have made such advance as to be able to read simple sentences with general correctness."<sup>35</sup> A young priest asked for entrance. He laid aside his saffron robe, became a student of the school, and received the Christian name, Elizah Hutchinson. This was the beginning in Assam of giving the converts new names. But as far as it is known, he never made an open confession of the Christian faith, but according to the report of the

30. *Ibid.*, p. 145.

31. Victor Hugo Sword, 'Baptists in Assam', p. 49.

32. *Journal of Brown*, April 7, 1836, B.M., Vol. 17, p. 119, also Sword, p. 49.

33. Victor Hugo Sword, 'Baptists in Assam', p. 49.

34. *B.M.M.*, Vol. 18, p. 7, also Sword, p. 50.

35. Nathan Brown, 'The Whole World Kin', p. 135.

Treasurer to the Home Board, he become a Teacher in one of the Mission schools.<sup>36</sup>

The girls were also taught in the art of handicraft and in letters. Mrs. Cutter gained their confidence and a large number of them attended her classes. The schools were to them their chief means of imparting knowledge and gaining the confidence of the people, as well as the means of propagating the Gospel. Thus at the very inception of Christianity, education was emphasised. It was the conviction of these early Missionaries that the schools were of the greatest importance in their effort to evangelize the savage tribes.<sup>37</sup> Brown also wrote to the Home Board suggesting a Missionary farmer to teach the people agriculture. He wrote, "the soil around Sadiya is inferior to none in the world, producing nearly all the tropical fruits and would nearly all those of the temperate regions."<sup>38</sup> The Missionaries also saw the possibilities of development of Industries in those areas. So in order to improve their economic conditions, they wanted to train the local people in the useful arts and in introducing foreign plants.<sup>39</sup> The Home Board approved of the proposal and decided to send two or more pious and intelligent families of suitable qualifications, as soon as such families could be found. However, this undertaking could not be materialised due to the insurrections of the Khamtis.<sup>40</sup>

#### ARRIVAL OF MILES BRONSON AND JACOB THOMAS

In response to various requests, Rev. and Mrs. Miles Bronson and Rev. and Mrs. Jacob Thomas were sent as associate Missionaries to Brown and Cutter. They arrived at Calcutta in April, 1837 and insisted on immediately proceeding to Sadiya though they were advised to wait until after the monsoon. They left Calcutta on the 26th April, 1837 and started their long and tedious journey up the Brahmaputra

36. Sword, pp. 50-51.

37. Nathan Brown, 'The Whole World Kin', p. 136.

38. Mrs. N.P. Mason, 'These Seventy-five Years', p. 34.

39. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. 17, p. 119.

40. V.H. Sword, *Baptists in Assam*, p. 52.

valley when the monsoon started, at a time when the current of the river used to come in turbulent whirlpools carrying with it trees and debris from falling bank endangering any kind of local craft coming up the river. The first portion of their journey was, on the whole, successful and it brought them to Gauhati in the best of humour and health. The next part of the journey was fraught with tragic events. As they proceeded up, the force of the current increased so much so that the boat in which they were travelling could not make progress and Bronson also became seriously ill with malaria, and was forced to moor in a low and unhealthy jungle a little below the mouth of the Dibruh river. Therefore, Thomas was sent ahead in a small boat to Sadiya to bring medical assistance which was only a day's journey away. When Thomas was only three hours from Sadiya and within sight of the town, two large trees, their roots undercut by the current, fell on his boat. The two boatmen were able to escape but Thomas, trapped in branches, was forced under the water and drowned. The boatmen rushed to Sadiya with the news and a rescue party was immediately sent out. Nothing could be done for Thomas but they were able to bring medicines to Bronson whose health was already improving. The depth of the sadness of this small group of Missionaries can be best understood from the writing of Cutter when he wrote, "I am now in a small boat, on my way to Sadiya, with our dear brother Thomas, lying before me, a cold and lifeless body . . . ." His feelings are further expressed in a small poem :

"Death, like an overflowing stream,  
Sweeps us away, our life's dream.  
An empty tale, a morning flower,  
Cut down and withered in an hour."<sup>41</sup>

The accident is further described in Cutter's account as he received it from the boatmen who were with Thomas at the time of his death.

"The men who were in the front and back of the boat, say

41. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. 18, p. 67.

they gained their footing on the ground, and sprang to the relief of brother Thomas, at the same time calling the other men, who were soon on the spot. They said they used every endeavour to get him out two taking hold of each arm, two hold of each shoulder, and one hold of his head, but they could not move him, as he was pressed so closely against the boat, and the trunk of the largest tree lay across his bowels. They stated they had neither knife nor axe with which they could cut away the trees and with their united efforts they could move neither that nor the boat ; neither could they raise his head above the water. He raised one or both of his hands above the surface for a moment, but they never heard a groan or perceived any further struggle. Finding, they said, all efforts to rescue him, vain, one boat immediately proceeded to Sadiya, to bring us the distressing intelligence. Oh, what a shock to us all ! What gloom instantly spread over our fond anticipations and bright prospects ! Brother Brown was unable to go out today, having a slight fever; but as quickly as possible, I got a boat and men provided with spades, hoes, axes, blankets, etc., and went with all speed, to the fatal spot. Our friends as well as myself, feared I shall be unable to recover the body; but before I arrived, the strong current had moved the position of both the tree and boat, and I was soon enabled to raise the body of my lifeless brother from its watery grave.”<sup>42</sup>

Nathan Brown despite his illness accompanied the rescue party to the aid of Bronson and to the comforts of Mrs. Thomas. He found them moored in an unhealthy jungle just below the Dibru river. The coming of Brown was an encouragement to the Bronsons, but it was a difficult task for Brown to bring the sad news of Thomas' death. He wrote, “Brother Bronson is in a very low state, and we fear the journey will be more than he is able to bear, especially since we can procure no food suitable for a sick person.”<sup>43</sup> The sad party finally reached Sadiya on 15th July, 1837, at the height of the rains.

42. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. 18, p. 67. also Sword, pp. 54-55.

43. Nathan Brown, ‘The Whole World Kin’, p. 147, Nov. 4, 1838 ; Also Sword, p. 55.



The death of Thomas was a great blow to the Mission and a constant source of sorrow to his friend, Miles Bronson. Besides, they were in constant danger of hostile raids by the Khamtis and Singphos. Their activities were greatly checked by continuous tribal warfares, and their hopes to enter among the hill tribes were shattered. Sadness occasioned by the death of their daughter, Sophia came to the Brown's family. Mrs. Brown and their only remaining child were often ill with fever or dysentery, and the incident that took place disturbed the peace of Bronson's mind. After the whole week's work of translation and preaching and care of the sick family, Brown one Sunday evening went to see the grave of their daughter. On arrival, he found to his horror that the grave of their daughter had been opened and the coffin exposed to full view. It was with great difficulty that he could persuade some of his workers to help him cover the grave before night fell.<sup>44</sup>

In spite of all these sad experiences and disappointments, the Missionaries carried on their work as best as they could under these circumstances. Translation of simple books into the Khamti and Singpho languages was started. Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Cutter started a small school for the Assamese-speaking people. As there was still only a little work in the Press, Cutter also became involved in educational work, opening several smalls school in nearby villages. Brown soon began to look for a suitable place to locate a Singpho centre. At the suggestion of C.A. Bruce, the British officer in-charge of the Company's Experimental Tea Plantations, the small military outpost at Jaipur was selected. The Bronson's family, along with Mrs. Thomas moved to Jaipur in April, 1838.<sup>45</sup>

The Home Board and the Missionaries were still committed to Shan Mission, yet the actual work was more related to the local inhabitants, namely, the Assamese as they were the residents of and around Sadiya. By the end of 1837, Brown has mastered the Assamese language and could preach fluently and he began to hold regular services in Assamese language. The following year, he began translation of the Gospel into the

44. Sword, 'Baptists in Assam', pp. 55-56.

45. F.S. Downs, 'The Establishment of the American Baptist Assam Mission', 1836-1841, *I.C.H.R.*, Vol. VI, No. 1, 1972.

Assamese language. Soon they also learned that the British (Baptist) Missionary Society had offered its Lower Assam Field to the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. Accordingly, the Missionaries sent an appeal to the Home Board urging them to accept the offer and send out personnel to man the field. By this the Missionary did not mean to abandon the Shan Mission, but to open a new field in the Brahmaputra valley. They asked not less than twelve Missionaries to work in this new field of the Brahmaputra valley, but as the Home Board had already expanded the Mission fields beyond its capacity, they could not maintain both the Shan Mission and the Brahmaputra Valley Mission. They were to choose one of them and they eventually chose the latter in 1841. The main reason for abandonment of the Shan Mission was the Khamti attack on the Sadiya garrison at about 3 O'clock in the morning of January 28, 1839.<sup>46</sup>

The Khamtis made a surprise attack on the Sadiya garrison, firing the houses and murdering indiscriminately all whom they met. Colonel White, the Commanding Officer, when first hearing the alarm, rushed out of his house making his way to the Magazine but he was met and surrounded by the enemy, who killed him on the spot.<sup>47</sup> There were only the Browns in the Station as the Cutters had gone to Calcutta for some works. It was a terrible night for the Missionaries whose houses were only about one mile away from the garrison. Why the Mission houses were spared is not definitely known, but as Brown said, "It might have been through personal friendship on the part of the Chiefs", but it is also probable that "they intended to reserve the houses of the Missionaries for plunder afterwards."<sup>48</sup> There was no time for the Missionaries to rush to the Cantonment as it was about one mile away and so, they slipped into a little boat taking a few biscuits along for food, and pushed out into the stream. Thus they spent the night "every moment expecting an attack from the Khamtis who might be lying in wait to rush upon and massacre them or take them as slaves." Brown wrote, "We, therefore, kept off upon the river till day

46. F.S. Downs, 'Mighty Works of God', pp. 19-20.

47. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. 19, p. 228.

48. *Ibid.*

break when the welcome sound of the bugle met our ears, and we immediately came in. The sight around us was truly terrible. The dead and dying were scattered in every direction". He observed that "While I am writing, the trees are clouded with flocks of vultures, which have collected from all quarters to feast upon the slain."<sup>49</sup> The mangled bodies of the dead, the groans of the dying who were weltering in pools of blood, were scenes and sounds which would make even the less squeamish soldiers turn away, and that was what that haunted Mrs. Brown for months. Brown wrote, "I cannot think that when I lie down and take my two little ones by my side, that I am acting contrary to the Gospel, by putting my sword and double-barrelled gun under my pillow ; nor could I in conscience hesitate to use them, if pushed to the last extremity."<sup>50</sup>

Rev. and Mrs. Bronson had already gone to Jaipur, another military outpost, to try out the possibility of opening work there for the Nagas. Mr. and Mrs. Cutter returned on April 15, 1839 from Calcutta. The Browns were compelled to live within the Cantonment where all the survivors of the town lived for four months in crowded quarters, causing a panic of disease. In the mean time, the population of Sadiya and vicinity was daily fleeing. Fields and villages were deserted. Brown wrote, "Khamtis, Singphos, and Mishmis combined have been plundering and carrying off the peaceable inhabitants."<sup>51</sup> To the weary Missionaries, it seemed that their work had been taken out of their hands and the prospect for the time had been blasted. Many of the Khamtis among whom the Missionaries were desirous for working were completely dispersed. The Assamese and other tribes also fled away in fear.<sup>52</sup>

The headquarters of the Government had been removed to Sibsagar, and Brown wrote, "There is no prospect that Sadiya will recover . . . for many years to come ; and we have at last concluded to relinquish that part at present and locate ourselves at the more central situation at Jaipur."<sup>53</sup> Hence, after a little

49. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. 19, p. 228.

50. Nathan Brown, 'The Whole World Kin', p. 182.

51. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. 19, p. 228.

52. V.H. Sword, 'Baptists in Assam', p. 58.

53. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. 19, p. 228.

over three years at Sadiya, after all its experiences, having gathered no converts, the Missionaries left homes, Zayats (Preaching booths), and school houses; and with all their goods, including Printing Presses, they pushed off from Sadiya on the 12th May, 1839, with Jaipur as the next Mission Station for further missionary activities.<sup>54</sup>

### WORK AT JAIPUR

Jaipur was one of the principal posts of the East India Company in Assam and Bronson and his family had moved there in the spring of 1837, to work among the Singphos—the people among whom he was sent to work. The main objective of his coming from Sadiya was to be near these people. Other Missionaries and C.A. Bruce, who were living at Jaipur during that time as an Agent for promoting the Tea culture, and being a warm friend of the Mission, rather urged that Missionary should come and open a Station there. It was also expected that the Nagas living in the neighbouring hill would be benefited by the opening of a Mission Station at Jaipur. Therefore, the Bronsons were warmly welcomed when they moved to Jaipur by C.A. Bruce and other British officials residing there. The Missionaries were provided with many comforts until arrangements could be made for their settlements. The resident British officials helped tremendously the cause of the infant Mission Station. The wives of the officers helped the Missionaries in opening schools and teaching there.<sup>55</sup>

Settling down at Jaipur, Bronson made an exploring tours into the Singpho and Naga districts and started the Mission to the Nagas in March, 1838. In January, 1839, taking with him a rubber tent and an interpreter, he climbed the mountains in search of their remote villages. He was hospitably entertained and gained the goodwill of the aged Chief who sent two of his sons to teach Bronson their language. The day before Bronson left, the Naga villagers visited him and requested him to read to them the books he had prepared. But before he could do

54. V.H. Sword, 'Baptists in Assam', p. 58.

55. William Gammell, 'History of American Baptist Mission', pp. 213-14.

further, he had to leave the Naga village as the news reached him that the Khamtis and the Singphos had attacked Sadiya and another party of the enemy were advancing towards Jaipur to drive away every White man from the country.<sup>56</sup>

Thus in 1839, three Missionary families—Bronson, Cutter and Brown were located at Jaipur. It is quite evident that they looked upon Jaipur as a permanent abode and as a place where they could accomplish things which they could not accomplish before. They divided their works as follows—Cutter, in-charge of printing and educational works ; Brown, for preaching and literary activities, while Bronson would pay his attention to the Nagas.

Cutter kept himself engaged in educational works, but it seems that the work did not flourish well as he hoped before. Jaipur, though located in a strategic centre, was not a large place, nor were there large villages in the immediate vicinity. Most of the inhabitants belonged to floating population, consisting of labourers who came for the purpose of sinking wells for Petroleum, and digging for Salt in the hills. Cutter, therefore, wrote that, “Jaipur is a good Station for preaching, but not so favourable for schools as many other parts of the country”.<sup>57</sup> Services were held both in English and in the vernacular. All the Europeans attended the English Services, whereas the Services in the Assamese language were attended by a crowd of all kinds of people. A group of Chinese Catholics, who were imported to work in the Tea Industry, took great interest in the Services. These Chinese workers inter-married with the Christians and became an important factor in later years in the Church in Sibsagar.<sup>58</sup>

Brown's time was taken up in preaching among the Assamese and in literary works. The need to evangelize among the Assamese pressed more and more. He continually asked for Missionaries to work among the plains people. He was of the opinion that the work among the hill people could afford to wait. He wrote, “I have long been in doubt whether in the present circumstances of the Mission, and while there

56. Nathan Brown, 'The Whole World Kin', p. 170.

57. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. 21, p. 220, 1841.

58. V.H. Sword, 'Baptists in Assam', p. 64.

are so many inviting fields among the Assamese, it is the duty of any brother to devote his life to the study of a language, and to the translation of the Scriptures into it, which is spoken only by a few thousand people."<sup>59</sup>

Bronson, on the other hand, decided to give his entire time to the Nagas. It was his desire to establish a Mission Station amidst the people itself. But the task appeared to be extremely difficult. The inaccessibility of the hills and the absence of roads rendered it almost impossible for Missionary tours. Moreover, the Nagas were suspicious of the Whitemen and resented their intrusion into their territory. However, Bronson succeeded in contacting a few Nagas from the Namsang village, located in today's Tirap district of Arunachal. In January, 1839, he tried to enter the village but he was not given permission by the Village Chief and the elders suspecting that he was Company's Agent. They found it difficult to accept the fact that they came all the way from beyond the oceans simply to give them books and teach them religion. Only after three days of camping in the jungle that Bronson was finally permitted to enter the village. And it was another three days before that he was permitted to meet with any of the villagers. Thus after six days of debate, the old Chief and his eldest son were convinced that he meant no harm, though some of the other sons were not. However, in the end, Bronson was allowed to stay. His main interest by this time were to help him revise the Speller and Catechism, and to consult them if they would be interested to have a school. Bronson was now convinced that it would be practicable for his family to live in Namsang and work there.<sup>60</sup>

The local British officials and the Mission Home Board also agreed to Bronson's Mission in Namsang. C.A. Bruce had already made a donation of Rs. 100 towards the printing of the Spelling book. Captain Hannay encouraged him as it would help to pacify the Nagas without administering over them. The Commissioner of Assam, on hearing of Bronson's Mission among the Nagas, wrote to the Mission Home Board urging them to send another Missionary to assist Bronson.

59. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1841, Vol. 21, p. 295.

60. F.S. Downs, 'The Mighty Works of God', pp. 22-23.

Between 1838 and 1840, various British officials contributed a total of Rs. 1890 for various purposes of Namsang Mission. All these voluntary encouragements influenced the Mission Home Board and so appointed Rev. Cyrus Barker and his wife for the Nagas in 1839. Miss Rhoda Bronson sister of Miles Bronson also accompanied the Barkers to Assam to assist her brother. She was the first lady Missionary to serve in the Assam Mission. Thus Namsang work was looked upon as the last hope for the Shan Mission both by the Home Board and Bronson. Through the Nagas, the Shans were expected to be contacted.<sup>61</sup>

Bronson visited Namsang again in December, 1839, to make arrangements to start work as soon as possible. Oppositions were overruled by the Chief and his eldest son, who were pleased to see the printed copies of the Speller and Catechism. A house was built for him on a hill overlooking the village, but the loneliness of the mountains evidently affected them all, for Bronson wrote, "We have never been quite so much alone as just now, having always had some brother Missionary or at least some English person with whom to associate."<sup>62</sup> However, Bronson was prepared to start a school but there was no student. In January, 1840, Rumjang, a young man living in the house of the Chief declared his readiness to go to school. By the middle of the month, four were enrolled into the school and this encouraged Bronson so much that he has decided to bring up his family to Namsang. So, on March 14, 1840, Mrs. Bronson and their daughter moved to Namsang, a small village about two days journey from Jaipur. By the end of March, the school had twenty students under the direction of Mrs. Bronson.<sup>63</sup>

But there were a number of obstacles in running the school at Namsang. The Nagas had the impression that only the young men and relatives of the Chiefs were capable of learning to read. They also had the notion that the common people could not be benefited by books. Besides, the labourers

61. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

62. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1841, Vol. 21, p. 113.

63. F.S. Downs, 'The Mighty Works of God', p. 24.

working in the manufacture of salt could not be spared. It was unheard of to have the girls in the school. They said, "You can not teach our females; they are trained to bear burdens, to bring wood and water, and to make the salt by which we make our subsistence". Thus the Missionaries had to be content with teaching a privileged few, who were considered able to assimilate the mysteries of the alphabets. Besides, maintenance of school discipline was the most difficult task for the Missionaries at the initial stage. The students refused to gather at a given hour. Even while the students were engaged in reading, if they heard the sound of a barking deer, they would seize their spears and Dao and rush to the chase without any permission. But men—old and young finally came to the Missionaries and soon picked up the rudiments of learning. Evening schools were also arranged for those who could not attend the day school and before long, the students looked forward in anticipation to the study period. Bronson wrote, "Not an individual is absent and they appear to have applied themselves to their books with zeal."<sup>64</sup>

The new Missionaries—Mr. and Mrs. Cyrus Barker and Miss Rhoda Bronson arrived at Jaipur in May, 1840. Bronson went down to bring them up to Namsang but the Barkers had to remain behind in Jaipur due to illness. It was decided that they would come up afterwards. The two ladies managed the school and Bronson turned his attention to the translation of the Scriptures. There was every prospect of developing their Mission Station at Namsang. But things have turned otherwise. Rhoda Bronson became seriously ill within a few weeks of her arrival and never completely recovered. During the whole summer of 1840, all the other Missionaries were ill with fever at one time or another. The school was often closed and no progress could be made in other aspects of Mission works. But the greatest blow to the Namsang Mission was that when Mr. Barker visited Namsang in

64. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1841, Vol. 21, p. 116; also *Sword*, 'Baptists in Assam', p. 62.



August, 1840, he declared that he wants to work among the Assamese rather than the Nagas or the Shans. In fact, as soon as he returned to Jaipur from Namsang, he started his tours in the Sibsagar district. Soon he asked officially to transfer him to the work of the Assamese plains. It seemed that he had been influenced by Brown who was convinced that greatest opportunity for the Mission lay among the people of the plains.

The small Namsang Missionary group found themselves in an extremely difficult condition. Bronson was compelled to relinquish his hope of Missionary work among the Nagas when one day in May, 1840, he became weak and shivered with fever chills, and had to tuck away in a little canoe down the Dihing river on his way to Sibsagar for medical aid. In October, 1840, Rhoda Bronson's condition became so serious that her brother decided to take her to Calcutta for medical treatment. The Bronsons accompanied her to Jaipur but could never come back again to Namsang. Rhoda's condition was not found suitable to undertake the journey from Jaipur and on December 8, 1840, she died. And with her death came the end of the early Naga Mission and the Shan Mission.

Except Bronson, other Missionaries—the Browns, Cutters and the Barkers were all convinced that the original idea of the Shan Mission was not practicable and it would be more fruitful if they turned their attention towards the people of the plains of Assam. The population was dense and spoke a common Assamese language and better facilities were available to take care of their health. They also came to believe that there may be more favourable response to their mission in the plains of Assam. This conviction was based on the fact that the first convert of the Mission was an Assamese, named Nidhiram Farwell.

Therefore, if the death of Rhoda Bronson marked the end of the Shan Mission, the baptism of Nidhiram in June, 1841, marked the beginning of the Mission in the plains of Assam. So, at long last, the Missionaries discovered that, Jaipur was not the paradise they had hoped it would be. Brown wrote :

“We have been disappointed in our expectation regarding Jaipur—instead of increasing in population it has rather diminished . . . . owing in great part to the unhealthiness of the place, and the sparseness of the population in the immediate neighbourhood makes it a very discouraging situation for Missionary labour.”<sup>65</sup>

65. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1842, Vol 22, p. 62 ; also Sword, pp. 65-66.

## The Assam Valley Mission

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### THE SIBSAGAR FIELD

The decision to reverse the policy, that is, Mission to the Brahmaputra valley opened a new Chapter in the history of the American Baptist Mission in North-East India. The fact that nearly six years of labour put in the Sadiya, Jaipur and Namsang fields bore no fruit, with the subsequent tragic events, went against the Shan Mission and in favour of the Mission in the Brahmaputra Valley. Besides, the baptism on June 13, 1841 by Nidhiram Farwell, an Assamese young man employed in the Printing Press, by reading a short prayer in English which he found in one of his little books, amidst much rejoicing on the part of the Europeans who gathered to witness the Baptism ceremony, also went heavily in favour of switching over the Missionary works in the Brahmaputra Valley rather than the hill people.<sup>1</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Barker made a number of tours throughout the districts of Sibsagar and Jorhat during which he became more and more convinced that either Sibsagar or Jorhat was the most advantageous place from which to carry on the Missionary works. In 1840, he wrote, "This place (Sibsagar) is the present Capital of Assam, is increasing rapidly, and will doubtless soon outstrip the former Capital—Jorhat. The village is scattered on the banks of the Dikho. A mile away

1. V.H. Sword, 'Baptists in Assam', p. 67.

are the homes of European residents, of whom there are several, on the borders of a large tank two miles in circumference and thirty feet deep. On one side of this tank are three large temples which give to all around an ancient and venerable appearance.”<sup>2</sup> He also brought before his Missionary fellows the following reasons for advocating Sibsagar as the future place for Missionary activities.

First, Sibsagar had every advantage over Jaipur as it is the most central and important place. It is also only a few hours drive from the Brahmaputra river which served as the main thoroughfare and was a two days ride over a comparative good road from Dibrugarh. The road to Jorhat was also open and brought it within one day’s journey of Sibsagar.<sup>3</sup>

Second, it is located directly opposite Rungpore and for many years the residence of the Ahom kings, and eight miles below Garagaon, their ancient capital and fort. The population in the immediate vicinity is large and particularly well located for schools, there being about one hundred villages within a distance of six miles from the Station. The population is mostly Ahom and the larger proportion of the people are able to read than in most other parts of the Province.<sup>4</sup>

Third, the populous part of North Lakhimpur, a district on the opposite bank of the Brahmaputra, could be visited from Sibsagar better than from any other place.

Fourth, Sibsagar had a Physician, an item of importance, as past experiences had proved, and this Physician was friendly to the Missionaries and gave all needed medical attention free. Fifth, Barker felt that he could more safely leave his family in Sibsagar, while he was about distributing tracts in various communities than he could in any other place.

Sixth, the principal Government of the district was located in the Court of Sibsagar, which brought together the most active, learned, and intelligent people and afforded an important channel of communication with the whole district.

2. Mrs. A.K. Gurney, ‘History of the Sibsagar Field’, Jubilee Reports, 1886.

3. V.H. Sword, ‘Baptists in Assam’, p. 68.

4. Mrs. A.K. Gurney, ‘History of the Sibsagar Field’, Jubilee Reports, 1886, p. 22.

Seventh, the headquarters of the Army was located there, and because of that a monthly expenditure of Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 12,000 was being made. This gave a strong impulse to trade and contributed to the permanency of the population. There was also a Hospital, a Jail, and a number of bricks edifices in process of construction. A Government School was to be established similar to the one at Gauhati, in which English and Bengali were to be taught.

Further, Captain Jenkins was of the opinion that there was no likelihood of the headquarters ever being changed from Sibsagar, at least not for many years to come.<sup>5</sup> About the same time, Cutter also wrote, "I wish you could go around with us for a week in the vicinity of Sibsagar. I resided in Maulmain for three years, and I can say I think Gauhati, Nowgong or Sibsagar a more interesting and inviting field than Maulmain."<sup>6</sup>

With this seeming bright prospect, the American Baptist Missionaries entered heartily into the work in the Brahmaputra valley with Sibsagar as the next Station. On May 24, 1841, at about twelve O'clock noon, a little canoe, carrying many strange boxes and Mr. and Mrs. Barker moored on the muddy banks of Dikho river, in the village of Sibsagar. Mr. and Mrs. Barker, the new Missionaries had arrived to make Sibsagar their permanent residence. A few weeks later, another canoe brought the Brown family there for medical attention, but it turned out to be their permanent residence, as in a consultation with the other Missionaries and Europeans, the Browns were advised to remain in Sibsagar. Miles Bronson, though reluctant to leave the Naga Hills, was also impressed by Sibsagar. He was also quick to see that his usefulness as a Missionary could be enhanced if Sibsagar was made the Mission Headquarters. So while he relinquished the work among the Nagas he did so with the hope that by winning the Assamese, the Nagas would also come to know Christ.

The Mission bungalow was located on the banks of the beautiful artificial Siva's sea—a sheet of water covering an area

5. V.H. Sword, 'Baptists in Assam', pp. 68-69.

6. Mrs. A.K. Gurney, 'History of the Sibsagar Field', Jubilee Reports, 1886, p. 22.

of one hundred-twenty acres and from which the village got its name. Legend has it that the lake was dug in 1733 by Siva Singh, one of the Ahom kings, to commemorate his conversion to Hinduism,<sup>7</sup> and it was believed to have been dug in one single day. Beside this lake, the entire district is dotted with artificial lakes which were dug by the Ahom kings in commemoration of one thing or another.<sup>8</sup>

The Missionaries came down and settled in this place with a hope of accomplishing some of the things they longed to do ever since their arrival in Sadiya in 1836. At last their hope seemed to be fulfilled as Barker wrote jubilantly :

“No thundering edicts are promulgated against our entering this interesting field, but the doors are thrown wide open. The people are in peace, and none molest or make afraid. A beginning had been made. Books are circulated, and the people are becoming interested to know what they contain. A great many who can read, and a great many by hearing them read, have become acquainted with the contents, and wish to know more about the religion of Christ.”<sup>9</sup>

Visitors from the higher ranks of society called upon the Missionaries daily for inquiry and discussion. Brown gave himself over to the translation and preaching, and Barker to learning the language. A school for girls soon flourished under the direction of Mrs. Barker, with the aid of Ramsagar, a local assistant.

In the meantime, Mr. Cutter having made arrangements for the security of the Mission property left Jaipur on November 30, 1841 along with his wife and the first Assamese convert Nidhiram Farwell and the prospective convert named Montan.<sup>10</sup> A word or two may be said about Nidhiram. Nidhiram's family came from Sadiya. The family came from a Hindu low caste. Nidhiram studied in the school run by Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Cutter. He also worked in the Mission Press. Just before the Missionaries moved to Jaipur, his father died, and in order to keep up with the work, he and his mother went to Jaipur

7. V.H. Sword, 'Baptists in Assam', p. 69.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

9. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1842, Vol. 22, p. 66, Barker's Journal.

10. V.H. Sword, 'Baptists in Assam', p. 70.

with the Missionaries. However, within two months his mother also died of cholera. By then he was only ten years old and was taken in by the Cutters into their household, where he had the ample opportunity to hear about Christ. He soon became antagonistic towards Christianity. But, however, following a period of great restlessness in May, 1841, he had a deep religious experience, and early in June, he confessed to the Missionaries that he would like to become a Christian. After careful examination, he was baptised in the Buri Dihing river at Jaipur on Sunday, June 13, 1841, after the Sunday morning service. Brown preached the baptismal service, but since he was unwell, baptism was conducted by Bronson.

The name Nidhiram contained the name of a Hindu god and so the Missionaries decided to name him "Levi Farwell". In later years, however, he came to be known as "Nidhi Farwell". The practice of giving converts Western names continued only for about ten years, after which, almost all the Assamese Christian families are descendants from converts of this period. Usually the Biblical names were preferred but the Missionaries here gave the names to the converts after the name of someone in America who was a strong worker for the cause of Assam Mission. In this case, Levi Farwell was a Pastor of Boston who had served as the the Treasurer of the Mission Society for many years.

Though Levi had little education, he served faithfully as a Christian worker throughout his life. In 1847, he married Thuku, the first orphan woman to become a Christian. A student of the Orphan Institution at Nowgong, he had been converted in 1846. Later in the same year, Levi was licensed to preach by the Sibsagar Church. In 1851, he was appointed "Assistant Preacher, First Class" by the Mission. He proved to be one of the most faithful Christian workers at Sibsagar where he died in 1873. It may be noted here that his conversion did not arouse any controversy among the Hindus partly because he came from a low caste, and partly, he was not from Jaipur and had no connection with the Community there.<sup>11</sup>

Sunday, the 11th December, 1841 was a red letter day in the history of the American Baptist Mission in Assam, for on that

11. F.S. Downs, 'The Mighty Works of God', pp. 30-32.

day the second Assamese named "Montan" was baptised in the sacred waters of the Siva sea of Sibsagar by Rev. Brown amidst the gathering of the Europeans and the Indians. Montan came under the Missionary influence while he was a student at Sadiya. He, however, did not remain faithful to Christianity as he was suspended from the Church membership a few months later because of immoral conduct, and was not restored until 1847. He was a resident of Dibrugarh and had been influenced by a tract entitled "True Refuge". He died of cholera in 1865. Between 1841 and 1845, there was no further conversion.<sup>12</sup>

In 1845, there were three baptisms, the first being Batiram Dass (renamed Batiram D. Peck). He came from a respectable family of the Kaist or Writer caste. He also attended the Mission school at Sadiya and worked in the Press. He moved with the Press to Jaipur where he was made head printer and finally to Sibsagar in 1843. For some months, he had secretly believed in Christ but it was only after his recovery after a serious illness that he openly confessed his faith to Cutter and asked for baptism. When this fact came to be known to the Hindu community there was an uproar. Despite these oppositions and threat to his life, Batiram was baptised in the Dikhu river on the 9th March, 1845. In 1849, he married a Christian girl named Moina from Gauhati. In 1851, he became "Assistant Preacher, First Class". He died in 1853 and his death was a great loss to the cause of the Missionary work.

The second convert of the year 1845 was a man named Kolibor, a dhobi or washerman. He had been considering of becoming a Christian for several years in the past, but could not decide as he found it difficult to give up opium eating. He was finally baptised on the 13th July, 1845. He did not receive any formal education. Nevertheless, he served the Mission faithfully for many years as an evangelist of the Sibsagar Church and receiving less salary than what he could receive as a dhobi. His wife died of cholera two years of his baptism and he had to take care of the children. He served the Church for more than forty years and was the father of Godhula, the prominent Church leader and the first Missionary to the Nagas.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 32 ; also *Sword*, p. 70.



The third convert of the year was Ramsing, a cousin of Batiram, who was baptised on the 20th December, 1845. Ramsing was very bitter towards the baptism of Batiram, and that is why, his baptism evoked bigger protests and agitations among the leaders of the Hindu community. The Hindu leaders argued that Christianity was a foreign religion which attracted only the persons of the low castes who were interested in the improvement of their material and social positions. However, the conversion of both Batiram and Ramsing did not help them to improve their social and material positions, rather they stood to loose by this action. The conversion of Kolibor also did not materially help him to improve his economic conditions.<sup>13</sup>

In 1846, Mr. and Mrs. S.M. Whiting joined the Sibsagar Station. Brown and Cutter busied themselves in translating, printing, teaching and preaching both in and around Sibsagar. In 1843, the Printing Press establishment was brought from Jaipur to Sibsagar where most of the printings were done. In 1846, the first Assamese News Paper, "Orunodoi" was printed from this press at Sibsagar. In 1851, the Sibsagar Church numbered 17 local members, and there had been 23 baptisms since the formation of the Church. By 1853 the Missionaries were faced with a problem of giving material support to the converts. The local converts totally or partially depended on the Missionaries for material supports and the Missionaries found it difficult to meet the material requirements nor was it possible for them to give them employment. They also felt that to give them all support will not be conducive to promote their personal independence and strength of character which they should attain. However, on the applications of the Missionaries, land was granted to be cultivated by Christian families and five or six families thus found employment.<sup>14</sup>

In 1853, Oliver Cutter who was one of the founder Missionaries and who had served well and faithfully for almost

13. Mrs. A.K. Gurney, 'History of the Sibsagar Field', Jubilee Reports, 1886, pp. 22-23 ; also Sword, p. 71, and Downs, pp. 32-34.

14. Mrs. A.K. Gurney, 'History of Sibsagar Mission', Jubilee Reports, 1886, pp. 23-24.

twenty years became involved in questionable personal relations and was dismissed from the Mission.<sup>15</sup> In 1885, there was another blow to the Mission in the Brahmaputra valley when the founder Missionary Nathan Brown left Assam on furlough, after twenty-two years of Missionary service without any vacation. Hard work under tiring circumstances has had a very heavy toll on his robust health. His robust constitution began to crumble and it became evident that the only relief was a journey back to America. It was not hard work and exposure alone, nor wholly material climate that had sapped his iron strength. Mental anguish, repeated discouragements and hope often deferred had not been without their physical effects. The Americans became pre-occupied with domestic issues, losing interests in a far-flung areas like Assam. The American Baptist Churches themselves had been divided into Northern and Southern Conventions in 1845 on the issue of Slavery. The Mission in Assam was now supported only by the Northern Churches in America and its support was thus much reduced, failing to meet the bare requirements in the Assam Mission fields. Besides, Brown could not reconcile with the policy of the Home Board when they did not approve of the Educational policy of the Assam field Missionaries. All these combined together weighed heavily on both his mental and physical strength. He felt that now the time has come when he could do no more. Thus it was unfortunate that his departure should come at this time when the Assam Mission needed him more than ever. His leaving was a shock to the Missionary Staff as well as to the local Christians who looked upon him as a spiritual father. Mrs. Brown wrote of the farewell at Sibsagar and told how the Christians began to collect around the bungalow at early dawn on the 13th February, 1855. The whole Christian community was soon at the verandah. Grey-haired, decently attired matrons, quiet-mannered young mothers with wondering children clinging to their skirts, and wide-eyed infants in their arms; Converts, Preachers, and Office hands, had all gathered to bid their Pastor and friend good-bye. "It was one of the hardest partings (I have had many)," wrote

15. V.H. Sword, 'Baptists in Assam', p. 83.

Mrs. Brown, "I ever experienced . . . . we prayed and sang, and lingered from early dawn till near eleven O'clock before we spoke the final good-bye."<sup>16</sup> Nathan Brown subsequently resigned from the Mission in 1856 while he was still in America. In America he became active in the anti-Slavery movement which was one of the causes of the American Civil War in 1861. Later he joined the Missionary Union again as a Missionary to Japan.<sup>17</sup>

After Brown's departure in 1855, Danforth and his wife came to Sibsagar and assisted Whiting for one year, after which he replaced Ward in the Gauhati Mission Station. In 1856, Whiting spent nearly seven months visting all the large villages and towns in Upper Assam, but there was no conversion. In 1857, there were only two Missionary families in the Assam field—the Danforths and the Whitings in Gauhati and Sibsagar respectively. The Bronsons were just leaving for America on furlough. This was the year when the great Sepoy Mutiny commenced in April. The Whiting family remained at Sibsagar till August, 1857 when a plot was discovered at Sibsagar brewing among the Sepoys to rise at the Puja, kill at the Europeans, and place the young prince at Jorhat on his grand-father's throne. Mrs. Whiting was the only European lady at Sibsagar. The Commissioner advised the Whitings to go on the river and placed a comfortable boat at their disposal and for several weeks they remained in the boat. Meantime Captain Holroyd surprised the plot, sent the royal family away, telling some of the leaders who asked for a trial, "We'll hang you first and try you afterwards," which he did accordingly.<sup>18</sup> The king was also captured and was sent to Calcutta as a prisoner. Despite these precautionary measures there were threats on the lives of both the Missionaries and the local Christians. The Muslims threatened the local Christians saying that as soon as the Missionaries were killed they would be the next objects of their vengeance, and Islam would be re-instated. There was not a single European

16. 'The Whole World Kin' or 'The Life of Nathan Brown', p. 433 ; V.H. Sword, 'Baptists in Assam', pp. 87-88.

17. F.S. Downs, 'The Mighty Works of God', p. 42.

18. Mrs. Gurney, 'Jubilee Reports, 1886', p. 24.

soldier in Assam except the officers in-charge of Native troops and hence the protection of European life against a general insurrection was very meagre. Plans have been made for the Europeans to gather at Gauhati but Gauhati was miles away from Sibsagar and Nowgong where the Missionaries were located. Bronson finally decided to avail himself of the protection at Gauhati and under cover of night he, with his family, slipped quietly out of Nowgong in a little canoe, and on to Gauhati.<sup>19</sup> Bronson wrote from his little Craft on the river, "A general feeling of insecurity is spread all over the country. All feel that it is emphatically true now that we know not what a day or an hour may bring forth. It would be utterly impossible for me to tell you the horrors of the mutiny, or the refinement of cruelty practised upon all, even unoffending and helpless women and children, that fell into the hands of the merciless savages."<sup>20</sup>

On arrival at Gauhati, Bronson found Danforth in a soldier's uniform, drilling morning and evening, resolved to defend his family and the Mission property, if called upon to do so. Danforth wrote, "For more than six weeks, I have done military duty daily, and that, too, directly in front of a large Company of Sepoys many of whom were known to be mutinous."<sup>21</sup> Later Danforth wrote that after six months of incessant anxiety they felt comparatively safe. Other Missionaries, owing to the strain of mutiny and disease were obliged to go on furlough so that in 1858, the Whiting family was the only Missionary in the whole of Assam stationed at Sibsagar.<sup>22</sup> Thus the 1850s were the most critical period in the history of American Baptist Mission works in Assam. In fact, it was even proposed to close down the Assam Field but for the eloquent appeal made by Bronson who was in America on furlough at that time that the Assam Mission was retained and supported only by the Northern Convention with very little financial grants.<sup>23</sup>

19. V.H. Sword, 'Baptists in Assam', pp. 88-89.

20. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1858, p. 17.

21. V.H. Sword, 'Baptists in Assam', p. 89.

22. V.H. Sword, 'Baptists in Assam', pp. 89-90.

23. F.S. Downs, 'Mighty Works of God', pp. 43-44.

All these events constituted a great setback to the progress of the Missionary work in Assam, and it was not till four years later in 1861 that we read of converts at Sibsagar when eleven persons were baptised. In the same year, Dr. and Mrs. Ward came to relieve the Whitings, and the next year, after eleven years' faithful service, the Whitings left Assam, never to return. While in Assam, Whiting baptised ten Assamese and one Naga. After the departure of Whitings, Mr. Ward had the entire charge of the Mission for the next seven years. During these years, there seem to have been few conversions, and much to try the faith and patience of the workers. Under Ward's direction, the Church, School and Printing establishments were kept up. He translated and published the book of Psalms and revised the hymn book, adding many original and translated hymns to those already furnished by Brown, Bronson and Nidhi Farwell. In 1866, Mrs. Ward, who seems to have been enthusiastic in teaching to sing well, wrote, "If the Assam Mission is behind some others in its Churches and converts, few I think can excel it in its hymn book". In 1865 Bronson was at Sibsagar working on his Dictionary which was issued from the Press in 1866.

In 1868 Ward baptised seven Assamese and in 1869 after eight years of hard work left for America for a rest making over the care of the press and the Mission to Mr. Clark who has just arrived at Sibsagar. In 1871 Clark baptised the first four Kols who came a distance of 70 miles seeking baptism. One of them had been a Christian several years, and through his efforts the other three were converted. In 1872, nine more were baptised and thirty in the next year, making 43 Kols in all.

In 1872, Ward returned to Sibsagar but died a few months later. In 1874, Clark was designated to the Naga work and Mr. A.K. Gurney and his wife were appointed to Sibsagar with the special task of completing the translation of the Bible into Assamese, a work commenced thirty years before. In 1874, there were 14 Kols baptised and in 1875, fifteen. In 1876, Clark handed over the Assam work and Press to Gurney and went to the Naga hills.

From 1876 to 1886, the hopes of the Mission have been largely dependent on the Kols and so it may be worthwhile

to make a brief note on the Kols. They were imported tea-labourers from Chota Nagpur. Their language is Mundari but the Assamese called them Bengalis because they came to Assam by way of Bengal. They are a race without caste. In their own place the German Mission worked and made great progress numbering its converts by thousands. On the tea-gardens of Assam, the Kols and Santals number about ten thousand. Many belong to the Church of England. Sibsagar being the great tea-district of Assam, the American Baptist Mission has received more of these converts than any other.

The most important branch Churches formed of Kols are at Teok, 20 miles south-west of Sibsagar; Bebejia (formerly called Modhupur), 50 miles away near the Naga hills, and Mokrung about 60 miles away. South-west of Sibsagar are the gardens Mackeypur and Dalbagan.

In 1878, Reverend Henry Osborne of Southampton, England, proposed to pay into the Assam Mission Treasury 500 pounds at once, and 100 pounds annually for five years, in all 1000 pounds, on condition that the Mission would appoint two local Preachers in his tea-gardens at Dibrugarh. Accordingly Bronson visited the gardens and reported, "On each of the two gardens are about two hundred coolies, men, women and children. They are all Santals from Chota Nagpur, Hindus, and are said to have a Priest with them. They do not understand the vernacular of our Kol preachers nor Assamese. Hindustanee is the only means of communicating with them". Subsequently, Bronson was sent to Dibrugarh to commence the work but owing to his illness and the violent opposition of the manager of the gardens, this could not be done. Up to 1879, Gurney baptised 30 Kols. He wrote, "The Assamese portion of the Church remains about the same, while the Kol work, the hopeful element in this Church, is steadily growing. I have baptised eight Kols, who came from thirty miles away to receive this ordinance. There is great need of a special Missionary for the Kols. As all do not understand Assamese readily, they would receive much more instruction in Hindi than they can in Assamese. With the constant drain of Press, Church, Preaching, editing of 'Orunodoi', oversight of

Assamese and Kols, both Preachers and people, translation is of necessity slowly progressing.”

Early in 1880, Gurney made three trips to Teok, Bebejia and Mackeypur when he baptised 54 persons. He wrote, “Teok is a branch Church of forty members, most of them baptised in Sibsagar by Clark or myself. These Teok Christians have a Chapel of their own building, hold services every Sunday, and their conduct is very satisfactory. Modhupur is even more interesting than Teok, they have a neat Chapel of their own building, and every Sabbath a service conducted by themselves. Christianity means something to them, ignorant but sincere. My third trip was to Mackeypur, a large garden, belonging to the Assam Tea Company, here I baptised twenty-eight. The Christians of this garden are young converts and need much instructions, yet I note as a promising feature, that each of the ten couples I married here, made a voluntary offering of one rupee. This is noticeable in men, whose wages are only Rs. 5 or Rs. 6 per month. Not much of note in the Assamese department”.

In 1881, eight Kols were baptised. In 1882, Gurney visited Bebejia and baptised seven. In the same year, five Assamese were baptised by Gurney at Dikhu. In 1883, Gurney wrote, “I visited Modhupur, where I baptised nine Kols. At Teok I baptised eight. I found seventy-five communicants at the Teok service. The manager of the garden here is very much pleased with these people, gives them good name as Christians. At Sibsagar I have baptised one Assamese, a young man of promise and ability, marking eighteen baptisms in all.”

In May, 1883, Gurney left Sibsagar for America for a rest. His place was taken up by Mr. and Mrs. Witter and Mr. and Mrs. Rivenburg who arrived at Sibsagar early in 1884. Rivenburg who was designated to the Naga Hills Station, Molung, was detained in Sibsagar for about a year. Mr. Witter moaned at the absence of Assamese Preacher for a district of more than three lakhs Assamese. He says, “Without a special effort in the line of School work—an effort in my opinion amounting to the constant supervision of one or two Europeans I fail to see, as I think our brethren in America must fail to see, how our work for the Assamese is to exist much longer”.

Witter joined in the work among the Kols. On one garden he baptised eighteen in one day, and two from another place.

Early in 1885, Gurney returned to Sibsagar, made one tour and baptised seven on the new garden at Mokrung. In March, 1885, the Witters became ill and Rivenburgs went to Molung for the work among the Nagas, so that only the Gurneys remained at Sibsagar. In 1886, two more Kols were baptised making a total of 154 Kol Christians. However, the number of Kol Christians was very fluctuating for the reasons that many of them worked in the gardens on contract basis and as soon as their contracts expired, they returned to their native country, while others left the gardens and went to other parts of Assam to distant gardens or to engage in cultivation. Since their contract in the gardens cover only two or three or five years, as they agree upon, the Mission work among them is naturally fluctuating, and thus the migratory character of the people makes the Mission work less promising than it at first appeared.<sup>24</sup>

Gurney devoted more time to the completion of the translation of the Assamese Bible though he kept at the oversight of the work among the Kols and the Assamese. He spent several weeks of each winter season among the Kols at Teok and conducted nearly all the Assamese services at Sibsagar besides preaching and teaching in the Sunday schools.

In June, 1889, Mr. Petrick, a new Missionary arrived at Sibsagar and assumed charge of the Kols and rendered services among the Assamese. In 1889, total number of Christians in the Sibsagar district was 159, of whom 133 were Kols, the remainder being Assamese.<sup>25</sup>

In 1893, C.E. Petrick reported, "During the last three years, I have spent in touring, visiting tea-gardens and villages from beginning of October to April. It has been my policy to visit any place where we have Christians, twice a year. As the Christians live in 62 different places, a great deal of travelling has to be done to accomplish this." During the rainy season,

24. A.K. Gurney, 'Jubilee Reports', 1886, pp. 24-30.

25. A.K. Gurney, 'Report from the Sibsagar Field', Historical Papers of the 2nd Triennial Conference, held at Gauhati in December 21-30, 1889.



from June to September, Petrick taught a Bible Class of Preachers. In 1893, the total number of Churches in the Sibsagar district was six, with a membership of 354, out of whom, 38 were Assamese and the rests were the Kols. The Churches were located at Teok, Bebejia, Nagodhoolie, Akrabari, Dolbagan, Moran and Amguri. The Chapel at Amguri and Teok have been built by the Planters, all the other Chapels have been built by the local Christians without any help from the Mission. The stronger Churches helped the weaker ones.

Weekly contributions have been taken in all the Churches and in Sibsagar a monthly subscription is given by a number of the members. In the village Churches, Thanksgiving during the harvest festivals were introduced. The income goes to pay for the local preachers. No Church has been quite self-supporting so far. There are Sunday schools in all the Churches.<sup>26</sup>

In 1895, the Sibsagar Mission Station was re-inforced by the arrival of Reverend O.L. Swanson who began the Bazar preaching soon.

In 1895, the Sibsagar Church had a membership of Christians of 124. Of these, 33 were Assamese and 51 were Kols. The spiritual life of this Church for sometime has been very low. The cause of this was the family quarrel in every direction. The Church has gone through some experience in trying to restore peace among themselves. However, in 1895 peace was restored and there was a larger attendance in the Church. The out-station Churches of Sibsagar have the following membership :

Bebejia Church has a membership of 113 with John as their evangelist. Teok has 94 members. Akrabari has a total membership of 52 with Dukna as their Preacher, and who was doing well in his work. Dolbagan Church has 45 members. Daba has 47 and their preacher was Nirmal. In the Moran Church, the preacher was Probhu Dyal and the total membership was 20. These members lived in four different gardens, one of which was Khowang where the work was started in 1894. Mission work was started at Dipling by Petrick in 1894 and baptised 5 converts. Nagadhooli Church has a membership of 24, but

26. C.E. Petrick, 'Report from the Sibsagar Field', Historical Papers of the third Triennial Conference, Tura, 1893.

without a preacher. Amguri has a membership of 16, but they have moved away elsewhere by 1895. The total number of members in the whole of Sibsagar district in 1895 was 544.<sup>27</sup>

In 1899, Reverend C.E. Petrick, the Missionary in the Sibsagar field reported, "My chief work has been in former years among the immigrant population both in gardens and villages. The work has grown steadily as in former years. We have now twelve Churches on the field—10 Kol Churches, 2 Assamese Churches. Since the 1st October, 1898, I have stopped paying any preacher in the district, except for direct evangelistic work. In this way, all our Churches have become independent of Mission support. Each Church has a man able to conduct its services. They do not get a fixed or guaranteed salary, but just what each Church is willing to give free will offerings and collections. The expenses for preachers have never been high. During 1897, I paid Rs. 423-12; and in 1898, Rs. 550-02, for Preachers' allowances." The second Assamese Church was organised in October, 1897 at Domgaon village near Teok in the Jorhat sub-division by baptising 7 persons. Four Assamese members from Teok joined this new Church by letters. The Sibsagar Church at Sibsagar has 57 members, 46 of these are Assamese or half-Assamese. The total number of Christians in the Sibsagar field in 1899 is 652.<sup>28</sup>

In 1900, Bebejia and Nagadhooli Churches have been handed over to the newly created Mission field at Golaghat. The remaining Churches in Sibsagar have been self-supporting. The total membership in 1900 in the whole of Sibsagar district was 532.<sup>29</sup>

The history of this Sibsagar field during the past two years, like that of all the other Upper Assam field, is full of changes. The field has been successively looked after by Mr. and Mrs. Petrick up to 1900 and Reverend O.L. Swanson after him. In November, 1901, Mr. and Mrs. Paul took over the field from Swanson.

27. O.L. Swanson, 'Report from the Sibsagar field', Historical Reports at the 4th Triennial Conference, Sibsagar, Dec. 14-22, 1895.

28. C.E. Petrick, 'Report from the Sibsagar field', 4th Triennial Conference, Dibrugarh, February 11-19, 1899.

29. C.E. Petrick, 'Report from the Sibsagar Field', Historical reports of the 6th Session, Gauhati, December, 22-31, 1900.

The work on the field differs somewhat from that of the other two. Most of the Churches in Sibsagar are older and the local helpers have had a better training than those of the other fields. Still the problem had not been few, nor the difficulties small. Of evangelistic work, little has been done in the past two years. Rev. Swanson made extensive tours in 1901 visiting all the Churches and baptising converts in almost every place. In 1902-03, Joseph Paul, the Missionary for Sibsagar reported, "I have sometimes visited the Churches and in some places have preached to the heathens but the great part of my time has been spent in off-setting the false teaching of others, in attending to cases of discipline, in marrying, and in doing other works."

The Upper Assam Church Association has been formed and met for the first time at Teok in 1901, and at Betbari in 1902. They have been well-attended and most thoroughly enjoyed both by the people and the Missionaries. Two evangelists have been employed by this Association for the greater parts of the two years and for this purpose, the Churches have raised Rs. 450. The total number of baptisms during 1900-1903 have been 147.<sup>30</sup>

In 1905, Petrick, the Missionary in the Sibsagar field reported, "Most of my time has been spent in touring. In 1903, I spent 181 days on tours and in 1904 I was out on evangelising tours for 210 days. I spent ten weeks in the Dibrugarh district."

The number of Churches in the Sibsagar district in 1905 was 16. The new Churches were at Horam, Attabari, Mohongaon, Nimaigarh, Atkhel and Chutia Basti. The Church of England and the German also worked at Horan. The Baptists at Horan numbered 20. Attabari is a Tea-estate, 12 miles from Sibsagar. Mohongaon is a daughter Church of Dolbagan. It was quite a promising Church with a membership of 30. Nimaigarh is close to the Naga hills and was founded by some Christians of the Saleng-Pokar Church. It has 18 members. Atkhel is a Church with 18 members. Close to the Atkhel Church was a large Garo village where some Garos also were considering the step of being

30. Joseph Paul, 'Report from the Sibsagar Field', 7th Session of Assam Mission of the American Baptist Union, Gauhati, December 27, 1902 to January, 1903.

baptised. Chutia basti was still younger than Atkhel and was organised only in 1905 when 12 converts were baptised. At Narwa a policeman and his wife were baptised. At Dihingbutch, a Miri woman became a believer, and at Debrapur a whole Assamese household, husband, wife, son and servant were baptised. They were Ahoms. The total membership of all the Churches in the Sibsagar district in 1905 was 765.<sup>31</sup>

In 1907, Petrick reported that "During the last two years, I have been alone in Sibsagar. Much of my time has been spent touring in the two districts of Sibsagar and Dibrugarh. In 1905, I spent 181 days on tour, and in 1906, I was 177 days on tour." He further reported that the number of Churches was 16. All have grown in number except three. The following Churches had the largest accessions : Dolbagan, Nimaigarh and Atkhel. The last two have more than doubled their membership. Nimaigarh has now 49 members. He baptised 26 converts in Atkhel during last two years, and 43 in Nimaigarh. The number of Hindus of different castes who have been baptised has been remarkable. In 1905, he has baptised ten Hindus, and in 1906, 36. They belonged to the following castes—Gonds, Gowala, Ramars, Tanti, Mahali and Rantiya. He baptised 23 Gonds in two tea-gardens near Sonai, Naphook and Tankok. Gonds seem to be clannish. If one accepts Christianity the whole relations are influenced. But if one falls into sin, his influence for the bad is just as strong. Most of the members of the Atkhel Church are converted Hindus, not Mundas. He also baptised a number of Santals, Oraons and Mundas.

In 1906, the Missionaries baptised 21 Assamese people, six of whom were Assamese Hindus. The others came from Christian community. In the same year, they baptised four Assamese Hindus at Moran, and three Eurasians, two young-men both married and one young man. The number of converts baptised in 1905 was 98 ; in 1906 was 101. The whole membership has risen to 939, of whom 88 were Assamese.<sup>32</sup>

31. C.E. Petrick, 'Report from the Sibsagar Field', 8th Session of Assam Mission of the A.B. Mission, Gauhati, December 24, 1904 to January 1, 1905.

32. C.E. Petrick, 'Report from the Sibsagar Field', 9th Biennial Conference of the A.B. Mission Union, Gauhati, January 5-12, 1907.

