

THE SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY  
(MHS)

THESIS TOPIC

REASONS OF CHURCH SPLIT AMONG CHIN MIGRANT  
CHURCHES IN STAVANGER

THESIS FOR  
MASTER OF GLOBAL STUDIES

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STAVANGER, NORWAY

MAY 8, 2015

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I thank our heavenly Father, for His unceasing love and guidance throughout my studies at School of Mission and Theology.

I am deeply indebted to Stavanger Chin Church, without her financial support this studies could not have been successful. My heartfelt thanks goes to all church leaders and members for their prayer support and encouragement to complete this studies.

My deepest thanks goes to my supervisor, Kari Storstein Haug (Associate professor) for her helps and words of encouragement throughout this work. Her advices and guidance enabled me to complete this course. I am so grateful to all professors and staffs members of School of Mission and Theology for helping me in various ways.

I would like to say thank you to all the interviewees, for sharing their precious time and helping me in doing this course work.

Finally, I would like to extend my appreciation and heartfelt thanks to my family and close friends. The love of my dearest family has always been the greatest source of my strength to do this studies.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AG	Assemblies of God
BCMS	Bible Churchmen Missionary Society
BLC	Bethel Living Church
CACC	Chin Association for Christian Communication
CJC	Church of Jesus Christ
COTR	Church On the Rock
DNB	Det Norske Baptistsamfunns
GBC	Grace Believer Church
ICB	Independence Church of Burma
LIEC	Lakher (Mara) Independent Evangelical Church
MIC	Mara Independent Church
MIEC	Mara Independent Evangelical Church
NCCF	Norway Chin Christian Federation
NLAC	New Life Apostolic Church
NSD	Norwegian Social Science Data Services
RCT	Realistic Conflict Theory
SBC	Stavanger Baptist Church
SCC	Stavanger Chin Church
SCCF	Stavanger Chin Christian Family
SCCF	Stavanger Chin Christian Fellowship
SCO	Stavanger Chin Organization
SIT	Social Identity Theory
SLOC	State Law and Order Council
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

UPC            United Pentecostal Church  
USPG         United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel



## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Theme of the Thesis

The topic of the thesis is “Reasons of Church Split among Chin Migrants Churches in Stavanger.” Much has been written about church conflicts, division and consequences of these in the church community. The church has encountered and dealt with these conflicts throughout the centuries. One of the major issues occurred in the early Christian community was misunderstanding between Jews and Gentiles. The gentiles murmured against the Jews because their widows were neglected in daily distribution, probably meaning “in giving of sustenance to the poor and needy.”<sup>1</sup> It shows that conflict was, is and will always be in the church for the church is composed of people who have different beliefs, values and practices. Every issue needs to be solved properly. Because, church divisions dismay and distress mature believers, disillusion new believers, cause havoc in the lives of pastor and their families.<sup>2</sup>

By the help of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Norwegian Government, the ethnic minority group of the Chins in Malaysia and India were allowed to stay in Norway as a refugee. This program was started in the year 2002. The first Chin refugee, who arrived to Moi, in Norway is Mr. Van Thang. He arrived to Moi on November 28, 2002 from Malaysia and he was followed by others in 2003. It is estimated that there are about 1500 Chin refugees and are 16 Chin churches and 3 Chin fellowships in Norway.

The churches established by the Chin migrants in Norway are now encountering with various issues such as denominational issues, doctrinal issues, form of worship, identity issues, leadership and power issues. These conflicts seriously endangered church growth and community spirit in many places. In some place, these issues have caused church split in Oslo, Langesund, Grimstad and in Stavanger. The spirit of church unity was divided. Reunion of the splitted body, family and church is difficult for both the parties. The desire for oneness and unity among

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<sup>1</sup> [www.goarch.org/ourfaith/ourfaith7126](http://www.goarch.org/ourfaith/ourfaith7126), accessed on 25,3, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> [www.gotquestions.org/church-splits.html](http://www.gotquestions.org/church-splits.html). Accessed on 3, 2, 2015.

Christians and churches<sup>3</sup> never results in actual and practical. Instead of having the ecumenical spirit which is unity in diversity, many churches are still encountering and dealing with this splitting issues.