In 1910, Petrick reported that from October till the beginning of July he was generally on Mission tour. Old Churches have been strengthened and new places have been opened. Work has been started in Ghorpholia, a new village which promises of growth with 16 members. Some Churches like Mathurapur and Nimaigarh have grown rapidly. Five years ago the land on which now stands the prosperous Church of Nimaigarh was a wilderness under the Naga hills. Now there are comfortable homes and rich fields of 118 members, frequent baptism adding to their number. Mathurapur, 4 miles from Dolbagan is a growing Church of 42 members, all baptised converts from Hinduism. A very interesting work has been opened among the Oriya immigrants from Orissa at Dumor Dolong where there were 16 members. In Bortani near Sepon tea-garden there was a church with 11 members. There were 16 Churches in the Sibsagar district in 1910. The four largest Churches have each more than 100 members. Teok has 104, Nimaigarh 118, and on the vicinity of Tengapukuri, there were more than 300 members in four different villages. The largest Church is at Teok. Namsissu is situated at about 3 miles from Seleng Railway Station and the Christians live there. The Superintendent of the Nakadrari Tea Company built for the Christians at Teok a very fine church measuring 64 ft. by 23 ft. The church has also 20 benches and tables. Another significant feature in the Missionary work in Sibsagar was that between 1907 and 1910, nine Mohammedans were baptised—two at Debrapur ; one at Atkhel ; four at Mathurapur and two at Sibsagar.<sup>33</sup>

Regarding the Churches, Petrick reported in 1913, "From a numerical point of view the past two years have been satisfactory, for while the Roman Catholics have disturbed the growth of some of the churches, and have decoyed a score or so of their members away, there have been additions by baptism aggregating 214. These churches paid the salary of their Pastors and built Chapels. Two more new Churches have been organised and regular services were conducted in six new places."<sup>34</sup>

33. C.E. Petrick, 'Report from Sibsagar Field', 10th Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

34. C.E. Petrick, 'Report from Sibsagar Field', 12th Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 4-13, 1913.

O.L. Swanson, the Missionary in the field for Sibsagar and Dibrugarh reported in 1916 that during the year, several tours have been undertaken by him in these fields. The chief work on these tours has been in visiting the churches and holding conferences. Johan Padri, in company with other workers and also some women, spent many days in going to daily markets, villages and tea gardens. Even some Europeans got interested by seeing and hearing this Christian band sing. They also held revival meetings. The baptisms on these two fields were 182. The total membership in the Sibsagar district in 1916 was 1857. These were organised into 24 churches in the Sibsagar district.<sup>35</sup>

In 1917, U.M. Fox, the Missionary on the field reported that in the year there were 15 who were baptised. Besides, there has been preaching by workers sent out to various Hindu villages and occasional meetings among the fishermen of the place. The Missionaries felt the greater call for more works to be done for them. Besides, several people from outside came to the Missionary for religious instructions and many of them for medicines. Sunday Services have been conducted at the Church and weekly prayer meetings on different days in various sections of the town were held.<sup>36</sup>

A.C. Bowers, Missionary in the Sibsagar field reported that the year 1926 has been very interesting. Nothing exciting or sensational has happened but the consistent steady development of the Christian community has been most encouraging. The administration of the work in the field continues to be conducted by the Association through its Committees. All money for evangelism and education, whether from the Mission or the Association is administered by the Standing Committee.

The Annual Association elects the Standing Committee and appoints the Small Committee of the Larger Committee. The larger Committee meets quarterly and the Small Committee meets monthly. A.C. Bowers himself was elected a member of the Committee having one vote and that was the extent of his

35. O.L. Swanson, 'Report from the Sibsagar Field of the Missionary Conference', Nowgong, February 17-14, 1916.

36. U.M. Fox, Sibsagar Field Report, 15th Session of the Missionary Conference, Sibsagar, January 15-22, 1917.

power in the conduct of the work in the field. All arrangements, financial and otherwise, for all meetings, including even the Annual Bible Class in Sibsagar, were made by the Committee. Bowers' chief responsibility has become that of a teacher, and this naturally includes teaching in regard to any better method of farming or cattle raising or baby culture or any other such things that he may know of. Thus the tendency in this field seems to be approaching the ideal set by the Mission for a self-dependent community.

Bowers further reported that there were sixty-five Christian communities in the Sibsagar district field. Thirty were regularly organised Churches. He regularly visited them two to four times a year. Services were held regularly and the Holy Communion observed quite regularly in many of the Churches. The number of bottles of grape juice sold indicated this. Over four dozen bottles have been sold in the last ten months, and some of the Churches made their own wine from raisins.

Regarding his other nature of work Bowers said that an Indian loves a law suit. The re-settlement of the land in this district has given more than ample opportunity for the indulgence of this complex. It seems as though there have been at least a hundred cases brought to me for advice or arbitration, during the year. The outrageous dishonesty of the underdealings connected with the survey and their attempt to trick the illiterate out of their holdings definitely emphasises the need of education among the people. Could they only read their deeds and receipts there would be much less opportunity for cheating them.

There are now sixty-four Christian communities and 27 organised Churches. Last year they raised Rs. 1100 and spent for evangelism only. There are 16 evangelists. They raised more amount this year for evangelism and 220 baptisms were reported for 1925-26. During the four years, Bowers has been in Sibsagar, over 1000 have been baptised and this has been done entirely by the local Christians. Bowers had not baptised even one person.

Three new communities have been opened up and three new Church buildings have been erected during the year. The Tea planting community have continued to take interest in the work. On two tea gardens, church buildings have been given to

the Christians, and in many instances, they have taken personal interest in the moral and religious life of the communities.

The educated non-Christians also have shown great interest in the Missionary activities. Men high in social and political circles have gone to consult the Missionaries in regard to their personal spiritual problems. Bowers reported, "One Brahman, an Extra Assistant Commissioner said to my wife and me, 'I do believe in Jesus Christ', and even the High priests of the Hindu communities have expressed their approval of the teachings of Jesus. All these things are evidences that our Christ is making His impact on the lives of individuals and the preaching Hindu bands which have visited not only Sibsagar but other stations prove that the entire community has been influenced to such a degree that they realised the necessity for reforms as well as defence."<sup>37</sup>

In his Missionary report in 1927, Bowers emphasised the need to become more and more self-supporting and to take over all the parts of the work it possibly could including the bazar preaching. When the Bowers came to Sibsagar five years ago, there was only one Marriage Registrar, John Padri and many had to wait for long periods before their marriages could be registered. By 1927 there were four Registrars. There was also only one joint Church Association but by 1927, there were two Associations necessitated due to growing church memberships. Within five years, number of Churches rose from 36 to 67, with 2050 members to 3065, and the amount of money raised for evangelism from Rs. 695-11-3 in 1923-24 to Rs. 1237-12-0 in 1926-27.<sup>38</sup>

However, by 1936, the number of churches in Sibsagar district dwindled to 40. There were still good number of strong and fine churches, but there was a greater number of churches that were very weak and needing nurture and care. When Rev. and Mrs. R. Wickstrand left home in March, 1936,

37. A.C. Bowers, 'Sibsagar Field Report', Missionary Conference, Jorhat, December 2-10, 1926.

38. A.C. Bowers, 'Sibsagar Field Report', Missionary Conference, Golaghat, November 23-December 1, 1927.



the field was left without a resident Missionary and Rev. R. Holm from Golaghat field had to look after it.<sup>39</sup>

John Selander, the Missionary in Sibsagar reported in 1937 that in May of that year a meeting was held when the Church reported baptism of 71 persons. Sibsagar Annual Association was the oldest Association in the Province of Assam having been its 40th anniversary. Another feature of the year was the dedication of four churches and approval for ordination of one Methuel.<sup>40</sup>

In 1938, Rev. J.M. Forbes reported, "I doubt that there has been ever normal growth in the Christian church in this area and my observations convinced me that Christian resources have been neglected and progress has not been made in providing an educated leadership. I think that the Oriya Christians at Borpatra are the only really alive although 14 or more centres have had baptisms. This Borpatra group sponsored an Association for their area. At the beginning of the year, Shri Methuel Castle was ordained to the ministry in Sibsagar."

He further reported that more than 3000 Gospels were sold since March and about 6000 tracts distributed. The Miri people are unlettered but they want the Gospels and somehow are getting them read. They express a keen desire to know about Christianity. There are only 39 churches with a membership of 2108 in 1938.<sup>41</sup>

In 1940, J.M. Forbes reported that the Sibsagar Association has shown an improved spirit and there was a few sign of improved morale and loyal support on the part of some churches. About 120 have been baptised, the largest group from non-Christians being at Borpatra Tea Estate. The Number of churches rose to 43 ranging in size from 5 to 120 or more families who have been visited more than once by the Missionary. Johan Padri died and he was called "John, the Baptizer", as he baptised literally hundreds, many of them from Lutheran

39. R.W. Holm, 'Sibsagar Field Report', Missionary Conference, Gauhati, December 1-6, 1936.

40. John Selander, 'Sibsagar Field Report', Mission Conference, Sadiya, December 8-13, 1937.

41. J.M. Forbes, 'Sibsagar Field Report', Gauhati, 1938.

or S.P.G. group which came to Assam from Ranchi. He was a courageous and effective preacher and evangelist.<sup>42</sup>

In 1941, R.W. Holm reported that the Jorhat Bible School boys visited weekly the churches in and about Jorhat. The churches at Teok and Namsisu in the Sibsagar area have been benefited by this arrangement. There have been several church buildings dedicated during the year.<sup>43</sup> In 1944, Holm reported that there was no resident Missionary at Sibsagar and he had to look after them from Golaghat field 75 miles away, though they needed a resident Missionary family to guide and help them. The Churches and the Mission jointly employed 7 evangelists. More than 1200 people gathered for the annual meeting in March. The churches raised Rs. 2172 during the year, of which Rs. 1290 was spent on their evangelistic and educational programme. One forward step was the calling of a new evangelist to work in the area between Nazira and Mariani, a young man named Agrippa who speaks three languages fluently. There are 45 churches with 2420 members.<sup>44</sup>

In 1945, the Sibsagar field has been turned over to Rev. and Mrs. Selander. Holm reported that the annual meeting with the Garo church at Mokhuti was one of the best we have attended in this district. Up to February 1945, 170 baptisms were reported. The 40 churches have a membership of about 2,200.

The military have left the compound, leaving all the buildings in need of repair. There is a fairly well-constructed mess hall which is being used by the local church.<sup>45</sup>

In 1946, Selander reported that Sibsagar field was still without a resident Missionary. The American Baptist Foreign Mission Society Secretary, Dr. Howard paid a hurried visit to Sibsagar and two of the villages when the people asked for Missionary again. There are 47 churches with 2,556 members

42. J.M. Forbes, 'Sibsagar Field Report', Jorhat, January 4-9, 1940.

43. R.W. Holms, 'Sibsagar Field Report', Golaghat, December 4-9, 1941.

44. R.W. Holms, 'Sibsagar Field Report', Nowgong, November 9-13, 1944.

45. R.W. Holm, 'Sibsagar Field Report', Jorhat, November 8-12, 1945.

in all, and the Association raised fund amounting to Rs. 2457 during the year.<sup>46</sup>

In 1947, John Selander reported that Rev. Methuel Castle baptised 50 persons that year. He has been very busy touring among the churches and helping them to sort out their problems. Holiram Marak is a new young people's worker, supported jointly by the Association and the Mission. He has been in the Police force for several years but retired in order to give whole time to Christian service. Like Golaghat, the Sibsagar Association celebrated its Jubilee this year.<sup>47</sup>

In 1950, the year when the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society handed over the charge of management to the local bodies, the local Church leader, Rev. Methuel Castle reported that there are 3000 Christians and 48 churches in the Sibsagar field. Under this Association, there have been 63 baptisms, and the work of evangelisation is carried on by the local churches. The field has five preachers maintained by the Association.<sup>48</sup>

## THE NOWGONG FIELD

In October 1841, Reverend Miles Bronson, driven away by disturbances from work in Upper Assam in the vicinity of Jaipur and among the Nagas, adopted Nowgong as a Mission Station. Up to that time, no Mission work has been done in the district. The population at that time could be estimated to be about two lakhs, mostly Hindus, but with considerable sprinkling of Muslims and the hill tribes. After settling down, Bronson began preaching and school work at once, and in April 1842, had schools enrolling 80 pupils. In 1845, a Baptist Church has been organised in Nowgong with six constituent members, including Dr. and Mrs. Bronson. So when another Missionary Mr. Stoddard arrived at Nowgong, he found the Church and school two evangelising forces,

46. J. Selander, 'Sibsagar Field Report', Gauhati, December 6-10, 1946.

47. J. Selander, 'Sibsagar Field Report', 44th Session, Jorhat, December, 10-14, 1947.

48. M. Castle, 'Sibsagar Field Report', 46th Session, Golaghat, January 3-9, 1950.

already organised and at work. The burden of entire care fell on Stoddard's shoulders after Bronson's departure.

Early in 1850, the Missionary force was strengthened by the accession of Mr. G.C. Dauble, a Missionary of the German Lutheran Mission at Tezpur who, having embraced Baptist views of baptism and Church polity, was baptised by Brown at Tezpur, and immediately joined the Mission at Nowgong. For three years, he served in the Orphan Institution of Nowgong and then went preaching in the villages till March, 1853, when he was called away to eternal home.

In March 1851, Dr. and Mrs. Bronson returned, bringing with them Miss Shaw who was to help in the Orphan Institution as a teacher. The Missionary force then was the strongest that has been in Nowgong in all its history—Dr. and Mrs. Bronson, Mr. and Mrs. Stoddard, Mr. Dauble and Miss Shaw, who became Mrs. Dauble in July, 1851. This band worked on heartily and successfully. The heavy work of bungalow building was pushed to completion and village preaching was prosecuted vigorously.

In November 1851, the Church for the first time gave "licence to preach" to two of the local members, Lucien B. Hayaen and James Tripp. But the former went to Sibsagar and the latter died in 1853.

The year 1854 was an eventful year when Dr. Peck came on deputation to visit the Asiatic Missions of the American Baptist Missionary Union, reached Gauhati in December, 1853, and then proceeded to Sibsagar and in January 1854 met for consultations all the Assam Missionaries assembled at Nowgong. All the interests of the Assam Mission were considered, but the Nowgong Orphan Institution was the occasion of the most discussion and the most difference of opinion between the Deputation and the Missionaries.

Work in Nowgong went as much as before for about one and a half years when in September 1855, Mrs. Dauble was compelled to leave for America on account of ill-health, and the Stoddards followed her in December of the same year, thus leaving Dr. and Mrs. Bronson alone again on the field. In June 1855, Ghinai was licensed to preach—the third licentiate of this church. In September 1857, ill-health compelled the Bronsons to take their second furlough to America, and

the field was left without a Missionary for twenty months. The work was left in charge of Charles Sonaram Thomas, the local helper. The church declined greatly during this period. By deaths, exclusions and scattering of members, it was reduced to five resident members—one less than when it was organised.

In May 1859, Rev. and Mrs. C.F. Tolman arrived. They had been looking forward with special encouragement to the work among the Mikirs but had to take charge of the Nowgong station on their arrival. In June 1861, he had to go back to America due to ill-health having been on the field only for two years. But before his departure, in December 1860, Dr. and Mrs. Bronson have returned to Nowgong from America, and Mrs. Tolman remained with them hoping Tolman might return. But it soon became apparent that he would not hope to return to Assam, and Mrs. Tolman followed him home in 1862, and the Station was again left to Dr. and Mrs. Bronson alone until November 1863, when Rev. and Mrs. E.P. Scott arrived, having been designated especially to the Mikirs.

The first attempt at work out-stations manned by helpers was made in May 1863, when Bhubon was licensed and located in his own village in Darrang. But the attempt failed by his unfaithfulness.

Rev. Scott made an early tour to the Mikir hills but malaria drove him back to America in just about two years after their arrival here. Dr. Bronson, besides school and preaching, worked with his pen to give the Assamese a Christian literature, as is evident from the number of hymns and tracts that bear his name. He undertook the great literary work of his life—'the Assamese-English Dictionary' which was published in 1867. In January 1868, he was again reinforced by the return of the Scotts, but the double burden had so worn on him that he was obliged to leave again for America early in that year. It was now Scott's turn to be left on the field single-handed. But their work was not to be of long duration, for in the following year, Scott was called away to eternal home. He died of cholera in Nowgong on the 18th May, 1869. Mrs. Scott bravely continued work alone till the return of Bronson in March, 1870, and still held on until

Rev. R.E. Neighbor, who had been designated as Scott's successor in the Mikir hills, came out in January, 1871, and took up the work which Mr. Scott so early had laid down. Mrs. Bronson had died in America in September, 1869, and Dr. Bronson on his return was accompanied by his daughter Miss Marie Bronson, who was to be his helper and who entered into the work with much of her father's earnest spirit.

A second attempt at working an out-station by local Christian worker was made by putting Charles and Besai at Nonoi, a thickly populated section about seven miles from the Nowgong station.

By the arrival of Rev. and Mrs. R.E. Neighbor, the station was again manned with two Mission families, Mrs. Scott being moved away to Gauhati in 1871. About this time, Dr. Bronson married Mrs. Danforth, widow of the late Rev. A.H. Danforth of Gauhati, but she too died soon in Burma in 1874 when she went there to recoup her health. This affliction was soon followed by another, for Miss Marie Bronson, who had accompanied Mrs. Bronson to Burma, died of cholera on the steamer near Goalpara, on her way back to Nowgong and was buried at Goalpara. After the double afflictions, Bronson was sent to Gauhati, and the Neighbors were left alone in the Nowgong field till December 1875, when they were joined by Miss Sweet, who has been sent out by the Woman's Society of the West to take up Zanana work and Girls' schools in Nowgong. Sweet's health failed her and could not continue long on the field.

In 1877 occurred the first Ordination of Assamese converts to the work of evangelisation, Kandura R. Smith of Gauhati and Charles Sonaram Thomas of Nowgong, being both ordained by a Council of Missionaries and Churches which met at Gauhati. Charles was chosen Pastor of the church at Nowgong in October, 1877, and continued in the office till his death in November, 1881. He was a good helper and was greatly missed.

Mr. Neighbor finding it necessary to return to America in March, 1878, invited Miss O. Keeler to come to Nowgong from Gauhati, as it was thought Miss Sweet in her feeble state of health was not equal to the burden of the entire work. For a few months only Misses Keeler and Sweet were

together, when ill-health obliged Miss Sweet to leave. She went to Calcutta for medical treatment and was there married to Rev. C.D. King and joined him in his work for the Angami Nagas.

Miss Keeler stood bravely at the helm alone, although the care and anxiety nearly were her life out, until January, 1880, when Rev. P.H. Moore and his wife arrived fresh from America, and she gladly transferred to him the charge of the station, reserving for herself the Women's Department, consisting of the Zenana work and Girls' schools.

In April 1882, Tuni J. Goldsmith was ordained and became Charles' successor as Pastor of the Church. For some years the Church had been saving its collections in the hope of sometime building a Chapel. In 1882, it became necessary to rebuild the old Chapel and the Church contributed Rs. 300 to this work.

Miss A.K. Brandt sent out to be associated with Miss Keeler arrived in November 1881, but did not remain long in Assam. She was married to Rev. R. Maplesden of the Telegu field in January, 1883, having been in Nowgong only about 14 months. But Miss Keeler was not able longer to continue on the field without a change, and left for America in March, 1883.

Miss Moore took charge of the Women's Department of the work during her two years and eight month's absence, teaching daily in the Girls' school and going with the Zenana women as after as she could.

In 1883, the Nowgong church, as a church, made its first attempt at financial support of an evangelist to the Mikirs, choosing Sarlok and paying him Rs. 8 per month. In July, 1885, this work gave place to an attempt at self-support. The Church agreed with Rev. Tuni John Goldsmith to serve it as a Pastor for three days (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) of each week, paying him Rs. 10 per month for his services. It also chose three Deacons, who with the Pastor were to exercise a general watch-care for the interest of the Church. All cases of discipline and difficulties in the Church are examined by them, thus relieving the Missionaries of much time consuming work. The plan worked well as could have been expected of a first attempt and thereby the Missionaries gradually hoped to make the Church independent of the Missionary control.

In November, 1885, Miss Keeler returned to her work and was accompanied by Miss N.L. Pursell, who was to be associated with her in the Women's Department and who at once took the study of the language.

Since the establishment of the Mission in Nowgong, the population of the district has largely increased, numbering according to the Census in 1882, 310,579, of whom 249,710 are Hindus, 12,074 Muslims and 48,795 others including the Christians and all non-Caste people. Great improvements have been made in the way of road and postal communications. The cause of education has advanced considerably. The reports on Education shows that there are in the district 153 schools of different grades, enrolling a total of 5,377 pupils. This spread of education was a great advantage to Mission work, both by opening the way for the use of tracts and religious books, and by a general undermining of many superstitions.

It may be stated that as a Mission, the Missionaries have not kept pace with the development of the district. The frequent change of Missionaries and the fewness and inefficiency of the untrained local Christian workers have been crippling hindrances to the vigorous prosecution of the Mission work. Even up to 1886, that is, after 45 years of Mission work in Nowgong, many of the people have not even heard of Jesus, and the general impression among those who heard, is that Christianity is a modern religion that has come intending to break their Caste, that is, simply to destroy their social standing among their countrymen. According to the Missionary report of 1886, some have heard of the teachings of Jesus and believed secretly, and if caste were done away, and they felt free to act as they think, would be called Christians instead of Hindus.<sup>49</sup>

On the 1st January, 1887, the Foreign Missionary force at Nowgong consisted of Rev. and Mrs. P.H. Moore, Miss Orrel Keeler and Miss Nettie Pursell. In April, 1887, Miss. Keeler left the Nowgong field and became Mrs Mason of Tura. On 6th December, 1887, Miss. C.E. Pursell came to Nowgong to be associated with her sister, Nettie Pursell and to fill up the vacancy left by Keeler.

49. Rev. P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report', Mission Jubilee Conference, Nowgong, December 18-29, 1886.



At the beginning of 1889, Nettie Pursell gave over the entire charge of the Woman's Department to her sister, C.E. Pursell, and came to Tura and became Mrs. Mason. On 17th June, 1889, Mrs. P.H. Moore with her daughter Clara left Nowgong for a change and rest in America. Thus at the end of 1889, the entire foreign Missionary force on the Nowgong field consisted of Rev. P.H. Moore in the General Department and Miss C.E. Pursell in the Women's Department. After the Jubilee Conference of 1886, and attention to some necessary repairs, the remaining days of the winter season were spent touring, and the summer season was spent in teaching in the Bible class. Thus the Missionaries spent time in the winter seasons touring and visiting the churches and taught in the Bible class during the summer, and in the Training camps.

The policy of the Lady Missionaries has been to devote the bulk of time and strength to direct evangelistic work among the women and children among whom they have access to go with Bible woman or alone and tell the story of Christ from house to house. Study of the language together with the care of the Girls' school has actually been the chief item of work in the Women's Department. The work done in the school and the influence gained over the girls was a source of gratification to Miss Pursell.

In 1888, few months after her arrival, Miss C.E. Pursell began to help in the Girls' school and supervision of the girls in the Boarding school. During 1887, 1888 and 1889, there had been a steady decline in the number of members of the Nowgong Church to 98, 95 and 87 respectively. Thus the Mission has been passing through a period of pruning rather than of growth. The opium habit caused the greatest number of exclusions from the membership of the Church.

Regarding the finances of the Church, at the beginning of 1887, the Church was paying its Pastor, Tuni Goldsmith Rs. 10 per month from its collections, and the Mission Rs. 15 for preaching among the non-Christians. A monthly collection was the only means of raising fund for the church. In October, 1887, a system of weekly collection was adopted. An attempt was made to get the members to pay one-tenth of their income. Envelops were given to know whether the members have paid or not. None except the Missionaries seemed to have paid the

amount. But the collections increased from the members largely and these together with the tithes from the Missionaries gave the church a reasonable income.

They hired the pastor, Tuni Goldsmith for the whole time at Rs. 20 per month for the remaining three months. The church paid its pastor for station work and its assistant pastor for work for the year 1888, and had a balance of about Rs. 100 in the Treasury at the end of the year.

At the beginning of 1889, this system was adopted for another year with a change in the salary of the Pastor from Rs. 20 to Rs. 25. The envelopes have not been in much favour and some have declined to use them at all, on the ground of not letting the right hand know what the left hand does.

Thus for the three years, the collections of the church together with the Rs. 10 monthly grant for the years 1888 have more than met all its expenses, but the Missionaries feel that until the church supports its own work without the aid of the Missionaries, it is far from true independence financially.

With regard to the management of the church, three Deacons and one Deaconess were chosen from among the local church elders, who were to assist the Pastor in all matters of discipline. Thus the responsibility was thrown wholly upon the church, the Missionaries only giving advice when consulted.

During December 1889, Rev. P.H. Moore visited Udmari, a village and Tea garden, together with Rev. E. Petrick, Bapuram, the Assistant Pastor of the church and two evangelists. Several Kols asked for baptism and Moore baptised five of them. As they are 18 miles from the station church, and of a different race and language from most of its members, it was thought best that it should constitute the nucleus of a Kol church.

At the beginning of 1887, there were four evangelists—Bapuram, Lomboram, both Kacharis but working mostly amongst the Assamese ; Sarlok, a Mikir, working mostly among the Mikirs, and Sikon, an Assamese, a youngman who usually travels with Moore on his tours. In June, 1887, Henry Goldsmith, eldest son of the Pastor, Rev. Tuni J. Goldsmith, who had been in Kohima with C.D. King, entered Mission service as an evangelist.

On the whole, the three years, that is, from 1886 to 1889

have not been a time of great movements or changes but the little progress that has been made, has been forward and not backward.<sup>50</sup>

At the beginning of 1890, Mrs. P.E. Moore was in America due to ill-health and so, only Mr. P.E. Moore and Miss C.E. Pursell were on the field. But soon Miss L.A. Amy came from America and joined the woman's work. On 18th January, 1891, Rev. and Mrs. P.H. Moore reached Nowgong on their return from America and resumed charge of the general work leaving the woman department to Miss Pursell and Amy. Miss Pursell became the wife of P.E. Moore of the Mikir field. So Miss N.M. Yates came out from America and arrived at Nowgong on the 18th December, 1891. Thus at the end of 1893, there were in Nowgong, three males, two married and two single Lady Missionaries.

At the end of 1889, the church reported 73 names on the roll. Rev. Tuni J. Goldsmith was paid Rs. 4 per month by way of pension for his services. In September, 1890, the church agreed with Rev. Tuni Goldsmith to serve as Pastor and paid him Rs. 10 per month. He continued in this relation until his death on the 15th May, 1892. He was a good man, conscientious and God-fearing, but not strong enough for a leader of the people. Physical infirmities and unhappiness in his home greatly hindered his usefulness as a Pastor.

At the annual meeting in February, 1892, a determined effort was made to thrust the church back to dependence on the Mission. After a long discussion, it declared its inability to support itself and manage its own affairs, and making over the church with all its funds and records to the Mission. The funds consisted of Rs. 334-13-6, the Post Office Saving Bank. After more than six years of self-management and self-support, this seemed a retrograde step and the Missionaries declined to accept the responsibility or support of the church. There was thus a deadlock. The pastor was, however, paid regularly and carried on his work till his death.

The youngmen in the church have shown more readiness than formerly to work with the Missionaries in street preaching.

50. P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report', 2nd. Trinnial Conference, Gauhati, December 21-30, 1889.

The Missionaries usually take out the Baby Organ and cornet and two ladies go along to help in the music. Several take part in addressing the people briefly. Sometimes, the Sunday school children go and help the Missionaries in the singing.

In January, 1890, Rev. P.H. Moore visited the Udmari church and baptised 10 persons. The members of this church were all Kols. The church then chose John, one of their own people, as their Pastor. He agreed to serve them for what they could pay him on condition that the Mission would pay him his debt of Rs. 60 as he said he could not save anything from his meagre support. The church Roll numbered only 15 and could raise from Rs. 2-8 to Rs. 3 per month. This was accordingly arranged. But John was soon taken away by cholera. Then they next engaged Bapuram as their Pastor, but he lived 18 miles away from the station and came only to conduct Sunday services. The Mission evangelist visited them occasionally and preached for them.

The evangelists—Lomboram, Henry and Serlok have continued in Mission employ till 1893. During part of the time, Lomboram and Henry have been diverted from their evangelistic work to help in the work of Bible revision.<sup>51</sup>

In January, 1893, seven foreign Missionaries were working at Nowgong. They were Rev. and Mrs. P.H. Moore, Mr. and Mrs. P.E. Moore, Mr. Gurney, Miss Amy and Miss. Yates.

At the beginning of 1893, the Nowgong church had no Pastor. In September of that year, Bapuram was chosen to take charge of all the church services. The church agreed to pay him Rs. 10 per month, and this was afterwards increased to Rs. 15. The Missionaries have continued to inculcate the teaching that evangelisation of the surrounding people is the work of the church, in a special and emphatic sense. In accordance with this teaching, the church began to look for youngmen who are fitted for this work. Early in 1893, Lucas was appointed for this work. In 1895, another man Sikon was employed by the church for evangelisation.

In October, 1895, the Nowgong Church promised a Grant-in-aid of Rs. 2 per month for a year to Balijuri church for

51. P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report', Third Triennial Conference, Tura, January 14-22, 1893.

appointing Nehemiah as station pastor. Similar grants have been made to Udmari church. Thus in three years, the church has licenced two of its members to work as evangelists and now lends a hand to help their sister churches. The Udmari church was the only church in the Nowgong district three years ago. The members of this church cluster about two centres, about nine miles apart, *viz.*, Udmari and Balijuri. The work has grown at both of these centres. At the end of 1895, each centre had its own evangelist quite independent of the Mission.

The Mission assisted the Udmari church by a grant of Rs. 5 per month towards the support of its evangelist for 21 months, and paid Rs. 5 towards the building of the little meeting house at Balijuri. Thus the Mission expended Rs. 110 for these two churches during three years.

The arrangement with Nehemiah, the evangelist was discontinued from October 1894, when he was employed by the Balijuri Church in May, 1895. The members of Udmari and Balijuri churches are all Mundas and Santals. Very few of them can read. Their evangelists are of their own people, and their meetings are conducted in the Hindi and Mundari languages.<sup>52</sup>

In 1899, P.H. Moore reported, "With regard to our native evangelist, I made an attempt to secure more work from them, with the result that they gave up their appointments as evangelists; so at present I have no native evangelists in Mission employ." In the woman department, one or two Bible women have been at their work continually contacting women and children but their activities were confined to Nowgong town and its vicinity only. The great mass of the people have not been touched.

In 1899 there were still only three churches in Nowgong district same as three years ago. There have been no marked changes in the Nowgong town church. The unordained pastor Bapuram, and the evangelist Sikon have been maintained. The grant-in-aid of Rs. 12 per month to help in the support of Sikon, has been reduced to Rs. 2 per year till now it is Rs. 6

52. P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report', Fourth Triennial Conference, Sibsagar, December 14-22, 1895.

only. It was further reported that while there have been accessions to this Church each year, its spiritual condition leaves much to be desired. The Sunday school and weekly prayer meetings have been regularly maintained but the Sunday school which was started for the non-Christian children has not been kept up. During the summer of 1898, Miss Daniels and Mrs. Parker arranged some occasional meetings for the young people.

The Udmari church was served by one of its own members, Simeon, who was its ordained pastor for about two years. But he resigned and the church has arranged with Markas, a man who had recently come there and is able to read and write fairly well in Hindi. Since June, 1898, the Mission has been paying this church also a grant-in-aid. Nehemiah went to Serampore college and tried to study there. Later, he went back to Chota Nagpur.

About half of the members of the Balijuri church ceded from it and built a Chapel for themselves about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile from the Balijuri Chapel. They applied to the Society for the Propagation of Gospel at Tezpur to join that Mission on the ground that the Baptist Mission did not help them with money, teachers, etc. A man from the Society for the Propagation of Gospel is then sent to work as their teacher and leader. Thus out of 82 members of the Balijuri church at the end of 1898, about 40 members have joined the Society for the Propagation of Gospel Mission.<sup>53</sup>

In 1900 there were still only three churches in the Nowgong district, that is, Nowgong, Udmari and Balijuri. The station church at Nowgong has continued much the same way as before. But in the village churches there has developed a want of harmony and even a spirit of discord. Markas, whom the Udmari church had employed as Pastor, turned out to be an adulterer having married another man's discarded wife. He was promptly excluded but has not ceased to harm the church.

The Nowgong station church has continued to retain Bapuram as unordained pastor, and Sikon as evangelist. But

53. P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report', Fifth Triennial Conference, Dibrugarh, February 11-19, 1899.

the contributions of the resident Missionaries is still the largest factor in payment of their salaries. The grant-in-aid from the Mission has been decreased annually, but the local contributions have not largely increased, and the church has been obliged to draw on a reserve fund to meet current expenses. While the church roll shows about three scores members, they were widely scattered. The station church at Nowgong was the only one that maintained a regular Sunday school.

In 1900, it was reported that during the last two years, the Udmari church stood divided into two factions, one party withdrawing and building a separate chapel for themselves. The withdrawing party included the majority of members and called themselves the Amguri church, from the name of the village where most of them lived, and where they built their chapel. They employed a member of their own church as their Preacher, who was able to read both in Hindi and Assamese and paid him between Rs. 2 and Rs. 3.

The Balijuri church has been without any Pastoral care during the entire two years. The faction that withdrew from this church and joined the Society for the Propagation of Gospel Mission some years ago, still maintained their separate existence, and had a Preacher from Tezpur S.P.G. Mission, resident with them. The *Kalazar* was prevalent at both Balijuri and Udmari which took a heavy toll on the lives of the people in the Nowgong district.<sup>54</sup>

In 1901, Mr. Carvell was in-charge of the Nowgong field, in addition to his work for the Mikirs and has baptised a good number both in the station and in the village churches.

In the woman department, Miss Daniels and Miss Long jointly held charge during the year 1901. Mrs. P.H. Moore, since returning from furlough, has continued her work among the children by the wayside and in house to house visits.

The older churches—Nowgong and Udmari, showed a gain in membership, whereas Balajuri had a diminution of members. The latter was due to change over of names of 35 members

54. P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report', Sixth Session of the American Baptist Missionary Conference, Gauhati, December, 22-31, 1900.

to S.P.G. Mission. Two new centres—Kathiatoli and Tika acted as a nucleus which could be developed into a church. During 1901, the Church at Great Valley, Pa, of which Mr. Craighead was the Pastor, sent money for the support of an evangelist. The money was placed at the disposal of the Nowgong church and they set apart Mr. Nishi Kanta De for that work, fixing his salary at Rs. 12 per month.

In 1902, the Nowgong church sent three representatives from Nowgong church to attend the meeting of the Upper Assam Association at Betbari. The three delegates had a really joyful time and came back full of enthusiasm. At their invitation, two representatives from Upper Assam came to attend Nowgong Association. The Association which has been meeting annually for several years, was an effective agency for drawing the churches into closer fellowship as well as a link drawing Christians together in closer sympathy and cooperation.<sup>55</sup>

In 1905 Rev. P.H. Moore reported that the usual evangelistic touring to villages, markets, schools and Churches has been the principal winter season work during the past two years. In November of the same year, Miss Long made another tour of the same village churches and found women's meetings being held weekly in all of them. Regular contributions had been taken with aggregate about Rs. 25 from four churches.<sup>56</sup>

At the end of 1902, five churches were reported in the Nowgong district. The names of Lengteng and Tapatjuri were added later on in the list of churches. Both these places were Tea gardens. At Tapatjuri, 20 have been baptised during the last 9 months. There were 48 baptisms in the whole district including the Mikir work in 1903, and 77 in 1904.<sup>57</sup>

The Annual Association meeting held in February, 1906 was notable for the ordination of Henry Goldsmith to the ministry. No new churches have been formed during the year or new

55. P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report', 7th Session of the Missionary Union, Gauhati, December 27, 1902-January, 1903.

56. P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report', 8th Session of the Missionary Union, Gauhati, December 24, 1904-January 1, 1905.

57. P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report', 8th Session, Gauhati, December 24, 1904-January 1, 1905.



evangelistic centres established. The Udmari people have built a new and a bigger Chapel but the conditions of the churches, on the whole, was unsatisfactory. Petty jealousies and dissensions have done much harm.

Messa was one of the Mission centres and a Christian Pundit was placed there for many years but it was still unfruitful. In November 1906, several young people expressed their wish to become Christians. They belonged to Kachari village, and a storm of opposition and persecution has broken out.<sup>58</sup>

In 1910, P.H. Moore reported that the general evangelistic work in the town and villages, and among the Christians and non-Christians, with some literary works have taken much of his time and energy during the last two years. Mrs. Moore spent her time in teaching children by the wayside when on her evening walks and visiting a few local women in their houses.

The number of churches remained the same as before. It was reported that each of the village churches was struggling with its own local problems. At Kothiatoli, a persecution of new converts was prominent. At Balijuri, they wanted a renewed and enlarged Chapel, but did not feel equal to the task of rebuilding. At Tapatjuri, they had put up a small Chapel during the past year but asked for educational facilities, though there was a Government Lower Primary School within a mile. At Udmari, a number of exclusions were due to secessions to the S.P.G. Mission. The Lengteng Church remained almost stationary. Barpani was another church that suffered the fate of so many Tea garden churches, on account of the transitory and migratory life of the membership. But during the last three years, the churches removed from the Tea gardens to villages and there were now more hopeful tokens of permanence and growth. The problem of consecrated and trained and effective leadership was still unsolved.

The Association of the churches of the Nowgong district used to meet in February. Under the impulse of the revival, a fourth field was added to the existing three. Such Associational meetings helped blend into one the heterogeneous classes of

58. P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report', Ninth Biennial Conference Gauhati, January 5-12, 1907.

which the membership of the Nowgong churches were composed.<sup>59</sup>

Proper attention could not be paid by the Missionaries to the eight small churches in the Nowgong district. Baptism during 1911-1912 has been made among the Mikirs. The church statistics showed baptisms 88 in 1911 and 77 in 1912. A great number of Mikir women also have been baptised.

Two Bible women in the Station made weekly visits among the heathen. A Women's meeting for Mikir women was a novelty. Four girls, the first fruits from Mikir hills entered during the past two years.

In December 1912, a tour of 26 days was given to Bible study classes in Christian villages, work among the non-Christian and the inspection of village Girls' Government Schools proved satisfactory.<sup>60</sup>

In 1915, P.H. Moore reported that the situation in Nowgong was really desperate. The churches were in open revolt against the neglect of the past few years. No new churches have developed.<sup>61</sup> It was reported by Miss E. Hay in 1916 that Miss Long spent in touring holding Bible classes among the women of the churches and doing evangelistic work among the non-Christians. She also attended the Sabha of the Golaghat district and then the Nowgong district Sabha at Udmari. That year, three women were employed, one worked among Bengalees, and another among Assamese of Nowgong, and the other worked in villages.<sup>62</sup>

According to the Missionary report in 1917, three outstanding events made the year 1916 a memorable one in the Nowgong district. The first of these was the meeting of the "All Assam Baptist Convention" at Nowgong. While the number was small, the enthusiasm and eagerness of the Christians, especially of Nowgong town was most commendable.

59. P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report', Tenth Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

60. P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report', 12th Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 4-13, 1913.

61. P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report', 13th Session, Golaghat, January 9-18, 1915.

62. Miss. E. Hay, 'Field Report', Missionary Conference, Nowgong, February 17-24, 1916.

The second event was the death of the Missionary, Rev. P.H. Moore, on March 3rd in Calcutta. For 36 years he was attached to Nowgong Station and gave his life and love freely for those whom he has come out to serve. The third event was the ordination of Sri Probhu Dayal, a faithful and devoted worker.

The Nowgong Station Church with a membership of 130 lived through a year of trials. Being without a Pastor for the greater part of the year and owing to dissensions between the larger families who lived much too close to one another, all has not been sunshine.

The little flock at Misa has taken on a new life and grown strong to the extent of thinking of organising themselves into a separate church body. Unfortunately, in most of all the churches, there was much to deplore. Litigation on account of land, was a constant disturbing element in the minds of the people. The largest church, Udmari, was slowly disintegrating owing partly to the coming of the Roman Catholic Mission and partly to the drifting away to unknown localities of many of the members. The total membership that year was 512 in the Nowgong field.<sup>63</sup>

According to the Field report of 1926, there were 14 organised churches of the Baptist denomination in the Nowgong district. 13 of these have church buildings. Others were under constructions. At two Tea gardens, church services were held though not regularly. There were Christians scattered among other gardens. The total number of Christians in the Nowgong district for that year was 744. But these figures did not include the Telegus from South India Mission, of whom there were about 100 Baptist and Lutheran Christians in one of the gardens. Because of the language difficulty, little has been done for these people except the supply of literature in their own tongue and the attempts of occasional services through interpreters.

The Churches of the Nowgong district received no aid from the Mission. They were organised into the Nowgong Association which gave at that time Rs. 50 per month for evangelistic

63. G.R. Kampfer, 'Nowgong Field Report', 15th Session of Missionary Conference, January 15-22, 1917, Sibsagar.

works. This body was working well and harmoniously at that time. But the great need was the training and conserving of those Christians.<sup>64</sup>

It was reported in 1927 that during the past year, the general work in the Nowgong district has been carried on about as usual. There have been many inquirers from many races and divisions of Mohammedans and Hindus, though many came from bad motives. The most encouraging piece of work has been carried on in the tea gardens near the border of Kamrup district. The Christian coolies from other parts of India have been organised into a church. The Association has appointed an Oriya pastor and evangelist. The Mission evangelists have spent much time in this vicinity teaching, preaching and strengthening the weak Christians.

The general Missionary has spent much time with the Nowgong church and community. There have been many signs of encouragement and an equal number of discouragement. It would seem that the church is morally and spiritually in about the same condition as it was a year ago.

For the past few months a service in English has been held each Sunday for the Missionaries, the educated Christians, the High school boys, and whoever else might be interested. In November, 1927, the Managing Committee of the All Assam Convention met with the Nowgong Church. The people were inspired and instructed in several services conducted by the leaders of the Convention.

There have been five evangelists working in the district during the past year. Three were supported by the Mission and two by the Association.<sup>65</sup>

In August 1936, Rev. U.S.G. Sension left Nowgong on furlough to America and the field was left under the care of Rev. W.R. Hutton who also held charge of the Mikir work. The Missionary report says that "The Mission in conjunction with the Association is maintaining one able man, Michael

64. G.R. Kampfer, 'Nowgong Field Report', Missionary Conference, Jorhat, December 2-10, 1926.

65. F.L. Gilson, 'Nowgong Field Report', Missionary Conference, Golaghat, November 23-December 1, 1927.

Christopher, as general pastor of the churches. I have visited only a few of the churches.’<sup>66</sup>

In 1937, it was decided in the Annual Association to release Michael Christopher to spend his full time in the work of the Assamese. Two evangelists were chosen by the churches to go from church to church helping in each place. In the last eight months, the Colpoteurs and Rev. Hutton sold about 3000 Gospels. The number of church members at the Nowgong Association was 875.

Three persons have given considerable time of their own to evangelization without pay and the women of one church have done a good deal of work in their neighbourhood.<sup>67</sup>

The Missionary report in 1938 says that the Nowgong field has never been particularly encouraging and still seems to be the same. A number of Mission workers have been lost or have been dismissed for various reasons. One new church was in the making at Kundoli where two new families have been baptised. Evangelists have been asked not to return to some villages, and in other places, they were welcomed and often fed and housed.<sup>68</sup>

In 1940 it was reported by Hutton that the process of shifting from one locality to another thus forming small Christian groups in new places is still going on. The need for strong villages if the work is to progress is seen by the people themselves and they voted to refuse recognition to any new church until it has built up to at least ten houses. The number of baptisms reported at the two associations last year was 121, the largest for any year in the history of the work. There have been 5 evangelists working throughout the year.

After three years or more of continuous agitation, the Mission secured from the Government a Dispensary for leprosy and some other diseases at Malasi. The scourge of

66. W.R. Hutton, ‘Nowgong Field Report’, Missionary Conference, Gauhati, December 1-6, 1936.

67. W.R. Hutton, ‘Nowgong Field Report’, Missionary Conference, Sadiya, December 8-13, 1937.

68. W.R. Hutton, ‘Nowgong Field Report’, Missionary Conference, 1938.

leprosy was so severe in that area that the Missionaries nicknamed the place the "Valley of the Shadow of Death."<sup>69</sup>

According to the Missionary reports of 1941, the state of the churches in the Nowgong district was very low with poor and indifferent attitudes towards church attendance and low standard of conduct. But the situation was not altogether hopeless. The responsible people in the churches have made earnest efforts to straighten out the difficulties. The Annual Association was well-attended. The district endeavour rally was held at Bordol.<sup>70</sup>

The Assam Baptist Missionary Conference reports say that in 1944, there were 18 churches in the Nowgong Association but only one was in good condition. Drinking and loose ideas regarding marriage caused endless trouble. One church has had the same pastor for over 20 years and was in the best condition of all. The Bible Class was held at Udmari and from the standpoint of representation by the churches was the best one in the Nowgong district. Dhonsing Marak was the only evangelist working in the district and he was entirely supported by the Association. He has sold much literature including a great many Bibles and New Testaments and around 300 of the new Hymnals.<sup>71</sup>

In 1945 Rev. Hutton reported that the Udmari church plans to complete the church building which was started several years ago. Another church, Baliadheepa, had collected Rs. 2,000 towards a new church building, but had the misfortune of having robbers steal half the sum. The annual Bible class was held at Bordol, one of the largest Mundari churches, with nine churches represented. However, an attitude was held by some of the leaders who have had this training already as they think that they have attained all the learning possible and some of them remarked, "What can the Missionary teach us?" In spite of that attitude, the morning attendance

69. W.R. Hutton, 'Nowgong Field Report', Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, 37th Session, Jorhat, January, 4-9, 1940.

70. E.R. Paul, 'Nowgong Field Report', Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, Golaghat, December 4-9, 1941.

71. W.R. Hutton, 'Nowgong Field Report', Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, 41st Session, Nowgong, November 9-13, 1944.

was around 73 and in the afternoons and evenings there were double that number.

For several months, Rev. Hutton had services at two Military Camps each Sunday. He also held services for West Africans and arranged services for a Garo Labour Corps which was moved away almost at once. Baptisms for the year were 77 in the district which had approximately 900 church members in 18 organised churches.<sup>72</sup>

In 1946, Miss E.R. Paul stationed at Nowgong reported that the field was left without any Missionary but they were showing a commendable spirit of self-reliance. They were however delighted when Mr. Comfort Goldsmith came to help in the Bible class at Udmari in October of that year where about 200 gathered.

The Mission evangelist Michael Christopher made tours on a bicycle to Assamese villages around Nowgong and had many trips to the village churches. He has found the most interested inquirers among a large group of Manipuris and in two Lalung villages.<sup>73</sup>

During the year 1947, most of the 18 churches in the Nowgong district were visited by Comfort Goldsmith as well as by two evangelists. The evangelists have sold many booklets, gospels and tracts. Young Assamese and tribal students were eager to learn more about the Christian religion. About 100 people attended the Bible Class in the village of Baliadheep in October of that year.<sup>74</sup>

According to the Missionary report of 1949, the Christian community in Nowgong town was one of the largest in Assam and the most economically independent station. There were 18 churches with a membership of 1297. That year 65 persons have been baptised. The Nowgong Baptist Association supported two evangelists and Michael Christopher supervised the field.<sup>75</sup>

72. W.R. Hutton, 'Nowgong Field Report', Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, 42nd Session, Jorhat, November 8-12, 1945.

73. Miss E.R. Paul, 'Nowgong Field Report', Missionary Conference, 43rd Session, Gauhati, December 5-10, 1946.

74. Miss. E.R. Paul, 'Nowgong Field Report', Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, 44th Session, Jorhat, December 10-14, 1947.

75. Dr. V.H. Sword, 'Nowgong Field Report', Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, 45th Session, Jorhat, January 11-16, 1949.

In 1950, the Mission had one evangelist who was also the pastor of the Nowgong church. The Association supported two evangelists who spent most of the time visiting churches. In February of that year, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Nowgong Church was celebrated. It was well-attended and the meetings were quite inspirational. There were altogether 15 small churches.<sup>76</sup>

### THE MIKIR FIELD

In May 1859, Rev. and Mrs. C.F. Tolman arrived at Nowgong. They have been looking forward with special encouragement to the work among the Mikirs, but had to take charge of the Nowgong station on their arrival. However, they made a tour to the Mikir hills the following winter season, and here Rev. Tolman imbibed that malaria which broke down his health and drove him back to America in June 1861, having been on the field only two years.

In November, 1863, Rev. E.P. Scott and his wife arrived, having been designated especially to the Mikirs. The first Mikir convert was baptised in 1863. Rev. and Mrs. Scott entered into the work among the Mikirs who inhabited the range of hills in the Nowgong district. They made an early tour to these hills but the malaria drove them back to America in just about two years.

Rev. and Mrs. R.E. Neighbor who had been designated as the successor of Rev. Scott in the work among the Mikirs, arrived in January, 1871. Rev. Neighbor took up in earnest the work for the Mikirs. He gave much attention to school work and succeeded in getting from Government a grant-in-aid of Rs. 1,500 a year, Rs. 600 of which was for a Normal School for the training of teachers, and the remainders for the maintenance of the village schools.<sup>77</sup>

In 1874, the Neighbors were left in charge of Nowgong station and the district work, and the works for the Mikirs were neglected. In 1878, Rev. and Mrs. Neighbor went to

76. Miss E.E. Hay, 'Nowgong Field Report', 46th Session of Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, Golaghat, January 3-9, 1950.

77. P.H. Moore, 'History of the Nowgong Field', Jubilee Reports, Nowgong, December 18-29, 1886.



America on furlough, and from that time until January 1891, there was no Missionary for the Mikirs, although Rev. P.H. Moore included the Mikirs in his work as much as possible, and in 1883, the church at Nowgong supported a Preacher to them. In January 1891, Mr. P.E. Moore came to work for the Mikirs. He married Miss Charlotte Pursell who had before begun to study the language and to try to make a beginning in school books. They set up headquarters at Krungjeng where Mrs. P.E. Moore spent three winter seasons and Mrs. Moore once, preaching and teaching.<sup>78</sup>

At the beginning of 1887, Sarlok, a Mikir evangelist worked among the Mikirs<sup>79</sup> and from April 1891, Long Saffa, a Mikir young man who showed a good degree of interest in religious work was employed to work with Sarlok among the Mikirs. Andrea Christian, another Mikir youngman, has done some evangelistic work for the past one year or so. He began teaching the Mikir language to Rev. P.E. Moore, and gave most of his time to teaching and preaching.<sup>80</sup> In January 1895, Mr. Carvell arrived and joined the Moore family in the Mikir hills. Mr. Carvell married Miss Amy of Nowgong station, and the four settled upon a location and built mainly at their own expense, to remain permanently on a hill which they called Tika.<sup>81</sup> According to the Missionary report of 1895, there were six Mikir boys in the Nowgong school, two of whom have been baptised. There were about ten Mikirs who have been baptised most of whom studied in the same school.<sup>82</sup>

According to the Missionary report of 1899, three Mikir youngmen were baptised in 1897 at the Mikir headquarters at Observatory Hill. It was proposed to organise a Church at Observatory Hill and two Mikir members were dismissed by

78. Mrs. N.P. Mason, 'These Seventyfive Years', Missionary Conference, Tura, March 11, 1911.

79. Rev. P.H. Moore, 'History of Nowgong Mission', 2nd Triennial Conference, Gauhati, December 21-30, 1889.

80. Rev. P.H. Moore, 'Report from Nowgong Field', 3rd Triennial Conference, Tura, January 14-22, 1893.

81. Mrs. N.P. Mason, 'These Seventy-five Years', Missionary Conference, Tura, March 11, 1911.

82. Rev. Penn E. Moore, 'Report from the Mikir Field', Missionary 4th Triennial Conference, Sibsagar, December 14-22, 1895.

letter from the Nowgong Church in 1898 to join the new Church there.<sup>83</sup>

Immediately after the Conference in 1895, P.E. Moore and J.M. Carvell made an extended tour in the Mikir hills, south, north and east as far as Golaghat. They made this tour on foot walking hundred of miles. They did not find anyone locality enough people to justify them in deciding upon a building site. They returned to Nowgong on April 7, 1896. In May, Moore made another tour south of the Borpani tea garden, and felt sure that he had found finally the right building spot. In October of the same year, Messers P.H. Moore, P.E. Moore and J.M. Carvell went to the spot and selected Tika Anglong as the future home of the Missionaries. Carvell proceeded at once to building and Moore went to Krungjeng where he had already spent two winters. Mrs. Moore joined him at Krungjeng on the 1st December, 1896. On January 18, 1897, they left for Tika Anglong arriving there next day. Carvell's house was under roof and one room closed so that he could live in it. Mrs. Carvell came out from Nowgong in February, 1897. Four happier, more hopeful men and women would have been hard to find. The houses were finished, plastered and white-washed before the rains set in.

The American Baptist Missionary Union had allowed Rs. 500 for a temporary house in the hills. The house at Krungjeng with out-houses and servants' houses, had been built at a cost of Rs. 130. The remaining Rs. 370 were spent on the building at Tika Anglong. The Missionaries found it difficult to estimate the help rendered by the Mikir Christians. Two Mikir Christian youngmen stopped at Krungjeng from the 1st January to April, 1896, but as they were alone a good part of the time, and one of them has got into very bad company, it was hard to say how much good they did.

Deobar accompanied Moore and Carvell in their travels during these three months. The following December, he, as school teacher and preacher, joined Carvell at Tika Anglong where he worked until December 17 of the following year.

Another servant of Carvell who became Christian has been valuable as a personal teacher to the Missionaries. He has

83. Rev. P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report', 5th Triennial Conference, Dibrugarh, February 11-19, 1899.

often conducted the Sunday services and has accompanied both Moore and Carvell when touring. Another man, Moore's bearer for nearly two years preached almost daily to the people who came to the bungalow. He also visited the nearby villages frequently. He composed three or four hymns, one of which has been used by Moore. He left Moore's employ and went to Nowgong.

Six youngmen have been baptised since last Conference in 1895— 3 at Tika Anglong and three in Nowgong. Five of them were living at Nowgong. One was in school, one was sick, the others were doing coolie work and one was dying of black fever at his home in the hills. Deobar succeeded in getting a few boys together during the first month of 1897, with a view to establish a school at Tika Anglong, but when rice became scarce in the rains, they all left.

Sunday services were held regularly in the verandah of the Mission houses. No church has been organised and no meeting house has been built so far. The money contributed by the Mikirs for the year ending October 1, 1898 was Rs. 5—9, and no collections were taken before that year.

For the last two years, Moore and Carvell have been employed in preaching. The people have come to the Mission houses singly, by twos and threes and by scores. They stopped to rest on the way to and from the market, to hear the singing, to see the pictures and various curiosities, to borrow money, to settle quarrels, to ask advice, to buy medicines, to sell their produce and very often they stopped just because they were invited to do so.<sup>84</sup>

Since 1899, the work of the Mikir Mission has moved on regularly except sickness of Carvell which made him absent. On September 2, 1900, for seven weeks and a little aid rendered at Tura kept P.E. Moore from the field for five and half months from July 5, 1900. The Mikir Missionaries have not yet organised a Church, but have maintained Sunday service regularly and a Sunday school.<sup>85</sup>

84. P.E. Moore, 'Mikir Field Report', American Baptist Missionary Union, 5th Triennial Conference, Dibrugarh, February 11-19, 1899.

85. P.E. Moore, 'Mikir Field Report', American Baptist Missionary Union, 6th Session, Gauhati, December 22-31, 1900.

During the year 1901, there were many interruptions. During 1902, the work has been carried forth with but little interruption. There was no organised church among the Mikirs yet. During 1902, regular Sunday services were held at Tika with an average attendance of 11. There was no paid evangelist in the Mikir work. There has been no special evangelistic efforts on the part of the Mikir Christians. There have been six Mikirs baptised at Tika during the past two years. The contributions of the Mikir Christians during 1901 was Rs. 2-14-9. During 1902, contributions have gone to Rs. 21-7-9, and all expenses incurred in the repairs of the Mikir Chapel and building, Chapel fence have been by a special contribution.<sup>86</sup>

In 1904 there were two Missionaries on the Mikir field. Regular Sunday services were maintained in the Chapel at Tika during the past two years with an attendance ranging from 10 to 40. The Sunday services were conducted by the Missionaries as well as by the local Christians. The Mikirs gave to church more liberally than before.

The work among the coolies on Borpani Tea estate resulted in a number of persons professing conversion. Last two years, in the Mikir field, there have been baptisms of five Mikirs, one Assamese, sixteen Garos and eighteen Bengalees.<sup>87</sup>

In 1907, it was reported that work at Tika for the past two years has shown some advance. There was in that year a Chapel and an organised Church, with a Mikir Pastor of 27 members. These were largely the school boys. In the past year, Moore has given more financial help to the Mikirs by way of small loans of money than in any previous year. This has brought more people to his home for both borrowing and returning, than in any year at Tika. Many have bought medicines or taken them free.

Over a year ago, Moore tried to have some of the ablest Christians preach and teach and sing at these places but they seemed to think that Moore was laying a trap to deprive them of their beloved hours of gossip at the market and so utterly failed.

86. J.M. Carvell, 'Mikir Field Report', American Baptist Missionary Conference, Gauhati, December 27, 1902 to Jan., 1903.

87. J.M. Carvell, 'Tika Field Report', American Baptist Missionary Conference, Gauhati, December 24, 1904 to January 1, 1905.

The Church members showed considerable ability in seeking their own profit. Many neglected the Sunday school. Some seemed to avoid Church services. Of the first three baptised at Tika, one has died an opium-eater, the other two have also followed his tracks, for, they were also confirmed users of the drugs.

P.E. Moore has given only a little time to the teaching by the wayside, some to teaching in the school, much to teaching in his own house and verandah. It has been necessary to do some nursing as well. Mrs. Moore has helped in the literary work.<sup>88</sup>

Since 1907, there have been many changes and much interruptions in the work for the Mikirs. Mrs. Moore planned and laboured for the people she loved so well until the very last, and Moor amid trial and suffering, preached to the Mikirs daily. Since Moore's departure, there has been no resident Missionary at Tika. Between 1907 and 1910, there have been four baptisms at Tika. The total membership in 1910 at the Tika Church was 32. Three Mikir youngmen have been engaged in evangelistic work. They have received the support from the Mission funds. The Christians that were at Tika have moved about half a mile away and have formed themselves into a Christian village.<sup>89</sup>

The Missionary report of 1913 stated that baptism during 1911-1912 has been made among the Mikirs. A great number of Mikir women also have been baptised.<sup>90</sup>

In 1913, it was reported that besides the Churches at Sidgamari and Tika, there was a branch Church of a few Garos at Omru that met regularly during 1911. In 1912, still another branch was started at Borpathar, making four places where regular services were maintained.

Three men have worked as evangelists the greater part of the past two years, and some six months were put in by others. They were preaching without pay. The Missionary has baptised

88. Rev. P.E. Moore, 'Tika Field Report', American Baptist Missionary Union, 9th Biennial Conference, Gauhati, January 5-12, 1907.

89. J.M. Carvell, 'Tika Field Report', American Baptist Missionary Union, 10th Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

90. P.H. Moore, 'Nowgong Field Report', American Baptist Missionary Union, 12th Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 4-13, 1913.

at 33 different times. The total number of Christians in the two fields for the two years being 87.<sup>91</sup>

The Missionary report of 1916 says that one new out-station has been started on the plain in 1915. Fewer baptisms were reported, and the year has, in some ways seemed less successful. Many were thinking, and some expressed desire to become Christians. There was a marked tendency toward a desire for better schools, and systematic education.

The Tika church and its four branches have Sunday schools, preaching services, prayer service and weekly service. Only 17 have been baptised. Sri Ingti was baptised on December 27, 1914 and died on December 10, 1915.<sup>92</sup>

In 1917, it was reported that Lindokso, a man of small stature was a pillar of the church in the Tika field. On October 15, 1916, the Missionary bungalow caught fire by a bolt from the sky and burnt most of their goods including medicines, Mission records, accounts and books, etc.

Before baptising, the Missionaries examined the candidates and read carefully the Church Covenant explaining the meaning. To the Covenant used at home were added pledges against the use of opium and gambling. In 1916, 44 were baptised.<sup>93</sup>

A new station at Furkating was opened to work among the Mikirs, and the larger part of February, 1926 was taken up in renovating the bungalow at Furkating and getting settled in it.

W.R. Hutton made one trip to Nowgong district to assist Rev. F.L. Gilson in the Annual Association. He also attended the Annual Association of the Tika Hills Mikirs and made another trip to Tika on the 1st of July, 1926. This trip was made at high flood time and he spent two days and one night in a boat. But since there was no rain, it was not altogether bad.

There has been an increase in church membership during 1926. Since the Annual Association was held in March, there have been 48 baptisms. The number would have been

91. P.E. Moore, 'Tika Field Report', American Baptist Missionary Union, 12th Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 4-13, 1913.

92. P.E. Moore, 'Tika Field Report', A.B. Missionary Union, Nowgong. February 17-24, 1916.

93. P.E. Moore, 'Tika Field Report', A.B. Missionary Union, 15th Session, Sibsagar, January 15-22, 1917.

considerably larger had it not been for an even split among the churches which left the former general Pastor, Sarbura Ingti without his position of leadership. The total membership was 250 men and 251 women, grand total of 501. These were scattered in 15 groups or congregations. The largest group had a membership of 68. The total church collections for the current year was Rs. 510-10.<sup>94</sup>

After the last Conference in 1926, Hutton went to the Mikir Hills of Nowgong district though he lost his camp cook on the way. He visited all the churches and came to realise that all the village churches and schools were most sadly in need of trained, earnest teachers who would also be the leaders in the church. The Missionary felt that the need of the Mikirs was to have someone among them who has had a real conversion. Many who were converted in the schools went back to non-Christian villages and became a part of them. Their conversion was not a vital experience. This was true of far too many of the evangelists and teachers as well.

The Churches on the Tika side were supporting two teachers, one for a Christian village and one for a non-Christian village. Umtilli was such a clean, well-ordered village with its surrounding fruit and bamboos and with its covered and carefully protected spring of fine water that was a joy to visit to the Missionaries. It has purchased the tin for its new church which would make the third tin church on that side. Other churches that do not have a tin roof yet have benches made by Sar Bara Carpenter that were modelled after the benches in Golaghat but were heavier and more substantial.

Hutton made one tour a year ago among the churches on the Sibsagar side. He visited the schools and churches and at night sat about the fires preaching. He found that even where Opium does not stand in the way there seemed to be a settled indifference to improvement with no desire for anything better.

On the Tika side, due to lack of funds, they have reduced the Office staff of the Mission to about 40 per cent. He was even considering the closure of the small school for the Mikirs at Furkating due to lack of funds. On the Tika side there were

94. W.R. Hutton, 'Mikir Hills Furkating Station Report', Missionary Conference, Jorhat, December 2-10, 1926.

two evangelists and the Pastor at large of all the churches. There were 12 church buildings and three other places where worship was held. There were 36 baptisms but three have gone back to heathenism. The total number of christians was 506 of whom 262 were male and 244 were female. On the Sibsagar side, there were four evangelists. There have been 18 or 20 baptisms during the year.<sup>95</sup>

In 1936, there were 25 churches, 865 christians, 66 baptisms, 17 sunday schools and 9 Christian Endeavour Societies.<sup>96</sup>

The Missionary report of 1936 says that two Bible Classes have been held at Tika and at Kokojan. The Missionary, W.R. Hutton was happy at the good turn out and the proceedings of these classes. One Mikir evangelist has been at work through the year doing hard work and reaping harvest. He Haliram has been growing through the years in knowledge of the Bible and its spiritual strength and influence. Another evangelist was appointed in September and has been energetically at work since then.<sup>97</sup>

The year 1937 has created an interest in the study of the Bible among the Mikirs in the annual Bible Classes. There were 101 who registered for this Class. The people paid their own expenses. The main event of the year has been the beginning of "Birta", a Paper for the Mikirs. There were 107 paid up subscribers, and before the year was over, 200 were expected. Each issue contained general and local news, an article for schools by the Education Director, the translation of the book of Psalm, an article on religious topics, and usually a Mikir story or some other story of Indian interest.<sup>98</sup>

The Missionary Field report for 1938 says that the Mikir work has no new developments. The Annual Associations were the best that they have yet had in spite of some adverse circumstances on the Tika side. The speeches in the annual gathering

95. W.R. Hutton, 'Furkating Field Report', Assam Baptist Union, Jorhat Conference, December 2-10, 1926.

96. W.R. Hutton, 'Furkating Field Report', Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, Jorhat, February 3-6, 1936.

97. W.R. Hutton, 'Mikir Field Report', Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, 34th Session, Gauhati, December 1-6, 1936.

98. W.R. Hutton, 'Mikir Work Field Report', Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, 35th Session, Sadiya, December 8-13, 1937.



were often of a high order and showed that new ideas of social life were growing up in the minds of many of the youngmen who were teachers and preachers. The annual Bible Classes were good but some Churches and Pastors did not yet realise their value. Hutton has been continuing the Mikir Paper "Birta".<sup>99</sup>

According to the Missionary Report for 1940, the process shifting from one locality to another thus forming small Christian groups in new places was still going on. The need for strong villages if the work was to progress was seen by the people themselves and they voted to refuse recognition to any new church until it has built up to at least ten houses. The number of baptisms reported at the two Associations last year was 121, the largest for any year in the history of the work. In one community on the Sibsagar side there has been a small movement towards Christianity with a number of families baptised and others planning to come. There have been five evangelists working throughout the year.<sup>100</sup>

The Missionary report on Mikir work for Rongkhang area for 1941 says that the Bible Class at Tika enjoyed a real treat. The attendance was continuously between 50 and 60, most of whom were youngmen. The Mikirs have a growing group of partially educated and quite promising masters in their village schools. They have two or three touring evangelists, and they have a devoted and newly reconditioned Missionary. While as a race, they were not as virile and ambitious as some of the Naga races, they have many pleasing and worthy characteristics and Christianity does make a real difference in their outlook. The race is very large and scattered.<sup>101</sup>

In 1940, it was reported by Hutton that the Mikir work on the Nowgong side lacked unity and a feeling of responsibility for the work on the part of the people. The people have not learned the value of the annual Bible Class and would not sacrifice to send their leaders. The work on the Sibsagar side

99. W.R. Hutton, 'Mikir Field Report', Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, 36th Session, Gauhati, 1938.

100. W.R. Hutton, 'Mikir Field Report', Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, 37th Session, Jorhat, Jan. 4-9, 1940.

101. J.M. Forbes, 'Mikir Field Report', Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, Golaghat, December 4-9, 1941.

was more promising. Two Mikirs and one Naga have been appointed to lead the people. One of the Mikirs, Kangnek Phangsho, who has been known to Hutton for 17 years could testify to his Christian life. The other, Joseph Hanse, was younger but was an earnest Christian.

The Mikir Paper, "Birta", had a subscription list of 425 which could be enlarged were it not for the difficulty of getting Paper.<sup>102</sup>

According to the Missionary report for 1945, the membership of the Mikir Churches on the Tika side was 653 and for the Sibsagar side 614. Of 614 on the Sibsagar side, 226 were Rengma Nagas. The Annual Conference and Bible Class was held at Deithor with 143 registered. The Bible Class and Birta were the favourites of the Missionaries. Birta by that year had a circulation of nearly 475 and reached many places even where the regular evangelists were seldom able to go.<sup>103</sup>

It was reported in 1946 that on the Nowgong side of the Mikir work, the Mission helped the Association to support four village teachers and an evangelist. They conducted their own Association and Bible Classes using materials that Hutton prepared for them. The heavy rains and floods in October ruined the rice crop and to add to the catastrophe, a kind of Cutworm has marched in armies across the fields. In most places the people were facing famine conditions.<sup>104</sup>

Hutton reported in 1947 that the work of the Churches seemed to be going on as usual. He felt good to hear from one Mikir teacher that 36 in his neighbourhood have become Christians. Another teacher reported that his parents and family had become Christians. These news were pleasing to the Missionary who had been trying to persuade them for the last twenty years.<sup>105</sup>

In 1949 it was reported that throughout the year, the

102. W.R. Hutton, 'Mikir Field Report', Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, 41st Session, Nowgong, November 9-13, 1944.

103. W.R. Hutton, 'Mikir Field Report', Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, 42nd. Session, Jorhat, November 8-12, 1945.

104. E.R. Paul, 'Mikir Field Report', Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, 43rd Session, Gauhati, December 6-10, 1946.

105. W.R. Hutton, 'Mikir Field Report', Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, 44th Session, Jorhat, December 10-14, 1947.

Mikir-Christians and non-Christians have been agitating for more schools, roads, wells and the like, for their land, and especially the need for a tribal headquarters of their own. This has been established at Halflong. There have been 400 baptisms during the year. The larger share was among the Rengma Nagas who lived in the Mikir Hills. Birta had a circulation of 600.<sup>106</sup>

## THE GAUHATI FIELD

Immediately after the break up of the Station at Jaipur, Rev. Cyrus Barker moved from Sibsagar in late 1843 and tried to find a suitable place for the Mission Centre in Tezpur, but having found Tezpur not suitable for a Mission Station, took up his residence at Gauhati in the autumn of 1843, the most important town in the Province. Before the arrival of Barker, there was only a Compound in Gauhati without any building. Thus Barkar was the first American Baptist Missionary stationed at Gauhati and the first Pastor of the Gauhati Baptist Church. He served in the Gauhati Station for less than six years and died before reaching America.

Mr. Danforth arrived at Gauhati in 1848, a year and a half before the departure of Barker. A substantial brick building was erected under his care, and a Chapel building. The latter was a substantial brick building, quite sufficient to accommodate all congregations up to the year 1886. It was a gift from the European residents in Gauhati, many of whom attended preaching services within it. Danforth remained, with a short transfer to Sibsagar, ten years, and then returned finally to America. Mr. Ward, another American Baptist Missionary, was associated with Danforth in the work at Gauhati for at least one year.

After Danforth left, seven or eight years passed before the work was taken up again by Messers Stoddard and Comfort. They seemed quite depressed by the effects of the long neglect of the field, but as Stoddard already knew the language and has had experience in Mission work, it was

106. W.R. Hutton, 'Mikir Field Report', A.B. Missionary Conference, 45th Session, Jorhat, January 11-16, 1949.

possible to put it speedily into prosperous shape again. But Stoddard was more needed for the Garo work at Goalpara, and so after five months, he departed there and Comfort was left alone at Gauhati where he remained on the field about seven years.

During Comfort's term of service, the station was reinforced by the transfer of Mrs. Scott from Nowgong, where her husband had died. It seemed that she was called upon to keep up the work during the temporary absence of Mr. and Mrs. Comforts, on account of their ill-health. During this short period, she seemed to have taken hold with commendable energy. After a little more than a year of earnest labour she was obliged to return to America, accompanied by Mrs. Comfort and her loss was especially deplored because the entire care of the village schools had rested upon her shoulders.

Dr. Bronson came to Gauhati soon after the departure of Mr. Comfort. He brought a rich experience with him as well as an intimate acquaintance with the various departments of the work in the district from previous supervision of it during the lack of a resident Missionary, while he was stationed. But within four years, he bade farewell to the land he loved more than his life, but which he should never revisit save in dreams and ecstatic reverie. Shortly before the transfer of Bronson from Nowgong, Miss. Mary D. Rankin arrived from America, and had the charge of the work immediately after Comfort left. Becoming Mrs. Bronson shortly afterwards, she returned to America with her husband where she has since remained.

Miss Orrell Keeler came to Gauhati Station in 1875 and rendered valuable services, but in a little more than two years she was called upon to take up the work which Mr. Neighbor was laying down in Nowgong. On the departure of Dr. Bronson in 1878, the Gauhati station was left in the care of Rev. Kandura R. Smith, commonly known as Kandura. He had been bought from his parents while a boy, and was brought up in the Nowgong Orphan Institution. He possessed unusual ability, and was put in-charge of the Gauhati Station with the full authority of a Missionary, save that the Girls'

school taught by his wife was in the charge of the Nowgong Missionaries.

In the fall of 1885, Mr. and Mrs. C.E. Burdette were transferred from Tura, possibly in return for the previous loan of Mr. and Mrs. Stoddard. Their knowledge of the Garo language gave them immediate access to the Garo Christians of the Gauhati field, though they were shut off from direct communication with the bulk of the non-Christian population in the town, and from the few Assamese speaking Christians who did not understand English. Kandura continued to act as their assistant, and had the charge of all the Assamese services until the close of September, 1886, when he voluntarily resigned. His ready knowledge of English and his ability to conduct religious services made his assistance very valuable to the new Missionaries.

The work of the district may be divided into (i) Station Work and (ii) Outside Station Work.

### **Station Work**

The Missionary works at the Station was confined to Gauhati town. Gauhati was the most important town in the whole Province of Assam in 1886. It was for some time the Seat of the Provincial Government and was the river-landing for Shillong. It stretched along both banks of the Brahmaputra for several miles, and had a population of 11,000. Communication between the two parts of the town was kept by a Steam-Ferry making several daily trips each way, and by numberless dug-outs. The south bank of the Brahmaputra and some adjacent land was occupied by European residences, Government Buildings, the Church and School-houses. It was formerly a strong military Station, and especially while it was the Seat of the Provincial Government, there was numerous English population. Even in 1886, the Civil officers and the Tea Planters formed a good Congregation if there was English service. On the northern side, and back from the river on the south side, the town broke into a number of more or less distinct villages occupied by various races. Assamese, Rabhas, Kacharis, Garos, Nagas and even one village of Manipuris from the south of the Naga hills were found there. There

were three principal bazars at that time. Two, situated at opposite extremities of the town, furnished the necessities and luxuries of local people's life and industry, while the third supplied all the ordinary wants of the European residents. The European residents, however, preferred to buy from the Planters' Stores Agency. In the two bazars first mentioned, there was at all times, and especially morning and evening, a crowd of men and boys with a good number of women and girls of various races and religious faiths. Inhabitants of the town, whatever their race, had a good knowledge of Assamese, and strangers who came for trade were generally somewhat familiar with it. The Missionaries lamented that in the whole town and outside, there was ignorance of even the commonest terms, such as, God, Heaven or Hell, and had to be frequently explained. The European and the Anglo-Indian population had the benefit of the services of a Chaplain of the Church of England who divided his time between Shillong and Gauhati. But they were also attended to by the Baptist Missionaries from the beginning of their stationing at Gauhati.

### **Outside Station Work**

Outside Gauhati, the Assamese, Muslims, Hindus, Kacharis, Rabhas, Garos, Mikirs and imported Kols were the objects of Missionary labour. In the early years of Missionary work among the Garos of Kamrup district, the Missionary from Gauhati or Nowgong directed the work, the nearest village being about 70 or 80 miles from Gauhati and another 75 miles from Nowgong. About four thousand Garos were said to live within the Kamrup district at that time. Half of the Gauhati field was filled with Kacharis and Rabhas, melting away into various dialects towards the base of the Bhutan hills. All these, however, had some knowledge of Assamese though their knowledge was confined to the purposes of trade and to persons who attended the markets or visited the Station. Christian teachings amongst these villages could reach only few, and those few also were least susceptible to Christian teachings.

**Progress of the Work**

The annual report of 1885 stated that Danforth was occupying a Zayat in the town near one of the bazars, Ward was spending most of the winter seasons in the neighbouring villages, and Mrs. Ward was teaching two hours a day in the town school. The Church in Gauhati was organised in 1845 with Rev. Cyrus Barker as the first Pastor. At the end of two years, the Church numbered 27 members, only a few of whom, however, had been baptised in Gauhati since the beginning of the Mission. Eight years afterwards a brick Chapel was erected through the beneficence of the English residents in Gauhati to whose benefit, services were held in English.

On the 17th of April, 1867, the Reverends Stoddard and Confort with their wives arrived at Gauhati and took charge of the Mission Church and property, and gathered ten persons as members of the Gauhati Church, two of whom, Omed and Ramke, the first Garo converts went away to Garo Hills to found a Church there. The annual report of 1867 mentioned of the low state of the church as was found by the new Missionaries. In 1874, the membership of the Gauhati church and out-stations was recorded as 82, diminished by six deaths, leaving 76. This number included 53 baptised during the two previous years at Baraigaon, leaving something like twenty names as strictly belonging to the Gauhati station church. Since that time there had been baptisms from time to time in Gauhati, but they had been mostly converts from different villages who came to the station for baptism. Various members of the older Christian families had been received, none of whom seemed to have added to the strength of the Church, while one or two new names of worth had been added from outside. At the time of the Missionary Conference in 1886, aside from the transient membership of boys and girls in the Station schools, there were but one Assamese woman Christian and one illiterate Garo and his wife among the enrolled membership of the church who manifested a lively interest in its welfare, while one educated member of the Nowgong Church who lived in Gauhati, had shown considerable real devotion, and ten more enrolled members might be considered as cyphers.

According to the Missionary report of 1855, Danforth has had a zayat built near the upper bazar and was preaching in it. In the same year, he was temporarily transferred to Sibsagar on account of Brown's return to America, but he resumed his preaching again after he returned to Gauhati. In three or four years he returned himself to America, and for seven years there was no Missionary in the Gauhati station, and such work as this must have flagged. During Bronson's time, bazar preaching was conducted, and during the first years following Bronson's departure, Kandura and his helper, Apinta gave a good deal of attention to it. An effort to resume it in October, 1885 proved the occasion for Kandura's resignation from the Mission service.

Outside the town, considerable attention was paid to the village preaching. In 1850, there was a noticeable interest among the Garos of Kamrup district, and requests were received by the Missionaries to establish Christian schools in their villages. It seemed that there was a good number of Garos in the town schools in Gauhati, and it was likely that these had served to kindle an interest in their several homes. In fact, there was a great demand for these schools and on one occasion, thirty youngmen had come thirty miles into Gauhati to beg for books and a teacher, stating that they had already formed themselves into a school. At that time, as frequently thereafter, nothing could be granted but books, and a promise that the Missionary would try to visit their village. The Garos of Kamrup district had just begun to accept Christianity in large numbers when Bronson left. First, in 1873 and 1874, at Baraigaon over 50 were baptised. Since that time up to 1878 about 150 more, and thence on to the year 1886, 500 more have been baptised. The formation of an Association was mentioned in 1851, and seven workers were set apart to its service. It seemed to have perished in the vicissitudes of the work, and at the earnest request of the Garo Christians, a new organisation was formed in January 1886. It took up as its first work the spiritual care of destitute Churches and the spread of Christianity in heathen villages. To this end, it selected a man for itinerant preaching and furnished money for his support.

The Rabhas and Kacharis in the district have been objects of the earnest attention and expectation of the Missionaries



from the beginning. They comprised one half of the population of the whole field. Danforth spoke of their readiness to accept Christianity. He described them as simple, honest, ignorant of almost all religion, and not Priest-ridden. He said that they had already a number of schools, and religious books were welcomed as text-books. They all confessed sin, but most had no hope of salvation. He added that the Hindu teachers were busy among them, and that they should be provided for speedily. Nearly thirty years later, Bronson expressed a like confidence regarding these people. On the occasion of the baptism of a promising Rabha convert, he wrote saying that "if the Gospel once begins to take hold of the hearts of these Rabha-Kacharis, multitudes will follow." Eight years more had passed, and they were still waiting. Missionaries and evangelists had made a few visits to the nearer villages, and occasional converts had been gained, but though these had generally proved faithful, and made good church members, the apostle to these people had not yet arisen. The baptism of about eighty Hindus was recorded since 1878. It was probable that all of these were from the semi-Hinduised Rabhas and Kacharis. Rev. Endle of the Society for Propagation of Gospel Mission at Tezpur said that great advantage was gained in working amongst these people by the use of their own language instead of Assamese.

The Kols have not yet been the object of direct, systematic effort of the Missionaries. They did not seem to be numerous in the Kamrup district, though considerable companies might be met with on some tea gardens. In October 1883, a company of 13 Kols came to Gauhati and were baptised by Kandura. In 1886, efforts were made to secure a teacher for them from their own tribe but failed.

The resignation of Kandura has compelled the temporary abandonment of work which might otherwise have been hopefully undertaken, and left the Assamese department of the work altogether dependent on the spare time of a Missionary who was but imperfectly acquainted with the language and customs of the people. Thus the work among the Assamese at the Gauhati station would not speedily progress.

Competent helpers in the Garo areas of the district were very few, and as a result, many had altogether apostatised. But

many were maintaining a good Christian character, and the work of the itinerant preacher seemed to have been definitely efficient in commending Christianity to the heathens. The Missionaries hoped that with faithful helpers of moderate ability and education to put at the head of the work in various places, and with blessing of God, the Garo work ought to continue to advance numerically and to increase in depth and permanence as helpers and appliances are multiplied.<sup>107</sup>

Shortly after the Missionary Conference in 1886, Kandura resigned from Mission Service as he was dissatisfied with his pay and he also felt injured by the new Missionaries and first drew away all the members except Garos from the membership of the Church. Thus the care was left to the Missionaries alone. The Gauhati church was quite small in 1889 comprising only four residents in Gauhati and fifteen Kols from the tea garden. Besides these, two from Nowgong Church who lived in Gauhati. The contributions were insignificant. The roll was called in 1887 but no discipline was imposed until then. In three meetings in 1889, the rolls were somewhat carefully examined, and after that the Ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper were observed in the station. The candidate for baptism was an Assamese, a youngman coming out from a Hindu family.

The evangelistic work at the station had consisted almost altogether of bazar preaching. Early in the summer of 1887, Burdette visited the lower bazar with a few school boys. They were surrounded by a large crowd and though their teaching was disputed to, they were listened to. Since then, without more than a dozen exceptions, Burdette had preached in one or other of the bazars every Sunday. School boys were his helpers first and then he was joined by Samuel and Kandura also helped him on many occasions. Their teaching was often approved and they were often accorded the victory in dispute, sometimes even by the disciples of their opponents, but commonly the Muslims declared the Hindus beaten, and the Hindus commended their replies to the Muslims.

The work in the villages had been direct by the Missionaries, and indirect through schools and churches. The inspection of

107. C.E. Burdette, 'History of the Gauhati Field', Jubilee Reports, Nowgong, December 18-29, 1886.

the condition of the churches had been carried on by a roll-call in the churches. The indirect work of the Mission through the churches and schools had been increasingly independent work of the churches and villages. The village churches kept their own records, held their own meetings and exercised disciplines, more or less independently of the direct guidance of the Missionaries. The work of the churches had been further carried on in the Association of the churches reorganised in the spring of 1886. In religious work, the Association has supported an itinerant preacher and in school work, it appointed the teachers through the school committee.

Nothing had been accomplished among the 99,000 Kacharis waiting for the preaching of Christianity. Two tours had been made and the people willingly and even eagerly listened to. Both Mr. and Mrs. Burdette gave some time for learning their language but could not find enough time to study it.<sup>108</sup>

According to the Missionary report of 1893, though the membership of the Gauhati station church was very small, the regular Sunday services and a weekly prayer meetings have been kept up. The street preaching was always listened to by an attentive crowd and occasionally an individual came to the Missionary bungalow for tracts and for conversation on the subject of Christianity.

Among the Garo and Rabha villages scattered in the south-east portion of the district, there were three self-sustaining Churches. Mr. and Mrs. Burdette worked hard for the policy of self-support and also to make the Christians feel that upon their own Churches rested the responsibility for the evangelisation of their heathen neighbours. They made some progress in this direction. The churches also assumed for one year the expense of sustaining a number of stipendiaries in the station school with a view to preparing more men to be preachers and teachers.

The Associational Committee had the entire direction of the village schools. They chose and appointed teachers and the Christians in the villages raised whatever amount was agreed upon for the teacher's pay, in excess of the Government Grant-

108. C.E. Burdette, 'Report from Gauhati Field', Missionary Conference, Gauhati, December 21-30, 1889.

in-aid which they received. The school teachers were all Christians and they conducted the religious services of the villages in which they taught, and were felt to be a real evangelising agency. Thus it was felt that the three years after last Missionary Conference in 1889 had been years of real progress in the life of these Churches. During this period, 156 have been baptised and the membership in 1893 was 436.<sup>109</sup>

In 1895 there were five independent Churches in the Gauhati field, one in the station, and four situated in the Garo villages and for the most part made up of Garos. One of these was formed in 1893, by the setting off of what had been regarded as a branch of one of the other Churches. This separation, together with the organisation of the new church, was devised and amicably accomplished. The new church had about 100 members that year.

Each of the four Garo churches was a centre of Christian influence and activity reaching out to a number of villages where Christian schools and Christian services were maintained. And the Christians who might be living in these outlying villages, with such as were brought in by conversion, were charged with the duty of evangelising their villages and building up distinct Congregation. Sometimes this duty fell solely on the teacher who was sent to open a new school in a heathen village. But the teacher did not have to wait long to find some of the villagers, and usually first of all some of his own pupils, ready to be converted. The readiness to support a school usually be taken as the willingness to accept Christianity.

Three years ago these outlying Congregations or branches of churches were nine in number but one or two have been given up. Then new branches have been formed and there were twelve in all. These, with the larger four Churches made 16 Communities which were scattered in the villages in the south-east portion of Kamrup district. At the beginning of 1894, there were two ordained preachers, both in the same village, and both acting as teachers in the large school of Baraigaon. In March, 1894, the Kinangaon village Church called a Council to consider the ordination of Rikman, who had been for years at the head of

109. C.D. King, 'Report from Gauhati Field', A.B. Missionary Union, 3rd Triennial Conference, Tura, January 14-22, 1893.

their school and of their church work in that village. The Missionary C.D. King approved of Rikman's ordination. Since his ordination, he had become a sort of Bishop, in a large section of the field. This section of the field was remote from Baraigaon where Bangalsingh and Sareng, the other ordained men resided. So it had come about that Rikman had often occasion to make tours among the Christian communities in this portion of the field. And he had been frequently called upon to administer the Ordinances and solemnise marriages. After a few years he has been released from school work to enable him to do more itinerating work.

In the other section of the field, the two ordained men of Baraigaon had some out-station branches of the Baraigaon Church which they helped and encouraged by occasional visits. They also ministered to the Rabhas or Rabha-Kacharis, who used the Assamese language, as did many of the Garos in this field.

These two Garo churches, in addition to their meetings of the whole church or Congregations, they had their young people's, women's, young women's and house to house meetings. Besides the usual Sunday school, a separate Bible school for adults was also organised. They also frequently held within the church or the village community, a special gathering or assembly or Sobha as they called it. These gatherings were conducted according to regular Parliamentary usage. In two or three of the churches, it had been the usual practice during the last two years, to hold, besides Sunday meetings, some sort of a meeting on every evening of the week save one. In addition to these meetings of the individual churches, these Garo Christians held, first in one village and then in another, frequent gatherings to which representatives from other Conventions were invited. And to attend these Conventions, the delegates travelled on foot for one or two or even three days. In addition to these Conventions, which were not to represent the whole field, they had the big Convention, that is, the Annual Associational meeting to which delegates from other Conventions were invited. In this meeting, the Missionaries could not help being impressed with the seriousness and reality of the religious exercises, and the sense of responsibility with which business was conducted. In February, 1893, they provided for the support of several boys in the Normal school at Tura. In the

following year, they took a step further in advance, in the matter of shouldering the responsibility of their own educational work and instituted a Training school of their own, in which they would support a number of their stipendiaries.

The Gauhati church was also one of the branches of the Association of Churches in Kamrup. And in February, 1893, the Association, according to law of rotation, met at Gauhati. The guests and delegates were housed in Mission Compound and meetings were held in the Mission Chapel, and the Gauhati church was expected to provide food for all that came.

The Gauhati Station church was numerically very small and although it included one or two local Christians of more than average intellectual ability and received all the aid that the Missionaries could give, its spiritual influence was but small. However, it undertook to support, with the help of the Missionaries, a lay preacher, a part of his time to be given to school work.<sup>110</sup>

No new church had been formed during the last three years ending in 1899, and so there were five churches including the station church. Besides the keeping of their work in their own communities, the churches had sought to provide at least one man to give his whole time to the work of an evangelist among the heathens. But in 1896, their funds were so short and their obligation so great that no evangelist was appointed that year. In 1897, no suitable man was available. During 1898, an evangelist had been supported by them, and in the Associational meeting, they had decided to support two, one of whom was to be supported by the separate contributions of the women of the four churches.<sup>111</sup>

According to the Missionary report for 1900, Sunday bazar preaching and a Garo preaching services were also added to the regular Assamese service. Attendance at these meetings had been small. Association meetings had been well-attended and vigorously conducted, but seemed less spiritual.<sup>112</sup>

110. C.D. King, 'Report from Gauhati Field', 4th Triennial Conference, Sibsagar, December 14-22, 1895.

111. C.D. King, 'Report from Gauhati Field', 5th Triennial Conference, Dibrugarh, February 11-19, 1899.

112. C.E. Burdette, 'Report from Gauhati Field', 6th Session of A.B. Missionary Conference, Gauhati, December 22-31, 1900.

By 1903, there were still only five churches. The four village churches comprised 17 villages where schools were located. Sunday preachings and semi-weekly prayer meetings were regularly maintained wherever there was a teacher. Various monthly meetings were kept up in some of the villages. In the station, the Missionaries were obliged to do all the work of preaching, leading meetings and teaching in the Sunday school.<sup>113</sup>

In 1904, one of the village churches had arranged to pay its pastor a monthly salary. In one or two of the villages for some years, the spiritual condition of the people was low. In two other villages where lived a few Christians, there had been a revival of interest in spiritual things. There had been a more marked advance in the station church. In 1903, the station church was reorganised and since then there had been maintaining regular services. Services were conducted by the local Christians, the Missionaries taking the services when requested. The members had been active in evangelistic work. One or more had usually accompanied the Missionary in his bazar work. The church also, with the help of the Missionaries had been supporting one of their members as evangelists.

Bazar services had been held regularly, and during most of the time, Bible study with the non-Christian Babus had been conducted by the Missionaries. This had resulted in some requests for baptism, but the Missionaries postponed till they were assured of their conviction. Touring had been done in the Christian villages as usual. Touring among the heathen villages had been done mostly on the north bank. In the fall of 1903, Burdette accompanied by Stephen, spent a few days in the part of the field. In the spring of 1904, Mr. Tuttle toured in that section.<sup>114</sup>

According to the Missionary report of 1907, there had been a net gain in the membership of 112. Two more Churches had chosen pastors to care for them. There was more of an evangelistic spirit manifested in the churches than two years ago. It was decided by the Association in 1905 to keep an evangelist

113. C.E. Burdette, 'Report from Gauhati Field', Missionary Union, Gauhati, December 27, 1902 to January, 1903.

114. A.J. Tuttle, 'Report from Gauhati Field', Missionary Union, Gauhati, December 24, 1904 to January 1, 1905.

among the Rabha and Kachari villages but no suitable man could be found. During 1906, a worker was found who could give part of his time to this work and had been supported by the Church for this work. Besides, there had been teachers in five heathen villages. This work had resulted in the conversion of a good number of persons from the heathen community. Interests in the study of Bible and Sunday school was also shown. The field had suffered much from epidemic diseases during the past two years. Dysentery and cholera had carried away many of our Christians. The greatest loss had been sustained in the death of Rev. Rikman N. Sangma, one of the Mission ordained pastors. The Christian women had supported two evangelistic schools in 1907 which indicated a marked advance.<sup>115</sup>

There were five Churches in the district with a membership of 1,026 at the end of 1908. In fact, there were 21 Churches which were called branch churches. Those baptised since the opening of the work in the district numbered 2,184 persons. During the last twelve years, 826 have been baptised ; of these, 569 were under 20 years of age and 372 under 16 years.

There evangelists have been supported by Mission funds. Two had given their time mostly to touring on the north bank while the other had concentrated his labours in the town and surrounding villages. One evangelist had been supported by the Kamrup Baptist Association and had given time to the Rabha-Kacharis on the south bank, south of the Trunk road, leaving a large Assamese population untouched.<sup>116</sup>

The Missionary report for 1913 stated that while progress had characterised the educational department of the work, the spiritual condition of the churches was very unsatisfactory. The Missionary had spent more time in preaching than in previous years. The special feature of the year was the independence of branch churches. They had separated from the mother church for several reasons and seemed to be showing new life. Deacons have been appointed and Holy Communion administered.

115. A.J. Tuttle, 'Report from Gauhati Field', A.B. Missionary Union, 9th Biennial Conference, Gauhati, January 5-12, 1907.

116. A.E. Stephen, 'Report from Gauhati Field', A.B. Missionary Union, 10th Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.



Two evangelists have been employed by the Board. One had spent most of the time on the North Bank. After a few months, one of them was called upon to be the pastor of the Gauhati Church with a salary of Rs. 25 per month. Weekly prayer meetings, Sunday services, and preaching in the open air had been continued throughout the last two years.<sup>117</sup>

According to the Missionary Report for 1915, the south bank of the Kamrup district had a population of 156,072 with over 1,315 square miles. The Missionary had spent time among the Churches exhorting, encouraging and disciplining them. The Church services were not so well-attended as was in previous years, and many members had not been in the service for a year or more. The prayer meetings were attended by a very few even in Gauhati.<sup>118</sup>

The Missionary report in 1916 mentioned that the Ward Memorial Church was opened on March 7, 1915. The Rev. G.R. Kampffer dedicated the building and gave a short account of how and why the building was erected. Dr. Ward was unknown to later generations of Christians except for some translations of hymns. Mrs. Bucknell, the donor of the Ward Memorial was his daughter and was born in Sibsagar and left for America while quite young. After many years she returned to Assam on a visit, and while in Gauhati she expressed a desire to commemorate the faithful labours of her loving father. A Church building was suggested and she at once promised to give the amount necessary to erect one.

Regular services have been conducted in the new Church by the Pastor, Levi Farwell and the Missionary. The Pastor had done evangelistic work visiting regularly the Railway station, steamer ghat, bazars and the villages near the town. Dispur, a village of about 3½ miles from the station, has had the attention and labours of both Pastor and Missionary. In December, 1915, a number of disciplined members came forward and asked for restoration into Church fellowship. Two youngmen of this village have been baptised and others

117. A.E. Stephen, 'Report from Gauhati Field', 12th Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 4-13, 1913.

118. A.E. Stephen, 'Report from Gauhati Field', 13th Session, Golaghat, January 9-18, 1915.

were awaiting baptism. They then had organised and were admitted as a branch of the Gauhati Church with regular services.

The Missionary has been unable to visit the Churches in the district, but the Rev. Sareng K. Marak, visited a few and baptised a number of people. The conditions of the Churches was difficult to describe, but their growth in spiritual things seemed to be slow. The Annual Associational gathering was held in Joypur village in the month of February, and this gathering continues to be popular even today. The Association evangelist visited nearly every Garo village on the south bank. He was a very energetic man and got along with the people.<sup>119</sup>

It was reported in 1917 that the south bank of Kamrup district with a population of 1,35,072 was still unevangelised and many thousands have not yet heard the Gospel except in the Garo areas. The services in the Ward Memorial Church at Gauhati have been conducted regularly with Rev. Levi Farwell acting as the pastor. He was also the Superintendent of the Sunday school. He was ordained in October, 1916. He was a good man, although not very energetic. The Missionary conducted two services every Sunday when in the station, one at Satribari, and the other  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Gauhati. The Beltola market which was held on Sunday and Wednesday, has been visited several times on Sunday morning and tracts have been distributed. Every church and every Christian village except one, has been visited once during the year 1916. The Magic Lantern was in use on one tour by the Missionary. In several villages, a week of special meetings were conducted and several repented.

The Gauhati Church has supported one evangelist in a very needy corner, 24 miles from the station and one orphan girl at Satribari. The Association has supported one evangelist who visited every Garo village on the field. He was a very energetic man and was not afraid of leaving his home on long tours.<sup>120</sup>

119. A.E. Stephen, 'Report from Gauhati Field,' Missionary Conference, Nowgong, February 17-24, 1916.

120. A.E. Stephen, 'Report from Gauhati Field,' Missionary Conference, 15th Session, Sibsagar, January 15-22, 1917.

The Missionary report of 1926 says that the fields in Lower Assam having been left vacant by the going on furlough of Kampfer and Stephen, Swanson who held charge of the field in Upper Assam was given the oversight of these fields. Despite the distance, Swanson made three visits to Gauhati town when conferences were held by meeting with the workers from these fields. He also in company with the evangelist made week-end visits to Boko, 38 miles from Gauhati. Here they held a large weekly market to which many of the Christians came from distant villages and a number stayed overnight taking shelter under the trees. One object in making these visits was to get in touch with the old Satribari girls and discuss with them the village problems and how to best advance them. Advice and suggestions were given as to what they would do on their part in helping to make the church life better. On their way back to Gauhati from Boko, they sometimes spent Sunday at another place where they had a large Sunday market. All sorts of people came there and had willing buyers specially Bengali and Hindi literature. During the year, the market close to Gauhati and also several miles out of the station have been regularly visited and they noticed a more friendly attitude of the people.

The evangelist has visited the Babus in their homes and in most places he has been welcomed. They have asked especially for English tracts and the evangelist has spoken of the changed attitude of some of these educated men. As time and strength permitted, visits were made by the Missionary in the homes in town and nearby villages.<sup>121</sup>

It was reported in 1927 that the general evangelistic part of the work on this field was assigned to A.J. Tuttle, before whom it was in the hands of O.L. Swanson. They then both visited the South Bank Kamrup Association. It had not been possible for them to do the bazar preaching on Sundays since this time had to be reserved for Conferences with such Christians as came for advice in regard to their difficulties.

One of the main features of this phase of the work was the plan to form an Assamese speaking Association due to the

121. O.L. Swanson, 'Report from Gauhati', Missionary Conference, Jorhat, December 2-10, 1926.

fact that the Garo tribal consciousness seemed to have been effecting the Garos in Kamrup in such a remarkable way that they have practically given up Assamese in their Associational meetings. As a result, the Assamese speaking people were not content to be members of such an Organisation. One effect of this was a further emphasizing of work among Assamese speaking people.

In the spring of 1926 a special evangelistic effort was made in the upper section of the Gauhati field towards Nowgong mostly along the South Trunk Road. An interest developed in two centres. Consequently, there were Christians in three Centres. Some 8 or 10 have been baptised and others were awaiting. These numbers were not large but were encouraging in a section where, heretofore, there have been no Christian centres. Tuttle said that it has not been possible for him to visit these Centres, though such might have been done if he had a motor car.

One of the disappointing things of the year for the Missionaries was their inability to be present at a district meeting, at which, in addition to inspirational talks, it was planned to consider the advisability of organising an Association for the Assamese speaking villages referred to earlier.

The statistics for the calendar year 1926 was that there were 19 Churches with 22 branch Churches and a total membership of 1,990. The total local collection was Rs. 2,688-6-0.

Rev. Tuttle closed this part of the Report by paying a glowing tribute to the helpfulness of Rev. Levi Farwell, without him, it would not have been possible for him to carry on the work. In addition to his being the pastor of the Church and the Clerk in charge of the Assamese Literature Depot, having charge of Stock, filling orders, collecting bills and taking care of correspondence with village Churches and schools, making reports and applying for the grants and paying out the money, he had also to give counsel and assistance to those from the villages and others who needed them. Besides, he also assumed full responsibility for all the services and took care that everything was in readiness.<sup>122</sup>

122. A.J. Tuttle, 'Report from Gauhati Field', Missionary Conference, Golaghat, November 23-December 1, 1927.

It was reported in 1936 that in the Garo work of Kamrup district, there were 23 Churches, 32 branch churches with a membership of 1,805, while in the Assamese work, there were 6 Churches, 8 branch churches with a total membership of 464.

The outstanding thing in connection with the Garo Church life has been the measures which have been taken to try to secure better pastors. As an attempt to choose good men as pastors, the Standing Committee of the Association prepared a list of those whom it considered qualified for pastoral work. On the list of eight were six who had had some of their training at Jorhat. Umon K. Marak was one of them chosen for pastor. The Garo Association celebrated its Jubilee in February, 1936.

In July, 1936, the Assamese Association working through its Standing Committee undertook to support an evangelist and evangelistic teachers in four Centres. The territory of this Association was one where there were scores of thousands not yet evangelised. Among the encouraging events of the year, the following could be mentioned from the report: "A group of Christians in one of our villages was forced by failure of crops to try to arrange with a big timber merchant for a contract to get out timber. This was necessary to get money to pay their taxes, carry on the work of the church and school in their village, provide clothes for their families and have money for the little things for which it is required even by the most humble. When they approached the timber merchant and asked him for an advance of hundreds of rupees so that they could fulfil their contract, not unnaturally he was a little hesitant about giving them the money. At that time a non-Christian Forest Ranger appeared on the scene and addressed the merchant as follows: 'These men are Christians and they always do their work faithfully. They are industrious and once they begin the work they will stick to it. Therefore it will be better to give them the contract and advance the necessary money.' This recommendation led to their getting the contract and the funds for executing it. It is always gratifying to find these testimonies

from outsiders to the faithfulness of those who profess Christianity."<sup>123</sup>

In 1937, it was reported that the number of Churches remained the same in the Assamese Association. This Association was still supporting an evangelist and giving help to teachers in several villages where there were Christians. In the Garo Association, the uniting of the churches to make fewer but stronger ones had proceeded and some able men have been chosen as pastors. Sunday schools numbered 66 with 600 pupils, with church membership of 1800. Six Christian Endeavour Societies were reported.<sup>124</sup>

In 1938 it was reported that the general condition of the Churches was about the same as reported earlier. Both of the Associational Sessions were good. At the Garo Association, there was an average attendance of 914 and on Sunday service 2113 were present. The Missionaries have been impressed with the interest of the people in their work. They witnessed a striking example of this at the Associational meetings. The following Church statistics for the two Associations were—13 Churches with 36 branches, 2294 members, 120 baptisms and 16 Christian Endeavour Societies.<sup>125</sup>

The Missionary Report for 1940 stated that a Pastor-at-large for work among the Garo Churches has been appointed. The new appointee, Kheong O. Sangma, finished M.E. School, took the full four years course in the Jorhat Bible school, served as an evangelist one year and for three years had been a village teacher and leader of his local Church. Another outstanding event of the year was the ordination of Rev. Ramkhe O. Sangma, the first ordination among the Kamrup Garo Churches for 25 years.

The women of the Garo village churches continued their active support. Their methods of raising money were cultivating a field, the entire proceeds of which were given to the church

123. A.J. Tuttle, 'Report from Gauhati Field', A.B. Missionary Conference, Gauhati, 34th Session, December 1-6, 1936.

124. A.J. Tuttle, 'Report from Gauhati Field', A.B. Missionary Conference, 35th Session, Sadiya, December 8-13, 1937.

125. A.J. Tuttle, 'Report from Gauhati Field', Missionary Conference, Gauhati, 1938.

work, and giving the handful of rice from the daily ration for the family. In two villages, the women have supplied petrol lamps for the churches, and in another village, the women have bought a real bell for the Church tower, and in another, they have furnished individual Communion Cups. There were 54 Churches and branches with 2364 members.<sup>126</sup>

In 1941, the Gauhati Church employed Horeswar Bordoloi as its pastor. One unique experience in the year was a three-day walking into certain villages in the south-west corner of the Nowgong district. These were people called Mayangs and they had a local native Chief. They were the old Kamrupa racial groups. They went by Steamer and walked about 35 miles from village to village. The number of churches was 16 with 49 branch churches and 2965 members.<sup>127</sup>

In 1944, it was reported that the Association meetings were well attended. There was the normal increase in the churches, mostly by baptisms from Christian families and the schools. There was also a good attendance of Indian soldiers at the Gauhati church morning service. In the past two years there has been a regular service in Urdu and in Tamil. The Pastor, Minaram Basumatari was in-charge of Assamese services. The Sunday evening English services were popular.<sup>128</sup>

In 1945, Mr. Edward Singha, a local Christian leader, who entered the Mission service eight months ago reported that he made a hurried visit to all the villages even during the rains so as to get a general idea of the field. The Assamese Association was small comprising only nine churches with a membership of 540. Of these, the Gauhati station church which witnessed an overcrowded attendance of service men and women during war days was appreciably reverting to the peace-time numbers. Since this church was situated in the heart of the town and on a main road, quite a number of educated and uneducated non-Christians attended the worship services. In the Garo Association,

126. A.J. Tuttle, 'Report from Gauhati Field', Missionary Conference, 37th Session, Jorhat, January 4-9, 1940.

127. J.M. Forbes, 'Report from Gauhati Field', Missionary Conference, Golaghat, December 4-9, 1941.

128. J.M. Forbes, 'Report from Gauhati Field', Missionary Conference, 41st Session, Nowgong, November 9-13, 1944.

there were nine main churches with 29 branches and a membership of 2,037. There were 19 Christian Endeavour Societies. The Garo people were independent in their thinking and decisions and they liked to manage their own affairs, and the leaders were responsible and faithful.<sup>129</sup>

In 1946, the Kamrup Garo Association reported a membership of 2,535 with 130 baptisms for the year. A newly formed Church received recognition and was taken into the Association. Various attempts have almost been abandoned by the people to reach out to the Rabhas because of their indifference.

The Assamese Association reported 875 members. It supported 8 Primary and one M.E. schools. A new Primary School was opened at Khetri where 26 out of the 40 enrolled were non-Christians.

The station church was carrying on its usual activities. The Book Room has been reopened and there have been 31 baptisms during the year.<sup>130</sup>

The 1946-47 Garo Association reported a membership of 2,827 with 208 baptisms. Edward Singha toured from village to village and tried to give emphasis on the necessity of having a family altar in each home as the importance of maintaining good Christian homes. The last Assamese Association was held at Moirapur in the midst of several non-Christian villages. Reports showed 765 members and 57 baptisms for the year. Sri Saul Suna and Jogendra Das were paying constant visits to the Churches of the Association. The Assamese Association maintained 8 Primary Schools.<sup>131</sup>

The South Kamrup Garo Association reported membership of 2,376 with 201 baptisms in 1949. It was planned to raise the Gohalkona M.E. School to High School standard. The South Kamrup Assamese Association reported 947 members with 72 baptisms. Three outstanding events marked the year's history of the Gauhati Church : (i) The dedication of the reconstructed

129. Edward Singha, 'Report from Gauhati Field', Missionary Conference, 42nd Session, Jorhat, November 8-12, 1945.

130. E. Singha, Report from Gauhati Field, Missionary Conference, 43rd Session, Gauhati, December 6-10, 1946.

131. E. Singha, 'Report from Gauhati Field', Missionary Conference, 44th Session, Jorhat, December 10-14, 1947.



Church Building on January 4, 1948; (ii) The giving of a Christmas Programme on the All India Radio by the young people with the help of the pastor and Dr. Sword; (iii) The baptism of a well-educated Bengali Hindu which was a witness in a bold way.<sup>132</sup>

The South Kamrup Garo Association for 1948-49, reported a membership of 2,875 with 174 baptisms. The Garo Churches have concentrated mainly upon their non-Christian Garo neighbours, largely through schools for Garo children. Thirish K. Marak, a Jorhat Bible School Graduate, active in Sunday schools and Christian Endeavour Society Promotional works, touring most of the time, Gilberth K. Marak, a Cherrapunji Theological Student, has given valuable service in his vacations. The Churches lacked trained and qualified Pastors.

The Assamese Association reported a membership of 757 with 26 baptisms. Sri Saul Suna and Lolit Sangma were the two paid evangelists, one worked among the tea garden coolies and the other among the Garos, Rabhas and Kacharis. The Gauhati Church was carrying on its own normal activities under Minaram Basumatari. Twenty-two young people were baptised that year.<sup>133</sup>

### THE GAUHATI FIELD : NORTH BANK

The Rabhas and the Kacharis and other tribes of the district of Kamrup were also the objects of the earnest attention and high expectations of the Missionaries from the very beginning of the Mission work at Gauhati.<sup>134</sup> However, various difficulties, such as the constraint in the Missionary personnel and resources and comparatively poor response of the people to Gospel preaching stood in the way of establishing a Mission station at the North Bank of the Brahmaputra in the early

132. E. Singha, 'Report from Gauhati Field', Missionary Conference, 45th Session, Jorhat, January 11-16, 1949.

133. E. Singha, 'Reports from Gauhati Field', Joint Conference, of the Missionaries and the Delegates of Assam Baptist Convention, 46th Session, Golaghat, January 3-9, 1950.

134. C.E. Burdette, 'History of the Gauhati Field', Jubilee Reports, Nowgong, December 18-29, 1886.

days of the Mission work. Yet occasional visits by the Missionaries as well as by the local evangelists were kept up throughout these years. In the fall of 1903, Burdette accompanied by Stephen, spent a few days in the North Bank of Kamrup district. In the spring of 1904, Tuttle also toured in that section.<sup>135</sup> As reported in 1910, two evangelists had given most of their time to touring on the North Bank.<sup>136</sup>

Despite these efforts, there was no convert from the indigenous population of the northern side of Brahmaputra within the Kamrup district till 1913. The reason for this situation was probably the fact that the people of the northern side were exceedingly orthodox Hindus. The Brahmins themselves claimed that half of the population of the north consisted of Brahmins. But the Missionary thinks that it might not be so many as that. But so much was true that there were more Brahmins in the Kamrup district than in all the other districts of Assam put together. There were 30 Tols (Sanskrit College), which prepared young Brahmins for the Hindu Priesthood, in the Kamrup district and the Missionary was told that there was only one other outside the district and that was also transferred from Kamrup district. The population of other high castes, such as, the Kalitas and the Kayasthas was very high. This explained the difficulty of the Mission work. While there were thousands of aborigines, such as, the Rabhas and Kacharis in the field, and while the Mission work might develop among them, it was the conviction of the Missionaries that the caste people, the real pure Assamese should be given chance to accept or reject Christianity. It was with this concept that the Missionaries tried to have a base in the North Bank.

Kampfer's first plans for the prosecution of this work was to experiment with a boat. The southern section of the northern side was largely low land, and most of the villages were accessible only by boat the greater part of the year. After the great earthquake of 1897, the ground level in many places somewhat changed, altering the courses of rivers and creating new swamps

135. A.J. Tuttle, 'Report from Gauhati Field', Missionary Conference, 8th Session, Gauhati, December 24, 1904 to January 1, 1905.

136. A.E. Stephen, 'Report from Gauhati Field', Missionary Conference, 10th Session, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

and lakes. Barpeta, a town nearly as large as Gauhati, and second largest in the whole district, was located in such submerged land. The Missionary felt that regular water routes should be established in this section, enabling them to go out from his headquarters in Gauhati and cover this route at regular intervals. In this way, touring would be possible throughout the year, and the field, which would probably be slow in developing, would be constantly worked by the Missionaries and their helpers.

Till 1911, Kampfer has not been able to do anything further towards this plan than to build his boat. The boat was an ordinary local hull with a Cabin built on it. It was inexpensive, and should the proposed plans proved a success, a motor-boat would be added later on. Several skirmishes on the northern side convinced Kampfer that unless he had a command over the Assamese language, nothing concrete could be done. Therefore, the study of Assamese language had been his first duty and then a study of Hinduism.<sup>137</sup>

After due considerations, Tihu was chosen as the Headquarters of the Mission work on the North Bank of the Brahmaputra river in the Kamrup district. It was a station on the Eastern Bengal State Railway, 51 miles from Gauhati, and lies on a Cart road three miles south of the North Trunk Road. There were no Europeans located there, but the people were there, large number of them, to whom the Missionaries were expected to preach. With its big villages in every direction, it was one of the most densely populated sections in the Brahmaputra valley in Assam. This was one of the reasons why the Missionaries have chosen Tihu as a suitable site for a Mission Station and was then working it as an Out-station. Another reason for choosing Tihu was its location. Occupying a position between the Railway and a Cart road and connecting with a network of Cart roads, it was admirably suited as a Centre from which to evangelise the people in that section of the district. Besides the reasons mentioned above, there was another reason how Tihu came to be chosen as the headquarters. While Burdette was at Tihu, at one of the Durga Pujas, he sold a

137. G.R. Kampfer, 'Report from Gauhati Field', "These Seventy Five Years", Tura, March 11, 1911.

Bengali New Testament to one Gongaram Dutta, who was once a prominent Mandal (Surveyor) in the vicinity of Tihu. When he first came to the Missionary, he had a better knowledge of the details of the life of Christ than one ordinarily finds possessed even by the better educated of the Hindus. He professed to seeking the truth as it is in Jesus, and the Missionaries believed that he was sincere, though he never confessed his faith on Christ openly. The probable cause for this was that his friends who saw him in Gauhati with the Missionaries reported the same to other friends at home and soon he began to feel the refined persecution. To make a long story short, this man invited the Missionaries to visit his village. On one of the trips in the fall of 1905, Tuttle, his wife and their little daughter, Lucile visited a Centre, which was in the end chosen as the Tihu Centre. In those days, one could reach Tihu by neither cart nor train, but ought to go either by boat or walk and send his goods by coolies. They went by boat and arrived at Tihu and there tried to pitch their tent. They did this under difficult circumstances, for the people crowded about them so that there was little opportunity to do anything. For days the people came morning, noon and night. Most of the men and boys and most of the women and girls had never seen a European woman and fewer of them had seen a European child. As Mrs. Tuttle and Lucile, who was then about three years old, were there, this afforded a great attraction. Then there was the baby Organ and Lucile's rag Doll. In any case, the people came, and whatever might have been their motive, the Missionaries had an opportunity to preach Christianity to them, and this opportunity they had used to the full. The Tuttles were not able to visit Tihu again before their furlough, and on their return found the Railway completed. They began to work there again as opportunity was given, and their old friend, Mandal allowed them to build a little house for Missionary and their workers on his own land rent-free. He even superintended the construction of the building for which he was roundly abused.

In October, 1911, Kampfer and Tuttle visited this place to examine some Candidates for baptism. They seemed to require more teaching and were not baptised. The visit of the Missionaries brought persecution upon them and they had not yet come out. On that trip, they visited a large community of people who

have broken away from the Brahmins and gave themselves over to religious thought and meditation. This community did not mind caste any more and formed a very good soil for sowing the Gospel seed. The Missionaries had every encouragement to believe that there would be people for conversion among the Assamese in that vicinity. In October, 1911, an offer was made by Tuttle to take over the Middle English school there and run it as a Mission school. This offer seemed to be well received, but by the time appropriations were available, the sentiments had changed very much and later on there seemed to be little prospect of getting the school on terms that were favourable to the Mission. However, the Missionaries have purchased land and have built a house for an evangelist, and materials collected for the temporary house of the Missionary. The Missionaries wanted that one of them would go and open a new Centre there.<sup>138</sup> In 1913, there was a tentative plan to divide the northern bank into an eastern and western section or a north and a south section.<sup>139</sup>

In 1915, Tihu field covered the western half of Kamrup district which was more generally known as the Barpeta subdivision. An evangelist worked on this field for the last two years. An Assamese family was baptised and endured great persecutions. A trip to Barbeta was undertaken by Kampfer and Bowers in motor boat from Goalpara in June, 1913. Barbeta was found to be a difficult place to work due to the religious prejudice of the people. At Sorbhog, a Colporteur was appointed and sold considerable literature. In 1914 a piece of land was purchased at Rangia by the Kamrup Association and an evangelist with his family stationed there. Rangia promised to be an important place, it being the railway junction. Work for the Assamese, Kacharis and Rabhas was conducted there. In the summer of 1914, a Colporteur worked in Amingaon and sold literature and preached and thus the people of north Gauhati repeatedly heard the Gospel.<sup>140</sup>

By 1916, the North Bank field with its headquarters at Gauhati extended from the Goalpara border to the eastern

138. A.J. Tuttle, 'Report from Gauhati North Bank', *These Seventy Five Years* by N.P. Mason, Tura, March, 1911.

139. G.R. Kampfer, *ibid.*, Gauhati, January 4-13, 1913.

140. *Ibid.*, Golaghat, January 9-18, 1915.

boundary of Mangaldai, roughly a distance of 100 miles with a population of about 6,00,000. A Colporteur has been on the field, distributing tracts, selling Gospels and Bibles. The Missionary tried to procure a free railway pass for the Colporteur but failed. Work among the Assamese centering round Tihu began to show results. Besides the two families converted two years ago, two new families sought baptism. A Bible woman visited the Hindu homes in the neighbourhood. At Rangia an evangelist worked for last two years among the population of Mohemmadans.<sup>141</sup> Rev. Tanuram Saikia and Renuka Marak visited North Bank.<sup>142</sup>

According to Missionary Report for 1927, there were 60 churches, each with a building, with a total membership of about 6,000. This was a new Christian community, most of the Churches were only eight or ten years old. In a flash of enthusiasm, bands of Christian men and women went to distant places, preaching the Gospel to the people. Those who were not able to go to distant places preached to their neighbours.