Church split occurred three times in Chin churches in Stavanger. It was happened two times in Stavanger Chin Church in 2009 and 2014, and was happened in Bethel Living Church in 2010. These splits seriously affected the lives and fellowship of the Chins community. In terms of church division, many questions were raised by the new generations. Why do the church split? What are the main reasons of church splitting? What kind of conflicts were in the Chin churches? Is it doctrinal issue? This research paper will explore the causes and conflicts that made church split among the Chin migrant's churches in Stavanger.

## 1.2 Research Overview

Concerning Church split or divisions in Chin migrants churches in Norway, no research has been done yet. But there are some literatures which are published and unpublished related with church divisions. These literatures mention how conflict occurred in the church and how such conflict caused church split in Christian church and community. There is no literature which directly gives answer to the research question, but there are some books and articles which are useful and supportive for this research. These literature are divided into two categories. The first part is about historical. The second part deal with conflict in the church.

To know more about the history and origin of Chin migrants in Norway, two historical books are used. The first one is "In Search of Chin Identity: A Study in Religion, Politics and Ethnic Identity in Burma" written by Lian Hmung Sakhong.<sup>4</sup> In his book, Sakhong mentioned the origin of the Chins, the arrival of Christian mission and the lives and culture of the Chins. The second one is "Chin Church History" published by the Zomi Theological College, which described the emergence of Christian denominations and establishment of churches in Chin State.<sup>5</sup> These

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<sup>3</sup> Harding Meyer, *That All May Be One: Perceptions and Models of Ecumenicity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Lian Hmung Sakhong, *In Search of Chin Identity: A Study in Religion, Politics and Ethnic Identity in Burma* (Denmark: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies), 2003

<sup>5</sup> Zomi Theological College, *Chin Church History* (Falam, Chin State), 2007

books described the history of the Chins and how Christian missions was introduced among the Chins people. The books also mentioned about conflict which occurred in the churches in Chin state, Myanmar.

In terms of conflict, the researcher applied three books which focus on intergroup conflict. The first book is, “Congregations in Conflict: Cultural Models of Local Religious Life” written by Penny Edgell Becker.<sup>6</sup> In this book, she mentioned about models of congregations and their beliefs, practices and core values. Becker also described conflicts in each congregations. It points out how the church dealt with the conflicts. The second books is “The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice”, edited by Morton, Peter T. Coleman and Eric C. Marcus.<sup>7</sup> It is a compilation of articles written by distinguish professors and authors particularly on conflict resolution. Among many articles, I chose “Intergroup Conflict” written by Ronald J. Fisher. Fisher mentions about intergroup conflict especially sources of conflict in community. The last one is “Intergroup Conflict”, by Tayler H. Cox, Jr.<sup>8</sup> In this book, Cox, has mentioned about sources of intergroup conflict. He discussed five sources which caused intergroup conflict. They are, competing goals, competition for resources, cultural differences, power discrepancies and assimilation versus preservation of microcultural identity.

### 1.3. Research Problems

This research focuses on the issues which caused church splits in Chin churches in Stavanger. As Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson has mentioned, research always begin with some problem or set of issues.<sup>9</sup> This study attempts to investigate and explore the main causes which bring conflicts and split in Chin migrant churches in Stavanger. People notice that conflicts occurs in every congregation, community and church. Sadly, Chin migrant churches in Stavanger encountered church split for three times. Church split occurred two times in Stavanger Chin

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<sup>6</sup> Penny Edgell Becker, *Congregations in Conflict: Cultural Models of Local Religious Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1999

<sup>7</sup> Ronald J. Fisher, “*Intergroup Conflict*” ed, by Morton Deutsch, Peter T. Coleman and Eric C. Marcus, *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Printed in United State of America), 2006

<sup>8</sup> Taylor H. Cox, Jr., *Intergroup Conflict* (San Francisco: Berreth-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 1993), 192.

<sup>9</sup> Martyn Mammersley and Paul Atkinson, ed., *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edt. (London: Tavistock publications Ltd., 2007), 21.

Church, in 2009 and 2014, and another one is occurred in Bethel Living Church. And, in 2010, the members of the United Pentecostal Church (UPC) left Bethel Living Church (now the name was changed to Grace Believer Church) and founded a new church, called, the New Life Apostolic Church.