Some of the Churches were cultivating two or three paras of land for the support of their schools, Supplies, Church, Association, Convention, and other purposes. Twenty schools were supported in this way.<sup>143</sup>

In 1936, Sword reported that the North Kamrup district has been turned over to the Assam Baptist Convention that year. This was a new venture when the local Christians managed their own Church affairs. Two men employed by the Convention were then in the field. There was already a small nucleus of Christians and a Church has been organised. A number of persons were awaiting baptism.<sup>144</sup> There were three places where there were one or more Christians, and they were affiliated with the Gauhati Church.<sup>145</sup>

It was reported in 1937 that the Missionary could visit the

141. *Ibid.*, Nowgong, February 17-24, 1916.

142. O.L. Swanson, *ibid.*, Jorhat, December 2-10, 1926.

143. O.L. Swanson, 'Report of North Kamrup Fields', Missionary Conference, Golaghat, November 23-December 1, 1927.

144. V.H. Sword, 'Report from North Kamrup Fields', Missionary Conference, 34th Session, Gauhati, December 1-6, 1936.

145. A.J. Tuttle, 'Report from North Kamrup Fields', Missionary Conference, Jorhat, February 3-6, 1936.

North Bank only once during the year. He has, however, kept in touch by writing letters and conversations with the leaders and in Bible Classes. Minaram Basumatari continued to do great work among these people and he was practically the Missionary on the field.<sup>146</sup>

## THE MANGALDAI FIELD

Although Mission work was begun in Gauhati in 1843, and although the Christian converts of the Kamrup district numbered 1204, not one of these were from the Northern side. The work in this part of the field was not exactly new work, but it was stony ground, worked successively by Missionaries stationed at Gauhati and seemingly without result.<sup>147</sup>

In 1914, there were but two members on this field, who were Kacharis. In 1915, there were two Churches, one unordained pastor and 296 members of the Church. A school has been running for about a year and a teacher employed to teach as well as to preach. A school house, Church building and two Small Boys' Dormitory were erected by the people. The new converts showed great zeal in preaching in heathen villages and in bazars.<sup>148</sup>

As reported in 1916, an opportunity was opened for the Missionaries to work among the Assamese in the town of Mangaldai. An able Assamese could do well in this centre. This work among the Kacharis was the most encouraging for the Missionaries. At the Association meeting at Ambhagaon, which was the second annual meeting in the history of this field of Mangaldai, more than 300 attended. The purely evangelistic work was entirely taken up by the Association. The support of two schools and one compounder, trained by Dr. Kirby, was the only financial help given by the Mission. During 1915, there were 67 baptisms, but in 1916, 53 have been

146. V.H. Sword, 'Report from North Kamrup Fields', Missionary Conference, 35th Session, Sadiya, December 8-13, 1937.

147. G.R. Kampfer, 'Report from Gauhati North Bank', Missionary Conference, 12th Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 4-13, 1913.

148. G.R. Kampfer, 'Report from Gauhati North Bank', Missionary Conference, 13th Session, Golaghat, January 9-18, 1915.

already baptised and others were awaiting. The total membership for 1915 was 367. There were six organised churches, and they raised for their own work Rs. 457, and spent Rs. 314. Most of the Churches have taken up cultivation to meet church expenses.<sup>149</sup>

Work in the Mangaldai field was three years old in 1917. The evangelistic work was done among the Assamese but only a few months could be spared for them. The Mission work among the Kacharis continued to grow steadily. The six Churches have grown in strength, two of them having more than 100 members, with a total membership of 448 in the field. The Missionary had to give more time for organising Churches, solemnising marriages, establishing schools and watching disciplines. They had trained pastors and teachers and had Sunday schools. But the women were ahead of men having a better grasp of the meaning of Christianity. At the Annual Association meeting, the women came with Rs. 127 and put it before the meeting saying that they wanted the Association to appoint an evangelist to give his whole time to preaching to the non-Christians. The evangelist was at once chosen. The Mission did not support or engage evangelists, it only gave Rs. 10 in aid of schools and Rs. 10 as pastoral aid to new Churches.

During the course of the year, the Missionary paid several visits to the Christian group at Tezpur. Without any Mission help, they erected a Chapel, organised into a Church with 19 members.<sup>150</sup>

According to Missionary report in 1926, Rev. Tanuram Saikia along with Ranuka Marak had visited and made tours specially in the Mangaldai field. The two parties that disturbed the working of the Association also decided to set aside their difference and work together harmoniously in the future. In this field, the additions by baptism were greater than on the other two fields, *i.e.*, Kamrup and Goalpara. In one village alone, the number reached 69.<sup>151</sup> As reported in 1927,

149. G.R. Kampfer, *ibid.*, Nowgong, February 17-24, 1916.

150. G.R. Kampfer, 'Report from Mangaldai Field', Missionary Conference, 15th Session, Sibsagar, January 15-22, 1927.

151. O.L. Swanson, *ibid.*, Jorhat, December 2-10, 1926.



the Mangaldai Church Association supported 20 schools.<sup>152</sup> In 1931, out of the population of 1,94,326 in the Mangaldai field, there were 4,678 Christians.<sup>153</sup> According to Missionary report in February 1936, there were 47 Churches with 3,077 members with 55 baptisms and 36 Sunday schools. The care of the field fell on Tuttle when Mr. and Mrs. David who had made a place for themselves in the hearts of the people were compelled to leave for America on health reasons. It was reported that the conditions of the Churches have improved over what it had been. The efforts of the evangelistic bands during the last few years have been directed to awaken religious interest in the churches as well as to preach the Gospel to non-Christians. Rev. Romanos still continued his faithful work among the churches, without whom, the church could not have progressed.<sup>154</sup>

According to the Missionary report in December, 1936, there were 51 churches with 3,891 members and 98 baptisms. The Kacharis were greatly interested in Christianity though the Mission had done so little for them. The Missionaries could give only part of their time in this field, and so they had to depend on their own leadership to a large extent with the result that conditions among the churches were not the best. Four evangelists were then in the field and the women had started the Gospel teams. The salaries were mostly paid by the people themselves. One man, a Colporteur was paid by the Bible Society.<sup>155</sup>

It was reported in 1937 that the spirit of evangelisation that characterised this field for many years had suffered a setback due to lack of right kind of preachers and failure to inspire and instruct the Christians. One disturbing factor was that some of the churches did not observe the communion service for many years. That year Romanus planned to visit every church and have the Communion service twice a year. Several village churches have built new houses of

152. *Ibid.*, Golaghat, November 23-December 1, 1927.

153. *Ibid.*, Jorhat, December 2-8, 1931.

154. A.J. Tuttle, 'Report from Mongoldai Field', Missionary Conference, Jorhat, February 3-6, 1936.

155. V.H. Sword, *ibid.*, 34th Session, Gauhati, December 1-6, 1936.

worship. 250 persons have been baptised during the year.<sup>156</sup> According to the report of 1938, Romanus, the general evangelist continued his faithful work, but because of his old age, he has lost some of the old fire which characterised his life and work 15 years ago. Two other preachers have been engaged by the Association but both these men were poorly trained. Nevertheless, 142 people have been baptised in that year. There were 55 churches and about 3,880 members. A new church was organised in a new place.<sup>157</sup>

In 1940, Romanus was still the dependable man in looking after the Churches in the field. He was the general evangelist and the Churches looked to him as their spiritual guide as the majority of the churches had no pastors. He had seen most of the churches come into being and through his work, many of them have grown in spite of persecutions and hardships. That year Mangaldai District planned to celebrate the 25 year jubilee. It was in 1914 that the first ten Christians of whom Romanus was one, came to Gauhati and asked Kampfner to come and baptise them. From these ten, 25 years ago, there was in 1940 a Christian community of about 10,000 persons.<sup>158</sup>

As reported in 1941, the chief hindrance to the growth of Christianity in this section was the underlying desire to perpetuate the Kachari customs. It was not a question of what was best for Christianity but what was the custom of the tribe. This had been a problem from the beginning of Christianity among them. However, 120 persons were baptised during the year. Romanus continued to be the only ordained man and the only person to whom the Missionaries could turn for advice.<sup>159</sup>

Aside from the Annual Associational meetings and one Quarterly meeting, the field has had no Missionary. The

156. V.H. Sword, 'Report from Mongoldai Field', Missionary Conference, 35th Session, Sadiya, December 8-13, 1937.

157. *Ibid.*, 1938.

158. *Ibid.*, 37th Session, Jorhat, January 4-9, 1940.

159. V.H. Sword, 'Report from Mongaldai Field', Missionary Conference, Golaghat, December 4-9, 1941.

Assamese hymnals and scriptures were sold in hundreds during the Association meetings.<sup>160</sup>

As reported in 1945, Romanos Daimari continued to be the leading evangelist in this field. No Missionary has ever been able to give full time attention to this field except their occasional visits from Gauhati. There were 61 Churches with a membership of 3,472. They raised Rs. 22,182 for the work of the Churches and evangelists during the year. The district was still backward in education but was waking up quite fast.<sup>161</sup> According to the report in 1946, the Mangaldai district was divided into three sections, each supervised by an evangelist appointed by the Association. During the year, four non-Christian villages have become Christians and about 300 persons have been baptised. Due to the lack of fund and the necessary Missionary personnel, this Mongoldai field has been relinquished by the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society and the field has been taken over by another American Mission known as the General Conference. Mr. Johnson and Hagstrom were the first Missionaries of this Mission.<sup>162</sup> Hence this promising field had been given up by this Mission which they started in 1914.

### THE GOALPARA FIELD

Goalpara, as a separate field for missionary works was opened in 1893. Rev. Thangkan Sangma who toured among the Rabhas of Goalpara district strongly pleaded for the appointment of a separate Missionary for the Rabhas. The American Baptist Missionaries for the Garos also reported that there was a large population speaking Jarua language, that their villages were largely intermingled with Garo Christian villages, and that they were ready to listen to the Gospel. The Conference in 1895 therefore recommended that a Missionary should at once be sent to the Rabhas in the Goalpara district. Mr. Craighead was asked and gave his

160. J.M. Forbes, *ibid.*, 41st Session, Nowgong, November 9-13, 1944.

161. Miss M. Burham, *ibid.*, 42nd Session, Jorhat, November 8-12, 1945.

162. V.H. Sword, *ibid.*, 43rd Session, Gauhati, December 6-10, 1946.

consent to take up that work instead of still seeking to enter Manipur.

Goalpara was first occupied as a Mission station in 1867, chosen then as the best place from which to reach the Garos. In November, 1878, Mason left Goalpara for Tura, where a year before Phillips had preceded him. Since then, until a few months ago, no Missionary has been located at Goalpara station.

In January, 1893, Craighead was appointed to Goalpara and shortly after went to Calcutta and was there married to Miss Ida M. Kushmore of Burma Mission. As there was no house available in Goalpara, they took up their residence at Dhubri until a site could be obtained and a house built. Craighead had to give a part of his time to the study of Bengali language but he commenced his work in Dhubri preaching in the bazar, two or three times weekly. In September, 1893, Craighead was joined by Stephen and together they made several visits to Goalpara, preaching in the bazars.

In January, 1894, Mr. and Mrs. Craighead were compelled to go to America on health grounds. In February, 1948, Mrs. Stephen arrived at Dhubri from Scotland. Up till this time, no place had been got in Goalpara, the old place had been chosen and asked for, but the reply had not been received. In April, the house in Dhubri was required for a Government Official and the Missionaries went up the river to Gauhati and occupied one of the bungalows there. In the course of a few months, a reply was received from Government that the site on the top of Goalpara hill was granted, and in the month of September, word was received from Boston that an appropriation was given to build a bungalow. Before the rains, they built a temporary house, and since the 10th October, 1894, they have been living in Goalpara.

In the meantime, the local Christians were also active in the evangelistic campaign among the Rabhas. Paturam of Nishangram, who was a Rabha, was appointed in 1893 as an evangelist to the Rabhas. In March, 1894, Arin of Resu, a Garo, also commenced work as an evangelist. Through these two people, many hundreds had heard the Gospel, but their labours were much interrupted by sickness in their families

and other domestic cares. In February, 1895, they both withdrew from the work, their domestic matters requiring all their time. In March 1894, a school was opened, Brinda, a Garo Christian taking the place of a teacher, who also did evangelistic work. The Rabhas seemed anxious for the school, but it had only been opened for nine months when they all left. The teacher tried to persuade them to return, but only a few did so. Consequently, the school was closed. A Bengali evangelist worked in Dhubri for four months, preaching in the bazar and visiting the nearby villages, but that work was also stopped on Missionary's leaving Dhubri.

During the rainy season, Setphen has been learning the Rabha language with Brinda as teacher. They had compiled a small vocabulary in manuscript. In the winter season, Rabha villages have been visited and preaching was done in Bengali. The headman of the village generally understood Bengali and acted as interpreter, and many indicated their willingness to become Christians. However, very little had been accomplished so far, due to Missionaries living far away from the field and a little knowledge of their language.<sup>163</sup>

1896 was occupied by jungle clearing, house building and all the other work attendant on the opening of a new station. In December 1896, Boggs from Tura joined them in touring the Goalpara district and were encouraged by the prospect of the work among the Rabhas. In April 1897, the Missionary bungalow was completed and the Stephens left the bamboo structure which had been their home for 18 months, and took possession of the more comfortable Mission house. The great earthquake did damage the building but not quite ruined. Their out-houses were all destroyed and instead of going for preaching kept them busy in repairing and rebuilding.

In 1898, the Missionary had been doing more evangelistic works both in the town and district than any previous years. In the district, Janing, the evangelist, has been preaching since May, 1896. The Garo churches have also had one evangelist at work during the greater part of the time. The Missionaries also preached in the winter time in many villages heretofore

163. A.E. Stephen. Report from Goalpara Field, 4th Triennial Conference, Sibsagar, December 14-22, 1895.

unreached, and the Missionaries found the people for the most part attentive and several asked them to go again.<sup>164</sup>

In 1900 it was reported that Mr. and Mrs. Stephen, two evangelists and one village school teacher had been at work among the Rabhas. One Hindu youngman professed to believe in Jesus but has not yet confessed openly. There have been no baptism and no churches formed as yet. Nishi Kanta Dey, who was teaching in the Rabha school, began work as an evangelist in the town. He has preached in the market, spoken by the wayside, and visited the people in their homes. They have received him and listened attentively. Janing, the evangelist to the Rabhas has gone to the villages preaching, but owing to the family troubles, he resigned his job on December 10, 1900.<sup>165</sup>

From December 1900 till the end of January 1901, Stephen visited several Rabha villages and preached.<sup>166</sup>

During 1903-1904, Mr. and Mrs. Stephen, one village school teacher and one Bengali evangelist worked in this field. Stephen bought a Magic Lantern from England and found it useful in the village preaching. In 1903, Stephen was accompanied by Dadu Sangma who studied sometime in the Goalpara Government High School and helped in the preaching for the Rabhas and the Garos.

There was not yet any sign of spiritual unrest among the Rabhas. They seemed to think that Christianity was another caste, and were content with what they were. They would like to have schools in their villages if they could have a teacher without any trouble or expense and if they would be useful to fight against the Babus but not as a help to things spiritual.

A Garo village about four miles from Goalpara has been asking Stephen to send them a teacher. This village has been the source of supply for thatch all the years the Missionaries had been in Goalpara. Until 1904, they remained non-Christians but that year they became interested in Christianity.

164. A.E. Stephen, Report from Goalpara Field, 5th Triennial Conference, Dibrugarh, February 11-19, 1899.

165. *Ibid.*, 6th Session, Gauhati, December 22-31, 1900.

166. *Ibid.*, 7th Session, Gauhati, December 27, 1902 to January 1, 1903.

Stephen spent four nights in their village in November and they promised to become Christians.

From the beginning of May, 1903, till April 1904, Stephen visited Dhubri once a month and preached in the bazar and had a Service in the Circuit House on Sunday morning for Europeans and in the evening, for all who would come, had a meeting in the Bijni Hall which was loaned free by the Hall Committee.<sup>167</sup>

In 1907, it was reported that the work in this field did not show any remarkable moving although in many places there was an interest manifested than before. During winter, the Missionaries divided their time between the north and the south banks of the river. A large section of the south had to be neglected to reach out to the north. The people were ready to listen but some were ready to argue in defence of their idol worship. The audiences varied from ten to several hundreds and on one occasion there were one thousand. They preached in the bazars, distributed tracts and sold over thousand Gospels. Brindabon Marak, who taught in the school for several years, began to preach from March, 1906. Philemon has been also doing evangelistic work along with the Missionary since October 1905. He was an earnest and faithful worker.<sup>168</sup>

As reported in 1910, people of eight different tribes have been baptised in this field. The work has been specially done for the Bengali speaking people. As they were by far the largest community in the district, this was natural. In 1908, of the 2894 visits by the workers, 82.3 per cent were worked in Bengali.

There were large number of Kachari villages but as none of the Missionaries nor workers knew their language, they used the common Bengali language. 13.9 per cent of the villages were Rongdania Rabhas. The Pati Rabhas were in large measure Hinduised and used the Bengali language only. They had no language of their own. There were Pati Rabhas connected with the Gauhati church and there were members even

167. A.E. Stephen, Report from Goalpara Field, 8th Session, Gauhati, December 24, 1904 to January 1, 1905.

168. A.E. Stephen, Report from Goalpara Field, 9th Biennial Conference, Gauhati, January 5-12, 1907.

in several Garo churches. As there were quite a large number of Garo villages all through the southern part of the district, and even on the northern bank of the river, they had come for their share. In fact, only 3.8 per cent of the work done has been for them. As a result, 12.3 per cent of the baptisms have been from among seven peoples and 87.7 per cent from among the Garos.

One Church has been organised with four branches in the villages. The growth has been about equal on both the north and south banks of the river. With few exceptions, the baptisms were from heathen villages. A few have not been able to resist temptation to drink, and some have been excluded for other faults. However, there were then 122 members of the churches in the whole field.<sup>169</sup>

As reported in 1913, one important event of the year was the arrival of the Motor Launch, "Grace" for carrying on the work along the rivers during the rainy season when they were usually kept confined in the station. The cost of it might not be more than 14 or 15 hundred rupees. This acquisition has increased the mobility of the Missionary in a district like Goalpara and Kamrup. By this they were able to reach a village about five miles from Goalpara where they preached to an old man that had never heard of Christ. One man in another village 40 miles above Dhubri, on a small stream, has been accepted by Church and was baptised. A gang of eleven Garo dacoits was caught up another stream. In a month, the Missionaries travelled 475 miles and were able to reach 1325 people. The Mech and Rajbangshi peoples of Goalpara district were stirred as they have never before. Both were seeking a higher standing in a society. With the Meches, it was a form of Hinduism that has appealed to them as a means of attaining a higher-caste standing though this movement seemed to be gradually losing ground. Among the Rajbangshis, the endeavour was to change their caste to that of Kshatriya.<sup>170</sup>

It was reported in 1915 that while there has been no mass

169. A.C. Bowers, *ibid.*, 10th Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

170. A.C. Bowers, Report from Goalpara (Dhubri side), 12th Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 4-13, 1913.



movement, yet there has been a steady normal growth that seemed promise well for the permanence of the work already done. The attempt of the Rajbangshis to change their caste to the next higher and also the turning to Hinduism of a large number of the Kacharis were stopped by this time. Now the tendency among these people who have accepted Christianity was to turn to business concerns and to the collecting of money to better their temporal conditions rather than seeking after spiritual uplift. The same tendency and desire was seen in other places also. 56 of the 78 baptisms during the last two years have been of Kacharis. A sprinkling number of Santali in the Santal colony in the north-west corner of the district have been baptised. There were 1500 Santal Christians in the Rangpur district. The majority of the Christians on this field were the Garos. There were 155 names on the roll. There were three organised churches, nine meeting places and six meeting houses. Two Santal villages had come near one of the Baptist Churches.

Nearly half of the work was done for Bengali speaking Hindus and Muhammadans. They listened respectfully but did not promise to become Christians. Nearly a thousand Gospel in Kachari have been sold but more Bengali than any other language. Hindi, English, Garo and Assamese Bibles were also sold. During each year about 4,000 Bibles and Gospels have been sold. Ten thousand tracts were given away each year. Half of the time of the Missionary was spent away from Goalpara in motor boat. The Raja of Gauripur has promised the Missionary a reverse gear for his motor boat that would cost about Rs. 200. The prospect for the coming year was normal. In two villages, a number of people were awaiting baptism, whereas, two were baptised at Goalpara.<sup>171</sup>

As reported in 1917, Bowers did not have time for touring in the Goalpara district as he had charge of the Sadiya field for 8 months. Besides, the repairs of buildings and installation of water pumps took much of his time. But the Missionary procured Motor Cycle and Car which enabled him cover more areas more quickly.

171. A.C. Bowers, Report from Goalpara Field, 13th Session, Golaghat, January 9-18, 1915.

The Christian Community began to emerge slowly in and around Dhubri but as the Missionary lived far away at Goalpara, contact became difficult and the work could not progress. Therefore, the Missionary recommended in 1916 that failing to get a house at Dhubri and a full-fledged Missionary, the Dhubri Centre be closed or hand it over to some other Mission. However, during 1915, 186 days were spent touring. There were 4 Churches, 8 meeting places and a total membership of 250.<sup>172</sup>

During 1916, Bowers spent almost 8 months touring the northern side of the Brahmaputra. The reason was that he had no field on the southern bank and so he spent as much time as possible in Dhubri which was the natural Centre for his field. Touring was done on his Motor Cycle and Car. Though the roads were rough and dusty, he found it an ideal as it was less expensive than any other means of touring. Twice during the year, the workers and the people assembled for Bible Classes which acted as incentive to the work. There were 30 baptisms during the year. The people have advanced in knowledge as much as could be expected from long-range Missionary work. The Missionary, however, found it impossible to develop a Church on the Dhubri side if the Missionary was located at Goalpara. The village Mission schools have been closed and the evangelists put on half-time. It was quite probable that in future, if they sow sparingly, they should not expect a bumper crop.<sup>173</sup>

The strongest Mission on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra was among the Kacharis of the Goalpara district. This work had been looked after by Sri Minaram Basumatari and his wife. They have managed exceedingly well and the work was flourishing. They contributed a total of Rs. 865 for Church work and benevolence. Some suggestions were floated for them to join the Lutheran Mission which was quite strong in their area, but they have not accepted the idea and wanted to remain Baptists.<sup>174</sup> In 1936, Sword regretted that a full-time Missionary

172. *Ibid.*, Nowgong, February 17-24, 1916.

173. A.C. Bowers, Report from Goalpara Field, 15th Session, Sibsagar, January 15-22, 1917.

174. A.J. Tuttle, *ibid.*, Jorhat, February 3-6, 1936, }

could not be provided for these Baptists of north bank. He was greatly impressed by their Annual Association meeting, to which, about 1,000 people gathered under the able leadership of Minaram Basumatari. Minaram was assisted by two young men, one of whom was a Colporteur paid by the Bible Society, but they were mere boys and so the brunt of the burden fell upon Minaram.<sup>175</sup> In 1937, the Missionary visited this field only once and the work was carried on by Minaram. Concerning the work, Minaram and his wife wrote: "Our small Christian Endeavour group here, boys and girls and teachers meets every Sunday evening and invite others."<sup>176</sup> In 1938, Goalpara continued to be their Mission field and the work was growing. Minaram and his wife were still the only workers in the field. He was expected to look after the school at Tukrajhar and also to visit the Churches. During the year, 49 have been baptised but more were ready for baptism. The Missionary made only two visits to this field in 1938 and Bible Classes were held both times which were well-attended. Miss Marvin and Dr. Urtikar assisted in those classes. People also came for medical treatment.<sup>177</sup>

It was reported in 1940 that the Annual Association held in March, 1939 was unique in many ways. There were only 30 people at the first meeting but rose to 1102 at the last meeting. There were 77 people who came to receive baptism. Another unusual feature was the performance of marriage ceremony for 13 couples who have been waiting for the Missionary to come. There were 19 Churches with 1115 members.<sup>178</sup> In 1940, about 100 persons have been baptised. Tukrajhar was the centre of the Mission field and the school continued to give good services through its educational standing.<sup>179</sup> It was reported in 1941 that the Association meeting was held as usual and it was well-attended. Several new Church buildings were dedicated during the year, among them, one substantial structure at Ballajhar,

175. V.H. Sword, *ibid.*, Gauhati, December 1-6, 1936.

176. V.H. Sword, Report from Goalpara Field, 35th Session, Sadiya, December 8-13, 1937.

177. *Ibid.*, 1938.

178. *Ibid.*, 37th Session, Jorhat, January 4-9, 1940.

179. *Ibid.*, Kohima, January 22-28, 1941.

and 97 persons have been baptised. The Missionary felt it necessary to work in close cooperation with the Lutheran Mission.<sup>180</sup>

The Missionary Report for 1944 stated that this field was rather remote from Gauhati, requiring 90-mile train trip and 20-mile Cycle or Ox cart ride and as such, was most neglected. As the people were Boros and Baptists, the American Baptist Mission had thought of handing over the field to the Australian Baptist Mission, since they were looking for such a field. The Missionary actually felt that an Agricultural Mission would be the most effective contribution to the progress of Christianity among them.<sup>181</sup> The Missionary regretted that the Boro Baptists at Tukrajhar centre lived far away from the Mission Centre and as such, they had the least care and encouragement from them. They had no well-trained leaders among them and only a few literate women. As a result, some of the older men have reverted to the custom of taking more than one wife, and the drinking of rice beer became disrupting force in the village churches. When a proposal was made for handing over this field to the Australian Baptist Mission, the Boro Christians agreed provided a Missionary would come and work among them, otherwise not. Therefore, it was decided to finally hand over the field to them.<sup>182</sup>

In 1946, Bible Class was held in this field where two Australian Baptist Missionaries were introduced to them and where about 500 people were present in the Sunday afternoon. Another and final round of tour was made in this field when it was finally handed over to the Australian Baptist Mission. By that time, there were 16 Churches with a total membership of 996.<sup>183</sup>

## THE NORTH LAKHIMPUR FIELD

Petrick's work at Sibsagar was primarily for the Mundaris.

180. *Ibid.*, Golaghat, December 4-9, 1941.

181. J.M. Forbes, Report from Goalpara-North Kamrup, Nowgong, November 9-13, 1944.

182. Miss M. Burham, *ibid.*, Jorhat, November 8-12, 1945.

183. V.H. Sword & Burham, *ibid.*, Gauhati, December 6-10, 1946.

In about the Christmas time in 1890, he sent two preachers from Sibsagar district to North Lakhimpur to see whether the way was open for preaching on the numerous gardens in the vicinity. They visited several gardens but did not get permission to do anything, not even to stop overnight and came back discouraged. But Petrick was not discouraged and sent them again in March, 1891, when they got permission to enter Joyhing tea garden, where they found a village of Bengali speaking people near north Lakhimpur, who were willing to listen to preaching. This attitude encouraged both the Missionary and the local preachers and so in November, 1891, Petrick himself visited north Lakhimpur and baptised the first batch of Christians in the Ronga river. This was followed by more baptisms and the field was visited regularly twice a year. Towards the end of 1892, Nathanael was sent over from Teok to live permanently in north Lakhimpur. In effect, conversions increased in north Lakhimpur and a few people of Joyhing garden began to show interest. Seeing the prospect, Petrick wrote to America in 1893, requesting a Missionary for north Lakhimpur. The Missionary Conference held at Tura also greatly urged this, and in December of the same year, John Firth and his wife reached Assam being designated to North Lakhimpur. As there was no house at North Lakhimpur, Mr. and Mrs. Firth put up for ten months in Sibsagar. In January, 1894, John, the ordained preacher from Sibsagar, visited the field and baptised the first batch of converts numbering 25, 20 of them being at Joyhing. In April, 1894, Firth went again to Joyhing and baptised 17 and secured a piece of land at north Lakhimpur for a Compound, and by October, 1894, Mr. and Mrs. Firth occupied a small house on the Mission Compound at North Lakhimpur, and work on the bungalow began soon.

The construction of Missionary bungalow was completed in June, 1895 and was occupied but the Missionaries lay prostrate with the severe fever. However, from the 1st October, 1895, Firth began touring and explored his field for the first time. He visited for three times the western half of North Lakhimpur where no Missionary or preacher had ever visited before and found a large number of tea garden coolies who were Lutherans in their own place at Nagpur, but had gone back to heathenism having no Missionary with them for the last ten or twelve years

of their life in Assam. Only one man and his wife had not wholly gone back as he had been a preacher in Nagpur. They have now determined to follow Christian religion again and were baptised in November and was appointed a preacher. These new Christians formed a new Christian village on the Ronga river as the water of their old village was not good. All the Christians on this field were Bengali speaking people. They used to come from their village to the Missionary bungalow and hold services there, and sometimes, they held services in their village in one of the houses. Firth frequently visited them and the Christians at Joyhing garden. In 1895, there was one Church and 73 Christians in all on this field.<sup>184</sup>

In 1896, Mr. and Mrs. O.L. Swanson joined Firth at North Lakhimpur. For one year and two months, Swanson gave his undivided attention to this field, building his bungalow and Chapel in the Station and evangelisation. Mrs. Swanson did a large amount of house to house visiting. They have organised Churches in different places wherever Christians lived. Each Church chose one of its own members as pastor and the larger churches chose Deacon, and the work seemed to progress well.

In this field, originally all the Christians were Mundaris from Nagpur but others have been converted and by 1899, there were 40 Bengali speaking people and others of different castes who have been baptised. They were Hindus but many of them have gone back to their old religion yielding to the entreaties of their relatives.

John Firth also asked for a Missionary for the Daplas, but instead of a Missionary from America, from Garo Hills, Tosin, a youngman already started the work among them by opening a small school in one village.<sup>185</sup>

In 1900, the work on this field was progressing but it was more apparent than real as many of them were only nominal Christians. However, one village church raised money by themselves and built a Chapel worth at least Rs. 50. Another

184. John Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur, Sibsagar, December 14-22, 1895.

185. John Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur, 5th Triennial Conference, Dibrugarh, February 11-19, 1899.

Church took up the question of Church discipline and excluded all members who did not attend church services regularly and give money for the support of the pastor. Thus with the reduced membership, the church became stronger and firmer.

People from Nepal, men, women and children who were coming into Assam were great in numbers. They seemed to be always walking, walking and walking along the roads. Between Dibrugarh and Tezpur, there were throngs of them, mostly settled in large villages. They have brought Hindu religion and Fakirs with them to Assam.

John Firth baptised a man and his wife, but the man was an opium eater but he was given a medicine to help and with that he conquered. A Dapla youngman also was baptised. The Garo Baptists have been supporting a Missionary among the Daplas for nearly three years. Miss Firth came to North Lakhimpur with a view to going up into the hills to work among the Daplas. The way not opening to her, she worked in the station specially for the Daplas.<sup>186</sup>

Mrs. Firth went to America in the spring of 1901, but Rev. and Mrs. H.B. Dickson came to North Lakhimpur in November of the same year. The German Lutherans have been at work on this field for two years and have caused confusion and conflict between the two Missions. Three Churches have built Chapels and six Churches have supplied themselves with Gongs.

Work on three Tea gardens has come to an end as the Manager of the garden did not allow the labourers to attend the services. Two unused Chapels on tea gardens have fallen down. Four of the best village Churches have been torn to pieces by the Lutherans and there was only one place on the entire fields where the work prospering at Doolakat, a village Church.<sup>187</sup>

H.B. Dickson did all that he could to encourage the Churches, to send their boys to school and to raise money for the support of a preacher. It was only such hard work as this by Rev. and Mrs. Dickson that could salvage the Mission from

186. *Ibid.*, 6th Session, Gauhati, December 22-31, 1900.

187. John Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur, 7th Session, Gauhati, December 27, 1904—January 1, 1905.

its most critical period. Hence during 1903, there were very few additions by baptism.

In January 1904, Joseph Paul along with the preacher of the Upper Assam Association, made a tour in north Lakhimpur district among the Miris on the Subansiri river and hundreds of them came to hear the preaching by means of a Magic Lantern. They received them gladly, thanked them for their medical help and other helps in the form of a sack of rice and begged them to come again.

In 1904, Paul toured in the Darrang district and in the North Lakhimpur field proper. On all these tours, they have visited villages, markets, road-side gatherings, gardens, etc. where they have preached, books sold, tracts distributed, enquiries answered and a few baptised. The Station school boys, during the summer months, have gone with the Missionary to nearby markets where the singing of the boys has attracted a large number of people. The nearby churches have also been encouraged by such singing.

### **Opium Problem**

Besides the fact that the North Lakhimpur churches were the most backward ones in Upper Assam, 25 per cent of the Christians were indulged in opium habits. An important meeting was held in November, 1904, at which all the Churches were represented. At this meeting, it was frankly admitted that in the past both the preachers and the Churches have deceived the Missionaries by continuation of the use of opium. Therefore, at this meeting, a firm stand was taken and resolved—*(i)* by positively refusing to consider for a moment as a candidate for baptism any person who was not completely free from the use of opium; *(ii)* that any member of the Church who was then using opium was warned that if any one was not free from use of opium, he/she will be excluded from the Church membership forthwith, and *(iii)* Manmasi was chosen unanimously to conduct baptism and to administer Holy Communion and to go from Church to Church preaching.

The Missionary works were carried on in the Darrang district and in the tea gardens as well. The Kolapain village received Paul warmly where 16 persons were baptised and at Karigaraj



village, 12 persons were baptised. The Missionary was discouraged to see a large number of people coming with Christian names and heathen hearts. The Missionary described them as drunken beggars with a false notion of what Christianity was. A Mission to them was golden Cow which must be milked lest she die.<sup>188</sup>

Mr. and Mrs. Paul continued to be in-charge of this field. In 1907, it was reported that there has been great change in the conditions of the Churches in this field. The degree of new life which has come to each Church can be measured by the number of boys and girls coming from it to the Station school. These Churches which had no boys at school were sickly and unprogressing. On the whole, 1906 had been the best year in the history of North Lakhimpur field. The organisation of the North Lakhimpur Association has proved a blessing in the sense that the young people of different Churches combined and preached to their non-Christian neighbours. The Miris have been the most attentive hearers but none of them has been baptised yet. 43 and 114 persons have been baptised during 1905 and 1906 respectively.<sup>189</sup>

During 1908, cholera, small-pox and fever spread among the people to such an extent that work was brought almost to a standstill. During 1909, better conditions prevailed. Bible Classes for the instructions of the workers and other local Christians have been conducted by the Missionaries twice yearly. As a result, there has been an increase in attendance and better understanding of the Bible. Thus the North Lakhimpur Baptist Association became a vigorous body, meeting annually. They took great interest in the Association and managed it with little suggestions from the Missionary. The different Christian Communities of this field organised themselves into Churches each having its own pastor. These pastors were cultivators and gave a part of their time to care for the churches. There were 11 Churches on this field in 1910.<sup>190</sup>

According to the Missionary Report for 1913, there were

188. Joseph Paul, Report from North Lakhimpur, Gauhati, December 24, 1904—January 1, 1905.

189. *Ibid.*, Gauhati, January 5-12, 1907.

190. John Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur, Gauhati, January 8-10, 1910.

9 Churches on this field with pastors. Sunday schools, Prayer meetings and disciplinary actions were being carried on. The North Lakhimpur and Bishnath Churches organised Associations with a common Treasurer, and supported 4 evangelists. During 1912, 14 Churches raised for all purposes Rs. 1,300, which was Rs. 2-8 per member. In the same year, 64 more members were added by baptism and the total membership was 529 with 14 Churches.<sup>191</sup>

It was reported in 1915 that there were 15 organised Churches with a total membership of 594. These Churches elected their own pastors from among themselves. The pastors cultivated their farms and at the same time, cared for the Churches. All of them were good men, and some of them spiritually strong and aggressively evangelistic. These Churches had capable Deacons who worked with their pastors and took Bible training. All the Churches had good meeting houses which they had built by themselves. These Churches were all located in the villages, and not in the gardens.

Rev. M. Paulus, a Mundari, was ordained in 1913 and was loved by all. Four evangelists were at work at needy points. One of them was supported by Darrang Association and the others by North Lakhimpur Association. Each year, the workers on North Lakhimpur field gathered in the Station school and spent the whole month of September in Bible study. Over 50 men each year have taken the studies. Only this kind of work prevented them from being absorbed by the Roman Catholics, Lutherans and the S.P.G. by which they were surrounded.

In 1914, the five Churches in Darrang organised themselves into an Association. They raised money and went to work in earnest. The territory of both Darrang and North Lakhimpur districts was very extensive and rapidly filling with settlers from all parts of Assam and of India.<sup>192</sup>

It was reported in 1916 that 87 people were baptised, and work began at a number of new places. Two new Churches have been organised. There were in 1916, 640 members on the

191. *Ibid.*, Gauhati, January 4-13, 1913.

192. John Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur, Golaghat, January 9-18, 1915.

two fields. One Church excluded 14 members for opium eating. It was one of the best Churches reporting 10 baptisms for the year, a new meeting house and a new school teacher's house built, with a church membership of 40. In another church of over 50 members, a shocking thing has occurred. Several members including one Deacon, went back to heathenism after serving for a quarter of a century. After some weeks, they have been restored.

The evangelistic work on both fields was in the hands of the Association. Each Association had a Missionary Committee. One Association employed three and the other two evangelists. The annual meeting of the Association took place in February. Hundreds of delegates attended the meeting. Rev. Paulus, the ordained Mundari pastor was the assistant to the Missionary. He had great influence. In September, Bible Class was attended by 64 men, one-third of whom were from Darrang field.<sup>193</sup>

It was reported in 1917 that this year has been a good one, also a sad one; good in the steady advancement made by the Churches, sad in the large number of deaths from cholera. One evangelist in the employ of North Lakhimpur Association saw 25 people baptised as a result of his labours, and at the same time buried his wife, daughter, brother and mother, from cholera. One village school teacher saw the people build him a good school house in which gathered 28 boys for daily lessons, when suddenly the whole village was overthrown by a flood and the desolation complete. One church saw a good number of people baptised and at the same time, six families coaxed from them by the German Lutherans.

During the year, there were 90 baptisms, two new Churches organised, one pastor ordained, five new meeting-houses built, a little over Rs. 2,000 raised by the Churches, with a total membership of 674 in a total number of self-supporting churches of 19.<sup>194</sup>

The North Lakhimpur-Darrang Field report stated that during the winter seasons, the Missionary toured among the

193. *Ibid.*, Nowgong, February 17-24, 1916.

194. John Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur, 15th Session, Sibsagar, January 15-22, 1917.

village churches and schools. This visit was helpful in exhorting the churches, though he could not cover all the churches on these two fields. In course of his tours, the Missionary baptised 101 new believers and organised a few new Churches. Several Chapels were built by the village churches.

The Darrang Association was deplete with able leaders, most of whom have died and those living were not interested in Church leadership. Yet Darrang was a great and beautiful territory, presenting opportunities for building up strong and firm Churches and leaders. Despite that the Association had no workers in the field. During the year, several were dismissed by the Association Committee and the remaining one taken for a worker by the All Assam Convention. Since there were no workers in the field, the Churches have stopped giving any money for the work of the Association. But the Association meeting held in February appointed three workers and the Churches resolved to support them. The annual Bible Study Class for workers was held in September at North Lakhimpur and an attendance of nearly hundred workers gathered.

Another event of the year was the arrival of new Missionaries, Rev. and Mrs. Bengt Anderson being designated to North Lakhimpur. The health of Mr. and Mrs. Firth was such that it was a welcome news.<sup>195</sup>

In 1927, Rev. B.I. Anderson reported that he has accompanied Firth in the tours of the Darrang district in a Ford Car. They were also able to occupy a new bungalow though their precious Cases from home was strayed, lost or stolen in the transit. They also started learning the language. The field has been explored from one end to the other, many of the Churches have been visited and all associational and larger gatherings have been attended. He also assisted Firth in baptising 26 people.

In the Station Church, Anderson found that it was an invisible body of saints as there were only the Missionaries and the Chaukidar who appeared at the call of the Gong to listen to the words of the preacher. And the actual results were often

195. John Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur-Darrang Fields, Jorhat, December 2-10, 1926.

nil because the Missionaries did not understand the sermons and the Chaukidar slept through it all. Later on as the station school was started, there was new lease of life, with the holding of Sunday schools, mid-week prayer meetings and preachings in the local markets and at the gardens. In all these meetings, 300 Gospels were sold and over a thousand tracts were distributed. And although the actual results of these works have not been so very great, they have proved themselves to be an excellent tonic for a home-sick Missionary.

There were no Bible Classes in North Lakhimpur that year and so the workers were sent to Golaghat to attend Swanson's Classes. In 1927, there were 21 Churches and about 700 members in the North Lakhimpur District, while in Darrang district, there were 11 Churches and 437 members. The most encouraging feature of the evangelistic work for the Missionaries has been the interest shown by the Miris in Christianity, though they have not yet openly accepted the new religion.<sup>196</sup>

In 1936, in the North Lakhimpur and Darrang combined, there were 49 Churches, 1830 members and 10 Christian Endeavour Societies. They were all self-supporting churches, financially and spiritually. To make this possible, every Christian was asked to give Re. 1 over and above his ordinary giving. In many villages, the families kept chickens, goats or rice, the proceeds of which went to the expenses of the church administration. In March 1936, J.W. Cook, the Missionary went to Harchurah tea estate to baptise 46 people. It was a memorable event for him as the whole village went down the river to witness the baptism ceremony.<sup>197</sup>

In 1937, R.W. Holm took charge of the North Lakhimpur and Darrang districts north of the Brahmaputra. Before the Cooks left, Holm along with them made a hurried visit to these fields for 10 days. Doolibil Church was the best church at that time in the whole fields as they have taken upon themselves the evangelisation of the neighbouring areas and went out every month.<sup>198</sup>

196. B.I. Anderson, Report from North Lakhimpur, Golaghat, November 23-December 1, 1927.

197. J.W. Cook, *ibid.*, 34th Session, Gauhati, December 1-6, 1936.

198. R.W. Holm, *ibid.*, 35th Session, Sadiya, December 8-13, 1937.

In 1938, the Darrang Association met at Singimari with over 200 attending. There were 23 Churches, 748 members, 81 baptised and contributions totalled Rs. 1,240 of which over Rs. 700 were earmarked for a new Church building.

The Lakhimpur Association met at Dekiajuli in which more than 1000 were present. Report showed 34 Churches, 972 members, and contributions totalling Rs. 911 and baptism numbered 85 for the year.<sup>199</sup>

In 1939, the Missionaries visited North Lakhimpur four times covering only one-third of the churches on the field. They also attended two Association meetings. The Missionaries saw one hopeful sign in the formation of "Gospel Team" in every Church for doing definite work, and the team from the Doolibil church sold over 1,000 Gospels in one year. There were 42 Churches and baptisms numbered over 150. A Women's Association was also held in North Lakhimpur under the guidance of three earnest women—Rohini, Monica and Mary. They reported a large crowd which showed interest in the work of the district.<sup>200</sup>

It was reported in 1941 that the Missionaries made four trips to North Lakhimpur field and three well-attended Bible Classes were conducted. There were scattered 52 Churches in the North Lakhimpur and Darrang valleys with a membership of 1933 and 22 Christian Endeavour Societies in the Churches. There were 9 evangelists and baptisms numbered 132 during the year.<sup>201</sup>

According to the Report for 1944, there were 46 Churches, 2,350 members and 117 baptisms during the year. The 13 evangelists were active in the North Lakhimpur-Darrang fields.<sup>202</sup>

In 1945, there were 30 established Baptist Churches in North Lakhimpur field and six Christian Endeavour Societies indicating the decline in the work. The Bible Class was held in October attended by 150 members. In Darrang field,

199. C.E. Hunter, *ibid.*, 1938.

200. J.W. Cook, Report from North Lakhimpur-Darrang, Jorhat, 37th Session, January 4-9, 1940.

201. *Ibid.*, Golaghat, December 4-9, 1941.

202. *Ibid.*, 41st Session, Nowgong, November 9-13, 1944.

there were 25 Churches with six evangelists. The Christians of these fields have been awaiting the posting of a full-fledged Missionary in their fields.<sup>203</sup> However, no Missionary could be sent to them and the North Lakhimpur field could no longer be held out by the local Christians.

### THE PATHALIPAM FIELD

The Missionary Conference in 1893 recommended that two men be sent to North Lakhimpur—One for the Bengali speaking peoples, and the other, for the Miris. John Firth, after seeing a number of Miris all around North Lakhimpur and the prospect of introducing Christianity among them continued to urge that a man be sent at once. Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Paul were sent from America and reached North Lakhimpur in January, 1895. Paul at once made tours and found the Miris numerous in Assam speaking Assamese language. Therefore, Paul decided to use that language in working among them. He also discovered that the only means of access to their villages was by boat. Accordingly, after the rains, Mr. and Mrs. Paul and a local preacher toured in boat and preached in the Miri villages on the Ronga and Subansiri rivers. In November, 1895, a site was chosen for a Compound at Pathalipam, 18 miles north-east of North Lakhimpur on the Subansiri river.<sup>204</sup> In October, 1896, Mr. and Mrs. Paul moved to Pathalipam to a temporary house. Next six months were spent in collecting materials and building a bungalow. Meanwhile, during the Sundays, they visited the villages and preached to the Miris, Bengalis, Assamese and others as best as they could. Four persons living near the Mission Compound professed faith and were baptised in the Subansiri river but subsequently went back to their old religion confessing that they had expected worldly gains in accepting Christianity. The other two remained faithful but have moved to Sibsagar.

Subsequently, there were many signs of genuine interests in Christianity in the nearby villages and judging from the

203. R.W. Holm, 42nd Session, Jorhat, November 8-12, 1945.

204. John Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur, 4th Triennial Conference, Sibsagar, December 14-22, 1895.

kind of enquiries made, it was expected that many would accept Christianity, but when it came to completely giving up of their old religion, it all faded away. They expressed joy at the coming of the Missionary to them and made preparations for their stay and comforts, by voluntarily offering firewood, eggs, chickens, milk free. They fixed time for the gathering and came on time to hear the preaching. They followed up the meeting with further enquiries at the boat. They sat late into the night on the cold river bank asking questions about Christianity. They would come again early in the morning asking for books to help them to remember what they had heard. Some of them would confess the emptiness of Hinduism, their sins and the need of salvation. They confessed much more which indicated a real interest in Christianity. It is interesting to mention that some of these very people travelled by boat and in foot, over a hundred miles to ask a Tea planter, whether the Missionary was preaching the Truth, and whether they were to expect money, cattle and other assistance if they became Christians.

At the beginning of 1897, Paul toured again from village to village along the Subansiri river. John, the local preacher, having discouraged due to deceit and cunning ways of the Miris, returned to his native town. Nevertheless, Paul managed to reach many villages and found interested hearers. In November again, Paul went out and camped in the midst of several Miri villages. Several youngmen were convinced and were willing to give up Hinduism, but the separation from homes and friends that stood in the way of their acceptance of Christianity.

In another village, Paul was able to convince an influential man who was an opium eater. Despite threat from a Gohain, he remained steadfast in his new faith. After that Paul went back to Sibsagar and met Messers Gurney, Petrick, Swanson and Firth, who seeing his weakness advised him to stay in the Dibrugarh Station.<sup>205</sup> With his transfer, the Pthalipam Station was not kept up.

205. Joseph Paul, Report from Pthalipam, 5th Triennial Conference, Dibrugarh, February 11-19, 1899.



**THE DIBRUGARH FIELD**

After Miles Bronson's short time stay in Dibrugarh during 1878-1879, nothing further was attempted in that Station by the American Baptist Missionaries, until the Pauls were transferred there from Pathalipam in January, 1898. Therefore, Mission work in Dibrugarh began only in January, 1898, and the first baptism of three Bengalis was conducted in February of the same year in the Brahmaputra river. These three with already four baptised elsewhere were organised into a little church. A good deal of preaching was done in the bazars and about twelve hundred portions of Scripture and tracts have been sold and distributed. There were in the town six persons who were active enquirers, one of whom was a young Brahmin.

Dr. Duncan sanctioned some amount for the Settlement of the Missionaries at Dibrugarh but the money has not yet been received even after one year. However, Joseph Paul began to work among the Tea garden workers. Paul made friends with some of the Tea Planters and secured the permission to work among the garden workers, and work began by a prayer meeting at Tallap Dak Bungalow on October 13, 1898, joined by two Nagpur preachers. Thus within a few days, they had access to over 34,000 Coolies. A start was made by the baptism of 82 persons, the organisation of four small churches with a membership of 92. This work of evangelisation was made easier as the German Lutheran Mission and other Missions have already prepared the ground.<sup>206</sup>

Until July, 1899, Paul was in charge of the Dibrugarh field when it was taken over by a new Missionary, Rev. A. J. Parker. By then the number of Baptist Churches was six with a membership of about 150. Rev. Parker accompanied by Benjamin, a strong and effective local preacher and Monsid, the Mundari preacher have visited and preached at Christians congregations and sold hundreds of Scriptures at the weekly markets. As a result, there have been interested enquirers and applications for baptisms. The Dibrugarh Baptist Church

206. Joseph Paul, Report from Pathalipam and Dibrugarh, 5th Triennial Conference, Dibrugarh, February 11-19, 1899.

services have been conducted in the Mission Bungalow by Benjamin and Parker, and the members have built a nice little Chapel later on.<sup>207</sup>

The Missionaries also made some tours in the villages but illness kept them back in the town most of the time. However, 72 persons have been baptised during 1902. The work of Reuben, a local preacher deserved special mention as he taught for eight months in the Oriya Church that composed of new converts at Dumduma. He taught and preached in Bengali language. Benjamin, the only other evangelist employed by the Mission has also done good work but illness compelled him to be confined to bed. They were paid Rs. 16 each per month. The general outlook of the whole field did not seem bright to the Missionary.<sup>208</sup>

During the year ending 1903, Paul was again in charge of the Dibrugarh field, after which, he was transferred to North Lakhimpur and Petrick has assumed charge of the Dibrugarh field, in addition to his charge of the Sibsagar field. Petrick spent ten days in Dibrugarh travelling by trains. As most of the tea gardens were near the railways, touring was easier than in other districts. Petrick baptised 11 persons in two places and 8 at Pekewijan and 3 at Samdeng. There were then three churches in the Dibrugarh district—Pekewijan, Bisekoja and Samdeng. The first was a village church and the other two were in gardens. The prospect was not in any way brighter in those churches than any other.

In Dibrugarh town, there were only three Church members, only one was baptised in Dibrugarh, the other two elsewhere. The Missionary did not think that Dibrugarh was a town fruitful for Mission work. There were also three members at Robung-Tallap, and two at Aborpathar near Dibrugarh. At Robung and Aborpathar, the Christians were Santals. Sri Diba of Aborpathar was a member of a Baptist church in Jamtara in the Santal Parganas in Bihar, and Charles Chuntu of Robung

207. A.J. Parker, Report from Dibrugarh Field, Gauhati, December 22-31, 1900.

208. Joseph Paul, *ibid.*, Gauhati, December 27, 1902—January 1, 1903.

was formerly a Catholic. Both were excellent men, intelligent and sincere Christians.<sup>209</sup>

Petrick toured for 64 days in 1905 and 55 days in 1906 in the Dibrugarh district. He baptised 21 converts during the last two years. A new Church was organised at Ledo. Ledo was for more than ten years a Station of the Arthington Mission. This Mission considered itself sent to the hill tribes only, but Ledo was hardly a place to open a station for hill tribes. Only a few Singpho villages and Fakial villages were near enough to Ledo to be worked from there. There was a large Ruli population at Ledo working in the Coal mines. None of the Missionaries stayed long enough to learn the native language. Only one native helper from Sibsagar succeeded in acquiring the Singpho language. Unfortunately, he took to literary work, translating some Gospels. The Missionary considers it a mistake to do literary work before ever a single convert was made or before any member of the tribe was able to read.

The Arthington Mission gained no converts, and had no baptisms to report. After the work of this Mission was stopped, Petrick started work in Ledo on a different basis. The result of this entirely new work has been the baptism of four converts; three Mundas and one Caste Hindu. This small Christian community, with the preacher and his family, was the beginning of a strong Church at Ledo. There were 4 Churches and 128 members.<sup>210</sup>

Petrick reported in 1910 that the work in the Dibrugarh field met with considerable difficulties. In most places, where they worked, other Christian denominations had also their work. Most of their converts were on tea gardens and therefore, the work lacked stability far more than in the Sibsagar district.

The climate also was not so favourable to the people as in the Sibsagar district. For instance, in the Sibsagar district, they had in the previous year among more than 1,000 members, only 18 deaths, which was a very low death rate for Assam, but in the Dibrugarh, they had among 150 members, 12 deaths,

209. C.E. Petrick, Report from Dibrugarh Field, 8th Session, December 24, 1904—January 1, 1905.

210. *Ibid.*, 9th Biennial Conference, Gauhati, January 5-12, 1907.

which would mean a death rate of 80 per thousand, whereas in Sibsagar, it was less than 18 per thousand. All these combined, caused the membership to rise slowly and posed as a great hindrance to the healthy development of the work.

Petrick spent two months of 1907 and also 1908 in the Dibrugarh district on tour, and about month in 1909. The membership of the Churches in the Sibsagar district was 1,069, whereas in the Dibrugarh district, 154.<sup>211</sup> It was reported in 1913 that the Roman Catholics have disturbed the growth of some of the churches, and have decoyed a score or so of their members away, yet there have been additions by baptism aggregating 214 in the Sibsagar and Dibrugarh fields. The churches paid the salary of their pastors, and built Chapels. Two new Churches have been organised and regular services were conducted in six new places in these two fields. The Missionary spent 48 days in 1912.<sup>212</sup>

In 1916 there were four Churches in the Dibrugarh field. The field could be looked after only with the untiring help of Tanaram Saikia. He has gone to the remote places under great difficulties to visit a church or a school.<sup>213</sup>

### THE GOLAGHAT FIELD

Through consultations with other Missionaries, it was decided that the Missionaries of North Lakhimpur should devote some of their time to Golaghat sub-division. In view of this, O.L. Swanson, started on his first tour in Golaghat sub-division in the middle of January, 1898. Four local Mission Workers accompanied Swanson. One of them was Johan, the ordained local preacher. One full month was spent in that field during which, they visited tea gardens, bazars and villages, distributing tracts, selling Gospels and telling stories of Jesus. As a result of this work, 39 persons were baptised in three different places. The work being so promising, it was considered advisable for Swanson to make a second tour in March,

211. C.E. Petrick, Report from Sibsagar and Dibrugarh, 10th Session, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

212. *Ibid.*, 12th Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 4-13, 1913.

213. O.L. Swanson, *ibid.*, Nowgong, February 17-24, 1916.

1898. This time, his chief aim was to follow up the work begun and have the converts organised into Churches. At Mookrung, Tea Estate, there were six Christians belonging to Bebejia Church. These together with the new converts were organised into a separate Church. Another Church was organised at Prangajan, a third at Dygroom Tea Estate.

It was now evident to the Missionaries of North Lakhimpur that in order to do any effectual work, it was necessary for the Missionary to be on the field. So letters recommending the opening of Golaghat as a Mission Station were sent to Boston, and the work of trying to secure land for a Compound was begun. Swanson had difficulty in getting a Site as the Office Babus put obstacles in the way. Several applications were made and refused but finally through the kindness and help of the Commissioner, the Compound was secured. As Rev. and Mrs. Paul had vacated the Mission bungalow at Pathalipam, it was decided by Firth, Paul and Swanson that this bungalow should be taken down and transferred to Golaghat and re-erected there. So in the month of April, in company with Paul, the trip to Pathalipam was made and the bungalow in a few days was taken down and placed on the bank of the Subansiri river ready for shipment. Because of delays and broken contracts by boatmen, all the materials were not landed in Golaghat until about the middle of June. Swanson made two more tours in the district during the rains and on the 21st September, 1898, the Swansons removed from North Lakhimpur to Golaghat.

The work of re-erecting the bungalow was begun in the following month. By the 11th of December, 1898, the Swansons were able to occupy part of the house while on the 7th of January, 1899, the bungalow was practically finished. Since the completion of the bungalow, Swanson visited the Churches and lastly made tour of two weeks in the lower part of the district where they have had opportunity to preach to Assamese, Bengalis, Mikirs and Garos. In 1899, there were four Churches, 111 Church members and the total contribution from the Churches for the year was Rs. 60-6-10.<sup>214</sup>

The first and foremost aim of the Mission has been to

214. O.L. Swanson, Report from Golaghat Field, Dibrugarh, February 11-19, 1899.

evangelize, and so they have tried to reach the masses with the Gospel message, preaching in the markets, villages and in the Coolie lines. They have also sold out religious literature. The separate Gospels in Assamese, Bengali, Hindi and other languages have had a ready sale. The whole Bible in Bengali and in Hindi has been sold mostly to the Christian communities.

In 1900, there were 15 Churches. Of these, two were transferred from the Sibsagar field. Three Churches have built their own meeting houses. The Church at Bebejia was building a new one, much larger than an old one. The Mission did not help in building these houses nor did they help in the support of their pastor. In 1899, 169 people have been baptised and in 1900, 166 persons have been baptised. The total membership on this field was 542.

It had been the aim of the Mission to teach all the Churches to manage their own affairs and conduct their own religious services. The pastor was generally a man chosen from their own number and he received the collections as pay for the work.

The first Association of local Christians was held in 1899 at Rangajan and it was decided to hold the Association annually.<sup>215</sup>

In November, 1901, Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Tuttle arrived to relieve the Swansons who went on furlough in March, 1902, whence he took charge of the field. Swanson's untiring efforts in prosecuting evangelistic work have shown the results all over the district. Mr. and Miss. Tuttle learned the language and directed the work of the Station school and the work of the preachers.

Aggressive evangelistic work has received more of a check than was expected, yet every church has been visited twice at least and administered Holy Communion, couples married, others baptised, cases of discipline attended to and instructions imparted. The local evangelists have done some good works in frequently visiting the new works and pastorless Churches. Thus, notwithstanding the difficulties and problems, the two years just closed have been marked by general progress by large

215. *Ibid.*, 6th Session, Gauhati, December 22-31, 1900.

increase in numbers and by a remarkable diffusion of Christian knowledge.<sup>216</sup>

It was reported in 1905 that Swanson accompanied by local preachers have been able to visit more markets, villages and tea gardens. They have preached, sold Gospels and distributed tracts by thousands. The results were that a man who heard the preaching for the first time at one of the bazar meetings, went home, pondered the words. Finally, he came and asked for baptism. At another place, they had Magic Lantern preaching. Months afterwards, a couple of our workers found some of them confessing their belief in Jesus.

Two new Churches have been added, making a total of 14, while there were 6 to 7 places where services were held at times. All the Churches were self-supporting in one sense, that is, they have their pastors and were paid by them. Five new Church buildings have been built, three by the Churches and two by the Planters.<sup>217</sup> It was reported in 1907 that nearly in all the Churches, there were new members. The Churches at Badulipur and Golaghat have been forwarded. There were revival meetings where both young and old wept for forgiveness of sins. 101 and 70 persons have been baptised during 1905 and 1906 respectively.<sup>218</sup>

According to the Missionary report for 1910, the Missionary along with the evangelists have devoted most of their time in caring for the churches and preaching to the non-Christians. Since the revival in 1906 in the Churches of Badulipur and Golaghat, there had been also a desire manifested in many other centres. Several Churches have held Sabhas or Annual Conferences for the deepening of the spiritual life.

Due to an increase in the contributions by women, the Association Committee has been able to send out and support at times as many as seven evangelists. Six workers have been employed by the Mission. Among these, Tonuram Saikia, the

216. Joseph Paul, Report from Golaghat Field, Gauhati, December 22-31, 1900.

217. O.L. Swanson, *ibid.*, Gauhati, December 24, 1904 to January 1, 1905.

218. O.L. Swanson, Report from Golaghat Field, Gauhati, January 5-12, 1907.

ordained man and specially gifted has proved himself to be the most valuable helper in every way.<sup>219</sup>

With regard to the evangelistic works, it was reported in 1913 that seven evangelists have been entirely supported by the local Christians through the Association. Six have been employed by the Mission and 250 persons have been baptised after 1911. The annual Bible Class was held at Jorhat for 1911 and more people attended the same. Those that knew the Assamese language well received much valuable instructions.<sup>220</sup>

It was reported in 1915 that the Missionary and the local evangelists have tried as far as possible to reach the great multitude of people on this field, with the Gospel of Christ. Wherever they have gone, they have found an eagerness, on the part of the people to hear the message. Gospels and tracts have been sold and distributed by many thousands. There were 29 Churches, nearly all of which had their chosen pastors and were holding regular services. During the last two years, 332 persons have been added by baptism. The total membership was then 1,346, who contributed Rs. 3,072 for the support of their pastors, teachers and evangelists to work among the non-Christians.<sup>221</sup>

According to Swanson's report for 1916, the past year was the busiest year in his life. Swanson travelled not only in the Golaghat field but also in the Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, and Sadiya fields. One trip was made to Kohima and also a tour in the Nowgong district. There were then 30 Churches on this field, many of them widely scattered throughout the district. Nearly all of these churches had their own pastors. 122 converts have been baptised making a total of 1,467 excluding the Mikir section of the Golaghat field. The Golaghat division of the Upper Assam Association, during the last year, have supported four evangelists to work among the non-Christians. They had also arranged to visit the weaker Churches. Thus, it was a great

219. *Ibid.*, 10th Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

220. J.M. Carvell, 12th Biennial Session, Gauhati, January, 4-13, 1913.

221. O.L. Swanson, Report from Golaghat Field, Golaghat, January 9-18, 1915.



encouragement for the Missionaries to find bands of Christian men and women out in the villages, tea gardens and market places everywhere preaching.

The first Union Bible Class of Christian workers was held in the Station from September 15 to October 15. It was the largest gathering ever held of its kind. The Christian workers came from Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, Golaghat, Nowgong and Mongoldai fields and was a grand success.<sup>222</sup>

The Missionary report for 1917 stated that the year 1916 has been a year of great activity, 190 new converts having been added to the Churches, which was a greater number than in any previous one year. Three new Church buildings have been erected, two of which were on tea gardens where the materials and much of the work was given by the Proprietors of the gardens. The third Church building was erected in the settlement of Naojan by the Christians themselves. At Bebejia, the people were in the process of erecting a new Church building. This Church building promised to be the best among all the village Churches in all Assam.

At one time, in one tea garden, the Missionary and his helpers were requested not to trouble the tea garden coolies with Christianity. But that Manager has been discharged and a new one has been appointed in his place, who was friendly with the Missionary cause. They helped the Missionaries in every possible way and the Company was putting up a fine new Church building at its own expense.

The American Baptist Mission has been called "The Cooly Mission", to which, O.L. Swanson replied saying, "From Golaghat, the Gospel is being preached to all people. The so-called higher castes of Assam have never been neglected by the Missionary nor his workers." One of the outstanding features of the work in Golaghat was the holding of the All Assam Baptist Bible Conference for Christian workers. The attendance reached nearly 120 workers coming from nine districts of the Province.<sup>223</sup>

In 1926, Swanson reported that though there has been

222. *Ibid.*, Nowgong, February 17-24, 1916.

223. O.L. Swanson, Report from Golaghat Field, Sibsagar, January 15-22, 1917.

evidences of the growth of the Churches, there was no sign of a mass movement towards Christianity. The two hundred or more converts that have joined the Churches have all been won through hard continuous personal efforts by pastors and the evangelists sent forth by the Churches.

The Church buildings have been erected and dedicated without Mission's financial assistance. The costs of these Church buildings would amount to around Rs. 1,500. This was considered to be a great growth in the "Indigenous Church". The Golaghat and Jorhat Association which used to meet annually held its Session with the Barpasi Church. It was attended by over 900 people. These annual meetings continued to be the real spiritual feast to the Christians. This field supported 11 evangelists who were to enter into the areas where the Gospel had not yet been preached. The evangelistic band of Assamese workers was busy in the winters camping in or near the Assamese villages where they preached before the Caste people. In many places requests came from villages in the interior to come with the Magic Lantern to show pictures and preach, so that the women and children would have the opportunity to see and hear the Gospel message. But the Missionary was unable to do that due to lack of funds for evangelistic work. He lamented that the sum appropriated for the support of the evangelists on his field was not sufficient to pay the salary of two of his leading workers, and that there was nothing left for the remaining twelve workers.

The Annual Bible Conference continued to be one of the main events of the year. It was held in September and the attendance was over 150. The teachers were experienced men like V.H. Sword, Selander, Nyai Chandra Das, Tonuram Saikia and Minaram Gogoi, who because of their experiences of Indian life and religions, were great assets in this Conference.<sup>224</sup>

It was reported in 1927 that the Missionary had not been able to tour his own field as much as he would desire, because of his having to supervise other fields in Lower and Upper Assam. Although a number of the smaller churches have ceased to exist, because of removals, the number remains the same, as new Centres have been opened. The total was still sixty

224. O.L. Swanson, Report from Golaghat Field, Jorhat, December 2-10, 1926.

Churches. Several new substantial Church buildings have been erected by the people themselves. For evangelistic purposes about Rs. 1,800, was raised by the Churches for the support of the workers, Bible Conference expenses, the printing of tracts and contributing to the Jorhat schools.

As usual, the Annual Association meeting was a great gathering. It represented many races of people speaking numerous languages. The Association has sent out 15 evangelists to preach to the non-Christian people.

Several tea garden Churches centring round the Hautley Tea Estate organised a small Sobha or annual conference which they called "The Pentescotal Shova" attended by many delegates. The Golaghat Annual Bible Conference was also held as usual, and was attended by delegates from five districts, *i.e.*, North Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Sadiya, Darrang and Golaghat. The work among the caste people could not be carried out as before due to lack of money and men. However, the evangelists were doing work in both preaching and distributing tracts and selling Christian literature throughout the district.<sup>225</sup>

It was reported in 1936 that there were 76 Churches with 4,000 members on this field. The Annual Association was held at the village of Nagajuri attended by over 1,500 people. The Association raised over Rs. 2,000 for benevolent purposes. All the Churches in the district were self-supporting. As in former years, the evangelistic band composed of men of different races has camped in different parts of the district. In this way, they have reached many villages with the Gospel message. The Bible Conference also was conducted to which about 200 men and women gathered from all parts of Upper Assam.<sup>226</sup>

In the winter of 1936, Rev. and Mrs. Swanson made the last tour among the Churches bidding them farewell as he was retiring from active service in Assam. They have preached in the market places in many centres. There were 71 organised Churches, 64 of them having their own pastors. In October, they held the 30th Annual Bible Class in Golaghat to which

225. O.L. Swanson, Report from Golaghat, Golaghat, November 23-December 1, 1927.

226. O.L. Swanson & R.W. Holm, *ibid.*, Jorhat, February 3-6, 1936.

over 200 delegates came from most of the districts in Upper Assam.<sup>227</sup>

In 1937, the Mission has stressed on the evangelistic efforts in the district. They organised bands of Assamese preachers and with help from nearby Churches, they have gone into non-Christian Assamese villages for preaching. There were many Assamese who liked Christian religion but because of home ties were not willing to break away. At the Annual Association meeting, all the 82 Churches sent their representatives to gather. Another meeting held was the 40th Annual Bible Conference in Golaghat in October with the attendance of 189.<sup>228</sup>

It was reported in 1938 that during the year, the Missionary visited 53 of the 86 Churches in the district. Baptism to date numbered 170. The Churches have raised nearly Rs. 2,200 for their evangelists, their school Promoter and the Village schools. The Missionaries were greatly helped by Tonuram Saikia and Dehiram, but they were ill for long period.<sup>229</sup>

In 1940, the Golaghat-Jorhat field had 87 Churches of which two were new ones that joined the Association that year. At least nine different races were represented in the Churches of Golaghat field. The 19 evangelists have been busy during the year bringing over 200 converts. Miss Lewison, assisted by an evangelist and two Bible women, has done excellent work in the vicinity of Golaghat town. In Jorhat section, Mr. Cook and Miss Christenson have continued their work of sending out the boys and girls of the Bible schools as well as going themselves. Despite all these efforts, all would confess that there was still room for more workers.<sup>230</sup>

In 1941, they have dedicated three new Church buildings, one of them in the Leper Colony at Jorhat. The active evangelistic ministry was centered in the 17 evangelists and three Bible women. One evangelist was a Nepali and several Nepali families were accepting Christianity that year. They had Bible Class for

227. R.W. Holm, *ibid.*, Gauhati, December 1-6, 1936.

228. R.W. Holm, Report from Golaghat Field, Sadiya, December 8-13, 1937.

229. John Selander, *ibid.*, 1938.

230. R.W. Holm, *ibid.*, Jorhat, January 4-9, 1940.

8 days. One Roman Catholic has entered Golaghat field for the first time that year.<sup>231</sup>

In April, 1944, the enemy forces were reported only 13 miles away from Golaghat. There was also an uneasy feeling when three fully armed regiments dug in, on and around the Mission Compound area and prepare for immediate action. The local community was naturally restless and upset, but the danger passed away, and only that experience lingered in them.

Due to the nearness of the war, the evangelists for several months stayed closer to their homes. When the danger was over, the preaching bands have again been organised. The Association and the Mission cooperated in employing 24 evangelistic workers.

Some years ago, a small group of Thadou-Kuki Christians in the Mikir Hills above Dimapur asked for help and fellowship with the Golaghat Association. The Golaghat Churches responded and for years a teacher has been employed to teach the boys and girls in one of the villages. Two years ago a Kuki preacher was employed to minister to their needs. In 1944, they had 7 Churches with a total of 46 Christian homes and 29 baptised that year.

In the Golaghat field, there were 96 Churches and groups of believers, with 3,760 baptised believers and 24 evangelists.<sup>232</sup>

The active evangelistic ministry in the Golaghat field had to be left to the faithful evangelists as the Missionary had to look after the fields in Upper Assam as well. Twenty-four evangelists were employed jointly by the Association and the Mission. Rev. Tonuram Saikia who has for many years worthily done the work of an evangelist, also served as pastor of the local Church at Golaghat.

In 1945 they sent three youngmen to the Jorhat Bible school, two of whom were Nunda and Stephen. They also employed a youngman as a full-time Colporteur who distributed much literature among Christians and non-Christians.

During the war-time, the spiritual life among many of the Churches waned. Drinking and its attendant evils came in.

231. R.W. Holm, Report from Golaghat Field, Golaghat, December 4-9, 1941.

232. *Ibid.*, Nowgong, November 9-13, 1944.

Many people made a great deal of money working on Military projects. Then in many cases, the money was gone, the work had ceased and village life was setting back to normalcy. The believers who have violated Christ Commands were coming back. In 1944, there were over 250 baptisms, and from February to October, 1945, there were 177 baptisms.<sup>233</sup>

In 1946, Selahder made regular visits to Golaghat and visited 15 of the Churches in the district. Most of the attention has been directed to the restoration of property getting it in shape for the re-opening of the Swanson Memorial M.E. School. In September, they started with 3 teachers and 7 boys. In October, they resumed the holding of the Bible Conference in which about 240 people attended. That year marked the 15th anniversary of the Association.<sup>234</sup>

In 1950, thirteen evangelists have been going to the villages and bazars, along the highways and narrow lanes to proclaim the Gospel to the people of all walks of life.

One sad experience was that a Pastor's wife was desperately ill and no medical aid was available. The pastor went out and sacrificed a chicken. Then both the pastor and his wife came out of the Church. However, about 3,500 books have been sold.<sup>235</sup>

### THE BISHNATH FIELD

This field was situated in the Darrang district and extended from a few miles south of Sutia to Helem, a distance of 40 miles. John Firth, the Missionary has toured this field several times. He made the first tour in the spring of 1899 going to Helem. The second trip was made in the fall of 1899 to Sutia. The third in the fall of 1900 and the fourth in the fall of 1902 to Sutia. The first three trips of Firth were hurriedly made, so that he was unable to explore the country towards the mountains. In October, 1902, Firth decided to make his fourth trip to Darrang, and Mr. and Mrs. Dickson

233. R.W. Holm, Report from Golaghat Field, Jorhat, November 8-12, 1945.

234. John Selander, *ibid.*, 43rd Session, Gauhati, December 6-10, 1946.

235. Miss Tait, *ibid.*, 46th Session, Golaghat, January 3-9, 1950.

also decided to go. Firth walked down the road taking coolies as a cart could not get out from North Lakhimpur. Mr. and Mrs. Dickson went via Komlabari, landing at Behali, where they found Firth. The next day after arrival at Behali, they started for Sutia and reached there in two days. The following Sunday was visited one of the largest markets in Assam. The evangelists were out every day and brought back word that they had found many villages and tea gardens.

On their return from Sutia to Burigaon, they heard that the evangelist who had been left at Helem was at Kolapani Busti, a village five miles from the Post road, and nine were ready for baptism. The next morning they started from Burigaon to Kolapani, eleven miles distant. On arrival at Kolapani, four were baptised and others were awaiting baptism. The Kolapani Church was organised on October 24, 1902.

About two weeks after they returned to North Lakhimpur, they received a letter from the Kolapani evangelist stating that more than twenty persons were asking for baptism, and urging the Missionaries to come down and baptise them, and the following week another letter was received stating that the number has increased to 30. It was therefore decided that the new Missionaries go down and do what they could towards helping the work along. On 18th November, 1902, they left North Lakhimpur and prepared to stay in Darrang until the Annual Conference. They arrived at Kolapani Busti on Monday and the following Sunday baptised 22 persons, who were received into the Kolapani Church. More were baptised on the 7th of December. 24 of the 33 members of the Kolapani Church were from Kolapani Tea Estate. On December 21st, 24 were baptised at Sardaru Tea Estate and 21 were awaiting for baptism. The Missionary was also told that very many people in Diplonge Tea Estate wished to become Christians.

The Planters visited were very kind and were quite willing that the Missionaries should work on their gardens. In looking over the field, the Missionary found a great number of villages, some of them were very large, Jangia, for instance, which was practically a chain of villages composed

of Kachari, Bengali, Oraon, Assamese and Mikir villages.

The Church decided to build a house of worship and did not approach the Missionary with the request. They had also set apart a man to do evangelistic work, each member consenting to contribute two annas per month towards his support. They had also their pastor and each Sunday contributed rice and pice for his services. The Missionaries felt that this was a step in the right direction.<sup>236</sup>

In 1904, the Missionaries toured in the Darrang district and visited villages, markets, road-side gatherings and tea gardens, and preached, books sold, tracts distributed, enquiries answered and a few baptised. Kolapani village was very glad to receive the Missionary where 16 people were baptised during the past few months.<sup>237</sup>

The Missionary report of 1907 did not mention this part of the work separately from the whole North Lakhimpur. In 1910, Firth reported one preacher working on the Bishnath field employed by the Mission.<sup>238</sup> In 1913, John Firth reported that there were five Churches on the Bishnath field supplied with pastors and were doing well. Sunday schools, Prayer meetings, attending to disciplines were being carried on.

The Baptist Mission organised one Association of the Churches on the North Lakhimpur field and one on the Bishnath field. The Associations of the two fields had a common Treasurer and supported four evangelists. During the year 1912, the 14 Churches from the two fields raised for all purposes Rs. 1,300, which was Rs. 2-8 per member. There were 64 persons added by baptism and were then 529 members in these two fields. 12 boys from these two fields have been reading in the Jorhat school.<sup>239</sup>

After this, no report of the Mission activities on this field appeared in the Missionary reports.

236. H.B. Dickson, Report from Bishnath Field, Gauhati, December 27, 1902 to January 1, 1903.

237. Joseph Paul, Report from North Lakhimpur Field, Gauhati, December 24, 1904 to January 1, 1905.

238. John Firth, *ibid.*, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

239. John Firth, Report from North Lakhimpur, 12th Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 4-13, 1913.



## THE JORHAT FIELD

In January 1905, Rev. S.A.D. Boggs pitched his tent at Jorhat and proceeded to build a bungalow which they were able to occupy on January 9, 1906. From the first, meetings for Prayer and Bible instructions were held, and during the first year, three were baptised.<sup>240</sup> During the early part of the second year, six more were baptised, one of whom was the Mission brought up little girl named Louise, and a Church was organised. In April, 1906, Rev. Henry Goldsmith, a tried and approved worker came to Jorhat to be the Head-Assistant in the Bible School, which was opened in April 1906, with five youngmen in the second year class and 13 in the beginning class. The Christian Endeavour Society was organised among the youngmen to spread the Gospel. So Church membership at Jorhat in 1906 was altogether 11, two being added to the already 9 persons baptised.<sup>241</sup>

It was reported in 1910 that the usual Church services have been kept up regularly. The following year, they had the preaching services, Sunday school and an evening Prayer service on Sundays, Church Prayers on Wednesday evenings and Christian Endeavour meeting on Friday evenings. The Jorhat Christian Endeavour Society sent two Delegates to the World Convention at Agra.

A Bible woman has been employed for two years to visit the village homes. During 1907 and 1908, the teachers and the Missionaries along with group of boys visited the nearby villages. The total membership of the Jorhat Church for 1910 was 19.<sup>242</sup>

The boys of the school organised a preaching band among themselves and set aside a Sunday each month for singing and preaching in the bazars. They have visited a nearby village where they have broadcasted the Gospel message. 21 of the boys of the school have been baptised that year.<sup>243</sup>

240. N.P. Mason, *These Seventy-five Years*, Tura, March 31, 1911.

241. S.A.D. Boggs, *Report from Jorhat Field*, Gauhati, January 5-12, 1907.

242. *Ibid.*, Tenth Biennial Session, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

243. Victor H. Sword & J.A. Ahlquist, *ibid.*, Jorhat, December 2-10, 1926.

Jorhat being the centre of education, Medical Care and other Technical Education, the evangelistic works were carried on through these institutions. However, in 1938, it was reported that three Bible women have gone out faithfully to the villages around Jorhat with Gospel message. Besides going to Hindu villages, they have been teaching a group of young women recently baptised and also visited some lonely Christian homes.

The Bible women attended three association meetings and the Assam Baptist Convention at Harisingha in Mongoldoi district. At each of these, they had special meetings with the women and children and at the Convention over 600 attended the women's meeting on Sunday in spite of rain. In 1932, it was voted to ask all the Christian women to give four annas a year for the women's Union in addition to the giving of hand-riced and offerings to the Church. The response was good and there was a balance of Rs. 225, out of which Rs. 100 was given to the Gauhati Orphanage.<sup>244</sup>

It was reported in 1940 that in the village work, they have visited many villages in the Jorhat district with very interesting experiences. Several times, some non-Christians came to the Missionary bungalow for further enlightenment on Christianity. Many times the Missionaries were refused permission to preach in the village, while they were also received in another village on the same day.<sup>245</sup>

The Bible school students organised themselves into groups doing practical work so that they would get experience in various fields, such as, bazar preaching, hospital visitation, conducting Sunday services, teaching, etc.<sup>246</sup>

It was reported in 1944 that the evangelistic work had not carried out extensively in the village churches and in the districts. But nearby villages have been visited and they attended the Association meetings in Darrang, North Lakhimpur and Golaghat.<sup>247</sup>

It was reported in 1946 that the Bible school boys went out

244. E.R. Paul, Report from Jorhat Field, 1938.

245. E.B. Christenson, *ibid.*, Jorhat, January 4-9, 1940.

246. J.W. Cook, *ibid.*, Golaghat, December 4-9, 1941.

247. E.B. Christenson, *ibid.*, Nowgong, November 9-13, 1944.

preaching as part of their practical works. Every boy was required to do some practical work each week.<sup>248</sup> The Missionaries accompanied by the Bible school students went out to villages near about the Compound. Weekly Bible study and Sunday school classes were also started in the Police lines. In most cases, people were eager to buy a copy of the Bible. They have sold Gospels in Bengali, Oriya, Hindi, Urdu, English, Assamese and Nepali languages. The women of the Christian Community raised over Rs. 1,000 for benevolent purposes.<sup>249</sup>

The Missionary report for 1949 said that many went out on preaching tours to other areas. The teachers in the Bible school, like Longri Ao, Raising K. Marak and Clement Saikia helped greatly in the evangelistic activities, and in the school.<sup>250</sup>

248. J.W. Cook, Report from Jorhat Field, Gauhati, December 6-10, 1946.

249. E.B. Christenson, *ibid.*, Jorhat, December 10-14, 1947.

250. J.W. Cook, *ibid.*, Jorhat, January 11-16, 1949.

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## Arunachal Pradesh

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### THE SADIYA FIELD FOR NORTH-EAST FRONTIER TRIBES

In 1836, a most humble beginning of the Mission work was started in the eastern-most Station at Sadiya. At that time, Sadiya was a frontier station affording a promising opportunity to prosecute work for the surrounding hill tribes. Years later, Sadiya was again opened as a frontier Station and the base of the Mission work for the Daplas, Hill Miris, Singphos, Mishmis, Kamptis, Abors and the plain Miris by the American Baptist Mission.

For ages, the tribes on the north-east border of Assam, the northern borders of Burma and the western borders of China have lived their own way of life. Sadiya was a door-way of opportunity for reaching many of these tribes. Assam was entered in 1836 and Sadiya opened as a Mission Station in order to reach the Shans on the north-eastern frontiers and through them to enter China and Tibet. In 1913, that is, after 77 years it appeared to the Missionaries as if they were going to fulfil the aims and aspirations of the pioneer Missionaries. After the Mission work at Sadiya had been established for three years, the work was destroyed by the Kampti war. These early Missionaries had started the work for the Singphos and Kamptis, but hardly a trace of this work remained. Sadiya as a Mission Station was closed for 66 years, that is, from 1839 to 1905, and when it was reopened, the original object was lost

sight of and Sadiya was reopened for the purpose of evangelising the Miri and Abor tribes.<sup>1</sup>

Sadiya and its neighbourhood on the north bank was reopened to Mission work in 1900 when Messers Savidge and Lorraine of the Arthington Aborigines Mission settled down at Sadiya and prepared to evangelise the Abors.<sup>2</sup>

### **Work for Daplas and Hill Miris**

In 1905, in response to an invitation by Government Officers, one of the Baptist Missionaries made a tour of 250 miles by pony, trap, elephant, boat and on foot for the purpose of discovering the prospects for Mission work among the Daplas and Hill Miris. The north Lakhimpur and Bishnath fields were traversed from end to end. Both the Daplas and Hill Miris lived back of the first low range of mountains, and their outlets to the plains were down the beds of a number of rivers which cut through this range.

The Daplas consisted of two tribes divided by the Boroi river. They extended from the Aka inhabited areas on the west to that of the Hill Miris on the east, a territory some 60 miles long by 40 miles broad. The two dialects of this tribe differed considerably, but each section was well understood by the other that there would be no difficulty in doing Mission work for both the tribes.

The Daplas who came down and lived on the plains for some years were, as a group, subjected to much sickness and many of the men have taken to opium.

The Hill Miris extended from the Daplas on the west to the Passi-Minyong Abors on the east. The tribe had two divisions—Sarag and Gechi. The dialects of these two sections differed but little, and they but little trouble in understanding the Daplas. The Sarags in dress and language in some respects resembled the Daplas, while the Gechis in some respects resembled the Abors. The Gechi-Miris were sometimes called the

1. Rev. H.W. Kirby, Report from Sadiya Field, Gauhati, January, 4-13, 1913.

2. A.J. Parker, Report from Dibrugarh Field, Gauhati, December, 22-31, 1900.

Galongs. Thus the whole field extending from the western Daplas to and including the Bor Abors was joined.

All the tribes, *viz.*, Daplas, Miris and Abors on the Sadiya field were so related that the work for both the eastern and western sections organised with the whole field in view.<sup>3</sup>

### **Work for Mishmis**

The Mishmis seemed to offer one of the grandest opportunities for the Assam Mission. They were described by Mr. Williamson after his visit among them as comparing in manners most favourably with the Abors. They were very hardy race living in a mountainous tract extending for about 110 miles between the plains of Assam and Tibet, in the Lohit valley. It was the dream of Mr. Williamson, the former British Assistant Political Officer, to build a road through this valley and so link Assam with Tibet and western China and so open a channel through which it was believed a tremendous flow of trade would follow, and by which, Chinese coolies could be recruited for Assam Tea gardens. The Government was sparing no effort to complete this road as far as possible. Government officers, thousands of coolies, mules and carts were all hard at work, from Sadiya to Rima which was just inside Tibet was 160 miles. About 50 miles from Sadiya at the entrance to the gorge leading into the Mishmi hills was a place called Temi. Here a camp has been set up, a field hospital established and a post office opened. In this 50 miles of plains, there was but a small population consisting of a few Assamese and Kamptis. The advance party building the road have now passed Temi and gone about 35 or 40 miles beyond. It was about this place in the year 1854 that two French Missionaries who had penetrated this far were killed. Since that day no Missionary has entered the Mishmi Hill. Their language was still unreduced to writing and the people were ignorant of Christian religion. The population of these hills was unknown, their villages were very small, most of the villages contained but a few houses, yet one house generally contained several generation. Williamson mentioned one house that contained the husband, six wives,

3. Rev. L.W.B. Jackman, Report from Sadiya Field, Gauhati, January, 4-13, 1913.

fourteen sons, nine daughters, thirteen sons' wives, twenty-three slaves, and counting children, there were seventy-nine people living in one house. The people were all Spirit worshippers and so far Buddhism and Hinduism have made no adherents among them. The people made their living by small cultivation and lots of trading. They brought into Sadiya musk pods, rubber, wax and medicinal herb called Mishmi Tetar of which several thousand rupees worth was sold annually mainly for the Chinese markets. An Assistant Political Officer has been appointed for the Mishmi Hills and a Station was to be opened at Walungs, a place only about ten miles this side of Rima. Here the altitude was about 3200 ft. The temperature was below freezing in winter, the climate was healthy and the scenery grand.

### **Work for Kamptis**

The Kamptis near Sadiya lived mainly on the Tenga Poni river about two or three days journey from Sadiya. They are a branch of the Shans from northern Burma and numbered less than 5000 persons. They were all Buddhists, had a school in each village and had Priests who had been to Burma. They have been exceedingly appreciative of medical work. One trip in which Rev. Kirby and his wife went, they were only away from the bungalow thirteen days, yet they treated 700 patients, the people giving liberally of rice, eggs, etc. When they left the King's village, he ordered every house to give them one seer of clean rice. Among these villages, the rice crop was three times as much as the people could eat. They also caught elephants, had slaves, paid no taxes and were well-off. Buddhism had done a lot for these people and had given them considerable culture, yet the Missionaries felt that there was a hunger among the people for something better. They have preached Christianity by the aid of a Steriopticon in almost all their villages, and everywhere they have had the friendly reception. When Dr. Barbour visited the Kirbys, he was taken to a Kampti village where no Missionary had ever before entered. They preached in their Temple Courtyard, hanging their Lantern Sheet to the walls of the temple. Two weeks journey from Sadiya over the mountains, they came to the Bor Kampti areas known as Komptielong. This place has been described as an ideal spot for a Mission Station. They have met many of those people as

they came to Sadiya to trade, and again they have met many of them in Kampti villages, when they listened to the preaching. Their headmen have frequently invited the Kirbys into their villages offering also to provide all the coolies needed. As far as the political reasons were concerned, it would be perfectly safe to enter their country, and the last Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Bentinck, was quite friendly to the entering of the Missionaries into their country. Many of the Kamptis that came to Sadiya to trade also crossed over to northern Burma and then went to Myitkyma to trade.

The Kamptis were also a small branch of the Shan tribe, yet their influence was far greater than their numbers. They raised opium in their villages, and many of them used it. One Headman told Kirby that it took Rs. 1 every day to provide opium for his family. The people realised the curse of opium and many of them were trying hard to break the habits.

The Kamptis had a written language of their own differing little from the Shans. The Priests read Burmese and taught it in their schools. Captain B.E.A. Prichard who crossed in 1912 from Myitkyima to Sadiya, going through the Bor Kampti country, was four months on the journey. He crossed over a range 12,000 ft. high, in the snows, his coolies deserted him and he lost most of his kits. Captain Prichard, the greatest explorer on the north-eastern frontiers, also bore this testimony to Missionaries, "In all his travels in China and Burma where the Missionary had been there, the people were most kind and friendly. Real explorers always found that Missionaries were their friends."

The Burmese Government at that time was making great effort to find a boundary of Kampti, and it is said that Chinese officials were at that time in Komptilong and were demanding food and labour without pay. In December, 1912, an expedition left Myitkyima for Kamptilong consisting of 150 Military Police and three British Officers, one of these officers had died of fever in the jungle.

### **Work for Singphos**

The Singphos corresponded to the Kachins of Burma, and the Kachins are said to be the most intelligent and to have the best physique of all the tribes of north Burma. Near Sadiya, the



Singphoes were mainly on the Noa Dehing river stretching off into the Hukong valley. They came into close contact with the Kamptis and were taking on the Buddhist religion. Away from the Kamptis, the Singphoes were all Spirit worshippers. In Government Circles, they were then considering whether the Hukong valley be attached to the Province of Burma or Assam, and a railroad was planned to go through the Hukong valley and so link up Burma and Assam. One of the Gospels has been translated into Singpho. While the Singphos were a Kachin tribe, yet the dialect used was different. From Sadiya to Myitkyina in northern Burma was 285 miles by road through the Hukong valley.

With regard to evangelisation, during 1911-12, 17 were baptised and the membership in 1913 was 55. But when there was rejoicing in the baptism of several school boys, there had been sorrow as some of the baptised ones have violated Church rules and had to be dismissed. Even the pastor resigned and Rev. Kirby had to take the services himself, assisted at time by different members. Siakwa Church Services have been sustained for the last two years at Siakwa, but the work there has suffered much because there has not been a good preacher or lack of organisation.<sup>4</sup>

It was reported in 1915 that some progress has been made in organisation, looking towards for more intensive work among both the Abors and Miris. But the doors were closed again to the Mission work because of the trouble between the Abors and the British Government resulting on the murder of the British Political Officer, Mr. Williamson. However, in about 1911, the door was again opened to the Missionaries and some persons were baptised and others were awaiting baptism.

### **Work for Abors**

During the last months of 1913, the Missionaries were able to do much medical work among the Abors during an epidemic of ulcers from which they were suffering. Following this up, a school was established early in 1914 in one village on the plains and continued encouragingly through the year.

4. Rev. H.W. Kirby, Report from Sadiya Field, Gauhati, January, 4-13, 1913.

The largest hill village near the plains fairly begged the Missionaries to come to them and offered to build a house for the Missionary, Jackman and his family to live among them as long as they wished. The same village has been asking for a school. But the advance into the hills had to be postponed as even Government officials could not go among these villages outside of British territory without a military escort. But so far as these people were concerned, the country has been opened to the Missionaries for months.

The two Garo evangelists sent by the Churches of the Garo Hills for work on these frontiers, have been with the Jackmans several months. They both went to work among the Abors, learning the language and engaged in school and medical work.

### **Work for the Miris**

During the summer, a Centre for the Miri work was established on the Subansiri river, some four miles above Badati. At Dogoria, the Mission Out-Station, they have by that time two evangelists, a motor-boat assistant in-charge of the "Mishing" and a boy. The Missionaries planned to work for the Miris from that Centre. The Motor Cruiser "Mishing" has continued to be of the greatest assistance in this work along the rivers.

### **Work in Assamese Immigrants**

This work was located principally in the Sadiya station and nearby territory. Two small churches were however on the south side of the Brahmaputra which was properly the Dibrugarh Field.

A pastor was appointed and the churches numbered 76 members. Nine were added by baptism during the year and the total number of Christians enrolled on the field was 93. In the Sadiya Church, there were Bengali, Assamese, Garo, Rabha, Nepali, Tibetan, Deswali, Kachari and some Manipuris expressed wish to become Christians.<sup>5</sup>

It was reported in 1916 that the two Missionaries, Swanson and Bowers took a trip together up the Brahmaputra in the Launch. Here they were not only robbed in Sibsagar but also

5. L.W.B. Jackman, Report from Sadiya Field, Golaghat, January, 9-18, 1915.

ran into the big flood. The work among the Abors seemed very promising. There were three churches and 8 baptisms during the past year.<sup>6</sup>

Kirby reported in 1917 saying that there was no Missionary on the Station until the return of the Kirby in December, 1915. All the work—medical, evangelical and educational, was in need of reorganisation. The medical work had almost ceased to be, the Compounder in-Charge was not leading a Christian life. In the church, there were many quarrels. For months all the Station work was in Mrs. Kirby's charge.

There had been no baptism in the Sadiya Church but in the work at Saikoa Church, there was more to encourage. The Christians there have built a good new church at their own expense and 15 persons have been baptised. The little Church at Kurigaon has almost died out of lack of care.<sup>7</sup>

The Missionary report for 1926 stated that that year has been strange and unusual to the Missionary John Selander in many respects. They started off with a trip up to Parasram Kund in the middle of January, 1926, joining the unusual throng of weary pilgrims to that sacred shrine. Thousands came because of the eclipse, this being especially propitious. Hundreds who had come the 47 miles up above Sadiya, were unable to cross over Mishmi Ghat and proceed the remaining five miles to the pools. Here the Missionaries worked among the pilgrims, going from group to group encamped there on boulder-strewn shore waiting for a possible chance to cross, or resting on their way back. 700 Gospels in Hindi, Nepali and Assamese were sold, and over 1500 tracts distributed.

### **Work in the Plains**

In February, 1926, the Missionaries toured the district in Sadiya field visiting all the Churches on the Doomdooma side, culminating in the Annual Associational gathering at Gohaingaon. Not being in the centre of the district, the attendance was not a record-breaker but much good work was done.

The Missionaries held a nine days' Bible Class in Sadiya in

6. A.C. Bowers, Report from Sadiya Field, Nowgong, February, 17-24, 1916.

7. H.W. Kirby, *ibid.*, Sibsagar, January, 15-22, 1917.

April, 1926. The attendance from the district was over fifty. The class was the first venture and the students were enthusiastic about it.

The preaching band has been touring the district in March and November. New villages have been visited and much preaching in the bazars and tea gardens has been done. Five regular evangelists have been employed—One Garo (ordained), one Assamese, one Telegu, one Oriya and one Munda. A new worker has been also engaged for part time work for Ledo. Two churches have been organised, one of Oriya and one of Mundas. Baptisms numbered 47 for the year.

In July, 1926, they had the dedication of a Chapel in Dheodaam. The Manager of the tea gardens gave this to the Oriya Christians on his garden. In Doomdooma, the Missionary bought a plot of land and erected a chapel. During the Durga puja festivals, the Missionary spent three days preaching in Doomdooma. The people seemed to listen attentively but the Missionary was not sure whether they were simply tolerating his message. One new worker, a Koch was employed, and one old worker re-engaged. The Assamese worker has been busy touring the Sadiya villages, and last month, the Missionaries used the Magic Lantern for twenty-two nights in different villages.<sup>8</sup>

### DIBRU-SADIYA FIELD

The Sadiya and Dibrugarh fields have been combined and the work began. In 1936, there were 31 churches and a total of 966 members with 124 baptisms during the year. In 1935 O.L. Swanson made several tours, attended the Annual Association and the Bible Class. The new Church buildings have been erected during the year. One of these was Limbugiri Tea Estate. Several schools have been opened in the Abor hills with Christian Abor boys as teachers.<sup>9</sup>

In December 1936, there were 33 churches and a total membership of 1270 with 130 baptisms in the Dibru-Sadiya field. The Swansons have left for America and the responsibility

8. John. Selander, *ibid.*, Jorhat, December 2-10, 1926.

9. O.L. Swanson, Report from Dibru-Sadiya Field, Jorhat, February 3-6, 1936.

of this field fell upon Mr. and Mrs. Holm. Mr. and Mrs. Holm made three trips to Sadiya, the third trip being with Dr. Howard. Mr. Holm and Howard baptised a good number of converts. Among the nine candidates, there were Hindus, a Roman Catholic, a Muslim, a Brahman and two from the sweepers caste. Their visit and Church services meant a great deal to the spiritual life of the Sadiya Church.<sup>10</sup>

In December after the Christmas of 1936, John Selander made a trip into the Abor land, visiting the villages from which the Mission High School boys came. Night after night, these Abor boys helped Selander in telling the story of Christ to their own people. Selander was much encouraged by these youngmen and felt that they would soon be prepared to help him more effectively as teachers and preachers. Selander found a remarkable change in the attitude of the Abor villages as they were most friendly. In March, 1937, Mr. Supplee came to help the Selanders for 8 days in the Bible Class at Sadiya. On Easter day, Selander baptised four, three of them were Abors. New places in the plains have been opened up for evangelisation. The preaching band has toured these places during the year and 134 baptisms have been reported.<sup>11</sup>

It was reported that the Annual Association meeting held in 1938 at Gohaingaon was the best annual meeting held so far. To meet the growing needs for the support of the work of the Association, new stimulus was given to the Women's hand rice fund, and a budget of Rs. 1,000 was adopted for the coming year. The baptism for the year numbered 188.<sup>12</sup>

It was reported that the year 1939 has been full of a variety of experience, both sad and glad. It started with a full month of touring in both fields in January, followed by taking part in six Associational gatherings. The result of the adoption of a definite budget in the Dibru-Sadiya Association was most encouraging. The previous year's goal of Rs. 1,000 was exceeded by Rs. 130, and ten Churches exceeded their allotment.

In July, they had a Church dedication on Rajghor Tea Estate near Dibrugarh where a group of Oriya have been

10. R.W. Holm, *ibid.*, Gauhati, December 1-6, 1936.

11. John Selander, *ibid.*, Sadiya, December, 8-13, 1937.

12. John Selander, *ibid.*, 1938.

organised into a church. Three other Oriya Churches have sprung up during the year in the Doomdooma district. The number of baptisms reported last February was 219, the largest thus far in the Dibru-Sadiya field.<sup>13</sup>

The Missionary report for 1941 stated that the annual meeting at Pukrijan last February was the 20th anniversary of the Mission Church Association. Norendro Singh related the history of the beginnings and growth of the work in various centres. In April, they had a week's Bible Class in Godalobong, serving the Churches in the Jaipur district. On Sunday a dozen were baptised in the Dilli river. The Mission evangelists have been found loyal, faithful and untiring in the service among the churches.<sup>14</sup>

It was reported in 1944 that the year has gone remarkably swiftly. Miss. Bonney and Miss. Langhin have kept busy looking after the work among the churches of this field, the Abor Boys' School and Assamese Girls' Primary School at Sadiya, plus the two houses of Burma refugees and their school. In between times they have been at home to various American troops, both officers and enlisted men. The evangelistic work has been supervised by Rev. Kotolu Minz and Rev. Norendra Singh. They have given unstintingly their time and energy riding back and forth to the churches on their bicycles, through mud and rain, dangerous traffic and dust. There have been over 200 baptisms during the year.<sup>15</sup>

The 25th Annual Association of the Dibru-Sadiya field was held at Pukrijan in 1946, the Mission's eldest church. In the same year, 24 men of this field attended the Bible Conference in Golaghat.

Somehow the Mission has muddled through the first year of the post-world war. Tremendous changes have taken place, especially in the upper Assam districts where once 2,00,000 Government of India officers and men were busy in the prosecution of the war, nothing remained but warehouses, ruins and wreckages. The Government of India's troops were glad to be

13. John Selander, *ibid.*, Jorhat, January 4-9, 1940.

14. John Selander, *ibid.*, December, 4-9, 1941.

15. Miss. Laughin, Report from Dibru-Sadiya, Nowgong, November, 9-13, 1944.

off for home when their task was done. But the Mission's task was never done. For the Mission, there can be no vacation, no armistice, no truce and no compromise.

The post-war Planning Committee has assigned two new stations to this district—one on the Ledo Road and one for the Tinsukia area, where thousands of Americans swarmed in 1945 and evangelisation was not yet possible in 1940.

In 1946 the Abors work has been limited to the station school. The Abors came in greater numbers from different villages to study. The plain Miris, formerly unreachable, have also come. The Government started giving attention to the Abors. Outposts have been established at nine days' walk up the Tsangpo river and an airstrip where planes can land has been built.<sup>16</sup>

It was reported in 1947 that there were 35 Churches in the Dibru-Sadiya Association and 33 of them contributed over Rs. 5,000 to the work of the Association. The work in the Ledo area was especially promising through the devotion of Lukas Swin. In Doomdooma, the Association has built a new Chapel. The baptisms during the year numbered 167.<sup>17</sup>

### THE ABOR WORK

In 1947, Mr. and Mrs. Vining had been in-charge of the Chapel Services and the work programme of this field. The singing has shown marked improvement under Vining's leadership.

The tribes on the north-eastern frontiers were at last receiving serious considerations by the Central Government. Road building, medical, educational and agricultural development and military defence were being stressed. The Missionary saw in these events the dawn of a new day for these tribes.<sup>18</sup>

In 1948, the Missionaries have used Flannelgraph lessons and found the Abors eager to watch and listen. A Sunday evening service in Sadiya for Abors in the Abor language has been

16. John Selander, *ibid.*, Gauhati, December 6-10, 1946.

17. John Selander, *ibid.*, Jorhat, December 10-14, 1947.

18. John Selander, Report from Dibru-Sadiya, Jorhat, December 10-14, 1947.

started with great success. In the Abor villages along the edge of the mountains inside the Excluded area, the Missionary showed lantern slides and distributed medicines. The people were friendly and interested and gave the Missionaries warm welcome and invitation to return.<sup>19</sup> It was reported in 195 that though the Missionaries were not permitted to set their foot across the Inner Line Boundary of the Abor Hills and Mishmi Hills districts, progress of preaching has not been negligible. The Council of Chieftains has reserved a tract of land for use as a permanent Mission Station. Visits have been made to nearby villages and lengthy discussions have been held, songs sung and personal relationship has been strengthened.

The Miris also invited the Missionaries with requests for more Bibles. The Miri villages were largely outside the Inner Line restrictions and the Missionaries have decided to enter there.

Three Padams, two Galongs and two Miris accompanied the Missionary to the Ao Association. The Abor wife of a Sema Naga was baptised, the first Abor woman to be baptised. Soon after, another Abor woman was baptised. There has been good response to visits to local Abor houses where medicines have been carried into. The first issue of the Abor newspaper "Sangar" (Crack of Dawn) came off in mimeograph papers just before Christmas.<sup>20</sup>

19. Rev. W. Vining, *ibid.*, Jorhat, January 11-16, 1949.

20. Rev. W. Vining, *ibid.*, Golaghat, January 3-9, 1950.



# Meghalaya

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## THE GARO FIELD

The American Baptist Mission had extended their activities among the Garos of the south Goalpara and the Garo Hills districts. But the history of the beginning of the Mission in those areas went back many a year. For generations, the Garos had been regarded with dread by their neighbours and were an annoyance and perplexity to the Government, so much so, that in 1867, the Chief Commissioner of Assam pronounced them "blood-thirsty savages, most desperated and incorrigible," and expressed what seemed to him a precarious hope that the work of the Mission among them might meet them with success.<sup>1</sup>

However, the Garos had appealed to the Missionaries and to the Government alike. In fact, Major Jenkins contemplated the Christianization of the Garos even before the British Mission began to operate in Assam. Again in 1837, Major Jenkins, after Rev. Nathan Brown arrived at Sadiya, suggested the establishment of a Mission Station at Gauhati, "with a particular view to the Garos."<sup>2</sup> Nathan Brown agreed that "the Garos would present a field of extensive usefulness,"<sup>3</sup> but the Home Board was unable to furnish Missionaries to meet all the

1. Rev. E.G. Phillips, Historical sketch of the Garo Field, Jubilee, Issue, Nowgong, December, 18-29, 1886.

2. Letter from Brown, dated January 13, 1837, Quoted in B.M.M. 1838.

3. V.H. Sword, Baptists in Assam, pp. 92-93.

needs and so, the Garos were left untouched until 1847, when the Government established a School at Goalpara, for Garo boys, hoping thereby to gain some influence and control over this fierce and untamable tribe. Their purpose had been realised but not as they thought. Ten boys were brought into the school, two of whom afterwards became the first Garo converts and first two Christian workers. Five others were among the first converts and for years earnest and efficient workers. Of these seven, three were afterwards ordained to the ministry.<sup>4</sup>

### **Omed W. Momin and Ramke W. Momin**

No historical account of the beginning of Christianity in this Garo field could be complete without a special reference to these two first converts—Omed and Ramke. They were uncle and nephew and both were eager to learn the alphabets. In fact, Omed used to take Ramke along with him to the plain weekly market where there was a Cutchery of the Bijni zamindar where the office clerks taught them the letters of the Bengali alphabets. They then began tracing the figures on a milestone, and copying them in the dust with a stick. Soon they tried such characters and symbols as they saw on bits of paper or bales of goods at the market. In this way, Omed learned to speak a little both in Assamese and Bengali during these visits to the plains. They could not continue this process as Ramke's father valued his services more at the Jhums, and Omed did not like to come alone. But one day in 1847 news was circulated at the Rongjuli market that the Government wanted boys for a school at Goalpara, and would feed, clothe, and teach them turning them out great men. Immediately Omed with his nephew Reban and two others, Ramsing and Jongrin were enroute to Goalpara.<sup>5</sup> Ramke, a boy of 11 or 12 years old, was for a time prevented by his step-father, who wanted his help on the cultivation more than his education. But soon a broken and weakened arm removed this obstacle. From his childhood, Ramke had a religious turn

4. Rev. E.G. Phillips, Jubilee Issue, Nowgong, December, 18-29, 1886.

5. Ramke Momin, *Kristo Bandhob or Autobiography of Ramke*, A'chik Ripeng, May 1912; Vide also W. Carey, *The Garo Jungle Book*, p. 54.

of mind. While a boy, he believed in the demons and was diligent in always trying to appease them, often trapping wild birds to sacrifice to them. After entering the school at Goalpara six months later, he became distressed by the drear prospect of future transmigration, an article of Garo creed, and especially by the prospect of being separated thus in after-life from loved ones. In this distress and unrest, he conceived that there must be a Spirit "better and stronger; wiser and greater" than Garo demons, and that this Spirit could bless him, if it so chose. So he prayed to this Spirit for blessing repeatedly, until soon, he says, he saw, on one occasion, a visible appearance and had audible assurance that his prayer was heard. As he could by that time read Bengali, he began reading the Hindu scriptures, and felt convinced that Rama or Vishnu was this great, good Spirit. But soon he read a tract that destroyed his faith in these, and he was thrown back into distress and unrest.

After two years of schooling at Goalpara, Omed has enlisted as a sepoy at Gauhati and after several years, Ramke went and lived with him, and attended the Gauhati Government Normal School. He reported his difficulties to his uncle Omed. They decided that of all the religions, the Christian religion was most desirable. They consequently put themselves under the instruction of Kandura Smith, the pastor of the Gauhati Church, but soon Ramke was called back to Goalpara, to take a post of Head Constable. The worldly cares and pleasures soon deadened his conviction, but a tract again aroused him. He desired to go to Gauhati but could not get permission. But on account of his broken arm, he got his services dismissed and at once returned to Gauhati, and was soon with Omed baptised by Dr. Miles Bronson on February 8, 1863, on the Sukheswar Ghat at Gauhati.

After having accepted Christianity as their new religion, they wanted to take it to their fellow Garos in the hills. Ramke had again entered the Government Service as a Writer in the Chief Commissioner's Office. They obtained dismissal from Service, and in March 1864, returned to propagate the new religion among their own people. They went out as Mission Assistants, but under the immediate supervision of Captain Morton, then Deputy Commissioner of Goalpara. From Goalpara they went first to their own relatives, and during a few months, six

or seven persons accepted this new religion. Omed took them with him and established a new village called Rajasimla, which was for some years a nucleus and always one of the important Christian villages. To this new centre, others, brought under the influence of Christianity, from time to time gathered in. After spending six or seven months among his relatives, Ramke opened a School at Damra where he remained most of the time, until 1866 when he and Rangku, his cousin took up wasteland nearby and established a village called Nishan-gram, which became the centre of Christian influence.<sup>6</sup> Rangku, the third Garo convert, resigned from the Police regiment in order to give full-time service to the spread of Christianity among his own people, and was baptised by Bronson on April 6, 1866 at Nowgong. In recommending his case to the Garo Mission, Mrs. Bronson wrote.

“We have now another Garrow labourer, who will soon be sent to join the two brethren already there. He is a jewel. We were surprised and delighted to find this man so well grounded in the doctrine of the Bible. His talents are of the highest order. But his Christian character is what gives us most satisfaction. The influence of his example has been most salutary on the members of the Church and the school. His faith in God, his vivid conception of spiritual things, and his consecration to the cause of Christ give him a weight, a momentum that exceeds anything we have seen among his people. We are so accustomed to halting, timid disciples that it is an unspeakable satisfaction to find in this man a valiant for the Truth. We trust he will prove an example indeed to the Garrows.<sup>7</sup>”

He eventually proved himself worthy of the high recommendations made by Mrs. Bronson by dedicating his time and energy to the cause of the spread of Christianity among his people and by remaining steadfast to the Truth that he had found till the end of his life.

6. E.G. Phillips, *Historical sketch of the Garo Field, Jubilee, Nowgong, 1886.*

7. Letter from Mrs. Bronson, dated Nowgong, April 13, 1866.

During these early years of Mission work at Damra, Ramke's religious influence was strong and marked. It was his custom to observe one day each week as a day of fasting and special prayer. Omed continued working as an evangelist, for the former was a born teacher while the latter was a born preacher.

Rangku was a welcome re-enforcement at the Garo field, but the converts no less than Bronson longed for a full time Missionary. Omed suggested this from the very beginning and now Captain Morton was urging it. Bronson was more perplexed especially when he received a letter signed by eight Garos representing different villages, The letter says.

“This is our request. Our brethren Omed and Ramke have come to us bringing in their hands a Holy Book which tells that Jesus Christ, the son of God, took the nature and form of man and made an atonement for the sins of men. At first we paid little attention to their words, but our brother Omed ceased not to explain to us the many evidences of the power and attributes of the great God and of his love to us (sinners). He also showed us the folly of worshipping senseless idols. . . . Therefore we make request that a Missionary be sent to be our guide. . . . Do not cease your efforts for us. This is our prayer”.

Signed :

Wanet	Village of Dilma
Chakin	Village of Dilma
Nedha	Village of Dilma
Kangora	Village of Dilma
Baneng	Village of Bangshi
Nata	Village of Dambora
Saga	Village of Dambora
Fokira	Village of Kotopata.

To a man of Bronson's spirit, such a letter as this was like a spark of tinder. It set him aflame. Rangku's letters further fanned this desire and at last he resolved to go.<sup>8</sup>

8. William Carey, *The Garo Jungle Book*, pp. 95-101; vide also E.G. Phillips, *Historical sketch of Garo Field*, Jubilee, 1886.

Thus in April, 1867, three years after Omed and Ramke returned to their people, Bronson, then located at Nowgong, visited this Garo field, and arriving at the Rajasimla village on April 14, 1867, baptised 37 converts and organised these, with Omed, Ramke and Rangku, into a Church of 40 members. He also ordained Omed as their pastor, charging them to "range the hills, to preach, to baptise, to do the work of a Christian pastor" and "to be faithful until death". The news of this beginning was heart-cheering to the friends in America who had begun to look on Assam as a barren field.

While Bronson was doing this work joyfully, Revs. I. J. Stoddard and M. B. Comfort with their wives, were passing up the river Brahmaputra, designated to Gauhati. On his way back, while in Goalpara, Bronson, appreciating the necessity of occupying Goalpara as a Mission Station for the Garos, purchased a house and compound for Rs. 800. To meet this expense and begin work, he raised by subscription Rs. 1119, mostly from residents of Goalpara. On reaching Gauhati and consulting Revs. Stoddard and Comfort, they decided that Goalpara should be occupied with as little delay as possible. The society approved, and in October, 1867, Rev. and Mrs. Stoddard moved to Goalpara. Goalpara was chosen because it was considered inexpedient to attempt living in the hostile interior, and because this was a Government Station only 9 or 10 miles from the hills, and not more than 30 miles from the centre of the work.

Thus the year 1867 was closed with a Church of forty members, an ordained Pastor, Omed, three other local assistants, with two schools, one at Damra taught by Ramke W. Momin, and second at Rajasimla taught by Fokira W. Momin, brother of Ramke and one of the first pupils of Ramke at Damra school.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Goalpara Field**

Rev. and Mrs. Stoddard have shifted to Goalpara in October, 1867 with a view to work among the Garos. During the first months of 1868, Stoddard visited many Garo villages, baptised a good number of people and was much encouraged in

9. E.G. Phillips, Historical sketch of Garo Field, Jubilee, 1886.

his work. He for the first time sat for Holy communion along with 72 Garo Christians.

The Government has already located, experimentally, station with several English officers at Tura, hoping to get control over the tribe to stop their bloody raids for heads against the people of the plains. In March 1868, Stoddard visited Tura and anticipated that ere long a Mission Station might be opened there. After returning from Tura, he and Mrs. Stoddard attempted living at Damra for a while that they might have more direct supervision of the school there, which by then has become the Training or Normal School for the Mission. But they were compelled to return to Goalpara early in July, on account of Stoddard's illness.

During the winter season of 1869-70, Rev. Comfort was with Stoddard in some of his work in the villages. After the close of the winter season, the Damra school was brought to Goalpara for the rains. In 1870, it was recommended by the Lieutenant-Governor, and seconded by the Chief Commissioner that the Mission at least occupy Tura as a Station, if not, remove there from Goalpara. It was also suggested that a Medical Missionary be sent there, and that, if able to perform the duties at the Station, an appropriation from Government might be made for his support.

In January, 1871, Stoddard in company with Bronson and Comfort, visited Tura again. They were convinced that the Station should be occupied, and with that in view selected a site for Mission premises. They strongly represented to the society at the desirability of occupying Tura, and urged reinforcement of the Mission. They left a Garo Christian school teacher there, and with him two youngmen from the Normal school. These were employed for a part of the time by Government as vaccinators, and a few months later passed through the hills to Goalpara. At first the people sought to turn them back, but when it was found that they were vaccinators, they were welcomed, and so had an opportunity, the first in all the region, of preaching to hundreds.