This research has been done in Stavanger particularly among the Lai-speaking Chins. The researcher selected 10 interviewees from different churches such as Stavanger Chin Church, Grace Believer Church and New Life Apostolic Church. According to annual report of the Stavanger Chin Organization (SCO),<sup>10</sup> there are about 270 Chins migrants in Stavanger and most of them are the Lai-speaking Chins.

The main research question is: What are the main reasons of church splitting? Why was this happened? Sub research questions are: What are the conflicts in the Stavanger Chin Churches? Is it theological, doctrinal or denominational issue? Is it because of personal attack and opposition? Was there conflict over leadership role? How did they handle the conflicts? The purpose of this project is to investigate, explore the real reasons which bring division among the Chins migrant church in Stavanger.

#### **1.4 Research Design and Structure of Thesis**

This research is an exploratory. The primary aim of the research is to present the findings by exploring and investigating the conflicts encountered by the Lai-speaking Chin churches in Stavanger, and to analyze the facts in accordance with the situation. In order to answer the questions, I used two kinds of data. The first one is doing field work or study in Stavanger especially among the Lai-speaking Chins and the second is studying and visiting libraries to get relevant books, articles and with other reliable materials.

I applied qualitative research method as a basic tool which is most appropriate and useful for exploring and investigating the real causes, and issues faced by the Chins people. As Kathleen McMillan & Jonathan Weyers say, “Qualitative research methods are those investigative

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<sup>10</sup> The Annual Report of Stavanger Chin Organization on 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 2015.

approaches that result in descriptive textual information. It is especially important in the social sciences, where its aim is often to understand the complex reasons for human behavior.”<sup>11</sup>

The research is divided into eight chapters. The first chapter introduces the theme, background and highlight the research overview, the problems, and the research main question.

Chapter two presents the main theoretical perspective used in the analysis, namely intergroup conflicts. Intergroup conflicts occur where there is more than two or three parties in the church, community and society. Conflicts need to be handled constructively. Due to poorly manage of conflicts, there exist division and splitting in the church community.

Chapter three deals with method. The researcher applied the qualitative research methods. In this chapter, the selected informants, the interview types, methods for the analysis of material, the role of the researcher, research ethical considerations, reliability, validity and generalization will be included.

Chapter four will deal with the background of the Lai speaking Chin migrants in Norway. The term Lai and the origin of the Chins will be mentioned in brief in this chapter.

The fifth chapter will deal with the establishment of the Lai-speaking Chin migrants’ churches in Norway. It will mainly focus on establishing the Chin church in Stavanger, Rogaland.

Chapter six will deal with the experiences of church splitting among the Lai-speaking Chin migrants’ churches in Norway. This chapter will present the research findings/results from the field work, and presentation of the materials in light of the research question.

Chapter seven will deal with analysis and discussion. It will present the main motivations and reasons for the church split in Stavanger. The research findings will be analyzed and discussed in this chapter. And, the last chapter is conclusion and recommendations. This chapter will highlight what was presented in this research in brief.

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<sup>11</sup> Kathleen McMillan & Jonathan Weyers, *How to Write Dissertation & Project Reports* (Great Britain: Ashford Colour Press Ltd., 2011), 123.

## Chapter Two

### THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

#### 2.1 Introduction

As Penny Edgell Becker mentions, “Conflict involves two or more parties who perceives their interests to be incompatible and engage in action oriented to the defense of their interests, be they ideal or material.<sup>12</sup> Conflict is an overt expression of tensions between the goals or concerns of one party and those of another. Thus the core of conflict is opposing interests of the involved parties. Cox argues that ‘intergroup conflict in religious community is mainly based on goals, values, conformity versus identity affirmation and cultural differences. Common goals is one of the defining characteristics of cultural groups... In multicultural social systems, the various groups represented may develop competing goals which then become the basis of intergroup conflict.’<sup>13</sup>

In this research, two theories, Realistic Conflict Theory (RCT) and Social Identity Theory (SIT) will be applied. Realistic Conflict Theory commonly discussed in the intergroup conflict literature. According to RCT, conflict is due to the presence of incompatible goals between groups. The realistic conflict is thought to intensify in-group bias and out-group hostility. Social identity theory is based on the idea that people as individual have a personal identity and as group members have a social identity. As individual identify more with a certain group, they begin to assume characteristics of the group as their own and develop a sense of who they are.<sup>14</sup>

#### 2.2 Value

It is important to remember that each ethnic group, denomination and religion has different value in their lives. Conflict occurs when and where people neglect and devalued what other people and group value most. Value conflict involves differences in what groups believe in, from minor

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<sup>12</sup> Penney Edgell Becker, *Congregations in Conflict: Cultural Models of Local Religious Life* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 37.