On January 15, 1872, Rev. and Mrs. T.J. Keith arrived and joined the Mission at Goalpara. During the winter season of 1872-73, there occurred one of those bloody raids that have been repeated from times immemorial. A hostile village raided

upon a Garo village under British protection, and carried off the heads of 16 unoffensive men, women and children. The Government was tried beyond endurance and resolved to annex the whole tribe. A military expedition was sent into the hills. The people saw the odds against them and submitted after a resistance at Rongrengre. With one but one less on both sides, the whole hills were annexed. Under the able administration of Captain J.W. Williamson, the first Deputy Commissioner of Garo Hills district, the Garos having no alternative, have accepted the new conditions of things and soon the whole hills were open to Mission work.

Early in 1873, Stoddard was obliged to return to America on account of broken health, Mrs. had already preceded him. He had during the five years of his connection with the work seen the Garo church increase from 40 to 286 members. He had seen workers trained and sent out, and the work extend all along the northern frontier. He gained a soft corner in the hearts of those gathered in by him.

In January 1874, Keith visited Tura, going in from the west, by the usual route, but returning through the centre of the hills to Goalpara. On December 19, 1874, the Mission force was again increased by the arrival at Goalpara of Revs. M.C. Mason and E.G. Phillips, with their wives. On the following April 3rd, 1875, delegates from the Garo churches or Christian communities, met at Goalpara and organised the first Garo Church Association. The churches also through their delegates pledged themselves to support an evangelist during the following year. This they have continued to do till today.

In September, 1875, Messers. Mason and Philips visited Tura, selected a new site for the Mission premises and with a balance of appropriations in hand, purchased some materials for a Mission house. The determination to occupy Tura was fully made, providence not hedging up the way. Mrs. Keith's health failing, in November, with his family, he went to Calcutta. The medical decision was imperative that he must not spend another hot season here. He himself returned, made tours among the churches, and thus introduced the new Missionaries to the work. Early in 1876, he was obliged to leave the work in inexperienced and ill-prepared hands. Keith had been only about four years on the field, but have seen



advancement all along the line, and had been enabled to make a good start in Garo literature.

### **The Tura Field**

In 1876, a small additional appropriation was made for building at Tura, and it was decided that one family go there, and the other remain in Goalpara for some time. Phillips having gone ahead and prepared a small temporary house, removed there with Mrs. Phillips in March, 1877. Interesting tent-meetings had been held, while the temporary house was being built, and there were a few enquirers. In the following May, six were baptised and soon after a Church of seven members organised. With the occupation of Tura, the Mission was so located as to begin extending its work into all parts of the hills. Government soon proposed to pass over to the Mission the whole control of the educational work of the district, with the whole grant-in-aid of schools, provided the Mission contributes a certain amount of funds, and bring the Normal school from Goalpara to Tura. This proposition was accepted and early in February, 1878, the school was taken to Tura.

The Missionaries then became convinced that if there were but two Missionaries, the best interest of the Mission would be served by their being located together at Tura. The location was such as to be nearly accessible from all parts of the district, the rainy season work could be carried on to better advantage in concert, and it was very advantageous to have the workers so near together as to be able to consult on all important matters. Consequently, Mason, in November, 1878, gave up Goalpara as a Mission Station and removed to Tura. The Executive Committee sanctioned the move and made an appropriation for another Mission house.

The Missionaries had long been asking that a Missionary lady be sent out to take up school work for the girls. On the 1st January, 1879, the Tura Mission Station had the pleasure of welcoming Miss Miriam Russell who was designated to do this work.

The first years after removing the Station to Tura were greatly broken into by the work of building. This, too, was sadly increased by a destructive fire, which swept off Mason's bungalow, only a few weeks after it was first occupied and with

it sweeping off the temporary bungalow and all the school building. This fire also destroyed nearly all the Garo books.

During the year, 1878, the Government divided the district into four sections or Mauzas, placing over each a Mauzadar. One of the ordained evangelists, Rev. Rangku W. Momin, the third Garo convert, with the sanction of the Missionaries, applied for one of these appointments and was stationed in the south-eastern quarter while school work had been done by Government along the southern frontier and occasionally an attempt made in the hills, no religious work had been done. These Mauzadars had been directed by the Government to teach the people whatever good they themselves had learned. Rangku considered this a full permission to teach religion, while he became a servant of the Government, he ceased not to be a servant of Christ. While doing Government work, he has done earnest Christian work and his influence has been widely felt for good. The south-western Mauza was placed under another Christian youngmen, and by that time, there were a good number of converts awaiting baptism, the fruit to quite an extent of his teaching. The two other Mauzadars were anything but helpful to the spread of Christianity, but one of these, has been replaced by a Christian man of long and good standing.

At Mauzadar Rangku's headquarters at Baghmara village, a school taught a few months in 1879 and then closed. In 1881 it was re-opened and in November of that year, two youngmen were baptised. Three more Christian teachers were located in this section and two years later the Missionary had baptised again another eleven believers.

On the northern side, the general progress of the work has been constant, though not without reverses. Intemperance has again and again re-asserted its power over individual members, sometimes, for a time, almost over some Churches. Because of these inconsistencies in the Christian Community, the progress of the cause stayed. For various reasons and especially just mentioned, the villages in the interior in that section when the work first began, were for a long time strongly prejudiced against Christianity. But for the past three or four years, this prejudice has been melting away. The work has also progressed into the very interior.

In 1881, Mrs. Mason's health has become so sadly impaired that rest in America was imperatively demanded. So in the spring of 1882, Mason and his family proceeded to their homeland. With much suffering Mrs. Mason reached home, and for a time seemed to rally, but on the 9th September, 1882, she left her loved ones to mourn her.

On December 25, 1883, the Tura Station was again reinforced by the arrival of Rev. C.E. Burdette. Already Mrs. Phillips' health had been sorely taxed by a long period of unbroken service and Mr. and Mrs. Phillips left for America early in the following May, regretting to see Burdette so soon forced to take the whole load.

In November, 1884, Rev. Mason arrived at Tura bringing back as his companion (her) that was formerly Mrs. Arthur of the Japan Mission. But hardly had she entered upon the threshold of her new field of labour when on the 9th December, she left her earthly abode. She lived but eleven short days after her arrival at Tura.

Shortly after this, in December, 1884, Miss Russell became Mrs. Burdette but continued her work in the Girls' school without abatement. Burdette gave special attention and much of his time to the Normal school.

Early in March, 1885, Mason and Burdette visited the southern side and baptised 21 converts, among them influential Lasker named Bong Sangma and his wife and the work advanced all along the southern part. In the following October, Mr. and Mrs. Burdette, in compliance with the direction of the Society, removed to Gauhati to meet a long-felt need in that field. Meantime Mrs. Phillips' health has been restored and on January 28, 1886, Mr. and Mrs. Phillips, in company with Misses Ella C. Bond and Stella H. Mason, arrived at Tura. The work of the field was again divided, as in former years, Mason having charge of the Church and schools on the northern side, while Phillips has charge of the Station school and of the work in the southern part of the hills.<sup>10</sup>

According to the Missionary report for 1889, the three years since the Jubilee Conference have been years of toil, and illnesses to which all the Missionaries have been more or less

10. E.G. Phillips, Jubilee Issue, 1886.

subjected. Soon after returning from the Jubilee Conference, Walter Mason was for a time desperately ill, but he was restored and sent to America in March, 1887. In April, Miss Orrell Keeler from Nowgong came to help in the work for the Garos but soon she was taken away. In February, 1888, Miss Nettie Pursell, also of Nowgong field came to take her place.

With regard to the development of the Church, it has made some progress. One new Church has been organised at Chotcholja in 1887. They have also ordained a Pastor whom they supported giving one-tenth of their rice harvest for Church work. 37 have been added to this church by baptism since its organisation and it now numbered 102. These 102 including men, women, boys and girls paid Rs. 120 to the pastor and contributed to Mission besides.

The church at Derek has continued to grow. They supported their pastor and conducted their own church affairs. 106 have been added by baptism during the three years and they numbered 262 members. The church at Resu which was organised in 1876, and where before 1880, the baptism rose to 122, has lost 55 persons by death mostly from Kalazar and 30 by exclusions and some by removals. Their pastor has been, for some years, near death by consumption and the members were cold and weak. Rev. Mason sent them a teacher and his visit in 1889, they were found fully awake. Regular meetings of the church were well-attended, including the womens' prayer meeting and Boys' prayer meeting, consisting mostly of boys under 15 years of age. 25 have been added to their number by baptism within that year.

The older churches of Nishangram and Rajasimla have held on their way, managing all of their own affairs and supporting their pastors. The Tura Church was composed largely of the scattered Christians on the south of the hills and pupils in the Station schools. There have been 216 baptisms, and there were at that time, 179 members, of whom, a little more than 100 lived in the distant villages which Phillips visited annually and where Christianity was slowly but steadily gaining a foothold. In the south-east section of this territory, the Christians were discussing the propriety of organising themselves into a separate church.

At the Station at Tura, services were held in the Mission

chapel and the preaching was done mostly by the Missionaries, with at least one service a week conducted by some local Christians, usually a member of the higher class in the boys' school. The four remaining churches, namely, Kongkhal, Rongjuli, Amjonga and Adokgre were weak, having lost many members by death from Kalazar, and having failed to keep themselves free from worldly vices.<sup>11</sup>

According to the Missionary report for 1893, Mr. and Mrs. Dring with their little daughter Flora arrived at Tura in December, 1890, for the purpose of taking charge of Industrial Department and aiding generally. In February 1892, Mr. and Mrs. Boggs arrived at Tura for the purpose of superintending and teaching in the Station Boys' school.

Regarding the churches they in general made progress. The Derek church which began in 1880 has continued to grow. They ordained their first pastor in February 1891, but lost him by death in November of the same year. But the church has developed working plans and working strength, and has, during the three years, added by baptism 234, numbering a total of 453 members.

The Chotcholja Church organised in 1887 has added 106 by baptism and numbered 206. Resu Church has developed slowly. She has been able to support a pastor and added 32 converts.

Nishangram, one of the oldest and the wealthiest and one of the strongest, has made true development. She has increased her contributions, and increased in membership, having baptised 177. The members supported their pastor and one evangelist with his helper, and gave from 4 to 6 rupees a month to their school teacher and besides contributed very largely to the High School.

Rajasimla has added 57 by baptism but she can not be said to have developed much as a Church, but like some churches elsewhere seen, the members seemed to keep sleepily. They have however suffered loss from cattle diseases and have been afflicted with one year of famine.

Of the four weak churches, Kongkal which was reduced to 12 members, was united for work with Resu, and a few

11. M.C. Mason, Report from Tura Field, Missionary Conference, Gauhati, December, 21-30, 1889.

members worked faithfully. In 1892, they have received 100 by baptism and numbered 126 and seemed in a prosperous condition. Both Rongjuli and Amjonga churches have gained some strength and have added by baptism 23 and 22 members respectively. Adokgre has about held its own.

The church of Tura has received by baptism 172 and has dismissed 123 by letter, 31 of whom formed the Okapara Church in 1890, the other 92 formed the Baghmara Church in 1892. Notwithstanding these two offshoots, the Church had a membership of 192. This church was the least independent as its services were held in the Mission chapel and conducted and managed by the Missionaries. The members were composed largely of school pupils and people belonging to the frontier police. They did not attempt to support a pastor although they contributed towards the general fund.<sup>12</sup>

It was reported in 1895 that Rev. and Mrs. Phillips returned from America in November, 1893 and Miss Alice J. Rood joined the Tura Mission band and arrived at Tura in December, 1894. Except these, the rest of the Missionaries were outside the field.

Regarding the churches, it was reported that the older and larger churches were making some progress. Derek had increased her membership and numbered 508. They supported their own pastor and helped support seven village school teachers, who in their own villages served as assistant pastors. Resu supported their own pastor and Kongkal has for the past two years made efforts to secure a separate pastor for themselves. Nishangram continued to do excellent work. Besides aiding in the support of two village teachers, she wholly maintained her own Girls' School and took the brunt of the support of the High School. These four churches have formed one Association. They had two or three gatherings in a year to devise plans for the development of the work, and the four churches were united in supporting three evangelists, besides contributing to the support of the general evangelist. The women of these four churches have held several conferences, the proceedings

12. M.C. Mason, Report from Tura Field, Missionary Conference, Tura, January 14-22, 1893.

and discussions of which have been conducted entirely by themselves.

The greatest increase in membership has been in the Baghmara Church. In 1894 they numbered 255 members and have been supporting their pastor for the past three years. They also organised an Upper Primary School, intended to meet the same need on the south side.

The Tura church set off some of their own church members and organised another church at Boldamgre village, who was planning to have a pastor of their own. Okapara church also supported their own pastor in addition to Rs. 3 per month for their village school and were beginning to talk of developing this school to a higher school.

The churches were also beginning to turn their attention to the needs of other tribes like themselves. The desire to have a hand in foreign Mission work had begun to develop in the minds of some. Dingmin, a Garo young man, was first designated to go to Ao Nagas and to work among them. Tangkhan Sangma set the ball rolling in Tura as Tura Church has already contributed Rs. 60 for this Mission and Tangkhan Sangma wrote a tract briefly glancing over the history of the Mission and urging that God had prepared them for the great work and the work for them, among their kindred hill tribes.<sup>13</sup>

It was reported in 1899 that the Missionaries at Tura field were Mr. Dring, and Mr. and Mrs. Mason who returned from furlough in 1896 accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Munger. Misses Morgan and Wilson came to Tura in October, 1898, and so there were ten Missionaries on the Tura field. But Mrs. Munger was called away from her earthly home in August, 1898.

The church statistics for that year showed progress even beyond any previous report and the Churches as a whole, have made real advancement and were still making diligent efforts to gain more members. Nevertheless, there was apparent negligence in many places and less of the spirit of personal effort on the part of the members, and a tendency to delegate this work to pastors, evangelists and teachers. The almost constant interruptions and change in the work of the Missionaries had told

13. E.G. Phillips, Report from Tura Field, Sibsagar, December, 14-22, 1895.

upon the churches as some respects, the condition of these churches were critical. There has been an increase of membership in all of the churches notwithstanding the formation of three new churches. Derek village got involved in the court case against the Bijni zamindar. The case was carried to the High Court of Calcutta. Their effort was to defend two non-Christian Garos against persecution. They lost their case and the two men were fined Rs. 5 each. The cost of the suit was over Rs. 3000 on each side. This and the subsequent trouble with the Bijni zamindar has caused coldness, lack of harmony and the resignation of their pastor.

The Tura church continued as in former years, their services being conducted by the Missionaries and the local preachers and teachers. While no pastor was appointed, they looked after their members besides contributions to various projects and have supported travelling evangelist with his helper. A large part of Rongjeng church was drawn from Tura church. This was the fifth church drawn from Tura church since 1890. The combined membership of Tura church was then 885.

The Nishangram church has followed its own course, growing and doing good. Parts of two new churches were drawn from this church, yet it still numbered 755. Pastor Gongman Momin, who was ordained in 1891, led this church for the last nine years with very good results. The Chotcholja church continued with great variations except that its membership has increased from 191 to 284. They supported their own pastor and one travelling evangelist.

The two smallest churches, Rongjuli and Amjonga, with a membership of 49 and 48 respectively, have gained a little strength each, but the changes were not worthy of mention. Neither supported a pastor proper and their contributions amounted to Rs. 85-14.

The Kongkal church has grown from 116 to 135 members. They supported their pastor and contributed considerably to outside work. The Resu church continued with slight changes supporting their pastor and contributing nearly twice as much as his salary for outside work. Resu, Kongkal, Derek and Nishangram were united in evangelistic work, and supported six travelling evangelists, one of whom worked for the Rabhas of



Goalpara. These churches contributed also for the home and foreign works of the General Association and to schools.

The Okapara church has grown from 78 to 111 members. There has been some lack of harmony and their pastor has died. The youngman who has worked with them has helped to improve, but he has just gone to Serampore for further study, the expense being borne by this church.

The Rajasimla church, the oldest of all, seemed to be very inactive and cold. Nevertheless they have added 103 by baptism during the last two years and have increased from 218 to 253, and have in the meantime, sent away 50 members to form the Santipur church in 1898. The Adokgre church, already weak was beginning to take on new life. She has added 103 by baptism and has supported a pastor. The Baghmara church has developed in everything. They have parted with about 115 members to form the Dambuk church, and the existing membership was 284.

The Boldamgre church has gained in membership from 50 to 123, and their contributions have increased at a better rate although they supported no pastor. Rongjeng, one of the new churches has made a good beginning. They have baptised 180 persons during the past two years and numbered 195 members. The Dambuk, another new church seemed to be doing good work. They numbered 172 members and contributed Rs. 180 that year. They supported a pastor. The Santipur church, organised in 1898 had a membership of 70, and their contribution amounted to Rs. 130. This church was then united with Chotcholja in evangelistic work and has appointed a pastor.

These united efforts had so far proved profitable to all taking a part. Church Conferences to which leading members of other churches were invited to attend and read papers on different subjects, were common in most of the churches and seemed to be beneficial. At nearly all these Conferences and Associations, the women and the young men had their separate meetings and brought together their contributions by which a good part of the evangelistic work was sustained. Not infrequently did the women of a church support a preacher and it was mostly gathered by the hand-grip thank-offering at each meal.

The General Association supported two preachers with their

helpers for Garo work, and their foreign work has been taken definite form in sending two men to the Daplas. The second went only as a help in getting started and has returned. The other has continued nearly a year and gave fair promise of getting the language, and reaching the hearts of the people. He seemed to have spent most of the time at or near North Lakhimpur.<sup>14</sup>

It was reported in 1900 that there were at the Tura field, Mr. and Mrs. Mason, Miss Stella Mason and Miss Bond and Dr. G. G. Crozier and Mrs. Crozier who came as new recruits and Mr. and Mrs. Phillips. Misses Wilson and Morgan left for Gauhati in October, 1899.

By this time, there were 16 churches with 80 branch churches. Mr. Dring made a hurried visit to the larger part of the Mission Out-Stations during the last winter season. Mason in company of Dr. Crozier, visited 40 Out-Stations and carefully examined the records of eight churches during November and December, 1899. On several occasions, they visited in one day four stations, examined their schools, held brief services and made several miles of travels by their horses. They found that there were evidences of neglect and great need of Missionary labour among them. The absence of Missionary visits and oversight and the death of leading members, have helped to relax interest and decrease evangelistic efforts. Yet there were evidences of christian life. Every Church had received additions by baptisms.

The Derek church called an unordained man as pastor, but Nishangram church has recently completed a church building, large, well-built with Steeple and Bell and pews that would seat 500. Under emergency the building would hold about 1,000 people. Doors and windows made in Calcutta but otherwise, all the works have been done by the Garos themselves.

Regarding the evangelistic works, it was reported that the churches kept up their efforts for spreading the Gospel. There were three different combinations of churches for the work of supporting evangelists and upbuilding each other. The General Association also continued its evangelistic work, both at home

14. M.C. Mason, Report from Tura Field, Dibrugarh, February 11-19, 1899.

and for the Daplas. One Dapla boy who has been associated with Tosin mostly from the first and supported in part, by the Garo Churches, has recently been baptised. In 1899, the Garo Churches sent a Garo youngman and his wife, both from Tura Normal school, to assist Rev. Swanson in the Golaghat field and the report of his work was very pleasing.<sup>15</sup>

It was reported in 1903 that the number of churches was 16, and the spiritual condition of the Christians did not materially differ from what it was two years ago. The spirit of worldliness was manifested among some of them. This had, in quite a large section, taken the form of a mania for speculation, especially in the Lac season. This resulted in the neglect of their religious duties.

But there were also bright spots in the property of the churches. Some were making progress. The Okapara Church, two years ago, was in a disheartened condition. But a youngman was called as pastor, and there has been encouraging growth in both church and pastor. The church has supported its pastor, given Rs. 7 per month towards three village schools, and then engaged another teacher, preparatory to opening another and higher grade school. This was expected to draw pupils from other villages, and prepare them for the 3rd Class in the Tura Training School. This last addition to their work would cost them at least Rs. 9 per month. This movement was wholly voluntary on their part.

There was a pressing need for more pastors. During the past years, only seven out of 16 churches have had their pastors, and that not because the churches were not ready to support pastors, but because there were not the suitable men to be found.

Regarding evangelistic works, it was reported that the churches have maintained six evangelists. Another was appointed to the work, but failed to give himself to it. A number of these were supported by the women of the churches, by the proceeds of the daily hand grip of rice contributions. Besides these, there have been two evangelists for the whole year, and one for a part

15. M.C. Mason, Report from Tura Field, Gauhati, December, 22-31, 1900.

of the year maintained by money coming from foreign contributions. The churches have also maintained their Missionaries to the Daplas until nearly the close of the year 1902. The churches also early in 1902, sent two of the best Garo evangelists on a tour to Upper Assam, to visit their Dapla Mission and also to visit the Garos scattered throughout the tea gardens.<sup>16</sup>

The Missionary report for 1904-05 stated that there was a widespread spirit of trade among the Garos, and not less among the Christians than among the non-Christians, with the neglect of their spiritual duties.

Another stimulant to worldliness has been the large law-suit that the Garos, under the leadership of Sonaran R. Sangma, have been carrying on for more than two years, to try and get back the land between the Garo Hills and the Brahmaputra river. This has absorbed a large amount of thought, and a large sums of money, and has affected the Christians as well as non-Christians.

### **Lack of Pastors**

A serious feature in the work among the churches, and one pointing to a serious weakness, has been the lack of Pastors. Some churches have suffered from the lack of good pastoral leadership. But while some have thus suffered, two others have been fortunate to get two pastors. The Derek Church has thus been fortunate. The pastor, Sujan, was serving as a faithful evangelist. For two years, he has been doing good service as a pastor, and the church seemed to be in good condition.

During the past year, Rev. Tokong has been doing good work at Rajasimla. A year ago, the church was in so low a condition that they thought they could not support a pastor. Rev. Tokong told them that he intended to work for them whether they called him or not. Soon after, he began work among them, the work was much revived, converts were gathered and back-sliders reclaimed. The church then called him and supported him.

An encouraging feature of the work of the past year has been the increased activity in evangelistic work. There have

16. E.G. Phillips, Report from Tura Field, Gauhati, December 27, 1902, January 4, 1903.

been 12 evangelists supported by the churches and two by Mission funds. 7 or 8 of these have been supported by the women of the churches, with the proceeds of their hand-grip of rice, although they have not all been supported by the collections of the previous year.<sup>17</sup>

According to the Report in 1907, the number of churches remained the same as before, 16, and the membership for 1905 was 4,333, baptism that year being 365, and the total contributions for the churches were Rs. 4720-9-4. This sum might appear small or large according to the standard of comparison. As compared with what they have done in the past and with what some other Christian communities of equal size and strength were doing, it was not without its encouragement.

It was also reported that the conditions of churches showed a tremendous lack of power. Worldliness has far too large a place in the lives of the people, and the supreme interest of nearly all in the land case, which they have been carrying on for 5 or 6 years, overshadowed everything else.

The work among the Daplas has been abandoned, which was made necessary by the return of the man, for reasons of health, who was there, and the failure to find another man equal to the task of meeting the peculiar conditions on that field. Efforts have been made to find some other channel through which the Garos might help in the work for other tribes, but nothing has been definitely settled.

The home work of the churches continued about the same, there being in all nine evangelists, of whom, two were supported by Mission money.<sup>18</sup>

Concerning the churches, Mr. Dring writes in 1910, "As seen by the table, our churches remain the same in number, while the membership is steadily climbing higher. The spirit of the world has still a very large place in the hearts of far too many, and as a natural result, the spirit of sacrifice and service is low. The great obstacle mentioned in our last report, the land case, is still at work and its baneful influence is still felt,

17. E.G. Phillips, Report from Tura Field, Gauhati, December 24, 1904, January 1, 1905.

18. W.C. Mason, Report from Tura Field, Gauhati, January 5-12, 1907.

and is, as we believe, largely responsible for the coldness and indifference to spiritual things that at present exists, but we believe the people are beginning to see the mistake and will ere long, we hope, drop that matter and turn their thought to better and more helpful things. A number of our churches have been giving considerable time and money to more permanent equipment in their work, in the way of building and seating arrangements, bells, etc. Two of the churches have had good bells sent out from America, and they and others are swing large number and getting material ready for good church homes. All village school houses, teachers' houses and church buildings were constructed by the villagers themselves. Pastor's salary and part of teachers' pay were also borne by them.<sup>19</sup>

In the Tura Mission field, at the end of 1911, there were 17 organised churches with a total membership of 5314. Since then one new church has been organised. By an organised church was meant a Mother Church having several branch churches, and clusters of Christians conducting worship by themselves. Several of these churches, though reluctant to organise separately, conducted church work and kept church records. There were about one hundred of these separate Christian communities or so-called branch churches. During the last year there were about 336 baptisms. In 3 or 4 sections, there seemed to have been genuine revivals and earnest efforts. Backsliders have been reclaimed and converts were added to the churches. In several non-Christian sections also, new work has been opened up and converts have been gathered. There were eleven travelling local evangelists, six of these were supported by the churches. There were twelve regular pastors among the churches. Three have had their support through the Missionaries and two through the Mission Society. Further religious work was done by the village school teachers.

### **Religious Life**

It was reported that the religious life has been far from satisfactory. Some churches have grown cold and even quarrelling has been among them. The Roman Catholics have also a

19. M.C. Mason, *Ibid.*, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

slight influence, as they were at work near the Baptist borders on the Australian Baptist Mission Field in present day Bangladesh. Yet the Missionaries believed that in general, there has been improvement. The zeal for land litigation has decreased, and the desire for education and improvement has increased. In three of four sections, there seemed to have been genuine revivals and earnest efforts. Backsliders have been reclaimed and numbers have been added. New works have been opened up in new areas and converts have been gathered.<sup>20</sup>

In 1916, the churches numbered 19 with a total membership of 6270, and they were all self-supporting but many of them were without pastors due to non-availability of suitable persons. In 1915, only ten of the churches have had full-time pastors. By this, it did not mean that these ten pastors did not cultivate land for a part of their support, but they had no other salaried position, as in the case in one or two of the churches where the upper primary school teachers acted in the double capacity of teacher and pastor. But some of the churches seemed to consider this rather happy arrangement, doubtless as a financial economy. Owing largely to the lack of supervision and consultation, the spiritual condition in many of the churches was far from good. Worldliness entered into the life of many with the result that there was a discouraging coldness and apathy in many quarters. In 1915, there have been 378 additions by baptisms. But the greatest problem was the lack of trained men.<sup>21</sup>

It was reported in 1917 that the church services in Tura have been managed entirely by the local Christians instead of the Missionaries for many years. Meetings have been well-attended and a roll-call meeting in October, 1916 took a broad outlook and made plans which would add efficiency and ensure success. There have been continual effort to have the local Christians take the responsibility, to bear the burden, to feel that the work was theirs, and to relieve the Missionaries.<sup>22</sup>

20. M.C. Mason, Report from Tura Field, Gauhati, January 4-13, 1913.

21. W.C. Mason, Report from Tura Field, Nowgong, February 13-24, 1916.

22. *Ibid.*, Sibesar, January 15-22, 1917.

It was reported in 1926 that there were over 10,000 living members on the church rolls, and over 900 baptisms in 1925.<sup>23</sup>

The Missionary report for 1927 stated that one of the most interesting events during that year was the 53rd Annual Convention of the Garo Christians which was held at Okapara about 14 miles distant from Tura in the month of February. Four Missionaries went by the Mission Ford, to the first rest-house where they parked the car and went the rest of the way on horse back. Okapara was among the newer and weaker churches, and the village was an Abeng village. Abeng is a division of the Garo tribe in which Christianity was growing very fast at that time. The Abeng Garo was lower down the scale in development than the Garo on the north side where Dr. Bronson did his work. The language is a bit different and their old gods are also somewhat different. For years they held back from becoming Christians to any great extent. But during the last two years, there were among them two churches and over twenty branch churches.

Regarding the evangelical work among the Kalazar patients, the report stated that in Tura the Government has a large Kalazar hospital where 1,500 Garos were treated for Kalazar every year. Most of the people who came to this hospital were Abeng non-Christian Garos. The Government gave the Missionaries the permission to have open evangelistic services every Sunday afternoon on the hospital grounds, which meant that 1,500 Garos have had teaching in the Christian faith. They had gone out from the Kalazar hospital not only better physically but also better religiously. Some of them have asked for Christian baptism.

In the same report, the Missionary gave us the picture of their winter season tour in the Garo Hills, starting November from Tura and arriving back in January. "We wake up early on the first morning to find twelve Simsanggiri coolies on the veranda waiting for us to pack the baskets and bedding rolls for the trip. The first night's halt is Pramphagiri, a village toward the centre of the hills where the headman became a Christian about two years ago. There were several reasons why this headman became a Christian; one, an experience with a wild rogue

23. *Ibid.*, Jorhat, December, 2-10, 1926.



elephant when he was saved from death, and the other, a desire to give up one of his wives. The whole village turns out to hear us preach. The headman becoming a Christian has made Christianity popular. The next morning we baptise twelve new Christians and marry them all according to the Christian custom, although they had been living together for years as man and wife according to the non-Christian custom. The second day's journey bring us to a village where there are no Christians.

From this section we go to Rongjeng where Reverend Tamring, a Christian Garo leader, has built up a strong work that stands head and shoulders above almost every other work we have. The coolies arrive at the village one hour before we do. How happy they seem to be. Reverend Tamring and the Church helpers have killed a cow and have given each cooly a piece of meat, sufficient rice and vegetables. The village school, which is now an upper primary school, has sixty-five pupils. The village teacher has an assistant and all the parents in the village are interested in the school. The church building is well-filled at night. After an inspiring service we turn in for the night feeling thankful that God has this village of brown people who are genuine Christians. From here we go to Nongbak-Akong. Before arriving at this place we are told that the Government Surveyor was mauled by a bear just two days before. He was surveying the mountain close by the village when the bear mauled him almost to death. At this place we find everyone friendly. The headman is a non-Christian but very hospitable. From here we see the distant plains off in Goalpara district. The next day we move on to the first Garo Christian village, namely, Rajasimla, the home of Omed, the first Garo to be baptised by Dr. Bronson. Now Rajasimla is a large Christian village with a fine church building. Practically every old Garo custom has been given up by this village. We are taken down the main street to the church building where we sleep and hold services in the evening. From here we tour along the edge of the Garo Hills following the path of Dr. Bronson when back in 1867 he baptized thirty-seven Garo Christians and foresaw the future development of the Garo Hills. From here we go to the four branch churches, where the people are humble and have a good spirit. The branch churches have a programme and goal toward which to work. They want to become main

churches. If they do not come within certain requirements, the other main churches in a council meeting will not give them their independence. Here we find good Sunday schools and young people's meetings. But they need some one to help them work out Christian program of living. I think it would be safe to say that only the Garo Churches which have a goal and a religious program of activity are in good spiritual condition at present. The others are riding on their oars and sin is reigning. We arrive back to Tura feeling that we must have more time to tour and live among the people in the district."

In 1926, 1,039 converts were added to the Church by baptism, making a total of 11,001 members. A new Church, Ampatigiri, has been added, making twenty-one churches with 238 branch churches. Two new men were ordained, making four Reverends in the district.<sup>24</sup>

It was reported in 1931 that the population of Garo Hills was 1,90,911, the Garos in the Goalpara numbered 20,906 or a total of 2,11,817, and the Christians numbered 14,177. This would make one Missionary to each 35,303 of the general population and one Missionary to each 2,363 of the Christians. The population of Goalpara showed an increase of 11,771 or 6.6 per cent in the last ten years. Since coming to Garo Hills, attention has been called to the fact that Dr. Harding in his field report claimed not only the 1,90,911 people of the Garo Hills district as the Tura field but 3,13,183 additional, that is, population between the Garo Hills boundary and the Brahmaputra until Dr. Harding's field report was narrated to me we had not heard that the Tura Missionaries have any active concern in regard to the evangelisation of the 38,612 non-Garos in the Garo Hills district let alone this 3,13,183 population who skirted the district<sup>25</sup>.

It was reported in 1936 that Rev. Tamring Momin, the renowned Garo preacher, has been the general evangelist of the Mission. Assansing, a much younger man, has been working against rather discouraging odds in the Dual-Matchi section. Gau Marak, the Mission Serampore man, who once told

24. R.H. Ewing, Report from Tura Field, Golagha, November 23-December 1, 1927.

25. *Ibid.*, Jorhat, December 2-8, 1931.

Mrs. Harding that he was never afraid to go through the tiger jungle alone, because he was never really alone, was then doing the combined work of Colporteur and evangelists. He has sold hundreds of Scriptures during the year and has not only preached Christianity in the bazars but has also had many priceless opportunities for personal work among the non-Christians<sup>26</sup>.

It was reported in December, 1936 that there were 22 mother churches, 16,000 members and 1,000 baptisms during the year. The biggest and constant worry of the Mission was the lack of sufficient funds to carry on the work. Because of the lack of funds, the Missionaries were unable to do anything like the touring among the churches and schools that was absolutely demanded by the situation. They were unable to keep enough evangelists in the field to ensure real contact with the churches in the area of over 4,000 square miles. They were unable to take advantage of strategic opportunities. They were even unable to do all the mere routine work because of lack of office help. They had manuscripts of books and pamphlets ready for the press but not enough money to pay the printer's bill. Sometimes it seemed as though they just limped along, hampered and harassed by lack of material resources.

Despite these drawbacks, there has been a district and an encouraging advance in the spiritual life of some of the churches that year. Characterised by activity in evangelistic work, joy, enthusiasm and somewhat better cooperation. The Derek Church had over 140 baptisms in 1935. Tura town church, despite the fact that it did not have enough funds to support a pastor, has had 80 baptisms. The leaders of the Tura Church worked out the problem of being without a pastor in rather an original way. They called for relays of two volunteers from their number to act as co-pastors for a period of two months, thus through the year having really 12 pastors. These men never knew the real problem of the church until they had a spell of pastoral work for a couple of months. It got them vitally interested in the church, and that interest seemed to keep hot after they gave way to other pastors.

26. F.W. Harding, Report from Tura Field, Jorhat, February 3-6, 1936.

The Roman Catholic group continued to push its work among the Baptists, not with so much of success this year as in previous years. The Catholics were planning solidly and wisely for the future. One of the greatest needs of the Garos was an industrial school. The Baptist Mission dreamed of such a school for years but no funds were forthcoming. The Roman Catholic Mission was cashing in on this scheme. Their industrial building was up and they were setting up gins, looms, etc.<sup>27</sup>

It was reported in 1937 that in that year Tilokchon Momin was ordained. This was the first ordination after many years. Rev. Tamring Momin and Grejan Marak have continued to serve as Mission evangelists. One of the problems of the Mission was the top heaviness of some of the mother church—branch church—group churches. There were mother churches with as many as thirty and 400 branches. The organisation became top heavy, unwieldy and cooperation became difficult.<sup>28</sup>

The Missionary report for 1938 stated that the Garo churches have made considerable progress materially and some progress spiritually the past year. There were then 16,784 members in good standing. There was a decrease in baptism over the past years, only 770 being baptised, and even this gain was almost offset by 197 death and 426 exclusions.<sup>29</sup>

The 1941 Missionary report said that while no spectacular progress had been made anywhere, yet the Mission had not been standing still. There was a church membership of 18,457, with the children in Christian homes being 7,637 with baptism of 1252. There were 24 mother churches with 337 branch churches and 308 church buildings. Of the 24 main churches, 21 had pastors who were supported by the main church and its branches. About 2,700 non-Christians regularly attended services in the churches.<sup>30</sup>

It was reported in 1941 that another milestone has been

27. F.W. Harding, Report from Tura Field, Gauhati, December 1-6, 1936.

28. *Ibid.*, Sadiya, December 8-13, 1937.

29. *Ibid.*, Nowgong, December 13-18, 1938.

30. A.F. Merrill, Report from Tura Field, Kohima, January 23-28, 1941.

passed in the mark in the work in the Garo Hills as this year the membership of the church passed the 20,000 mark representing a Christian community of more than 30,000. There were more than 2000 baptisms during the year. The 24 mother churches had that year 380 branch churches with 350 church buildings used exclusively for services and the total contributions were Rs. 14,101. 8578 unbaptized children of Christian parents and 3,248 non-Christians were attending the church services regularly.<sup>31</sup>

In 1943 it was reported that the Tura field has been keeping the flag flying since the Pearl Harbour and all through the Burma retreat except the problem of high prices, scarcity of labour, an unusual amount of sickness among the Garos and war works of various kinds. So many of the Garos were in war service, Porter Corps, Pioneer Corps, Armed Police, the Assam Regiment, Medical Corps, Transport and Supply, Technician groups, Signal Corps, Navy and Air Forces have been all drawn that there was an acute shortage of man-power for local works.<sup>32</sup>

It was reported in 1944 that the Mission has been able to carry on the normal work as the area was not immediately affected by the war. However, since many of the young men, some of whom were active in church work, have gone into the war service, the Mission has felt their absence. Besides, the rising costs and scarcity of some articles have also affected the people.

The Annual Meeting of the churches was smaller than usual, only about 900 in attendance, due mainly to the counter-attraction of a large National War Front rally in the same locality. Delegates from the Bengal Civil Pioneer Force were present, and at their urgent request the churches sent Rev. Tamring Momin and Rev. Bodon Marak to visit their Camps and hold services. During their visit to the Camps they baptised 81 of the pioneers. Lt. Col. H.A. Jones was doing work with this Battalion. The church reports indicated there were 776 baptisms

31. *Ibid.*, Golaghat, December, 4-9, 1941.

32. F.W. Harding, *ibid.*, Nowgong, November 5-9, 1943.

during the year, bringing a total membership to well over 20,000.<sup>33</sup>

It was reported in 1945 that the education and evangelistic work were very closely connected in the Hills. The school master was usually the pastor and evangelist as well. Evangelistic work was carried on by two Mission evangelists; one each from the four District Associations and the 'Big' Association as well as by the 28 pastor evangelists of the main churches. The church membership for that year was about 20,442 with baptismal for the year being 908 with 424 churches in the field. In spite of increasing pressure of administrative work in the station, the Tura Missionaries continued to emphasise touring in the villages and personal contacts in winning the Garos to Christianity.<sup>34</sup>

It was reported in 1946 that the evangelistic and educational works were so woven that they were considered as one, for example, the seed is sown in a non-Christian village by a school teacher and soon some of his pupils and then often the parents accepted Christianity.

One of the evangelists apologised for a poor report because of some of illness in his family. His reports showed 285 days of preaching and over 24,000 people preached. There were 1,138 baptisms in that year.<sup>35</sup>

In 1947, there were 27 mother churches with 378 branch churches and a membership of 20,988. During the past year, there were 1,315 additions by baptisms and 652 exclusions.<sup>36</sup>

In 1949, it was reported that there were 434 branch churches in the 27 mother churches and a total membership of 21,930. During the year, there had been 1,458 baptisms and 604 exclusions.<sup>37</sup>

In January, 1950, the Golden Jubilee Celebration of the North-East Garo Association was held at Rajasimla. It was a

33. A.F. Merrill, Report from Tura Field, Nowgong, November 9-13, 1944.

34. E.S. Downs, *ibid.*, Jorhat, November 8-12, 1945.

35. *Ibid.*, Gauhati, December 6-10, 1946.

36. A.F. Merrill, *ibid.*, Jorhat, December 10-14, 1947.

37. A.F. Merrill, Reports from Tura Field, Jorhat, January 11-16, 1949.

time of remembrance and inspirational for thousands in attendance. There on the north side, the Annual Convention of all the Garo Churches celebrated their Diamond Jubilee. Attendance was good and reports from 26 mother churches showed that the churches were progressing well among the 400 branch churches. During the previous year, 1,224 had been added to the membership making a total of 21,508.<sup>38</sup>

It was reported in January, 1951 that the advance in the evangelistic work in the Garo Hills was due to the efforts of Garo pastors, laymen, women and young people. During the past year, the total membership was 22,709 with 1,394 baptisms.

Mohinder Momin, an evangelist newly sponsored in connection with "Crusade for Christ", was working that year in the Mouza No. III, the most backward part of the Garo Hills.<sup>39</sup>

Thus as we come to the year 1950 or the end of the Missionary period, we find that the work of the Mission was still progressing.

38. *Ibid.*, Golaghat, January 3-9, 1950.

39. A.F. Merrill and Miss F. Rold, *ibid.*, Gauhati, 1951.

# Nagaland

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## 1. THE AO NAGA BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

### (a) **The Beginning of the Mission (1838-1841)**

Rev. Miles Bronson was the first Missionary to the Nagas. He and his wife along with Mrs. Thomas moved to Jaipur in April, 1838 in order to be nearer to the Singphos to whom they have been specially designated. But he soon discovered that the Singphos were the hard nuts to crack. In the meantime, Bronson had found another people whose response seemed much more promising, that is, the Ao Nagas, who lived in the vicinity of Jaipur. These Nagas were from the Namsang village who were friendlier than the Singphos and could converse in Assamese. Soon after his arrival at Jaipur, Bronson began to prepare a Spelling book and simple Catechism in Namsang dialect. These were the first books written in any Naga language. In 1838, Bronson decided to visit Namsang and explore the possibility of establishing an outstation and a school there.

In January, 1839, Bronson started off for the Namsang village but was denied entry. The villagers suspected him to be the Company Agent sent to spy on their village for conquest. They found it hard to believe that he had come all the way from foreign land simply to give them books and teach religion. It was only after three days camping in the jungle that Bronson was finally allowed to enter the village, and it was after another three days that he was allowed to talk to them. Of course, by then, the old Chief and his eldest son, though not



his other sons, were convinced that he meant no harm. In those six days the Nagas argued and argued in their characteristic Naga way but finally permitted him to stay. Bronson enquired if they would be interested in a school. He also persuaded the old Chief to send his sons to the school at Jaipur. But before any progress was in sight in these negotiations, the news of attack on Jaipur compelled him to hurry back to Jaipur as he left his family there. Bronson was now convinced that it would be feasible to have a station and live at Namsang and he began to make plans.

The Home Board in America and also the local British officials approved of this plan. In fact, C.A. Bruce, Superintendent of Experimental Tea Plantations had already donated Rs. 100 towards the cost of printing books. Captain Hannay, the Military Commander also encouraged him thinking that such a work would contribute to the British policy of pacifying the Naga tribes without having to assume administrative control over them. On hearing the news of Bronson's plans, the Commissioner wrote to the Mission Home Board to send another Missionary to assist him which was eventually done. Between 1838 and 1840, many British officials contributed to the tune of Rs. 1890 for various projects in the Namsang village. All these encouraged the Home Board in America. Therefore, in 1839, they sent Mr. and Mrs. Cyrus Barker for the Naga work. Miss Rhoda Bronson also accompanied the Barkers at her own expense to assist her brother. Thus she was the first unmarried Missionary lady to work in north-east India. They hoped that through the Nagas, the Shans of north Burma and south China might still be reached. In December, 1839, Bronson again visited Namsang to make preparations to start the work there. Opposition was again overruled by the Chief and his eldest son, who were pleased when shown printed copies of the Speller and Catechism. A house was built for him on a hill overlooking the village. Bronson was ready to start the school but there was no student. In January 1840, however, a youngman of the Chief's family named Rumjang volunteered and by middle of January, four were enrolled, and Bronson being encouraged by this, decided to bring his family to Namsang. On March 14, 1840, Mrs. Bronson and their daughter moved to Namsang. By the end of March, the school under the direction of Mrs. Bronson

had 20 pupils. The girls could not be admitted into the school as they were, by tradition meant for the household works only.

In May, 1840, the new Missionaries, Mr. and Mrs. Barker and Miss Rhoda Bronson arrived at Jaipur. Rhoda immediately went to Namsang but the Barkers remained in Jaipur due to ill-health. They planned to come as soon as they were able. While the two ladies looked after the school, Mr. Bronson did the translation of scriptures. Thus the Namsang project appeared to be bright, but soon serious difficulties developed due to the illness. Rhoda was seriously ill and could never fully recover. In the summer of 1840, all the Missionaries were down with fever. The school was frequently closed and no progress in any direction could be made. Meanwhile, the Barkers decided to work among the Assamese rather than the Nagas and asked to be transferred to the Assam work officially. In October, 1840, Rhoda Bronson's illness became so serious that her brother decided to take her to Calcutta and accompany her as far as Jaipur and then return to Namsang. But Rhoda's condition turned so bad that on reaching Jaipur, it became impossible to go further. She died on December 8, 1840. Though Bronson still believed that it was possible to work among the hills, other members of the Mission did not share his views and prevailed upon him to go to Nowgong which he did in October, 1841.<sup>1</sup>

Although the Namsang work was given up in 1841, the Mission still retained some contacts with the Nagas. Hube, a Konyak Naga was converted and baptized by Dr. Brown at Sibsagar on September 12, 1847. But he died of cholera shortly after his baptism on October 10, 1847. The second Naga to be baptized was Longjanglepzuk who was also known as Lungsang Francis Wayland, an Ao from Merangkong village. He was baptized by Rev. S.W. Whiting of Sibsagar Mission on September 7, 1851. He took up his residence at Sibsagar. In the summer of 1853, he went to his village to marry but while he was there, he was killed in the course of the Konyak raid on his village. For the two or three years of his membership at the Sibsagar Church, he lived an exemplary life. The third

1. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God.*, pp. 20-26.

Naga to be baptized was Yahukonsi Sarah Caldwell. She was baptized on January 4, 1852 and became a member of the Nowgong Church. Later in 1855, two Konyak men, named Aklong Konyak and Amlai Konyak of Namsang were baptized at Sibsagar by Dr. Brown. These two men went back to their village and began to preach but the village elders thought that it might disturb the peace of the village and so they were expelled from the village. Thus the Christian work among the Nagas did not progress up to this time, and the Mission also did not undertake any systematic work among the Nagas until 1871.<sup>2</sup>

### **(b) The Godhula Mission**

The work of the Mission among the Nagas was resumed by Godhula Brown and Rev. E.W. Clark. Clark arrived at Sibsagar in 1869 to work among the Assamese. He was in-charge of the Mission and the Press at Sibsagar and became involved in the beginning of the work among the Tea garden workers. But during his tenure for three years, he became interested in the Nagas, mostly the Aos, who frequented the Sibsagar bazar. To his surprise, an Assamese evangelist, Godhula, was found willing to imperil his life to preach to the Nagas whom the Assamese generally disliked.

Godhula's Christian name was Rufus Brown. He was a son of Kolibor, the washerman of Sibsagar, who became Christian in 1845. As a boy, Godhula was naughty and unruly. He attended the Orphan Institution School at Nowgong and completed his studies in 1853, but this did not improve his behaviour. However, a deep religious experience that he had changed his whole outlook and decided to dedicate his life to the service of the church. In 1858, he along with Apinta, the first Kachari Christian, went to work in the Jhargong village in North Kamrup. After several years, he returned to Sibsagar and got married. Then both the husband and the wife taught in the school there. In 1866, they volunteered to go and establish a school and preach at Majuli Island, the centre of Assamese Hindu orthodoxy. But local opposition forced them to

2. P.T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, pp. 50-51.

give up after some years. Godhula then returned to Sibsagar and expressed his desire to work among the Nagas.<sup>3</sup>

Godhula was in the prime of his life and Christian zeal.<sup>4</sup> He was also full of tact, courage and caught the spirit of adventure and thus volunteered to make the first venture.<sup>5</sup> An Ao Naga named Subongmeren from the Dekahaimong village (Molungyinchen—old Molung) used to go to Sibsagar for barter trade and came in contact with Godhula and Rev. E.W. Clark. Subongmeren lived with Godhula and his wife Lucy from December, 1870 to October, 1871 and through constant discussions, he became a Christian and was baptised by Clark in 1871 at Sibsagar. He then became the contact person paving the way for further evangelization in Nagaland.

In October, 1871, Godhula along with Subongmeren left for the Tea gardens lying along the foot of the hills with orders from Clark not to go beyond that. To go beyond the gardens meant a great risk. At Amguri Tea gardens, Godhula met many Nagas from Dekahaimong and shared with them his own finer rice, smoked and talked with them and gradually gained their confidence. But when he proposed to go to their village, they refused on the ground that none of them was a Tartar (Village official) and as such, they had no authority to take any "Subject man" or "Company man" (a man living under British rule). But Godhula insisted on going and so finally they agreed saying, "Well, come along then, We'll guard you on the way, but when we get there, all must be as the Tartars say." They slept in the forest in the first night and reached Dekahaimong the next day. Godhula explained to them that he brought them a new religion. But his motives were impugned. They said, "What do we want of this man's religion? Send him off. Get him out of the way; a spy, doubtless, of the Company." Then they put him in a small hut and a guard watched him closely. For two or three days, not a man, a woman or a child would go near his hut. But when he sang Christian hymns in Assamese with his deep-toned melodious voice, the people flocked around him and

3. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, pp. 63-64.

4. S.W. Rivenburg, *The Jubilee Conference*, 1886.

5. M.M. Clark, *A Corner in India*, p. 10.

listened to his story of Jesus. The people coming home from their jhums in the evening began to feel a new and different atmosphere. The influence of peace and love began to soften their hard hearts, and later they called the hut, "the sweet home, the peaceful place." Famine, pestilence and inter-village wars, involving many and costly sacrifices to secure the favour of the deities had so impoverished the people that many were having scarcely one good meal a day. In the failure of their own gods to give them help, they were all the more ready to listen concerning God whom Godhula called the Bread of Life. The great straits to which this village was reduced was taken as an occasion by Godhula to play the role of their guide and in leading them to a new religion. He captured the hearts and love of many of them that when he proposed to return to Sibsagar, women and children wept, and to do him proper honour, an escort of forty men was sent by the village authority to accompany him to the door of the Mission bungalow at Sibsagar. Thus a successful Mission was launched by Godhula in his first venture.

He made several trips to Dekahaimong during the winter of 1871, and in April 1872, he and his wife Lucy went to the hills. The Nagas built a small Chapel for worship and instructions were given there about Christianity. In November 1872, Godhula came down from Dekahaimong bringing with him the first fruits of his faithful labour. Even cholera in the plains which the Nagas dreaded, did not deter the new disciples. These nine Nagas confessed their faith and belief and Clark baptized them on November 11, 1872, and made them members of the Sibsagar Church.

These nine Naga Christians wanted to take Clark to their village, and fixed up a certain time when they would come and take him to their village. At the appointed time, sixty warriors appeared to escort him. Mr. Clark spent the first night comfortably with the English Tea Planter, Colonel Buckingham, at Amguri Tea garden. On the second night, they reached the dense shelterless forest but with plenty of tree leaves. The whole night the Nagas lay toasting their feet around the camp fires. Sentinels kept watch by turns. For additional security the space around was bristled with bamboo spikes stuck in the ground.

En route everything was done for the safety of Mr. Clark and was very well looked after in their village. On December 18, 1872, they reached the Dekahaimong village and baptized 15 more Nagas. On December 23, 1872, these converts along with nine baptized at Sibsagar were organized into a Branch Church. Thus it became the first Naga Church.<sup>6</sup>

During the next three years Godhula lived at Dekahaimong during the summer and in Sibsagar during the winter months. He cared for the small congregation and preached in the nearby villages.<sup>7</sup>

### (c) **Clark's Mission**

"I believe I have found my life work," said Mr. Clark as he entered the Mission bungalow on his return from twelve days' tours in the Naga hills.<sup>8</sup> Thus to Clark belonged the honour of first turning to the Nagas at a time when the British Government refused to give him protection.<sup>9</sup> To live beyond the British flag required the permit from the Viceroy of India residing at Calcutta. On making application, Clark received the reply that should he enter the Naga hills, he must do it at his own risk, with no expectation whatever of protection from the British arms. The British Government was still smarting from the rout of a large survey party sent to reconnoiter the Naga hills and the brutal murder of Captain Butler with one of his local soldiers.<sup>10</sup> Undaunted by all these antecedents, Mr. Clark in 1875 resolved to abandon the comparatively fruitless work among the Assamese and devote himself especially to work for the Naga tribes.<sup>11</sup>

Mr. Clark made his second trip to Dekahaimong on

6. S.W. Rivenburg, Jubilee Conference, 1886; M.M. Clark, *A Corner in India*, pp. 10-14; P.T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, pp. 51-53; F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, pp. 64-65.

7. S.W. Rivenburg, Jubilee Conference, 1886.

8. M.M. Clark, *A Corner in India*, p. 15.

9. P.T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, p. 54.

10. M.M. Clark, *A Corner in India*, pp. 15-16.

11. Edmund, F. Merriam, *A History of American Baptist Mission*, p. 127.

February 9, 1876.<sup>12</sup> On March 2, 1876, while Mrs. Clark was still in America on furlough, Clark went to Dekahaimong again taking with him only the most necessary articles and soon settled in part of the house of a Naga widower. His cook and general house keeper was an orphan Bengali boy, who had been his ward for sometime at Sibsagar. No Assamese could have been persuaded to accompany him at that time.<sup>13</sup>

Only a small part of the village was Christian, the fruit of the work of Godhula. There was no other Christian in those hills, and those in the Dekahaimong village were suffering considerable religious persecution of the majority and were living in the perils of active war.<sup>14</sup> However, Mr. Clark placing his life in the hands of God, began to preach in a crowded village fortified by a heavy stockade. At first it was a presumptuous venture to go far outside the village stockade, not on only account of lurking enemies, but because of numerous hidden punjees, to step upon which would cause fatal wounds. Therefore, Clark along with a small band of his disciples and a few others favourably inclined towards Christianity, met together and used to discuss on Sundays and a few of them were convinced by him. But other villagers were still suspicious of the motive of the White man. They said, "You will find sooner or later that the great rajah preacher is a disguised agent of 'The Company.' Has he not the same white face?" Glorifying in their independence, these Nagas were utterly opposed to any movement that overshadowed any alliance with this ever-encroaching power. Proud of their own religion and traditions, they were quick to see that this Gospel of peace and love would rapidly empty their skull houses and put to rout most of their old customs, for which they had great reverence. The Missionary's presence and his teachings spread like wildfire from mountain peak to mountain peak and everywhere was fostered the suspicious spirit.<sup>15</sup>

For many years, the forty villages of the Ao Nagas had waged war among themselves with adjoining tribes. Each

12. S.W. Rivenburg, Jubilee Conference, 1886.

13. M.M. Clark, A Corner in India, p. 16.

14. E.W. Clark, Missionary Conference Reports, 1913.

15. M.M. Clark, A Corner in India, pp. 16-17.

village had also its friends, but one of these might at any time become an enemy. War honours were greatly prized. A man without such was without respect. For such honours, the head of a woman or a child counted as well as that of a man. Guerilla warfare was the prevalent type. Land not under cultivation was covered with dense jungle. This favoured ambuscides and stealthy warfare everywhere. The village houses were of inflammable material which favoured hostile incendiarism. Night and day, in the village, about it, on paths far and near, on cultivation or jungle, everywhere and all the time, the perils of slaughter were imminent. In the first seven and half months that Mr. Clark lived at Dekahaimong, they were few days in succession without a war scare and sometimes more than one in the same day. The family had separated in the morning for the day's duties could never feel sure of a full reunion at night. Many guard stations were maintained. Carelessness here was sure to invite massacre. Warfare took so many men from tending the crops that the food supplies were frequently scant. Yet the people accustomed to hard life, bore it with commendable cheerfulness. It was under these circumstances that Mr. Clark began to preach the new religion in the Naga hills.<sup>16</sup> However, hostility to the new religion waxed stronger and stronger. There was a division in the village Councils and repeated efforts were made by the opponents of Christianity to inveigle their village into war with other villages, and thus to overwhelm by a strong war spirit the influence of the few Christians, whose teachings were so antagonistic to their military ambition, without the realization of which there could be no social and political standing in the community, and for which they would willingly imperil life. To intimidate the Missionary, a war party of youngmen ambushed one whole week for human heads, which they intended to throw down before him as symbolical of what he might expect himself in case he did not retreat to the plains. They returned, however, without booty, but racked with fever, thus affording the Missionary an opportunity of exercising some medical skill and taming their savagery.<sup>17</sup>

16. E.W. Clark, *Missionary Conference, Gauhati, 1913.*

17. M.M. Clark, *A Corner in India*, pp. 17-18.



### The Molung Station

The tillable lands around Dekahaimong were limited and had been much exhausted by frequent croppings. There was thus more prospect of poverty rather than abundance of food. Besides, the few converts wanted to establish a village where the spirit of Christianity rather than that of war should reign. So the few Christians along with the Missionary moved a few miles westward to an uninhabited mountain crest and founded the village of Molung on the 24th of October, 1876. This was the first Naga Christian village. But the founding of a new village did not free them from troubles. According to tradition, the founding of a new village demanded a sacrifice of cattle to the great village deity of the Ao Nagas which had not been fulfilled by the occupants. This was considered as the declaration of war against their old faith. Therefore, in a few weeks, a threat to exterminate Molung and to kill the Missionary was sent to it by the greatest village in the tribe. The Christians in reply said that the new village most earnestly desired to live in peace and amity with all others. They also said that they were the accepted disciples of the Almighty God, who made the earth and all on it and who cared for His children. They also added, "We trust in Him, and we beg that you be His friends and not His foes." In a few days, however, unexpectedly, a peaceful message was sent to the Christians at Molung, and the Christians were full of praises to their Lord for this deliverance.<sup>18</sup> There Mr. Clark lived in a small hut till February 15, 1877 when a new house built by the Nagas was ready for occupation.<sup>19</sup>

Early in March, 1878, Mrs. Clark after returning from America, joined her husband in this enterprise and rendered valuable services in school work and in others. In 1879 the Assamese preacher Zilli and his wife also joined the Molung Mission. Early in the year 1881, Godhula was ordained and went with his wife to Merangkung (Nowgong) to found a new Station. A few months afterwards, he baptized seven persons, of whom five remained faithful. In May, 1883, David was sent to work among Kilingmen who were then living at Bura

18. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

19. E.W. Clark, Missionary Conference, 1913.

Haimong village. In November 1884, the teacher and most of the Kilingmen removed to Assangma, nearby where a school has since been maintained. Several seemed to have professed Christianity but there was no baptism.

The Molung Mission was re-inforced by the arrival of new Missionaries, Rev. S.W. Rivenburg and his wife on January 8, 1885. They soon began to learn the Ao language. In May, 1885, Rev. E.W. Clark left Molung for America, after a stay in Assam of seventeen years, nine of which were spent in the Naga hills. During this time, the language was mastered and written, a dictionary made, Primer, Catechism, Life of Joseph, a Hymn book and the Gospels of Matthew and John were carried through the press, besides the ordinary works of the Missionary. In July 1885, Zilli visited Lyrman, a village about a day's march from Molung, and the people heard the Gospel for the first time. These people later on came to Molung asking for teachers for themselves and their children. An Assamese preacher Robi remained with them from October, 1885 till April 1886. Robi converted two men but they had not asked for baptism. During October and November, 1885, eight men who had formerly resided at Molung came back and asked for baptism and thus a new interest started at Yazung village. But they have had no teacher or preacher to guide them.

In April 1886, Godhula not only left the Mission work but also Christianity. According to Jubilee reports, 1886, there were 54 Christians at Molung.<sup>20</sup>

The Missionary report for 1889 stated that there were 74 members in the Ao church. There was no ordained priest yet on this field. In April 1889, the Ao tribe, with the exception of one large village and some mixed villages, was formally annexed to the British Dominion of India, and was made the sub-division of the Naga hills District with a Resident British Officer in-charge. The people gradually became amenable to the British rule.<sup>21</sup>

It was reported in 1893 that during the last three years, the Mission work among the Ao Nagas has been carried on by the

20. S.W. Rivenburg, Jubilee Conference, 1886.

21. E.W. Clark, 2nd Triennial Conference, Gauhati, December 21-30, 1889.

Clarks, and the work has been prosecuted with abatement due to the effect of climate on their health. There were the main church at Molung and two other small churches. In the village where one of these small churches was located, were believed to be a number of converts. A new church has been formed in one village, so that the increase of churches was one. There was no ordained local preacher yet in the Ao mission. The total membership in the Ao churches was 75.<sup>22</sup>

### **The Impur Station**

Two Missionaries have arrived at the Ao Naga Mission field—the Rev. and Mrs. Perrine in 1892 and the Rev. and Mrs. F.A. Haggard in 1893. The arrival of these two Missionaries rendered it necessary to find and prepare places of work. For a great many years, Mr. and Mrs. Clark have felt it desirable that the Mission station be moved farther into the hills. When two families came, as there was no room for them at Molung to move became a matter of necessity. After a thorough canvass of the hills, the site was decided upon between the villages of Mopungchukit and Sungratsu, a site which the Clarks had in mind for years, about forty miles from Molung and ten miles north of Mokokchung, and fifty two miles of Government Road, east of Mariani.

The Mission had to face lots of difficulties in taking possession of this site. They sold the land but evidently they wanted more money. When the Mission appeared months after the purchase to take possession of and erect the building, there was opposition from the villagers. More than a month before the arrival of the Missionaries, the villagers had given the purchase money into the hands of the Officer in-charge at Mokokchung and decided not to let the Mission have the land. For weeks the Missionaries were boycotted and they could not even get a coolie for work nor buy so much as an egg. The Missionaries tried every means in their power to settle the matter. Finally the Nagas themselves appealed to the British officer, Captain Woods of Kohima, who, however, passed orders in favour of the Mission. Then the Mission established

22. *Ibid.*, Report from Amguri, 3rd. Triennial Conference, Tura, January 14-22, 1893.

their rights, occupied the land and the opposition has gradually dwindled away. There was a lot of work to do at the beginning. The jungle had to be cut, then local houses built for themselves and their servants, then the roads dug and then the Missionary bungalows. The Nagas, as many as 200 in a day helped the Missionaries in the constructions. The Chinese Carpenters under the direction of Mr. Dring, the Industrial Missionary at Tura, built them, and the Missionaries worked as general helpers at all trades. Mr. Haggard and family moved from Molung to Impur on November 1, 1894. Mr. and Mrs. Perrine with the Drings arrived at Impur on December 1, 1894. The Clarks remained at Molung for the time being, partly because trained teachers were available at Molung for compilation of an Ao-English Dictionary, and partly to render some assistance to the Assamese preachers in trying to revive the church there.

### **Haggard's Church Work**

On arriving on the Naga field, the Missionaries found that like all other fields, it had its difficulties and evils. But the Mission now decided to grapple with the situation come what may. Thus the Naga Mission church defined its position on problems of religious practices, drinking, eating opium, marriage relationship, observance of Sundays and giving to the church work. Thus the church took a bold step to keep all evil out of it regardless of its effects on individuals. Because of this action the work came to somewhat standstill. The Christians could not walk so fast nor so far as the Covenant required, and so they fell away. But there were signs of an advance. A few have been able to take a stand and five have asked for baptism. The year 1895 showed the following church statistics :

Dekahaimong	— 13 members
Yazang	— 7 members
Wamakun	— 3 members
Merangkong	— 5 members
Molung	— 40 members
<hr/>	
Total	68 members

It was intended that a church be organised at Impur early in 1896. The membership of this Station would be largely composed of teachers.

### **The Evangelistic Work**

Bendang, Bannie and Dingmin Marak have made several evangelistic tours in the Naga hills. Bendang was one of the old standbys at Molung. At the Garo Association meeting last winter, Tangkan Sangma made a call for volunteers to go to the Nagas. Two responded and Dingmin Marak was sent and the Garo Association has undertaken his support. Herriet teacher Robie's daughter was undertaking the work of Bible woman under the direction of Mrs. Perrine.<sup>23</sup>

Due to the new strict regulations of the church adopted at Molung, the new Molung church had only four members of which three were the Missionaries. But revival came in an unexpected way. A young man who had been refused admission into the Molung church on account of his opium eating habit, underwent a deep religious experience and converted one of his friends in 1895. These two went to work and won a large number of other young people. These young people formed a religious society of the strictest order. They were soon accepted back into the church and their preachings speeded up a revival movement which rapidly spread beyond Molung to neighbouring villages. The revival movement was so great that they decided to organise an Association and thus in 1879, the first Association of the Ao churches was held at Molung. It was reported in 1899 that there were five organised churches established with a total membership of 177.<sup>24</sup>

It was reported in 1900 that in December, 1899, Mr. and Mrs. Perrine left for America leaving Mr. and Mrs. Clark alone on the field. The Rivenburgs moved to Impur in February, 1900. The year was perhaps on the whole, the most prosperous one in the history of the Mission. The village school work and the church work were prosecuted with unusual vigour, and the

23. S.A. Perrine, 4th Triennial Conference, Sibsagar, December 14-22, 1895.

24. S.A. Perrine, Report from Ao Naga Field, Dibrugarh, February 11-19, 1899.

number of persons baptized in 1899 was 84, and 132 in 1900. The total membership of the Ao churches was 360 by that year.<sup>25</sup>

In 1901, Mr. and Mrs. Clark left for America and were replaced by Mr. and Mrs. Rivenburg and were reinforced by Mr. and Mrs. W.F. Dowds. The Rivenburg took the entire responsibility for the work leaving the Dowds free to learn the language and to become acquainted with the work. In November, however, the Rivenburgs left Impur, but still retained general oversight of the work until April 1, 1902, when all was turned over to Mr. Dowd's hands. Mrs. Dowd spent much of the first year in studying Ao language, teaching music and English in the school. The Dowds also studied Assamese.

Mr. Dowd being alone on the field had charge of the Station school, the care of the pupils, oversight of the repairs of the houses at Impur station, dispensing of medicines and the general care of the village churches and schools, so that very little time and strength were left for preaching and travelling. However, he attended during the first winter the Association meeting of the Ao churches and spent about five weeks in touring.<sup>26</sup>

It was reported that the Clarks have returned to Naga hills on 1st January, 1904 and devoted themselves to literary works and some evangelistic work.<sup>27</sup> Till 1893 the Impur Mission Station had only one Missionary and he was also busy in founding this new Station. But by 1904 the Missionaries began their efforts to reach each and every tribe having a part of the Impur field. In 1904, they had converts from every one of these tribes, but the progress was slow as many dialects and difficulties of communications limited their efforts. Great importance was attached by this time in the establishment of churches in two of the largest and the most influential Ao villages, Longsa and Longkum, each containing more than 700 houses. Perrine was so enthusiastic about the Naga Mission that he revived the old idea of a central Asian strategy. "The Naga Mission is chiefly valuable because of its position and what it is potentially in

25. S.W. Rivenburg. *Ibid.*, Gauhati, December 22-31, 1900.

26. W.F. Dowd, *Ibid.*, Gauhati, December 27, 1902-January 1, 1903.

27. E.W. Clark, Missionary Conference, Gauhati, December 24, 1904, January 1, 1905.

relation to the whole Mongolian race.”<sup>28</sup> Church membership continued to multiply and by 1905 about 20 villages had become Christians in the Ao territory.<sup>29</sup>

But the progress of Christianity was followed by persecutions, and the most hostile opposition came from the custodian of traditional Ao custom, particularly the Sungratsu and Mopungchuket villages. In 1905 they tried to compel the Christian minority to observe all the non-Christian festivals and taboos and pay for the expenses of all the religious ceremonies of the village. This issue was eventually taken to the Court and the Deputy Commissioner issued orders declaring ‘Liberty of Conscience’ to all and thus relieving the Christians from the payment of village taxes for false worship and for the entertainment of the visitors.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the liberty of conscience granted by the Deputy Commissioner, persecution of the Christians continued. The Christians were compelled to contribute equally with the non-Christians to the support of the heathen religious rites and ceremonies, and to observe the heathen ‘Amung’ or day of rest by staying away from cultivation on Amung days. The village headmen then sought an occasion to fine the Christians, partly because they wanted the feast at the expense of the Christians, and partly they wanted the unbaptized believers of Christianity to delay their open confession of faith.<sup>31</sup> Despite these persecutions and less tourings by the Missionaries, evangelistic work went on as usual, making considerable progress. During the past three years ending in 1912, 616 persons have been baptized. The number of Christians was estimated at 2000. The evangelistic work was done almost entirely by the local Christians, who got no help from the Missionaries except their pay and a little encouragement. There was one church which sent its members to sing, preach and pray in the neighbouring villages. The church was about only eight years old and they paid the evangelists for doing what it recognised as being the work of

28. S.A. Perrine, *Ibid.*

29. J.C. Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings in India*, p. 69.

30. W.F. Dowd, Report from Impur Field, Gauhati, January 5-12, 1907.

31. R.B. Longwell, Report from Impur Field, Gauhati, January 7-47, 1910.

the church. It had a membership of 351, of whom nearly two-third were women. The church had also collected about 300 maunds of rice. It was located at about twenty miles from Impur. It is interesting to mention that the first evangelist who went from Impur to preach in that village saved his life only by being a good runner and by knowing how to hide in the jungle. The villagers chased him as if he were a tiger.

However, persecutions still continued in the Ao areas, though not so vigorously as in the past few years. The Christians were no longer compelled to contribute, except in time, to the support of heathen religious rites. They were also still under the imposition of having to observe the heathen rest days. While the Christians have felt that the local Government official was their worst enemy, because of its antipathy to them and for overlooking the fault of the Dobhasies or Interpreter in depriving the Christians of justice and fairness in court proceedings. The Christians also considered the Government Official as their enemy as they simply ignored the action taken by the village headmen in fining them for refusing to attend the Sunday market at Mokokchung, and for having taken out four boys from the Impur school when the examinations were on, and for fining them for refusing to take the heathen form of oath and for not taking action on their appeal for complete exemption from all obligations to the religious customs of the heathen.<sup>32</sup>

In the midst of this persecution and revival, Clark, the veteran pioneer Missionary retired from the field in 1911, after 42 years of service in north-east India, of which 35 years were among the Ao Nagas.<sup>33</sup> Despite the departure of the man who more than any other had contributed to its development, the Ao church continued to grow. In fact, the church was in healthier condition than the Impur centre where the efforts of the Missionaries were largely concentrated. That was why, in 1913, Longwell was forced to confess that "We can not claim that the work in Impur is in a flourishing condition. It is far from it." There was a serious dispute between the church and the Missionaries concerning the training school at Impur. The

32. R.B. Longwell, Report from Impur Field, Gauhati, January 4-13, 1913.

33. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, p. 119.



church wanted more control over it than the Missionaries were willing to give. The seriousness of this dispute was indicated by Longwell in his report of 1913, saying, "It (Impur Centre) does not have the support and can scarcely be said to have the respect of the native Christian community."<sup>34</sup>

It was reported in 1915 that the Missionaries resumed their work with renewed vigour. During 1913, evangelistic work flourished. Touring was more extensive and more satisfactory than before. Bailey visited nearly all the villages of the Ao Nagas, baptising good number of people. Teachers were placed in several new villages. Religious interest was very keen and the spiritual life was reviving.

Churches and individual Christians were doing evangelistic work. They went in bands of two or more and visited distant villages. The Missionary, Mr. Bailey met one band of seven women in a village thirty miles from their homes. They were making a tour in the interest of the women's work. These Christians aroused interest and broke down opposition and made way for a permanent work. The Missionaries also visited in March, 1914, many Lohta villages, some of which have never been visited by any Missionary.

In 1913, Association of Naga Christians met in December. The whole Missionary force was present and about 1300 Naga Christians gathered there. 302 persons were baptized during the last two years. By 1915, there were 36 churches with 1700 members.<sup>35</sup>

It was reported in 1917 that Mr. Dowd was responsible for the Station school and religious services besides other odd jobs. During the year, he spent about 50 days on the field and two trips to the plains for conferences. More than half of the village schools were inspected, the majority of the Ao churches visited and over a hundred candidates were baptized.<sup>36</sup>

It was also reported that the evangelistic work has been of increasing interest and they had enough local people to do

34. R.B. Longwell, Report from Impur Field, Gauhati, January 4-13, 1913.

35. J.R. Bailey, Report from Impur Field, Golaghat, January 9-18 1915.

36. W.F. Dowd, *Ibid.*, Sibsagar, January 15-22, 1917.

evangelistic work. The association meeting was well-attended, and the Sunday school was the most pleasing aspect of the Missionary work.<sup>37</sup>

By this time, the Ao churches displayed genuine zeal in the work of evangelization. In 1920 there were 46 churches with 3838 members. Schools were set up in 38 villages and four Missionaries were on the field.<sup>38</sup> In April, 1926, more than 3000 Christians gathered to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Clark's foundation of Molung centre. There were then churches in 52 of the 58 Ao villages and some more in other villages.<sup>39</sup> By 1930, the Ao church became almost entirely self-supporting, under some able leadership. The Christians were 8112 in 1930, and 9000 in 1933.<sup>40</sup>

Various leaders were sent to Jorhat for Bible School training. In fact, this had been a practice since 1915, as the churches were determined to have an educated leadership. Some of the first persons to receive Theological training, however, did not work long in the church. A committee consisting of Ao church leaders and the Missionaries was also set up in order to decide when a newly established local church should become self-supporting. The delegation of the work of their churches and the association to the local Congregation was one of the most promising features of development in the Ao area. By 1936, only 13 per cent of the total expenditure for Christian work in the Impur field came from Mission sources. The Ao Christians also did effective work among several other tribes, and were able and willing to take more responsibilities in education, evangelism and medical Mission.<sup>41</sup>

It was reported in 1937 that the work of the Missionary on this field included besides the regular work, Engineering, Agriculture, Dairy-farming, Journalism, Architecture and Jurisprudence. During the year, a Medical Plant had been started with

37. J.R. Bailey, *Ibid.*

38. P.T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, p. 73.

39. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, p. 120.

40. P.T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, pp. 74-75.

41. B.I. Anderson, *Missionary Conference, Jorhat, February 3-6, 1936.*

dispensary, in-patient wards, school, Infirmary and workers houses completed. A girl's hostel has been built and the old dispensary remodelled for a school house. A bridge was built across the Malak river and a Dam to conserve water has been constructed on the compound. During the year, 92 village churches were visited and there were 530 baptisms among the Ao Nagas.<sup>42</sup>

In 1938, there were 69 Ao churches with 11,657 members, and 893 baptisms during the year. The Baptist churches in the Ao areas were entering upon a period of development characterised by an increased activity among the young people. The evangelist Mr. Kijungliba has done commendable work in looking after the churches as well as the village schools during the year.<sup>43</sup>

It was reported in 1940 that his excellency, Sir Robert Reid, the Governor of Assam, Lady Reid and their party visited Impur Mission Centre. The Missionaries were gratified to see the interest and the friendly attitude taken by the Governor towards the work of Christian Missions in the hills of Assam. A plea for permission to re-enter the Sangtam tribe to care for the Christians there met with favourable response. Lady Reid gave Rs. 100 for the work among girls and women and made some very commendatory remarks about the cleanliness and attractiveness of the Christian women. The money had been used to start Industrial work among the girls and much progress had been made along this line.

The condition of the churches was reported as not altogether good. The most serious trouble of the year has been the breaking out of political and anti-church agitation directed by men trained by the Mission. Repeated visits by the Missionary and evangelists helped to bring about better understanding and in one case Government took some very drastic actions.

Including Sangtams, Changs and Konyaks 744 have been baptized during the year. By this time, the Aos have accepted full responsibilities for the support of the work among the Sangtams.<sup>44</sup>

42. B.I. Anderson, *Ibid.*, Sadiya, December 8-13, 1937.

43. B.I. Anderson and Mayangnokcha Ao, *Ibid.*, 1938.

44. B.I. Anderson and—Missionary Conference, Jorhat, January 4-9, 1940.

It was reported in 1941 that the evangelistic work in the Ao field has passed almost entirely into the hands of the Ao Naga pastors and the evangelists. The Missionary visited 25 Ao villages that year and assisted in dedicating two new church buildings. The Ao Christians numbered 13,776 and 930 were baptized during the year among the Aos, Konyaks, Changs and Sangtams. The Annual Association meeting held that year was a sad affair due to the agitation of some of the non-Christians. The Government took the matter in hand and refused to allow more than 1000 people to attend the meeting. The general expenses of the churches during the year was Rs. 18,000. The Women's work and Christian Endeavour have flourished that year.<sup>45</sup>

Another trying experiences of the church was the transfer of the services of Christian workers to Government. One was Mayangnokcha Ao who served as the Head master of Impur School for 14 years but left for Government service. According to Tanquist, "he was worth more to the progress of the work than a Missionary family but his pay was only one-third of what he could get elsewhere and only one-tenth that of an ordinary Missionary family." Others who followed suits were Subongmeiba, Panger, and Kumbho. The Mission somehow missed the point when they said that they were short of funds and could not compete with the Government.

But Kijungliba was with them. He was a prince of an evangelist and leader. He could work effectively with the help of a responsible church Council and look after the needs of the churches in general. The Ao Christians were increasingly conscious of their responsibility to border tribes like Sangtams, Konyaks, Changs and Phoms. Travel among them was restricted by Government but Kijungliba was allowed to go freely among them.<sup>46</sup>

It was reported in 1945 that baptism on the Impur field numbered about 1,300. They held a Bible Class at Impur that year. The Ao evangelist Kijungliba continued to serve in his

45. B.I. Anderson, Mayangnokcha Ao, *Ibid.*, Golaghat, December 4-9, 1941.

46. J.E. Tanquist, Missionary Conference, Nowgong, November 9-13, 1944.

own quiet and very effective way.<sup>47</sup> The Missionary report for 1946 on the Ao Nagas was most encouraging. The number of baptisms for the year among them was 691 with a total church membership of 17,000. The contributions in cash for the year amounted to Rs. 1,05,375.<sup>48</sup>

In 1947, the Ao Baptist Association celebrated its Golden Jubilee. 11,295 delegates from 58 churches registered for the Jubilee celebrations. The Ao Christians numbered 15,734 and their total contribution was Rs. 16,153-11-0 and of this amount Rs. 1000 was the gift of the Mission. The evangelistic work centered round two Bible Classes and a special training for workers. The work among Konyaks and Changs were still part of the Ao Association.<sup>49</sup>

The Ao Nagas were only one of the seven tribes in the Impur field. The others as large as the Aos were the Changs and the Konyaks and they were clamouring for the evangelists. The Aos had two Bible conferences and supported an evangelist during the year.<sup>50</sup>

It was reported in 1950 that in the Ao work, three achievements were particularly gratifying—the completion of the revised New Testament printing, the decision to raise the Impur M.E. school to High school standard and the good results of the “Crusade for christ” movement. There were altogether 1166 Ao Nagas baptized during the year and the total church membership was 1,70,00. Total collections for the year was Rs. 55,000 and 57,000 Yimchis of rice.<sup>51</sup>

Thus as we go on with time, we find the progress of the Ao churches and their concern for other tribes as well.

## THE ANGAMI BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

In response to the earnest request of Rev. E.W. Clark, the Home Board in America, appointed Rev. C.D. King as Missionary to the Naga Hills with permission to plant a Station

47. B.I. Anderson, *Ibid.*, Jorhat, November 8-12, 1945.

48. B.I. Anderson, *Ibid.*, Gauhati, December 6-10, 1946.

49. B.I. Anderson, *Ibid.*, Jorhat, December 10-14, 1947.

50. C.E. Hunter, Missionary Conference, Jorhat, January 11-14, 1949.

51. *Ibid.*, Golaghat, January 3-9, 1950.

wherever he thought best. Rev. King arrived at Calcutta on December 19, 1878, and on the 24th married Miss Anna Sweet of Nowgong field in Assam. On the 25th, he left his bride at Calcutta and proceeded to Naga hills, calling at Tura for a few days to acquaint himself with the kind of work involved in the opening of a Mission station.<sup>52</sup>

C.D. King described the Angamis as the most independent, enterprising, warlike and treacherous of all the numerous hill tribes of southern Assam.<sup>53</sup> After generations of warfare and strifes, the Government of India occupied the Angami country by the end of 1878 and established Cantonment and Civil Government in the heart of the tribe at Kohima. The presence of a Regiment of Infantry and 500 armed police indicated that peace was at home and all Missionaries of Assam including Clark felt that Kohima would be the most favourable for Missionary work.<sup>54</sup>

C.D. King moved to the Naga hills and wanted to proceed to Kohima at once but the Government refused permission because of the unsettled conditions. After many trials and delays he established himself at Samaguting now Chumukedima a Station which was formerly occupied as the headquarters of the British troops to protect the border people from savage raids. He brought his wife to this place after a very tiring journey on June 27, 1879. Punaram, an Assamese Christian accompanied them to commence school work. Thus, they without a house were allowed to stay in the tents. However, in October, 1879, the Angamis raided their Camp to massacre all the Whites, and C.D. King and his wife, after many vicissitudes escaped and found their way to Sibsagar where they remained till March 1880 when Mrs. King, due to ill-health went to America. On the restoration of peace, Rev. King received permission again to enter the Naga hills, and he proceeded directly to Kohima. At Kohima, with great difficulty he built a bungalow, a school house and out-building practically by himself. He had hardly finished the constructions and started learning the language and care of the school when the

52. S.W. Rivenburg, Jubilee Reports, 1886.

53. B.M.M., Vol. LIX, June, 1879, No. 6:144.

54. S.W. Rivenburg, Jubilee Reports, 1886.

British Government ordered him to vacate the site. He pulled down the buildings and erected new on a site half a mile away. All these works have absorbed the time and strength of King.<sup>55</sup>

At Kohima, two questions were put to King by the Angamis— (i) Can you cure diseases? (ii) Can you tell by looking at a person's hand how long he will live?<sup>56</sup> King replied that he brought to them both the 'Great Physician' and the 'Giver of eternal life!' Henry Goldsmith, an Assamese Christian, and Sarbey, a Mikir Christian, both from the Nowgong church accompanied King to Kohima to teach in the school and help in the Mission work. The school was started with eleven Naga boys and it grew to 30 after a few months. It was carried on with much success till 1886 when the members gradually fell away. The Kohima field was soon joined by an Assamese evangelist named Robi who served for a number of years till he returned to Sibsagar.

Mrs. King joined her husband at Kohima in March, 1882. Besides teaching in the school, Henry Goldsmith also conducted the Sunday services in Assamese and a week day Prayer meeting. The school boys as well as the sepoy's attended and learned something of Christianity from the services. On March 29, 1883, Rev. and Mrs. C.D. King, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Goldsmith, Sarbey and Robi organised themselves into the Kohima Baptist Church for the first time. On July 29, 1883, the first baptism was given to the wife of one of the Assamese. In 1883, Sarbey the Mikir teacher married an Angami girl named Dunino but she was not yet a Christian.<sup>57</sup>

It was even presumed that both Robi and Sarbey married the Angami girls.<sup>58</sup> In 1884, a Eurasian was baptised. In May, 1884, Mrs. King with her two emaciated babies went to America to recoup their health. In November, 1885, Mrs. King and the children returned and very happily began their life anew. But in less than a month, all were ill. The first Angami Naga was buried in the ordinance of baptism on June 21, 1885.

55. S.W. Rivenburg, Jubilee Report, 1886.

56. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. LIX, September, 1879, No. 361.

57. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, p. 130.

58. P.T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, p. 81.

Three others soon followed. In 1887, the Kings left for America due to ill-health after eight years of service.<sup>59</sup>

After the Conference of 1886, the Rivenburgs immediately proceeded to Molung and began packing to proceed to Kohima. They arrived at Kohima in January, 1887 and busied themselves in repairing the buildings for about two months. He gave some hours a day in learning the Angami language and after some months started translating some hymns and gospels. He engaged two Angami boys about 12 years old and taught them to read and write so as to test his own method of writing Angami. His experiment was quite satisfactory.

On arriving at Kohima, he found the names of two Nagas, one Mikir and two Assamese on the church roll. The Assamese, Henry Goldsmith and his wife returned to Nowgong, and the two Nagas were excluded from the church later in the year. The Mikir lived seventeen miles away from Kohima and came only occasionally. Thus there was no active Christian left on the Kohima field.

Rivenburg held a service in English for Europeans of the place. At first, a large number of officers came on Sundays but after a time, one by one, they ceased to come. There have been no visible results from this work.<sup>60</sup>

During Rivenburg's five years stay at Kohima, 1887—1891, there was no conversion though regular preaching was conducted at Kohima and neighbouring villages and held two services at his bungalow every Sunday. On account of this unproductive enterprise, the Rivenburgs were recalled to America by the Home Board but he refused to leave. In 1891, the Rivenburgs were compelled to go to America due to ill-health and on the way at Calcutta, he saw the proofs of some book in the press.<sup>61</sup>

During the absence of Rivenburgs in America, there was no Missionary work done on the Kohima field. The Out-buildings except one have disappeared and the only bungalow would hardly withstand the winds of another month of March.

59. S.W. Rivenburg, Jubilee Report, 1886.

60. S.W. Rivenburg, Report from Kohima Field, Gauhati, December 21-30, 1889.

61. E.W. Clark, Report from Amguri, Tura, January 14-22, 1893.



The Rivenburgs arrived at Kohima on October 29, 1894. The first three months were spent in putting the Mission house in order. After that he went about the villages preaching and doctoring as opportunity offered. Many listened attentively, asked questions, and said, the words are good, but as for accepting Christ, no one has been converted.<sup>62</sup>

In 1895, after returning from Missionary conference, work in preaching and doctoring was resumed by Rivenburg and has continued without interruptions till the middle of November, 1898 except when he took a short trip to Impur in June, 1896.

The Naga preacher, Sieliezhu who commenced his work in November, 1895, continued for two years and then took leave for cultivation during 1897-98, and then resumed his preaching ministry without any salary. But this was found unsatisfactory and so in November, 1898, he became the full-fledged evangelist of the Mission.

In May, 1896, an Angami who read in the Government school for years was converted, and after sometime, he was sent to his village for preaching. The following year, his wife was baptized and several others became enquirers. During the three years, 1896-98, Rivenburg baptized four Nagas, one Mikir, one Garo, one Khasi restored one and again excluded him, leaving the church number to ten in 1899.<sup>63</sup>

From the time of Missionary Conference in 1899, work at Kohima was continued along the old lines. The two Angami evangelists Sieliezhu and Neisier have continued their work uninterruptedly and as a result of their labours, two men—one a leper, and one from a neighbouring tribe were baptized in 1899. In all, four were added to the church making a total of 15.<sup>64</sup>

After the Missionary Conference in 1900, Rivenburg returned to Kohima and remained there till February 18, 1901. During these six weeks, six days were spent in a tour to Nakama where two were baptized. On February 14, 1901, two

62. S.W. Rivenburg, Report from Angami Field, December, 14-22, 1895.

63. *Ibid.*, Dibrugarh, February 11-19, 1899.

64. S.W. Rivenburg, Report from Angami Field, Gauhati, December 22-31, 1900.

more were baptized at Kohima. On August 11, 1902, Rabin, a Garo residing at Kohima turned up at Impur for baptism. In company with evangelist, Niesier, he had walked hundred miles in rains to receive the ordinance. He led an earnest, consistent Christian life till December 22, 1902 when he died on account of dysentery.

The Rivenburgs went to the Ao field but returned to Kohima on May 29, 1902. When they arrived they found the Kohima Church in a very unsatisfactory condition. One whom he considered as the strongest member has gone back to heathenism and was excluded. One has been baptized, making a total membership of 17.

During the two years, the evangelists, Niesier and Sieliezhu have been at work and the baptisms were due to their labours. In November, another member, Sarbey whom C.D. King has brought from Nowgong commenced to do the work of an evangelist.<sup>65</sup>

Rev. and Mrs. H.B. Dickson came to Kohima on November 23, 1906 before Rev. and Mrs. Rivenburg left for America on December 1, 1906. The number of Christians began to multiply, believers were found among the Semas and Zeliangrong besides the Angamis. During a short visit, Dickson baptized 47 people from three villages. In 1907, the church membership has grown to 95.<sup>66</sup>

In November, 1907, the Rivenburgs returned from furlough and resumed charge of the Angami work, Dickson being occupied with the Sema language and one long tour through the Sema areas up to the middle of June, 1908 when he left the Mission because of his disagreement with Rivenburg. On March 22, 1908, Mrs. Rivenburg passed away after an operation. On November 21, 1908, Narola Rivenburg, their daughter (she was named by her Ao Ayah—Narola meaning 'Flower' in the Ao language) having abandoned her studies in the Vassar College, U.S.A., came to Kohima to assist her father in the work and returned to America in July, 1910.

The same Angami evangelists were retained and there have

65. *Ibid.*, Gauhati, December 27, 1902 to January 1, 1903.

66. P.T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, p. 86.

been four baptisms. In December, two evangelists were appointed by the churches for four months on a monthly salary of Rs. 10. There were 90 church members representing several Naga tribes.<sup>67</sup>

In Kohima, church services were held uninterrupted. Three evangelists for the Angami, Sema and Chakhesang Nagas have been appointed. In 1911, there were six baptisms and in 1912, also six. The Chapel at Kohima commenced in December, 1912.<sup>68</sup>

The Missionary report for 1915 stated that one evangelist, each for the Angamis, Zeliangrongs, Chakhesangs and Semas has been employed. The Church kept its schedule of working through Sunday schools, preaching, Infant schools, conferences, prayer meetings, Assamese Bible class and Christian endeavours. The Church membership for 1913 and 1914 was 124 and 151.<sup>69</sup>

Mr. and Mrs. J.E. Tanquist were designated to Kohima field and arrived in Kohima on June 18, 1913. He undertook tourings in the district and acquainted himself with the field.<sup>70</sup> According to Missionary report for 1916, there was a total church membership of 129 at the beginning of 1915. During the year, 16 were baptized by Rivenburg, 4 died and 3 were excluded, making a total membership of 138 at the end of 1916. The Angami Association meeting was held at Kohima in 1916. Mrs. Tanquist also conducted a Girls' sewing class three days a week and Sunday school as well.<sup>71</sup>

The Missionaries felt that there was more need for aggressive evangelistic efforts. The local evangelists have been working for years and they have done good work. One promising young man with a Theological training has been ordained. 76 persons have been baptised during the year and five evangelists have been employed.<sup>72</sup> In 1918, the Kohima church and the Nerhema

67. S.W. Rivenburg, Report from Kohima Field, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

68. *Ibid.*, Gauhati, January 4-13, 1913.

69. *Ibid.*, Golaghat, January 9-18, 1915.

70. J.E. Tanquist, *Ibid.*

71. *Ibid.*, Nowgong, February 17-24, 1916.

72. J.E. Tanquist, Report from Kohima Field, Gauhati, January 15-22, 1917.

village Church formed themselves into the Angami Association and reported a membership of 248.<sup>73</sup> The annual Association meeting was held at Kohima in 1921, and Mr. and Mrs. George Supplee joined the Kohima Mission field in 1922. There were 370 members in the entire Kohima field in that year and in the following year the membership rose to 525. The non-Christian Nagas complained to the Deputy Commissioner that their normal life was disturbed by the large scale conversions. The Deputy Commissioner, however, resigned himself voluntarily from the Government job and joined the Christian revival movement.<sup>74</sup> The Rivenburgs returned to Kohima in 1923 but Rev. J.E. Tanquist had been working since 1912 till 1947.<sup>75</sup>

According to the Missionary report for 1926, there was steady rise in the membership of the church in the Kohima field.<sup>76</sup> It was reported in 1927 that among the sturdy Angamis, Christianity has increased only by slow degrees. Christians of sterling qualities have come forth and have used their influence for good not only among the people of their own tribe but among the surrounding tribes as well. But most of the better trained among them have been looking for Government jobs with good salaries and influential social positions.<sup>77</sup>

The Missionary report for 1936 says that the dominating and likable Angamis have been slow to respond to the Gospel message but the outlook for vigorous growth of the Christian community in face of no small amount of opposition was never more favourable than now.<sup>78</sup>

The Angami conversions began to rise from 1937 onwards. The total number of persons baptized was 355, of whom 99 were Angamis. The total church membership was 1736, out of whom, 630 were Angamis.<sup>79</sup> The Angami villages along the highway were visited by the Missionaries. The baptism during the year

73. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, p. 141.

74. P.T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, p. 88.

75. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, p. 141.

76. J.E. Tanquist, Report from Kohima Field, Jorhat, December 2-10, 1926.

77. *Ibid.*, Golaghat, November 23, December 1, 1927.

78. *Ibid.*, December 1-6, 1936.

79. J.E. Tanquist, Report from Kohima Field, Sadiya, December 8-13, 1937.

was 215, of whom 58 were Angamis. One Mission enthusiast in Winconsin in America, a man of ordinary means has helped aside from his full share in regular budgets.<sup>80</sup>

In 1940, a renewed interest and enthusiasm has been created in the Angami field by Megosoiso Savino, a graduate of Pierce Divinity School, Burma, a young man of outstanding Christian character.<sup>81</sup> He summoned the churches to take a greater responsibility.<sup>82</sup> In 1941, there were 389 baptisms in the Kohima field. Thus an awakening was in progress among the eastern Angamis.<sup>83</sup>

During the second world war, Kohima was known throughout the world. It became the turning point of the war in the area. From Press reports, one might get the impression that the Mission work came to a standstill, but the work continued without any serious break and can be called more vigorous than ever. However, the Mission workers had to give their time and energy to the war efforts in response to some special call, but on the whole, the Pastors and evangelists have stuck cheerfully to their posts at the time of real testing. M. Savino responded to an urgent call and was in the midst of danger for three weeks. After being wounded he came to Impur with his wife for a period of rest but was kept busy in many ways. Then they travelled visiting churches and conducting Bible Conferences. During the invasion, the Treasurer of the Kohima Church Council lost a considerable sum of money meant for the pay of many workers. They were however made up partly by the Mission and partly by the churches.<sup>84</sup>

It was reported in 1945 that the Kohima Association could not be surpassed in efficiency and cordial cooperation. The church has assumed full responsibility for employment of workers, use of funds, policies and disciplinary problems. No old work was closed nor new projects discouraged on the plea of shortage of funds. The Bible Training School interrupted

80. *Ibid.*, 1938.

81. *Ibid.*, Jorhat, January 4-9, 1940.

82. P.T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, p. 90.

83. G.W. Supplee, *Report from Kohima Field, Golaghat, December 4-9, 1941.*

84. J.E. Tanquist, *Ibid.*, Nowgong, November 9-13, 1944.

by the invasion for a year, resumed again.<sup>85</sup> The total number of baptism in 1946 was 502. The church council decided to start a Bible school with Rev. M. Savino, Mr. and Mrs. Tanquist and another Angami as teachers.<sup>86</sup>

In 1949, Rev. Supplee visited different churches but covered only 25 out of 90 villages. The baptism reached over 400. The Bible Classes played a major role in training the young Mr. workers.<sup>87</sup> When Rev. Supplee left for America in 1949, Hourton helped the Kohima work for a couple of years. By this time, the responsibility fell more and more into the hands of the nationals which they took up as a challenge.<sup>88</sup>

### THE LOTHIA BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

The Third Mission Centre in Nagaland was set up at Wokha in 1885. This was the work and the sacrificing spirit of the pioneer Missionary, Rev. E.W. Clark. It was while he was alone for ten months in the Naga hills in 1876 that he felt convinced that these were the people and the places where the seeds of Christianity ought to be sown. He asked, "Were the tidings of the Gospel for the Aos alone?" Later he wrote, "A road is being made from the plain of Assam up to Wokha. The Political Agent will probably occupy Wokha another year, when it will doubtless be a safe place to live. Wokha is a large Naga village and other villages are near. Let the other Missionary family go there."

As Clark predicted, Wokha was occupied by Captain Butler the Political Agent but the brutal murder of one of his sepoy by the Wokha Nagas was punished by burning their large village. A few months later, Captain Butler himself fell a victim to the hostile and warlike spirit of the Nagas. His successor was appointed at once and a site about 3 kms distant from the Naga village and commanding a small and partially detached mountain spur has even since been occupied as a Sub-

85. J.E. Tanquist, Report from Kohima Field, Jorhat, November 8-12, 1945.

86. *Ibid.*, Jorhat, December, 10-14, 1947.

87. G.W. Supplee, *Ibid.*, Jorhat, January 11-16, 1949.

88. P.T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, p. 91.

Divisional Station of the Naga hills guarded by a force of sepoy of about 60 to 80.

In 1885, during the visit of Messers Moore and Witter to his house at Molung, Clark suddenly turned to them and said, "If the Witters will occupy Wokha at once, I will give Missionary Union a special gift of Rs. 500 to cover the expense of their transfer . . ." A telegram was then sent to the Deputy Commissioner at Kohima asking for permission to occupy Wokha as a Mission Centre. Permission being granted, a bungalow was placed at the disposal of the Mission. Mr. Witter whose health was not suitable to work in the Assam plains, at once accepted the challenge. He left Molung for Sibsagar on March 3, 1885 and arrived on the same day. The following day, he left Sibsagar for Wokha, Witter and his party reached the Wokha Tea Estate lying at the foot of the hills on April 7, 1885, where he was met by C.D. King of Kohima, who travelled on foot about 192 kms. through the hills to lighten for them the burdens of the new untried way. He was accompanied by several sepoy and 100 Naga coolies. After experiencing in travelling through various and exciting hills, they reached Wokha on April 9, 1885 and occupied an old abandoned house which the Deputy Commissioner placed at the disposal of the Mission. At that time, there was no other bungalow at Wokha, their only neighbour was the Sub-divisional Officer who occupied another rest house.

After setting down, Witter began to study the Lotha language from April 17 onwards. Besides the study of the language, Witter also tried to improve his Assamese which he learnt while at Sibsagar and used that language to converse with the mixed races living in police lines at Wokha. On Sunday morning, the 2nd August, 1885, for the first time, Mrs. Witter gathered several Lotha boys to her residence and began the first formal teaching of Christianity to them. From 1886 onwards, Mr. Witter started teaching in the Naga Sunday school class in the Lotha language, whereas, Mrs. Witter opened a Sunday school class for the sepoy and bazar children who belonged to different tribes but who knew the Assamese language. Ten children were thus brought in for regular studies. In the beginning, some parents having religious scruples, detained their children for a week or two, while some punished their children for

having run away to attend the class. But some children used to come to the Mission bungalow on Wednesdays for singing. They keenly enjoyed the Assamese hymns which they sang from morning till night. One of these children used to repeat the prayer along with his younger brother at his home at night but their mother stopped them. About the middle of August 1886, Mrs. Witter began to visit regularly the wives and concubines of the sepoys and shop-keepers and soon came to know every woman of Wokha to whom she told the story of Christ. Many sepoys also visited the Mission bungalow and in one way or another, the Missionaries came into contact with nearly all the residents of Wokha. Though no one made formal acceptance of Christianity, yet Mr. and Mrs. Witter feel that from these preachings to the Assamese, Gurkalis, Garos, Hindus, Mussulmans and the animists of Wokha and the neighbouring villages, a day will not be long when a harvest will be reaped. Besides the Witters, Robi, the Assamese preacher and his wife also stayed at Wokha and assisted them during 1885-86.<sup>89</sup>

After the Jubilee Conference in 1886, Mr. Witter returned to Wokha alone and preached in several villages who was listened with great interest. Nine Naga students who attended his school were taught both secular and religious subjects in the Lotha language. Assamese hymns were also taught to them. But from the time Witter left Wokha in 1887 till the coming of Mr. and Mrs. Haggard in October, 1896, there was no Resident Missionary at the Wokha Mission Centre. In 1897, the Haggards were called back to Impur and so, Wokha was without a Missionary for the second time. Zilli, the Assamese preacher visited the Wokha Mission Field in December, 1896 and was getting ready to go to Wokha with his family when he died suddenly.<sup>90</sup>

The first Lotha converts were two youngmen, Nkhao from Yikhum village and Shanrio from Isungiki village, baptised by Haggard at Impur on October 2, 1898. Both were orphans and pupils at the Impur Mission school.<sup>91</sup>

89. W.E. Witter, Jubilee Issue, 1886; Vide also, M.M. Clark, *A Corner in India*, pp. 88-93.

90. P.T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, p. 96.

91. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, p. 126.



In 1900, Robi, the Assamese preacher and his family moved to Wokha to attempt for the fourth time to set up a church among the Lothas. At first, he was well-received but later, it was not encouraging. However, there were six Lotha boys studying at Impur, five of whom were baptised that very year.<sup>92</sup> In 1902, Robi worked and preached among the Lothas and baptised the first Lotha outside the Mission school. During 1901-02, 20 Lotha boys were studying in the Impur school, several of whom have become Christians and two of them started teaching and preaching among their own people.<sup>93</sup>

The uncertainty in planting a Church among the Lothas became clear when a good number of Lotha students at Impur became Christians. In 1904-05, S.A. Perrine reported, "The Lotha is perhaps the most encouraging part of the work. Boys have been drawn from every part of that tribe for the training school. Of these, quite a good number have become Christians. A few boys have been induced to attend the Impur school. These are the very first among the Lothas . . . The past year a fairly strong church has been built up at Okotsa village. This is the largest Lotha village. The Lotha boys make better servants than the Aos and better students and more stalwart Christians."<sup>94</sup>

Between 1907 and 1909, R.B. Longwell has made one trip to the Lotha villages.<sup>95</sup> J.R. Bailey of Impur Station visited many Lotha villages in March, 1914, some of which have never been visited by any Missionary before.<sup>96</sup>

In 1920, a school was opened for the Lothas at Furkating as they showed more interest in learning and in listening to preaching. In 1921, there were 149 baptised members of the Lotha church and the membership was increased to 257 in the next year. Regular services were held in 9 places and by 1923, church was established in 12 villages.<sup>97</sup>

92. S.W. Rivenburg, Report from the Ao Naga Field, 1900.

93. *Ibid.*, 1902-03.

94. S.A. Perrine, Report on the Lotha Work, Missionary Conference, Gauhati, December 24, 1904 January 1, 1905.

95. R.B. Longwell, Report on Impur Field, Missionary Conference, Gauhati, January 8-17, 1910.

96. J.R. Bailey, *Ibid.*, Golaghat, January 9-18, 1915.

97. P.T. Philip, The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland, p. 98.

On May 21, 1923, representatives of six churches met at Okotsa and formed their own Association. This Association was at first regarded as the branch of the Ao Association, but the Lotha Association now traces its origin to this Okotsa meeting of 1923.<sup>98</sup>

In 1926, Furkating Station was opened specially for the Lotha Nagas and Wokha as the outstation. In February on the same year, W.R. Hutton occupied the Furkating Station after rennovating the bungalow.<sup>99</sup> In 1927, it was reported that the work among the Lothas has not had adequate attention of the Missionaries. The Lotha work was still divided into two—the educational work being done at Furkating, and the Mission work from Impur, which was very unsatisfactory.<sup>100</sup> The Mission, however, secured permission to build a Mission Centre at Vankhosung in 1928 from Mr. Pawsey, S.D.O., Mokochung, but no Missionary was posted there.<sup>101</sup>

Significant progress was made in the Christianization of the Lotha Nagas from 1930 onwards. The church grew rapidly. In 1932, the membership rose to 1000 and 1265 in the following year.<sup>102</sup>

According to Mission reports in 1935, there were 26 churches and 965 Christians among the Lotha though there was no resident Missionary. They were looked after by the Impur Missionaries who occasionally conducted Bible Classes among them.<sup>103</sup> As the membership increased rapidly, the Lotha Church Association began to insist on rigid discipline in order to make people feel that church membership is a highly desirable thing.<sup>104</sup>

In 1937, J.E. Tanquist reported that Christianity is rapidly gaining a foothold among the 20,000 Lotha population. Ten

98. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, p. 128.

99. W.R. Hutton, Report on Furkating Field, Missionary Conference, 1927.

100. R.B. Longwell, Report on Impur Field, Missionary Conference, 1927.

101. P.T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, p. 98.

102. *Ibid.*

103. J.E. Tanquist, Report on Kohima Field, Missionary Conference, 1935.

104. *Ibid.*, 1936.

per cent of the population are already members of the churches, and counting their young children, it can safely be said that one-fifth of the tribe are Christians. The Annual Association was held in a village 57 kms from Kohima. On the way, about 39 persons were baptised in a Sema and a Rengma village. Baptism during the year numbered 193 among the Lothas. The Missionaries found the Lothas plucky and likeable.<sup>105</sup> In 1938, it was reported that the work continues to bear fruits and full of promise in many ways. The Association meeting was held in November where 946 persons attended besides the local population which was a record of the Lothas. The number of baptism was 206 and the total church membership was 1642.<sup>106</sup>

In 1940, there were altogether 204 converts who were baptised and thus the Christian community steadily increased in numbers.<sup>107</sup> It was reported that the preaching of the Gospel was in the hands of the people themselves for many years. One old priest was fined Rs. 50 for daring to break with the old custom and for becoming a Christian.<sup>108</sup> It was reported in 1944 that during the last 12 years since the establishment of a Central Mission at Vankhosung, the Lotha Christians have increased in numbers and have become more conscious of what they can do for themselves. But in 1944, they decided to close the school and use the buildings at Vankhosung as the Lotha Christian Centre for Bible Conferences and church Council meetings. Two of the workers made their headquarters there for the distribution of books and visitation of churches.<sup>109</sup>

The Missionary report of 1946 says that the year witnessed the highest number of baptism, a record of 386. The total church membership was around 3000 which was about half of the population. The Annual Association meeting was attended by more than 700 delegates. Three evangelists have been touring among the churches and the Lotha church Council recommen-

105. *Ibid.*, 1938.

106. *Ibid.*, 1938.

107. J.E. Tanquist, Report from Kohima, Missionary Conference, 1940.

108. B.I. Anderson, *Ibid.*, 1941.

109. J.E. Tanquist, Report from Naga Hills, Missionary Conference, 1944.

ded that one of them be ordained and another one commissioned to baptise.<sup>110</sup> In 1947, after a brief stay of Mr. and Mrs. W.E. Witter in 1885-86, Rev. and Mrs. Houston have been appointed to be a resident Missionary among the Lothas. The total church membership was 3,200 and Ahamo, the evangelist toured among the churches besides supervising the Bible school. The total number of baptism in the year was 247.<sup>111</sup>

The Silver Jubilee Celebration took place in January, 1948 at Vankhosung, where over a thousand people attended. Rev. Houston preached in fifteen villages and 553 persons were baptised that year. There were over 55 churches in 64 Lotha villages with over 3400 baptised Christians and many hundred unbaptised believers.<sup>112</sup> In 1950, 480 Lothas have been baptised and estimated church membership was 3300. Bible Classes were held in March and July and the Annual Association meeting in November of the year.<sup>113</sup>

### THE CHAKHESANG BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

In 1895, Rev. S.W. Rivenburg accompanied by Sieliezhu and Kruneizhu, two Angami Christians, came to Chazuba village of Chakhesang territory and preached about God, the Creator and sure place of rest after death. The same day, ten persons were converted and were baptised and a church was formed there. However, due to strong pressure from their own people, seven of them reverted back to their old religion but the other three remained stuck in their new faith and became later on, the main pillars in the spread of Christianity in the whole of the Chakhesang areas. These three persons were—Ngakhra, Huluyi and Swuzumo. Yet they had no churches, they simply worshipped at homes. They neither read the Bible nor sang any hymn, but simply discussed about life after death and heaven.

In 1896, the second congregation was founded in Yorubami village by Sairu and Molhunyi but there was no evangelization

110. J.E. Tanquist, Report from Kohima, Missionary Conference, 1946.

111. *Ibid.*, 1947.

112. H. Houston, Report from Wokha, Missionary Conference, 1949.

113. *Ibid.*, 1950.

during 1895-1914, as the converts evidently did not have any idea of it and they had no contact with any Missionary. They simply remained faithful to their belief. But from 1914 onwards, the trio—Suhulo, Lhuprieve and Sare began to spread the Gospel but evidently no church was established by them. Thus the period between 1885 and 1930 was a period of non-growth of churches among the Chakhesangs. The seed sown earlier began to germinate only after 1930.<sup>114</sup>

Even after 1830, evangelization was not rapid and not organised. Besides the trio, only the youngmen who studied at Kohima Boarding school became Christians and talked about Christianity in their own villages when they returned to their homes. Group decisions, such as, that swept the Ao tribe, has not taken place during these years. However, christian influences began to be felt through these young men. Bible has been seen and heard and Christian hymns have been sung and enjoyed, but no definite step has been taken to organise the church in the Chakhesang territory till 1930.

In 1930, a big Conference of Christians was hold at Phek village which led to the increase in the number of small Congregations. The Chakhesangs began to understand about Christianity and began to like it. Many groups consisting of four to eight families decided to become Christians in spite of strong oppositions from their fellow men. Thus the third church was established at Phek region in the Phek village in 1930.

In the Sucheku region of Chakhesang territory, a Congregation was formed in Losami village in 1931 consisting of five Chakhesang converts, who braved the severe persecutions resulting in their expulsion from their own village.

In the Khuzhathede region, the first church was founded in Lekromi village in 1935 by a small group of believers, while two people started another church in Kami village. The Gospel message was carried on to other villages from these two villages. Other churches were set up in the Thipizumi and Khulazu Basami villages in 1939 and 1940 respectively, in the Chokri region.

In the Pochuri region, the first church was founded by Sare

114. P. Dozo, *The Growth of the Baptist Church in Chakhesang Naga tribe*, pp. 29-35.

at Kanja village in 1942, and the second Congregation was formed in Mulomi village in 1945. Small Congregations were formed in the Chakhesang areas bordering Burma from 1950 onwards.<sup>115</sup> These Christian influences emanating from the decisions of small groups of Chakhesang believers were further accentuated by the work of Rev. M. Savino, an Angami evangelist, who came with the Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills accompanied by 3rd. Assam Rifles and porters numbering more than 600 marching for 30 days in order to survey for advance ministry of the Gospel in the entire Chakhesang areas, and arrived at Phek on December 22, 1949. They brought along with them several Interpreters whom the Government deputed with a view to visit the Sangthams, Yimchuri, Kallamyu, Phom, Chang and Sema. They were known as controlled areas.<sup>116</sup>

### THE SEMA BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Christian influences spread to the Sema areas from both sides of the Ao and Angami territories. Though the Semas were late in their contact with Christianity but once came into contact with it, they moved very fast. That is why, it was amazing that without the work of a Missionary or the preaching of a native evangelist, people became Christians and organised themselves into churches.<sup>117</sup> Thus the genuine Christian movement started among the Semas practically with no direct influence from without.<sup>118</sup>

In his report for 1904-05, Perrine said that he has prepared, by means of pundits, Primers and Arithmetics, in Ao, Lotha, Sema Nagas which are in the press at Calcutta.<sup>119</sup> Thus it is clear that the Missionaries have been already preparing to evangelise the Sema Nagas long before they actually entered

115. P. Dozo, *The Growth of the Baptist Church in Chakhesang Tribe*, pp. 38-51.

116. Rev. M. Savino, Report on Chakhesang Baptist Field, Assam Baptist Convention, 46th Session, Golaghat, 1950.

117. V.H. Sword, *Baptist in Assam*, p. 115.

118. J.E. Tanquist, Report from Kohima, Missionary Conference, 1936.

119. S.A. Perrine, Report from Impur, Missionary Conference, 1904-05.

the Sema territories. The first Missionary appointed for the Semas was Rev. H.B. Dickson, posted at Impur Station, but since there were Sema students at Kohima school and the western Sema areas were more accessible to the Missionaries, he was transferred to Kohima in 1906 to cater to their needs. He worked for the Semas from Kohima till 1908 when he resigned because of his differences with Rivenburgs.<sup>120</sup>

In the beginning of 1907, Dickson became fully occupied with the Kohima school which had an enrolment of 103 students. At the same time, he kept himself busy with the learning of the Sema language and preparing the first Sema Reader with the help of one of his students, Ivilho, the first Sema convert. He also made one long tour through the Sema areas up to the middle of June, 1907.<sup>121</sup>

In 1913, one evangelist was appointed for the Sema Nagas.<sup>122</sup> In 1914, Tanquist camped for the first time in a Sema village whose chief and several others with him had been Christians since 1906. As he travelled through the Sema areas, he came across in the Emolimi village, situated in the centre of the Sema tribe, with Christians who were the first fruits of the former Sema students of Kohima school.<sup>123</sup> In 1915, one whole-time evangelist for each of the Angami, Kacha, Kezarima and the Sema Nagas had been appointed by the Mission.<sup>124</sup> In the next year, 13 Sema Nagas have been baptised whose names have not been included in the Kohima Church Register.<sup>125</sup> In 1922, an Associational meeting was held for the first time, in a Sema village. After this, Tanquist and his group halted at the largest Sema village where an old man who attended the Kohima school many years before served as an Interpreter, was converted and later worked as an evangelist. A church was also set up in his village. In 1924, the Sema Associational meeting was held in that village, which stirred the neighbouring villages,

120. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, p. 148.

121. S.W. Rivenburg, *Report from Kohima, Missionary Conference, 1910*.

122. S.W. Rivenburg, *Report from Kohima, Missionary Conference, 1913*.

123. J.E. Tanquist, *Ibid.*, 1926.

124. *Ibid.*, 1915.

125. *Ibid.*, 1916.

baptised and organised them into churches. Thus the movement of the Semas towards Christianity has begun in a vigorous way from this time onwards. The number of Sema Christians reached more than double the Angamis and the Rengmas and thrice that of the Kachas and Kukis taken together. Besides, there were hundreds of Semas whose names have been recorded in the Impur Church Register.<sup>126</sup>

As the church grew and as the Semas were not satisfied with the Ao and Angami preachers who visited them only once a year, they appealed to the Mission Board for a full-fledged Missionary. But it was only in 1928 that Rev. B.I. Anderson had been appointed as a Missionary for the Semas. Anderson worked from the Impur Centre as Dr. Bailey met at untimely death. He was asked to open new fields for the Semas for which he received about Rs. 300 in appropriation from the Mission but having required to look after the Aos as well he could not fully devote to the Sema works.<sup>127</sup> Thus there were still many villages where there was not a single Christian, but the baptism of 660 in that year was a pointer to the chain of events that was to follow.<sup>128</sup>

In 1939, five Bible classes have been held during the year for pastors and teachers. Some of the strongest enemies of the Christian religion have been converted and attended the Bible classes. The touring of the distant churches and villages were done by a Motor Cycle donated by the Missionary friends in America.<sup>129</sup> In 1941, 350 new converts were added to the church roll. The Missionary visited 65 villages during the year and held three Bible classes. The total amount granted to the Sema works was Rs. 62 per month, whereas the pay roll was Rs. 335 per month. This amount provided for two evangelists, four travelling pastors and 16 village school teachers, besides 7 teachers in the Central school.<sup>130</sup>

126. *Ibid.*, 1926.

127. B.I. Anderson, A Brief Historical Sketch of the American Baptist Mission Work in the Sema Naga Tribe, Nagaland; Sema Diamond Jubilee Magazine, 1978.

128. B.I. Anderson, Report from Impur, Missionary Conference, 1938.

129. *Ibid.*, 1940.

130. *Ibid.*, 1941.