<sup>13</sup> Taylor H. Cox, Jr., *Intergroup Conflict* (San Francisco: Berreth-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 1993), 192.

<sup>14</sup> [www.geocities.ws/rpipsych/intergroupconflict1.html](http://www.geocities.ws/rpipsych/intergroupconflict1.html), accessed on 9, 4, 2015.

variances in preferences or principles to major cleavages in ideologies or ways of life.<sup>15</sup> In her book, *Congregations in Conflict: Cultural Models of Local Religious Community*, Penny E. Backer mentions that “Worship and religious education are the keys to reproducing a religious tradition, teaching people the symbols, beliefs, and rituals that distinguish a particular religious heritage from other. Worship and religious education are central to internal reproduction... It is viewed as the primary and most important tasks of the local congregation, to the exclusion of other priorities. They are what members value most.”<sup>16</sup> They are central to the congregation’s public discourse and social identity.

### **2.3 Cultural Differences**

As Huntington notes.” The heart of culture involves language, religion, values, traditions, and customs”.<sup>17</sup> Culture is a strong part of people’s lives. It influences their views, their values, and their hopes. According to Fay, ‘A culture is a complex set of shared beliefs, values, and concepts which enables a group to make sense of its life and which provides it with directions for how to live.’<sup>18</sup> The Chins migrants in Norway are different in culture and worldviews. Even though the Chins are minority, there are many dialects varied from village to village. Cox mentions that intergroup conflict between diverse groups may also occur because of misunderstandings and misperceptions that are related to the different worldviews of culture groups.<sup>19</sup>

### **2.4 Conformity versus Identity Affirmation**

In every community there used to occur interconflict which is tension between majority and minority group members over the preservation of minority group identity. This conflict increases the spirit of in-group favoritism. Groups produce a sense of social identity: a sense of belonging

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<sup>15</sup> Ronald J. Fisher, 179.

<sup>16</sup> Penny E. Backer, 56.

<sup>17</sup>Larry A. Samovar and Richard E. Porter, eds, *Communication Between Cultures*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edt., (USA: Thomson Learning, Inc., 2004),p.33.

<sup>18</sup> B. Fay, *Contemporary Philosophy of Social Science: A Multicultural Approach* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 55.

<sup>19</sup> Tayler H. Cox. 194.

to social world.<sup>20</sup> Cox highlights that ‘the majority group in an organization has higher status than minority groups by definition. It point out that minority groups will usually be much more aware of, and more concerned with, the preservation of group identity than majority group members will. The constant efforts of minority groups to affirm themselves may annoy majority group members, who view these efforts as needless differentiations that serve no usual purpose.’<sup>21</sup>

## 2.5 Power

According to the French cultural critic, Michel Foucault, one could find power patterns and behaviors within all micro-groups, because these features arose naturally and unavoidably. They came with the territory, namely the inevitable diversity of levels found in any community.<sup>22</sup> In the church, community and organization there are at least two or more different parties and groups who struggle for power and to dominate the power less. According to Fisher, power conflict occurs when each group wishes to maximize its influence and control in the relationship with the other. Power conflict is often distinguished by the use of negative power, through behaviors such as threat, and deception<sup>23</sup>

Fiske has demonstrated that powerful people tend to pay less attention to those in low power because they view them as not affecting their outcomes, they are often too busy to pay attention, and they are often motivated by their own high need to dominate others. Therefore, in conflict situations high power holders and members of high-power groups often neglects to analyze as well as underestimate the power of low power holders and members of low power groups.<sup>24</sup> Power has been misused in the church and organization throughout the church history. The powerful class, or the majority members try to hold their power by using heavier methods of influence, especially coercive or punishment tactics.

The consequences of the intergroup conflicts are:-

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<sup>20</sup> [www.simplypsychology.org/social-identity-theory](http://www.simplypsychology.org/social-identity-theory), accessed on 2, May 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Taylor H. Cox. 196.