It was reported in 1944 that from Mokokchung side, a zealous old evangelist, Inaho took charge of the Sema villages. The Christians in these areas were in the critical stage of development, not even one-fifth of the church members not being able to read or write and the literature being meagre. About one out of every four churches had a pastor trained in the Bible school. Inaho was in-charge of the field during the absence of Anderson. Khuvikhe, assistant to Inaho started taking up greater responsibility for the District work. Another was Zugeshe, who toured with Khuvikhe in the villages. The two made a good pair in visiting the churches, for both were able speakers, and while Khuvikhe led in songs, Zugeshe played the violin. The Sema work towards Kohima side has had special attention from M. Savino and his wife. The churches have had their own Associations and Committees and made splendid progress.<sup>131</sup>

In August, 1945, a Bible Conference was held where more than 1000 delegates attended despite the fact that the Semas have suffered the most from the war, many of their villages having been invaded by the Japanese. Baptisms from among the Semas numbered about 800, with a good number of them being from villages across the border.<sup>132</sup> In 1946, three Bible classes have been held in different sections of the Sema Nagas, the attendance at each class was 1000 or more. Four Sema evangelists have been employed. There were 145 churches with 25 pastors and the baptism during the year was 708.<sup>133</sup> In 1947, the new station at Aizuto for the Semas has been officially approved and appropriations made available for its opening. Plans for a new bungalow were made and a small house has been built to enable the Missionaries to stay on the premises. The Semas worked very hard to level the land and make it suitable for buildings. In all, the Semas have contributed approximately 10,000 days of free labour. They held two Bible Classes and a special meeting of a select body to draw up rules for the guidance of the church. 693 persons were

131. J.E. Tanquist, Report from Naga Hills District, 1944.

132. B.I. Anderson, Report from Impur, Missionary Conference, 1945.

133. Impur, 1946.

baptised during the year and the church numbered 100.<sup>134</sup> In 1948, Rev. and Mrs. Anderson moved to Aizuto, new station and stayed temporarily in a small house of two rooms while the construction of a bungalow was on progress. The evangelistic work was done with the baptism of 963 in that year. The number of churches was 150 with a total membership of 16,000.<sup>135</sup>

The Missionary report of 1950 said that both the schools and the church have suffered from agitations between two sections of the Sema tribe. The most experienced evangelist has resigned and another was killed by a wild bear. Bible classes were held at Aizuto and in the village. 752 persons were baptised during the year and the 'Crusade for Christ' campaign was launched which greatly accelerated the growth of Christianity in the Sema areas.<sup>136</sup>

### THE KUKI BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

The schools at Impur and Kohima drew some Kuki boys to study from the early times of their establishment. Some of these boys later went back to their own villages and started the process of Christianization of their own people while some of them became active Christian workers. According to Downs, the first Kuki convert was Ngulhao Thomsong of Taning village who was baptised at Kohima on June 20, 1908. He worked for two years with a small group of Christians at Serhima village. In 1910, he left for Manipur where he served for the rest of his life, that is, till 1945.<sup>137</sup> According to P.T. Philip, Ngulhao was baptised in 1897 and after doing some Missionary works in Naga Hills, left for Manipur. The first Kuki church was established at Serhima village on February 7, 1912. Nguljahren Singson was mainly responsible for the founding of this church. Evangelistic works were carried on by Nguljahren Singson, Tongjengni Hangsing and a few others. The first full

134. Impur, 1947.

135. B.I. Anderson, Report from Aizuto, Missionary Conference, 1949.

136. *Ibid.*, 1950.

137. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, p. 144.

time evangelist for the Mikirs and Kukis of Nagaland was Ngulpu appointed on June 7, 1914. There was wide awakening among the Kukis in 1916 when 76 people were baptised. There was also widespread opposition to this awakening and the converts were threatened with murder. When the converts could no longer bear the threats and harassments, they left and founded a new village at Chalkot where a church was set up in 1922. From Chalkot, Christianity spread to Taning and other neighbouring villages.<sup>138</sup>

The year 1926 is remarkable in the church history of the Kukis of Nagaland as they have organised themselves into an Association in that year. The first meeting was held in March, 1926 in a Christian village about 96 kms from Kohima. It was an inspiring meeting for them. The ingathering was fairly good though not particularly unusual. They appointed two Kuki evangelists and among other things, they also decided to forbid the drinking of intoxicating liquor.<sup>139</sup> In 1936, there were 200 Kuki Christians<sup>140</sup> which were increased to 334 in 1937.<sup>141</sup> Three Kukis were baptised in 1938.<sup>142</sup> From 1949 onwards the Kukis have shown normal growth in the expansion of the church in the Kuki areas in Nagaland. The Association continued as a combined Association for both Kukis and Zeliangs till 1952 after which they had their own separate Associations.<sup>143</sup> In 1950 there were 700 Kuki Christians in the whole of Nagaland.<sup>144</sup>

### THE RENGMA BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

The sparks of Christianity spread to the Rengma areas quite

138. P.T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, pp. 116-117.

139. J.E. Tanquist, *Report from Kohima Missionary Conference 1926*.

140. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, p. 145.

141. P.T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, p. 117.

142. J.E. Tanquist, *Report from Kohima Missionary Conference, 1938*.

143. P.T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, p. 117.

144. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, p. 145.

late compared to other Nagas. It was in the year 1918 that the first Rengma convert, Lokin of Tseminya village was baptised at Kohima. Lokin was serving as the vaccinator under the Government but came under the influence of Dr. Rivenburg and subsequently received baptism. Rivenburg sowed the first seed among the Rengmas as early as 1888 and since then the local evangelists have been wandering in and out among those villages. In 1919, ten families forshook their religion and wanted to be baptised but baptism could not be conducted for one reason or another. In 1921, 42 people were baptised and in 1922, altogether 98 people from 12 different villages were baptised. In 1923, it was reported that in the past two years, about 255 people were baptised, of whom, nearly half were Rengmas. The first Rengma was ordained in 1922 in order to meet the needs of the church.<sup>145</sup> In 1926, there was an annual Conference in which attendance was fairly good.<sup>146</sup>

The Missionary report for 1927 said that there was a colony of Rengma Christians in Themokedima on a beautiful site along the road where the Missionary planned to put up a house from where he would preach to the wayfarers.<sup>147</sup> Despite many difficulties, the work among the Rengmas has made good progress as they have shown united growth, both in numbers and in character. The few touring evangelists and the local church leaders gave evidence of increased zeal and willingness to assume more responsibility as the Mission support was gradually diminishing.<sup>148</sup> With only one Hymn book and the Gospel of John as their sole literature, the Rengmas made rapid progress.<sup>149</sup> At the end of 1937, the total membership in the church was 350, and 114 were added to the Church Register in the following year. Though they have grown in number but the Rengma churches continued to be a branch of the Angami Association till 1939. In 1940, they have organised their own

145. P.T. Philip, p. 120.

146. J.E. Tanquist, Report from Kohima, Missionary Conference, 1926.

147. J.E. Tanquist, Report from Kohima, Missionary Conference, 1927.

148. *Ibid.*, February 3-6, 1936.

149. *Ibid.*, December, 1-6, 1936.

Association which meet for the first time in December.<sup>150</sup>

In the months of August and September, 1944, Mr. M. Savino and his wife toured the Rengma areas and conducted a series of Bible Conferences which were well-attended.<sup>151</sup> In 1949, one Bible class was held among them and they have shown normal growth in church and membership.<sup>152</sup> In the same year, H. Houston attended the Rengma Association where 1500 Rengmas, the Angamis and the Semas gathered. The Rengma membership was reported as 1300 in 13 villages. By this time, they have employed full-time translator as they hoped to complete the translation of the New Testament into southern Rengma dialect.<sup>153</sup>

### THE ZELIANGRONG BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

According to the annual report of 1906, three students of the Kohima school were baptised on December 31, 1906, one of them was a Kacha Naga. The Kacha Naga included the Zeme, Mzieme, Liangmei and Rongmei tribes now collectively called as Zeliangrong.<sup>154</sup> The report of 1910 also referred to the pupils from Sema, Angmai, Kezamia and Kacha Naga studying at Kohima school.<sup>155</sup> Dr. Downs thinks, the first church among the Zeliangrongs was established at Benreu village and the first Christians were Keneise and Nsarangbe, who were converted by the evangelists from Kohima Mission Centre.<sup>156</sup> By 1913, one evangelist has been employed for the Zeliangrongs.<sup>157</sup> According the Missionary report for 1915, apart

150. P.T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Church in Nagaland*, pp. 119-121.

151. J.E. Tanquist, *Report from Kohima, Missionary Conference, 1944*.

152. G.W. Supplee, *Report from Kohima, Missionary Conference, 1949*.

153. H. Houston, *Report from Wokha Missionary Conference, 1950*.

154. P.P. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Church in Nagaland*, p. 124.

155. S.W. Rivenburg, *Report from Kohima, Missionary Conference, 1910*.

156. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, p. 147.

157. S.W. Rivenburg, *Report from Kohima, Missionary Conference, 1913*.

from Kohima, six distinct groups of Christians have their own meeting houses and regular Services but all of them except the Semas are considered as part of the Kohima church, the Zeliangrong church being one of these groups.<sup>158</sup> In the same year, one full-time evangelist has been employed for them.<sup>159</sup>

The Missionary report for 1126 said that among the Zeliangrongs, the ingathering has been fairly good but not particularly unusual. The number of Christians among the Zeliangrongs and the Kukis taken together was only one-third of that of the Semas. However, they have asked for a Missionary to work amidst them.<sup>160</sup> In 1927, they received the services of a High school trained youngman who while in the Government service was zealous for the evangelization of his own people. He was also working in the production of literature in their own language.<sup>161</sup>

When Christianity first spread to the Zeliangrong villages, the people opposed it bitterly. Most of the churches thus set-up were small and the Christians were invariably driven out of their villages. Another strong factor working against Christianity was the influence of the Kampai Cult of Rani Guiduilu, who was openly and often violently anti-Christian.<sup>162</sup>

According to the Missionary report for 1937, the number of Kukis and Zeliangrong Christians taken together was only 334.<sup>163</sup> Baptism among the Zeliangrongs was only four in 1938.<sup>164</sup> In 1939, Keneise of Benreu Church was ordained and appointed evangelist for their areas. The Zeliangrong churches were included within the Angami Association till 1953 when they along with the Kukis formed their own separate Association.

Christianity spread much faster among the Zeliangrongs only after 1950, and the number of Christians among the Kukis and the Zeliangrongs taken together was 807 in 1951.<sup>165</sup>

158. J.E. Tanquist, *Ibid.*, 1915.

159. S.W. Rivenburg, *Ibid.*, 1915.

160. J.E. Tanquist, *Ibid.*, 1926.

161. *Ibid.*, 1927.

162. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, p. 147.

163. J.E. Tanquist, Report from Kohima, Missionary Conference, 1937.

164. *Ibid.*, 1938.

165. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, p. 147.

## THE NAGA MISSION TO THE NAGA BORDER TRIBES

### TAE SANGTAM BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Sekyuling, a Sangtam of the Chare village migrated along with his family to Aonokpu, an Ao village, due to the famine in his village where he came in contact with an Ao Christian widow and was converted. He then went to Impur Mission Station and stayed with Dr. J.R. Bailey by whom he was baptised in 1912. During the World War I, he took back his family to his own village and joined Labour Corps. He returned to his village Chare on June 14, 1918, and though he did nothing to promote the cause of Christianity in his village, yet their presence might have eased the situation to further the cause of Christianity in those areas.

The introduction of Christianity among the Sangtams was the Missionary enterprise of the Ao Nagas. In 1926, they celebrated the 50th anniversary of the coming of the Clarks to the Naga Hills when they took a decision to extend the work to the border tribes. They immediately sent Samsalepzing to Chare village but being unable to enter, he stayed and preached at Jakpa and neighbouring villages during 1927-28.<sup>166</sup> Thus the Missionary activities among the Sangtams were opened for the first time in 1927, but the fierce opposition for more than ten years hindered the growth of the church in every way. Besides, since the tribe was not under the Government administration, life was insecure there.<sup>167</sup>

In 1929, Samsalepzing went to Chare village and established a church there and became the first Pastor for the Sangtam church. But since the Sangtam areas fell outside the administrative jurisdiction of the Government, free movement from the administrative areas were not allowed, and as a result, progress was very slow. But the Ao preachers penetrated into those dangerous areas at the risk of their own lives for the cause of

166. P.T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Church in Nagaland*, p. 134.

167. R.B. Longwell, *Report from Impur, Missionary Conference, 1927*.

Christianity.<sup>168</sup> As a result, by 1936, the Sangtams had 140 Christians in six churches and 20 persons were baptised that year.<sup>169</sup>

In 1937, the Sangtam Christians numbered 255 and the severe persecutions to which all the first Christians were subjected had come to an end. Many of those who have come to believe in Christian religion had bloody deeds to account for. Some of them asked the evangelists if there was any hope for them to go to heaven even after having taken many heads. They were assured of it.<sup>170</sup>

In 1938, the Government prohibited the Missionaries as well as the Ao evangelists from working in the Sangtam areas. So all the works had to be stopped in that year. Yet there were seven churches and more than 250 Christians.<sup>171</sup> In 1939, Sir Robert Reid, Governor of Assam, Lady Reid and their party visited Impur. They were friendly and were greatly impressed by the Mission work at Impur. Permission was then sought to work among the border tribes. The Governor, as a good gesture, granted the permission. Thus the work was carried on among the border tribes. In 1940, church membership rose to 600 and the Ao Association assumed the full responsibility in evangelising the border tribes.<sup>172</sup>

In 1943, there were 15 churches with 1500 Sangtam Christians and efforts were made to organise a separate Association. The Government granted permission to move freely among the border tribes to Rev. Kijungliba Ao. In 1945, permission was granted to another Ao evangelist, Onenlepten Ao, who though a man of little education, was committed and dauntless, and moved his family to live amidst the Sangtam head hunters.<sup>173</sup>

In 1946, the Sangtams have started their own Association. About 1630 people attended the meeting. Of these, 802 were from 14 churches which were predominantly Sangtam, 25 were

168. P.T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Church in Nagaland*, pp. 135-36.

169. B. I. Anderson, *Report from Impur Missionary Conference, 1936*.

170. *Ibid.*, 1937.

171. B.I. Anderson and Mayangnokcha Ao, *Ibid.*, 1938.

172. P.T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Church in Nagaland*, p. 136.

173. *Ibid.*, pp. 136-138.



Changs and the rests were Semas and Aos. The array of headmen from the unadministered territories was an impressive sight. The Nagas attending this meeting were unanimous in their invitation to the Mission to enter their territory to preach, to heal and to start schools. They all wanted schools in their villages but the teachers available were only the Aos. The Ao teachers went and gave testimony with the result that there was a rapidly growing Sangtam church. The Ao pastor, Onenlepten Ao, who lived with his family among the Sangtams has done much to unify and strengthen the work. As a result, about 520 Sangtams have been baptised and two well-attended Bible classes have been held.<sup>174</sup>

In 1947, the Sangtams held their second annual Association meeting and added 164 new converts to the 15 churches.<sup>175</sup> In 1949, the number of Sangtam Christians was 800 out of 1200 families in 15 villages. They held their fourth annual Association meeting where about 2000 people were present.<sup>176</sup> In 1950, Rev. M. Savino went to the Tuensang areas including the Sangtam villages with the permission of the Government and boldly proclaimed the Gospel message to them.<sup>177</sup> Crusade for Christ campaign was launched in 1950 in the Sangtam areas and brought about 240 persons to church making a total membership of about 2800. They asked for a new evangelist for the development of churches. Most of them were served by the Ao pastors. A new Sangtam hymnal has been put in the press and the Bible was being translated at that time.<sup>178</sup>

### THE KONYAK BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

The first attempt to evangelise the Konyak Nagas of Namsang village of the present Tirap Division of Arunachal Pradesh, was made by Miles Bronson. He made the first tours among the Nagas of the foothills during 1838. In 1839, he built

174. B.I. Anderson, Report from Impur Missionary Conference, 1946.

175. *Ibid.*, 1947.

176. C.E. Hunter, *Ibid.*, 1949.

177. M. Savino, Report from Kohima, Missionary Conference, 1950.

178. C.E. Hunter, Report from Impur, Missionary Conference, 1950.

a house at Namsang village where he took his family on March 14, 1840. They were soon joined by Miss Rhoda Bronson, sister of Miles Bronson. The Bronsons translated some books into the Namsang dialect and opened a school for them. But they were ill most of the time and so returned to Jaipur Station after a stay of eight months without converting anyone.<sup>179</sup> Though the Naga Mission was stopped, a few Nagas who came down to the plains of Assam were converted from time to time. Hube, a Konyak Naga, the first Naga convert was baptised on September 12, 1847, but he died on October 10, 1847. In 1855, two Konyak men named Aklong Konyak and Ambi Konyak of Namsang village were baptised at Sibsagar by Dr. Brown. The two men returned to their village but were driven away by the village leaders in anticipation of law and order problem there. Thus their attempt to convert their own people failed.<sup>180</sup>

The next attempt to evangelise the Konyaks was made by Rev. E.W. Clark, when in 1876, he went with men of Dekahaimong village to Tamlu village. The villagers of Tamlu attacked Clark and his party with spears, but no one received any serious injury except Clark who received a minor injury on his small toe. Thus the second attempt to Christianise the Konyaks also failed.

The Mission to the Konyaks gained ground only with the work of two Konyak boys—Ongthai of Kangtsung village and Longna of Tamlu village. They went to study at Impur Mission school where Ongthai was baptised on December 11, 1932, and Longna and two others were baptised in 1933. Twelve others were baptised at the annual Association and at the end of 1933, there were 15 Konyak Christians.<sup>181</sup> In 1936, there were two churches and 14 baptised Christians, and the work among them was carried on by Ao evangelists who were reaching out into the regions beyond the border.<sup>182</sup>

In 1937, in two Konyak villages, there have been groups of

179. Mrs. A.K. Gurney, Jubilee Reports, 1886; V.H. Sword, Baptists in Assam, pp. 62-65 and 103; P.T. Philip, pp. 144-145.

180. M.M. Clark, A Corner in India, p. 5.

181. R.G. Beers, Walk the Distant Hills, p. 40; P.T. Philip, p. 145.

182. B.I. Anderson, Report from Impur, Missionary Conference, 1936.

believers and three other large villages were ready to listen to the preachings of Christianity. An Ao evangelist has been doing what he could but the difficulties were great and the open doors too many for one man.<sup>183</sup> In 1941, there were 145 Christians and 36 baptisms that year in two Christians.<sup>184</sup> In 1944, the Ao Christians were increasingly conscious of their responsibility to border tribes. But the travel among them was restricted by the Government and only Rev. Kijungliba Ao was allowed to go freely among them. However, the Aos have asked permission for more evangelists and it was hoped that the permission would be granted to some of them soon.<sup>185</sup>

Thanglong, a young Konyak has been engaged to work as evangelist among his own people. He was a graduate of the Jorhat Bible school where he was supported by the Ao Women Societies. Thirty have been converted since he started his work in June, 1946.<sup>186</sup> By 1947, the Konyaks had 900 Christians and 69 have been baptised that year.<sup>187</sup> Thus the Konyak areas became one of the large Centres of Christian activities, and they have been clamouring for evangelists.<sup>188</sup>

In 1950, about 700 Konyaks have been baptised bringing the total membership of around 1600. The work among them began vigorously in 1942 when a former Jorhat Christian Normal school student went to Wangching village as a teacher appointed by the Government. With his teaching and preaching, they for the first time, opened their eyes to the Christian life and what it meant for them. Three Ao churches supported the Konyak pastors in the new churches.<sup>189</sup>

November 1, 1950 was a turning point in the history of Christianity among the Konyaks, for, on that date Rev. Longri

183. *Ibid.*, 1937.

184. V.H. Sword, Report from Gauhati, Missionary Conference, 1941.

185. J.E. Tanquist, Report from Naga Hills District, Missionary Conference, 1944.

186. B.I. Anderson, Report from Impur Missionary, Conference, 1946.

187. *Ibid.*, 1947.

188. C.E. Hunter, Report from Impur Missionary, Conference, 1949.

189. C.E. Hunter, Report from Impur Missionary, Conference, 1950.

Ao was appointed full-fledged Missionary to them. It was this dedicated man who was mainly responsible for total transformation of the lives of the Konyak Nagas.<sup>190</sup>

### THE CHANG BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

The Changs live next to the Sangtams in Tuensang district of Nagaland. They were one of the warlike border tribes which made the Mission work in their areas extremely difficult and dangerous. The Government also did not allow any evangelist to go there until 1937.<sup>191</sup> Despite travel restrictions, dangers and difficulties, by 1939, there have been baptisms of 744 new converts among the Sangtams, Changs and Konyaks. The Ao Naga Christians have taken the full responsibility for the support of the work among all the border tribes.<sup>192</sup> Thus a Naga Mission to the Nagas was set in motion.

In 1940, there were 50 Chang Christians, 32 persons baptised that year and one church.<sup>193</sup> In 1943, there were two Chang churches within the Ao Association with 40 communicant church members.<sup>194</sup> By 1944, the Ao Naga Christians became increasingly conscious of their responsibility to all the tribes bordering Burma. But travel among them was restricted by the Government and was extremely risky. Only Rev. Kijungliba Ao was allowed to travel freely among them.<sup>195</sup> In 1945, among the Changs and Sangtams, 150 new converts were reported by a former Ao evangelist, Onenlepten Ao, who was working among them by special permission of the Sub-Divisional Officer.<sup>196</sup> By 1946, Imlong Chang, a leading man among the Chang tribe, who as a store-keeper in Mokokchung, has translated the

190. R.G. Beers, *Walk the Distant Hills*, p. 43.

191. B.I. Anderson, Report from Impur, Missionary Conference, 1937.

192. B.I. Anderson and Mayagnokcha Ao, *Ibid.*, 1940.

193. V.H. Sword, Report from Gauhati, Missionary Conference, 1941.

194. C.E. Hunter, Report from Impur, Missionary Conference, 1943.

195. J.E. Tanquist, Report from Naga Hills District, 1944.

196. B.I. Anderson, Report from Impur, Missionary Conference, 1945.

Gospel of Mark into his own language in his spare time.<sup>197</sup> In 1947, the Christian activities among them were still part of the Ao Association, and the baptisms among them numbered 146 that year and the total number of Christians was 250 in 11 churches.<sup>198</sup> By 1949, the Chang and Konyak areas became large field of activities like the Ao field. They were all clamouring for more evangelists.<sup>199</sup>

The Changs and the Phoms together formed a new Association in 1949, consisting of more than 30 churches. There were about 1500 church members, 450 of them being baptised that year itself. They supported a Preacher to go to farther Chang villages. They also wanted to control over the Seikhu school and make it purely a Christian school.<sup>200</sup>

### THE PHOM BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

The Phoms inhabited the Tuensang district, east of Aos and north of Changs. They were one of the most warlike tribes bordering Burma. Longleng is the political and Christian centre for them.

Rev. Kijungliba Ao was the first to evangelise the Phoms. Imkum of Kanching village was the first convert among them, who was baptised in 1936, and the first church was established at Kanching. Mengkham, Imkum's son, was sent to Impur for training, after which, he came back and became the first Phom evangelist.<sup>201</sup> The Missionary report for 1943 said that though the Phom villages were few but they were large some of which had about 600 houses. Ten persons were baptised from one of these villages. Phom living in Ao villages were already Christians, but in their own villages, head hunting continued till a few years before.<sup>202</sup> Mengkham, the Phom evangelist and his colleagues were very active in evangelising their own people.<sup>203</sup>

197. *Ibid.*, 1946.

198. *Ibid.*, 1947.

199. C.E. Hunter, *Ibid.*, 1949.

200. *Ibid.*, 1950.

201. P.T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, p. 154.

202. B.I. Anderson, *Report from Impur, Missionary Conference, 1943*.

203. P.T. Philip, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

**THE YIMCHUNGER BAPTIST ASSOCIATION**

The Yimchungers inhabit east of Semas and west of Kheamungans in Tuensang district. Shamatori is their headquarters and Christian centre. The first evangelist to them were the Semas. The Semas supported one evangelist for them, and some Yimchungers in five villages have become Christians by 1950. Opposition to preaching was great but the work continued with greater zeal and dedication.<sup>204</sup>

**THE KHEAMUNGAN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION**

Evangelisation of the Kheamungans began when our period of study ends in 1950. They occupy the south-eastern parts of Tuensang extending to Burma border. In 1950, the Aos sent Jongpong Wati, Jorhat Bible graduate to preach to them. In 1952, five churches were set up with 410 members, and work continued with great zeal and enthusiasm.<sup>205</sup>

204. *Ibid.*, pp. 158-159.

205. *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162.

# Manipur

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## THE ARTHINGTON MISSION

Attempts have been made by the Burma Missionaries as early as 1836 to pass through Manipur but permission was refused. In 1885, Mr. Robert Arthington of Leeds, England wrote to Assam Baptist Mission stating his desire to open a work among the Singphos, with a Station at Mankum or Ledo in Upper Assam.<sup>1</sup> But this scheme did not materialise at that time.

In 1890, the year in which Surchandra Singh was compelled to abdicate the throne in Manipur, a young English Missionary named William Pettigrew arrived in Bengal under the sponsorship of a private society, the Arthington Aborigine Mission. Pettigrew was a member of the church of England but became a Baptist through R. Wright Hay, a Baptist Missionary Society Missionary stationed at Dacca. But he continued to work under the Arthington Mission. Then he began to take interest in the Meitheis of Manipur, some of whom he met in Cachar. In 1894, he applied for permission to enter Manipur and work among the Manipuri Hindus. Permission being granted, Pettigrew arrived at Imphal on February 6, 1894. He immediately started a school for Manipuri boys and wrote a Primer and Grammar. He carried on his work for six months, after which, the British authorities, who was administering the State on

1. Mrs. P.H. Moore, *Twenty Years in Assam*, p. 60.

behalf of the minor Raja, decided against opening of Mission work. The Authorities objected not to the opening of schools but to evangelisation. However, Pettigrew was permitted at his own risk to work among the Tangkhul Nagas in the hills, north-east of Imphal. Pettigrew toured in the Tangkhul areas in 1895 and chose Ukhrul for his Mission centre. But the Arthington Mission refused to support his Mission work any longer. Therefore, Pettigrew placed his case before the American Baptist Missionary Triennial Conference held at Sibsagar in December, 1895.<sup>2</sup>

### THE AMERICAN BAPTIST MISSION

The Triennial Conference of the American Baptist Missionaries of Assam held at Sibsagar during December 14-22, 1895, and the Executive Committee at Boston in January 1896, decided to take over the work in Manipur which has been commenced by Pettigrew under the sponsorship of the Arthington Aborigine Mission, and accepted William Pettigrew as a member of the Sibsagar Baptist Church and named him the first Missionary to Manipur.

Pettigrew proceeded to Manipur but since the Government objected to the Missionary works in the Manipur valley, he began his work at Ukhrul on February 1, 1896, a work which he started before. From February to October, 1896, the building of the temporary Mission bungalow, out-houses, school building and the study of the language took much of Pettigrew's time. From October to December, he stayed at Calcutta to finish the printing of the Gospel of John in Manipuri and to marry Miss Goreham, just out from London. In January, 1897, the school building was completed and 20 boys took admission in the school. At the end of December, 1897, 11 more boys came from Hundung village, making a total of 31 boys. The year 1898 was spent in school work, in improving the knowledge of the language and in translation work. From April to July, cholera ravaged in both the Manipur valley and the hills. In

2. V.H. Sword, *Baptists in Assam*, p. 116; Vide also F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, pp. 75-78.



the valley and hills combined, about four to five thousands died of cholera.

With regard to itinerating work, the Missionaries were confronted with difficulties owing to the villages all around having each a dialect of their own and owing to the school work both in the valley and at Ukhrul, as Pettigrew was appointed the honorary inspector of schools for the whole State. But every opportunity was grabbed by Pettigrew to preach. Practically, Manipur had two fields to work—(i) The work in the valley was strictly secular, Christianity propagated in any form being forbidden except being allowed to distribute the Gospels, and (ii) The school work at Ukhrul with the translation work and composing of literature, which took much of Missionary's time leaving very little time for preaching.<sup>3</sup>

In 1901, the Missionaries were busy in seeing to the building and completion of the permanent Mission bungalow and other buildings. From January to July, the Manipuri contractor, through the orders of the P.W.D. Department, gave from 8 to 10 hours daily supervising the work done by his men. On July 19, 1901, the new bungalow was occupied. In the same year, a church was also built at Ukhrul, and during August and September, frequent church meetings were held. On September 19, twelve persons were baptised at Ukhrul. Three more were baptised, and on February 23, 1902, the church at Ukhrul was formed.<sup>4</sup> This was the first Baptist church in Manipur and the only one till 1916.

The Pettigrews returned to Ukhrul on December 13, 1905, after two years of furlough. During the first few months of 1906, they spent a great deal of their time in repairing the bungalow and the compound. In 1906, the Ukhrul Church had 29 members and 15 more were baptised the same year. But soon seven were excommunicated, one died and six were taken back to church. The church members have built a Chapel House in the centre of the village where crowded meetings were held on Tuesday and Friday evenings besides the usual Sunday

3. William Pettigrew, Report from Tangkhul Naga Field, Missionary Conference, 1899.

4. W. Pettigrew, Report from Ukhrul Field, Missionary Conference, December 27, 1902 to January, 1903.

services. Five evangelists visited over seventy villages during the last winter season. During the rains, they attended the Bible Training Class and a Medical Class. Since October, 1906, they have been out in the district preaching in many villages and through their works about 30 candidates for baptism were reported.<sup>5</sup>

Between 1907-09, the church at Ukhrul has passed through a time of trial. A serious problem arose over some of the members having participated in the great tribal festival feast "Kathi Kasham" or the Soul Departure feast. It compelled Pettigrew to investigate into the affairs, who found out that the festival involved the offering of sacrifices to evil spirits, though the church members made him to understand that it was quite harmless. He called all the church members together and asked them to settle over it once for all. He then drew up Church Disciplinary Rules which every church member was expected to follow. Seven out of 35 accepted but the remaining 28 members refused to accept. Therefore, Pettigrew along with the seven members formed a new church, and the remaining 28 members who could not see eye to eye with the Missionaries relapsed back into their original religion. Thus the church which Pettigrew organised in 1902 broke up.

The new church adopted a covenant which took a strong stand against the worship of evil spirits. As a result, the work came to standstill. The church could not walk so fast and the prospect of future converts was not a rosy one. This happened in March, 1908. There were ten baptisms in 1907, three of whom were married men with families. There were no baptism in 1908 and only two in 1909. The total membership in 1909 was 14.

The five evangelists working before 1908 left along with others. There was only one working after the trouble. After giving them training in Bible and Medical classes during 1906-07, it was a heart-rendering experience to Pettigrew to see them all backslide.

The first tour ever made by the Missionaries with family and evangelists was made in February, 1907, to villages, north, west and east of Ukhrul, and in November, to villages in the

5. *Ibid.*, 1907.

south. In 1908, the Missionaries made one tour to the western villages, travelling as far as the cart road through the Mao Naga areas where Manipuri could be used in preaching. The Tangkhul villages have been visited by the Missionaries as well as the evangelists more than once during the last five years.<sup>6</sup>

During 1910-11, Pettigrew got an opportunity to visit the other hill areas of Manipur at the expense of the Government as he was appointed the Superintendent of Census. This was the first time that Census was taken in the hills of Manipur. Contacts made during these visits were very useful for Pettigrew in opening the way for Christianity in non-Tangkhul areas.<sup>7</sup>

Thus although work in the valley was prohibited by the Government, the outlook in the hills was encouraging. A letter dated December 5, 1912, from Government to Mission, reads, "I beg to say that the Vice-President of the Manipur State Durbar will be glad if you communicate to him your scheme for educational work among the Kukis as soon as possible in order that he may know what provision to propose in next year's budget. He will also be glad to know what evangelising schemes you propose." These Kukis are the old Kuki clans included in the term Lushai who were originally in Chin hills and Lushai hills respectively, and have emigrated northwards into Manipur. They numbered about 37,000 persons at that time. These old Kuki clans are organised far more democratically than the Lushai or the Thado. There is no regular system of Government among the old Kukis, and they have no hereditary Chiefs as among the Thado. A headman called Ghalum is appointed by themselves over each village, but is much more a priest than a potentate, and his temporal power is much limited.

During his tour of investigations in south-west Manipur, Pettigrew also discovered that in western portion of Manipur, north of the Cachar Road, is inhabited by the Thado branches of the Kuki clan, and the areas south of the Cachar road, although having many Thado clan villages, is to a great extent occupied by different branches of the Lushai and old Kuki

6. W. Pettigrew, Report from Ukhrul Field, Missionary Conference, January 8-17, 1910.

7. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, p. 81.

clans. What did strike Pettigrew was the predominance of the Thado language among all these many and varied branches. Even the Kabui Nagas who occupied many villages to the north and south of the Cachar Road, and whose population is estimated at about 6,000 persons at that time, use the Thado language in intercourse with other villages. Therefore, Pettigrew was no doubt that the lingua franca for all these branches of Kukis and Lushai who occupy these areas, and whenever Mission work is established in these sections, Thado should be made the medium of instructions for all. Also the Thado literature will not only reach the Thados but all the varied clans that cover the southern and western hills of Manipur. Pettigrew also found that people of this clan are on the whole more open-minded and hospitable, and more susceptible to the teachings of Christianity than the Nagas. They have nothing like the number of sacrificial feasts and carousals that the Nagas have, and the fact of the Thados having a chief in each village with absolute authority is a great advantage, compared to the democratic Nagas, where every one has his say in matters that come before the village courts.

By 1911, there were at Ukhrul four Thado Kuki boys, two of them were Christians. Besides them, there were four others from the three branches of old and new Kuki clans. Two of them who became Christians wished to remain in the school and learn more before teaching or preaching. There was also a Kuki Christian at Kohima who was ready to do evangelistic work among his own people. Applications from Kukis have come to the Missionaries to attend the Christian school at Ukhrul with scholarships.

For some years, there has been a hostel for Kuki clan boys at Imphal who attended the school under Pettigrew's care for the purpose of studying Manipuri. There were by 1911 about 20 boys in the school and hostel. There was also a need of a woman to take charge of the Girls Department of the school and to teach them. There were several girls in the school who demanded separate attention. They were bright and cheerful.

Taking into consideration therefore the important position which the Mission occupied at Ukhrul as a centre for work and the prospect of expanding the work among the numerous clans, with all multiplicity of works that accompany such projects,

Pettigrew pleaded for no less than three Missionary families and one Lady worker so that the work of the Mission Society could be carried on effectively in Manipur.<sup>8</sup>

U.M. Fox reported that in 1911, the only Christian community in Manipur was at Ukhrul, where the only organised church was located. The few Christians in a small number of other villages were required to keep in touch with this church and maintain an interest therein. There were 54 church members that year and a number of others waiting for admission. The church was self-supporting as well as evangelical. The church organised Sunday school classes and Christian endeavour services. As a result of the work of two evangelists, in November, 1910, seven of the Somra village in the un-administered tracts have sent representation to the Mission for a school.<sup>9</sup>

The Missionary report for 1915 says that the church had its discouragements as many turned back to their original religion after leaving the school. Two workers were expelled because of immorality. These two were leaders among the Tangkhuls and Kukis. On the other hand, 20 were added to the church by baptism. Nine of them were Tangkhuls, 9 Kukis and 2 Amsu Nagas. There were six evangelists on the field of Manipur.

U.M. Fox also baptised 7 converts from Imphal who belonged to Nepali community, one of whom was a master of the Raja's band. He again baptised 26 Thado Kukis from one village which showed that there was already an awakening among the Thado-Kukis.<sup>10</sup>

According to Missionary reports for 1916, the church at Ukhrul which was the only church in Manipur, has passed through troublous times and descended to a low spiritual life. The Sunday school at Ukhrul has kept up its regular work of teaching and attendance has been large. The All India Sunday School Examination was held in July, 1915. There were 96 entries, 50 passed and received certificates, while two received medals, and Bibles. One young Kuki received a medal.

8. W. Pettigrew, Report from Ukhrul Field, Missionary Conference, 1911.

9. U.M. Fox, *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*, 1915.

There has been considerable development of the work among the Kukis in the western hills. Over 100 have been baptised. One church has been organised and hundreds of them were enquiring about the new religion. An influential Chief or Raja has professed conversion. Two evangelists have been doing good work in teaching and preaching.<sup>11</sup>

According to the Missionary reports for 1917, Missionary activities have been extended to the capital of the State, Imphal and to the western hills, from Ukhrul. The appeal to the Chief Commissioner of Assam to remove from Ukhrul to a more central spot in the valley was rejected by him, and permission to tour in the western hills was refused by the Vice-President of the Durbar. Under these circumstances, the headquarters of the Mission for Manipur has been transferred to Kohima. Visits have been made by the Missionaries to Manipur from Kohima.

In the absence of the Missionaries, the responsibility for the educational work has been put in the hands of the Head Master of the school, Porom Singh, and on the religious side, in the hands of Mr. Miksha, who took care to see that the church and the Sunday school services and the monthly church meetings are held regularly. The Missionaries were pleased with the progress made. 21 baptism in 1916, made the membership 78, and the church was self-supporting.

Imphal saw for the first time, an organised Christian church in 1916. It was made up of Kabui Nagas, Sema Nagas, Kuki, Manipuris and Gurkhas. They were small in number but were enthusiastic, their number being 18, It was entirely self-supporting and had contributed over Rs. 50 during the year. In December, 1916, two Manipuri women were baptised and joined the church. One was an educated girl from the Welsh Mission, while the other was the wife of the Telegraph Master who just retired and lived in his hometown in Imphal.

### **The Kukis of Western Hills of Manipur**

According to the Missionary report for 1917, in Manipur, the centres of Christian work were located in three places. The

11. W. Pettigrew, Report from Ukhrul, Missionary Conference, 1916.

most northern was at Tui-yang-wai-jung, a wholly Christian village of 24 houses with a community of about 100 persons. The church was organised in 1916, and the existing membership was 86. Ngulhao, the evangelist looked after the interest of this community. At Christmas time, 83 of them travelled from their village to meet the Missionaries at the rest-house at Karong on the cart road. For three days there was happy fellowship with them and their conduct at the various services held, and their memorizing of hymns sung in hearty unison and to tune, made the Missionaries glad. Owing to restrictions, all these western Kukis had to meet the Missionary far from their villages, and the absence of accommodation for them, and the necessity for worship to be held in the open air, made it difficult for all.

The next centre was at Longkhong situated about 80 kms due west of Imphal. Longkhobel, the evangelist took care of this community. It was not a Christian village and those becoming Christians were settling around the evangelist. The number was small and the members were young in age. It was not yet organised into a church, and for sometime, was classed as a branch of the Imphal church. There was a small primary school in the village. The church membership in 1916 was 32. In the case of these Christians, they had to travel over 80 kms to Imphal to see the Missionary and hear his sermons.

The other centre was at Shenbang-yang, a village south-west of Imphal, about 48 kms. This village was wholly Christian and 21 have been baptised. This community also has been made into a branch church of the Imphal church. Teba, one of the old Kuki students of Ukhrul, has taken up the work as an evangelist for this people.

Thirteen delegates from five churches of Manipur gathered together at Ukhrul in November, 1916, and formed the first Association of the churches of Manipur.<sup>12</sup>

By 1926, there were 24 organised churches with 13 branch churches in Manipur State. Both the organised and branch churches were self-supporting in the sense that the local Christians bore the expenses of church buildings and other local expenses including the payment of salaries of their pastors, and

12. W. Pettigrew, Report from Imphal, Missionary Conference, 1917.

day and night school teachers in which the pastors taught without any remuneration. According to the Missionary report for 1926, the total membership for the whole State was 2467 with 254 baptisms during the year and a large number were waiting for baptism.

Squabbles broke up two years ago in one of the Sadar areas, that is, the areas administered from the Capital or the areas north of Imphal up to the Nagaland borders, and broke the village up and the parties were at loggers heads for a long time. Now peace was restored and those separated sought again to work together.

The Tangkhuls retained the same zeal for preaching to their own fellow non-converts around them. Whatever the rivalry of 1923-24 had caused, it subsequently brought many to Christianity but left many more embittered than before. Oppositions by the Chiefs and elders continued with great intensity till 1925, but in the next year, such oppositions have died down and the non-converts started enquiring about the new religion. And where the Christian community lived faithful to their new faith, their movement for deeper faith in Christ was more manifest. In the southern parts of Tangkhul areas, most of them still stuck to their old religion. In the western section, two villages have indicated their desire to become Christians and the Missionaries decided to visit them and other villages soon. But opposition to the Missionary's visit to the villages of the non-converts was pronounced up to 1925, but has died down slowly in the following year.

In Imphal, they have been doing the work honestly despite restrictions and the opposition of the Durbar. There have been ample signs of the restlessness of the Meithei youngmen of Imphal who longed for freedom from hide-bound priestly rule, and a few of them began to enquire into the truth of Christian religion. But the conditions laid down for these youngmen were very severe as they were required to confess their faith in Christianity before the Durbar, before the Missionaries could accept them for baptism and entrance into the church.

During these years, the activities of the North-East India General Mission (another Christian Mission) among the Anals in the south-east section of the Sadar area was watched with disapproval by the American Baptist Mission as they tried to



spread Christianity of their Mission in rivalry rather than cooperation.

The two American Baptist Missionaries divided up their work equally. Dr. G.G. Crozier who came to Manipur from Tura in 1917, mastered the Thado-Kuki languages and translated the Bible into their languages, while Pettigrew specialised in the Manipuri and Tangkhul languages and continued to translate the Bible into those languages.

Contributions of the local Christians to the Mission work were made with enthusiasm and zeal and the year 1926 witnessed a much higher rate of giving than even before.

The North area Christians have vied with each other erecting new Chapels, school houses and hostels. One section of that area contributed Rs. 2763 and the other section Rs. 1576, making altogether Rs. 4413 voluntary gifts in cash and kind for Association expenses and for local church requirements. This was indeed a substantial help rendered by the local Christians without which the Mission work could not have progressed as it did.<sup>13</sup>

Rev. and Mrs. Pettigrew went on furlough in 1919, during whose absence, land clearing and buildings in the new Mission Compound at Kangpokpi began under the direction of a Kuki Christian, Seilut Singson. When the Pettigrew returned in 1921, the new Mission Compound with permanent buildings, bungalows, Chapel, school, boys and girls dormitories, cook houses, orphanage, leper asylum, the first in Manipur, and dispensary were established. Aban H. Momin has been brought from Tura by Crozier to run the dispensary who served till his death in 1940, having married a Tangkhul girl.<sup>14</sup>

Ukhrul, the old headquarters of the Mission since 1896 remained the Mission outstation, with the Middle English school, the Mission camp house and the Christian community of Tangkhul Nagas living in close proximity. The Missionary saw in this Centre, the gradual growth of Christianity from a small Christian community of 63, the converts crossed to 234

13. W. Pettigrew, Report from Kangpokpi, Missionary Conference, 1926.

14. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, pp. 160-161; Also W. Pettigrew, Report from Kangpokpi, Missionary Conference, 1927.

in 1916, and then by 1926, it further rose in two centres of Ukhrul and Kangokpi, to 2742. Churches have been organised, and Day and Night schools have increased.

Regarding the evangelistic works, the 1927 Missionary report stated that the Missionaries visited the North-East area, and in course of their tours, attended the Tangkhul Naga Association meetings at Phungton. Of the 2000 Tangkhul Naga church members, about 800 attended the meetings with much enthusiasm. The Missionaries were impressed by the desire of the local Christians to erect permanent church buildings. The problem of raising necessary funds has been solved in those areas by the growing of additional crops in the way of cotton, linseed and paddy, and diverting the sale proceeds for building purposes. Another impression made on the Missionaries was the intense desire to bring the whole tribe to Christianity. The usual opposition of the Chiefs and elders has been manifested in some cases, and where converts were weak, the opposition won for sometime. However, the whole families in Tangkhul Naga villages have been breaking away and exhibited determination to suffer any persecution from the non-Christians, and any restrictions the Sub-Divisional Officer of the District might put on them. The Manipur State Durbar had in no way decreased their antipathy to Mission work among the hill people of the State, let alone the valley population, and no amount of persuasion so far, would make them agree in any further increase in the number of converts. This was the latest Government stand even with regard to the Tangkhul Nagas, who have been always considered by the Missionaries as a tribe among whom they could work without any restrictions. The Government allowed the Chiefs and the elders to turn out the Association evangelists and refused to allow them to preach or have any intercourse with the non-converts.

Besides the Tangkhuls, the Missionaries were also interested in the Mao Naga tribe who showed keen interest in the new religion. Their areas were situated on the northern frontiers of Manipur, 34 kms from Kohima and 64 kms from Kangpokpi. It was located along side the Imphal, Kohima and Dimapur motor road. The Mission opened a State Primary school in this Mao village in 1903 and has continued ever since, and boys who have studied there up to Class IV have gone to Kohima

Mission school where some of them have become Christians, and returned to their own village to form this small nucleus of believers. The Sopvoma village was such a village where they had the Gospel preached to them off and on by the Tangkhul Christians since the revival of 1923 and by 1926 they were anxious to be converted and form a church of their own. But the problem was how to operate the Mission in those areas in view of the resolutions of the Durbar passed saying that neither Pettigrew nor his superintending pastor may visit any Christian village north of Imphal. However, as luck would have it, the Mao Chiefs and elders of those areas presented a petition to the Political Agent along with the petition by a small community of Christians in their midst saying that they would be willing to have the Christians remain with them, allow others to join them and allow the superintending pastor to preach Christianity to them. The petition has been forwarded to the Durbar by the Political Agent, with hopes of consideration favourably.

The Christians at the Sadar area, made up of Thados, Koms and Anals numbered over 700 church members. They progressed steadily despite Government restrictions and inability of the Missionaries or the superintending pastor to visit them regularly. The Durbar also allowed the Missionaries to visit them in the Associational meetings held at Chandel village in South-East area in 1927. Over 320 gathered under the Sadar area Association. This Association meeting was intended to be an occasion for inspiring the Christians of that section and to help them to be loyal to their new religion. But troubles cropped up as the number of Christians belonging to the North-East India General Mission under the control of Mr. Watkin Roberts, with a Lushai pastor were allowed to establish themselves in 1920 in that district. This Lushai pastor and other paid workers of this Mission have by their actions, caused frictions and troubles among the new converts of the American Baptist Mission. As a result, no paid worker of the American Baptist Mission was allowed to evangelise in that area. Only the voluntary workers among the community themselves as they travelled around, used the opportunity to preach and converts continued to come forward for baptism.

The Mission policy of self-support worked well in this sadar

area. At the time of the Association meeting, one-tenth tithe principle was adopted, and during 1926-27, all teachers' salaries, local church expenses, erection of church buildings, Pastor's salaries have been paid by the Association funds. The raising and selling of paddy crops for church work realised over Rs. 400.

The International Sunday school lessons have been taught to an increasing number and the All India Sunday school Examinations held in September, 1926 brought a record number of candidates at the Examination Centres at Kangpokpi and Ukhrul. Over 300 entered, and 205 received pass marks.<sup>15</sup>

### THE NORTH-WEST AREAS OF MANIPUR

In the North-West Area of Manipur, Dr. and Mrs. Crozier visited over 30 villages during 1927, making thus a total of 73 villages of the area visited out of the total of about 160 villages. In course of their tours, they found the dreadful state of large numbers because of the use of alcoholic drinks, the numerous sick with no medical help and the cringing fear of demons. Most of the villages have never been visited by any Missionary nor the Gospel has ever been preached before. In some villages, the elders even refused to allow the children to receive the picture post cards distributed by the Missionaries nor accepted any medicine, though they were personally friendly and delighted with the Gramophone.

The superintending pastor reported the baptisms of 95 during 1926-'27, 50 of them in the remotest village of this area. 147 Christian homes were distributed in 8 villages with 832 population. The church membership by 1927 was 437 against 408 the previous year. Cash contributions during the year was Rs. 279-14-9. The churches paid their own pastors except at Government headquarters where the Mission maintained an evangelist who had also to spend much of his time serving as a coolie for Government officers and servants without pay. In this way, they could preach even in the remotest villages without the notice of the Government.<sup>16</sup>

15. W. Pettigrew, Report of the North-East Area and Sadar Area of Manipur, 1927.

16. G.G. Crozier, Report from North-West Area of Manipur, Missionary Conference, 1927.

Since 1920, Manipur had been divided into two fields or Associations with one Missionary in-charge of each field. The Associations were rather regional than tribal. From 1917 to 1928, all churches of Manipur were included within the Manipur Christian Association. In 1928 this organisation was replaced by the Manipur Baptist Convention within which there were three Associations—North-East, Sadar and North-West. The Convention held its first meeting at Kangpokpi in 1928 where 1100 people from ten tribes attended which appeared promising to the Missionaries.<sup>17</sup>

By 1935, there were altogether 67 churches, 5510 church members and 210 baptisms during the year. Thus there was substantial increase in the number of Christians in Manipur. The Mission supported 5 workers while the local churches supported 8 workers.

Contrary to previous years, there has been very little persecution of the Christians, only one convert being driven out of his village. Otherwise, all other new converts were allowed to move to the edge of their village and settle there.<sup>18</sup>

In 1936, there were 101 churches in Manipur, 6316 church members and 1363 baptisms. This was the largest number of converts in one year that they had ever before in Manipur State. They built their own churches and appointed their own pastors and paid them.<sup>19</sup>

In 1937, in Manipur, there were only 82 churches of which 59 were organised and 23 were branch churches. That year, a church was started among the Chiru Kuki group where there have never been any converts. There was also one convert from the Maram Naga tribe, the first from this group. These two tribes have been neglected because of the language difficulty and because of their suspicions of all outsiders. The number of baptisms for the year was 581. But persecution has not been diminished and the new converts were still driven from home and if he was the head of the house, the home was destroyed. Still they came forward asking for baptism. The total local

17. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, p. 158.

18. W.R. Werelius, *Report from Kangpokpi, Missionary Conference*, February 3-6, 1936.

19. *Ibid.*, December 1-6, 1936.

contributions for church and evangelistic works were Rs. 3928, and Mission contribution was Rs. 1773 only.<sup>20</sup>

During the absence of the former Missionaries, J.E. Tanquist took charge of the Manipur field on April 1, 1938 including the station school and the medical work. One of his first tasks was to make a trip to the center of the Tangkhul area where difficulties existed among the Christians. Baptism during the year numbered 633 with a total membership of 7689.<sup>21</sup>

By 1940, churches of Manipur were divided up into three large Associations. The Missionary listed 23 tribes in the Manipur State among which there were Baptists in 11 tribes. An Advisory Body of Christian workers was annually selected by the various areas, one for each 500 church members. This Advisory Council of 14 members used to meet with the Missionary three times a year for consultations and advice.<sup>22</sup>

In 1941, at a little village where there has been quite a bit of persecution, a new work was opened with only five Christian houses. A Kabui village with 20 houses on the borders of the Tangkhul area was ready to become Christians largely through the efforts of a Tangkhul pastor. A number of new churches have been organised during the year. In a village in the Mao area where there were only three or four Christians, an evangelist sent reports of 29 houses ready to become Christians. A pastor-cum-teacher supported by the women of Kangpokpi has been carrying on the only work in another tribe who also reported a gain of 37 members.<sup>23</sup>

During the early 1940s, Manipur was in the grip of the World War II. The Japanese first cut the roads in Manipur and the Kangpokpi Mission compound was occupied by them for three months. For almost four months, the Missionaries and the inmates of the Mission compound were kept away from the Station by the invasion and for almost the same length of time, two-thirds of the people of Manipur were in enemy territory. And when the road was finally opened, the two

20. *Ibid.*, December, 8-13, 1937.

21. J.E. Tanquist, *Ibid.*, 1938.

22. J.A. Ahlquist, Report from Kangpokpi, Missionary Conference, 1940.

23. E.E. Brock, *Ibid.*, 1941.

armies met only six kms from the Mission compound. After things have become serious, the Missionaries were asked to fly out which they did, though they felt that too much would be lost if they left the work.

During the war, Kangpokpi was under fire for four successive nights with small arms and artillery. As soon as the roads were clear, the Missionaries returned to Kangpokpi and found that their Mission compound was occupied by a fighting unit. This fighting unit took the Missionaries in and gave all the help they could. The Missionaries also found the buildings with large holes in the roof, a considerable part of the ceiling gone, broken walls and missing plaster was a silent reminder of the things which has recently occurred. The rooms were bristled with rifles and sub-machine guns leaning against the Seats. Of all the places along the road, Kangpokpi was the first to be hit and the last to be evacuated.

Most of the buildings in the Mission compound were damaged. In one of the bungalows, the two worst places were a spot ten by fifteen feet over the verandah where 43 bullet holes, and a room at the back where there were 63 bullet holes made by machine gun bullets and seven by Airplane cannon shells.

The Mission work stood out in two distinct aspects (i) the splendid way in which the people carried on the work of evangelisation, and (ii) the fine Christian spirit with which the great majority met the problems and trials of the invasion. One outstanding aspect has been the assuming of definite responsibility for evangelism. In two areas the work was on a cooperative basis with the Associations assuming more than 40 per cent of the expenses of supporting 21 evangelists. Two of the Associations held their meetings in 1944, one with an attendance of over 1000 and the other above 700.

The people stepped forward in a splendid and uncomplaining way though they had suffered greatly. Some eight or nine thousand church members which meant about 20,000 people in all, were under Japanese control for almost four months. All their food, rice, chickens, pigs and cows and everything else that they could not carry into the jungles when they fled was taken by the enemy. Many of them went back to broken houses and empty granaries. The village sites have been burnt over and fields plowed up by high explosives and planted with a dangerous

number of unexploded shells. Besides, lack of good exposure and sanitation has taken its toll. But the food and the medical situation has been taken care of by the Government. Still there was crying need for medical help. Funds granted by the Mission, and the funds raised in the Assam Baptist churches, supply of truck-loads of clothing and blankets by the army have enabled the Mission to take care of the most desperate cases.

A survey of the church buildings in the area showed 8 partly and 19 completely destroyed. An estimate on the prewar basis gave the damage as Rs. 26,000 which meant that more than Rs. 70,000 would be needed for replacement.

Turning back to evangelistic works, two tribes which faced considerable persecution have increased their membership by 100 per cent to 300 per cent despite difficult conditions. Thus though there were less than 600 Christians in the whole Manipur State in 1919 when Kangpokpi was opened as a Mission Centre, by 1944, the total membership in the State crossed over 12,000 mark.<sup>24</sup>

In 1945, Manipur State was divided into three large Mission fields. The Tangkhul Nagas numbered over 8,000 Christians with 112 churches and 450 baptisms during the year. The Thado and Kacha Nagas together numbered 5,000 Christians with 120 churches and 300 baptisms. The central area had a dozen distinct languages with 5,000 Christians with 217 churches and 420 baptisms.

Thus great step forward was made by the people towards Christianity.<sup>25</sup>

### THE THREE ASSOCIATIONS

The whole of Manipur was divided into three Associations—North-West, North-East and Central called Sadar. Each of these Associations through its own Committee appointed and supported its own evangelists. The people felt great need for Bibles and evangelistic literature. Appeals for church leaders

24. E.E. Brock, Report from Kangpokpi, Missionary Conference, 1944.

25. G.W. Supplee, *Ibid.*, 1945.



and financial help came from many directions, even from far away Burma.<sup>26</sup>

In 1947, there were 15,982 members of the Baptist churches in Manipur with 150 regularly organised churches of which 122 were entirely self-supporting.

For a number of years, the Baptist field in Manipur has been divided geographically into three Associational areas. These areas were far from homogeneous with respect to tribal groups. With the rapid rise of national feeling, it had become increasingly difficult to carry on the work smoothly and with the coming of Indian Independence, problems have become beyond anybody's control. The oldest and the largest of the Associations was the North-East area or Ukhrul where plans were afoot for celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the coming of the Missionaries to Manipur in March, 1948.<sup>27</sup>

March, 1948 marked one of the high spots of the Mission work in Manipur State. A belated Jubilee celebration was held at Ukhrul with more than 10,000 attendance. In Ukhrul field, there were 169 churches and a membership of 11,121,<sup>28</sup> whereas in the whole State of Manipur, there were nearly 40,000 Christians.

During the year, considerable time has been spent in Bible Conferences. The Maos and the Marams began to respond to the preaching of Christianity. The Kabui Nagas, the largest tribe in the North-West area, formed their own Association in 1946 and employed six evangelists.<sup>29</sup>

According to the report for 1950, in the Ukhrul areas, works have begun in 14 new villages, making a total of 193 villages. The baptisms during the year were 1200.<sup>30</sup>

In 1950, there were 19 evangelists in the Kangpokpi field. The Associations were also helping to support a number of pastors and teachers and new churches. An Associational meeting, was attended by more than 2000 Persons.

26. J.S. Anderson, Report from Kangpokpi, Missionary Conference, 1946.

27. *Ibid.*, 1947.

28. E.E. Brock, Report from Ukhrul, *Ibid.*, 1949.

29. J.S. Anderson, Report from Kangpokpi, Missionary Conference, 1949.

30. E.E. Brock, Report from Ukhrul, Missionary Conference, 1950.

The Bible Conference was the best attended in the history of Kangpokpi. It was a step forward toward Mission's goal of developing this into a leadership training Institute. 30 persons were baptised on the closing day of the conference.

The Bible conferences on the southern part of the field among the Anals and the Maos were attended by more than 400.

182 churches have recorded a membership of 8527 with about 600 baptisms during the year excluding the Thados and the Kukis.<sup>31</sup>

31. J.S. Anderson, Report from Kangpokpi, Missionary Conference, 1950.

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