<sup>22</sup> Roy Kearsley, *Church, Community and Power* (England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), 85.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>24</sup> Peter T. Coleman, “Power and Conflict”, Morton Deutsch and Peter. Coleman, ed., *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice* ( San Francisco: Jossey-Bas Publisher, 2000) 137.



1. The other group is seen as the enemy
2. Distortion of perceptions increase, for example, we are strong, they are weak.
3. Hostility between the group increases.
4. Members tend to hear only those things that support their group`s position. <sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> W. Warner Bueke, Conflict in Organizations, 788.

## Chapter Three

### METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

#### 3.1 Qualitative Research Method

In this research, the researcher applied a combination of literature studies and qualitative research method. Qualitative research is an appropriate and effective way of doing a research where the main aim is to reveal a target audience's range of behavior and the perceptions that drive it with reference to specific topics or issues. It uses in-depth studies of small groups of people to guide and support the construction of hypotheses.<sup>26</sup> I realized that in doing research, qualitative research method is the most useful and appropriate method to dig out and get the issues and information that I want. Qualitative research methods primarily include observations and interviews where the researcher charts behavior or makes field notes. Therefore, I chose this qualitative research method for my field research.

First, the researcher visited different libraries and tried to collect books which are applicable and supportive for this research. Supportive books, articles, magazines and other small and unpublished book have been collected. I also collected church meeting minutes and will use internet sources related with the subject. Second, I selected the interviewees and did interview to previous and present church leaders, and organizations leaders. I also have talked with and discussed the issues with church leaders from nearby churches.

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.qrca.org/?page=whatisqualresearch>, accessed on 10,11,2014.

### 3.2 Selecting the Informants

Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson has mentioned, “a crucial issue that arises once the decision has been made to collect data via interviews is: who should be interviewed?”<sup>27</sup> In doing a research, selecting the informants is very important. The researcher should carefully do his research in the right place and to the right person. For my research, I have selected ten interviewees from three different denominations. There were six men and four women in the interviewees. All of them play the main leadership roles in the church and other Chin organizations since they were together in Stavanger Chin Church (SCC). They were involved in handling the church conflicts. And I believe that collecting information and sources from different denominational leaders will be more truthful and trustworthy for my research.

The selected informants are most trusted and respected leaders in each church leadership and denomination. They play significant leadership role in every activities in Chins organizations. I hopefully observed that they know well about the church conflicts and how the church was splitted. They have been involved in the church activities since they were in the Stavanger Chin Christian Fellowship. All of the selected informants are considered as educated and have experienced in teachings, social activities and church leadership. As I have expected I got the required information from the informants. It will be the main source for my master thesis.

### 3.3 The Interviews

In order to collect and obtain true and reliable information, I selected ten informants from different denominations in Stavanger. The major way of getting the information was by interviews. Tim Rapley said, “Interviewing is never just ‘a conversation’, it may be *conversational*, but you as the interviewer do have some level of control. The point is to follow the interviewee’s talk, to follow up on and to work with them and not strictly delimit the talk to your predetermined agenda.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, 103.

<sup>28</sup> Tim Rapley, “Interviews.” In *Qualitative Research Practice*, eds. Clive Seale, Giampietro Gobo, Jaber F Gubrium and David Silverman (London: Sage, 2004), 18, 26.

In doing research and field work, the researcher apply different types of interview methods and techniques based on the context. Therefore, I used personal (individual) interview type in my research. Open-ended questions type was applied in this research.

Before the interview was started I introduced about myself to all the interviewees. The interview was done at their residence. Generally, I spent more than two hours in each interview. As it is a qualitative research I prepared the interview questions as a guide before the interviews was conducted. Fortunately, I sometimes had a chance to interview with their spouses. This is the only method that I used to get the required information for my thesis.

### **3.4 Participant Observation**

I had spent times with the three different churches. We have worship service together whenever we have a speaker from Chin State, Myanmar and from around the world. We have combined service on Pentecost Day every year. Fortunately, I was with them in the last church split which occurred in 2014. As a pastor, I tried to deal with the conflict in many ways, but it did not work.

I observed that there are differences in singing, prayer and witnessing in worship service. I noticed that the movement and style of the Piangthar (Born again) group is distinct. They have a unique style of worship that is unbearable for the other. There is no time limitation in witnessing, singing and preaching. They sing hymn repeatedly and dance before the pulpit. The preacher also has no time limit in his preaching. Sometimes he/she spent more than 60 minutes in preaching. There are two main groups, people who like quiet worship and pray quietly and people who prefer dancing, raising their hands and shouting with hallelujah.

I realized that participant observation is also useful for gaining an understanding of the physical, social, cultural, emotional and denominational contexts. It is needed to be a part of them if we want to know and understand the real life and value of the other people. As Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson has mentioned, “In a sense all social research is a form of participant observation, because we cannot study the social world without being part of it...”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, “Ethnography and Participatory Observation”, *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Denzin and Y Lincoln Eds., (Oaks: California, 1994), 249.

### **3.5 Role of Researcher**

I played two roles in my field research, as a pastor and student. It is one of the traditions that teacher, parents and religious leader are highly respected particularly in South-East Asia countries. No one is allowed to insult and even joke religious leaders. They are considered as sacred people. During the interview I planned not to play on the role of pastor. Therefore, I introduced that I came not as a pastor but as a researcher or student. I assured them that this meeting and information will be confidential and will be kept safely. In order to obtain the true information I humbly requested them to expose their feelings especially on the church conflicts. One of my problem was/is that I am a pastor of the Stavanger Chin church. My role as a pastor is unavoidable and deniable but they understood my role and told me freely and openly. Some interviewees prepared me cake, fruits and coffee.

### **3.6 Analysis of Material**

In order to get reliable information, I have applied the qualitative research method. I believe that the materials collected and information received through the interviews are crucial and imperative for my thesis. All information is kept in my notebook and in my computer. I used two methods in keeping the information by writing a note on my note books and computer. It is very much important to keep the material as well as the information obtained by the informants till I make analysis for the findings. The notes I kept will be the source of answering the research question.

The main and important issues mentioned in the interviews by the informants were about denominational issues, doctrinal issues, form of church worship, leadership position, socio-cultural and power issues. Some of the interviewees said that social issue also became one of the issues that caused church split. From these information I gathered and kept in order of the main causes which bring division in the church. Then, I would go through the relevant sources to the study topic as mentioned in previous chapter.

### **3.7 Ethical Consideration**

Before the research is done students are well trained to consider ethical issues seriously. As Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson has mentioned, it is the responsibility of the researcher to try to act in ways that are ethically appropriate, taking due account of his or her goals and values, the situation in which the research is being carried out, and the values and interests of the people involved.<sup>30</sup> Since all the researchers are encouraged to follow the rule of the research, I also tried to do my field research in accordance with the ethical rules set by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD).

I selected ten interviewees from three churches. In order to meet with the interviewees, first, I made appointment by phone and fixed a date. I was so happy for accepting my request. I was fortunate for they are familiar with me and have good communication with them. Therefore, I have time to interview with them openly and freely. Religiously and culturally speaking, the Chins are unique. They enjoy talking and sitting together with friends.

Before the interview was done, I introduced myself and purpose of doing this interview. I assured them that the information will be confidential. It will be kept secretly and the researcher will not expose to anyone. After the project has been done all information and documents will be destroyed. I told all the interviewees that I do this research by the permission of School of Mission and Theology and Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD).

One of the problems that I faced in my field research was making the appointment with the interviewees, for they all have work and busy with other social and church activities. Some appointment were done hardly. They did not have time for the interview. They can only gave me a time at night especially after dinner. Generally, we spent more than two to three hours for the interview.

### **3.8 Reliability and Validity**

This research has explored a background data to get reliability in qualitative research where trustworthiness and confidentiality play a vital role. Hammersley suggests that reliability ‘refers

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<sup>30</sup> Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, 228, 229.

to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions.’<sup>31</sup> Reliability, recognized as pertaining to the stability of data-collection measures, remains an important notion.

Validity is normally established through consideration of three main aspects: content validity, criterion-related validity, and construct validity. Yin suggests that ‘for any kind of research, including qualitative research, possibly, which control issue deals with the validity of a study and its finding.’<sup>32</sup>By the permission of the interviewees, I have noted down what they said during the interviews. I thought that, the information that I obtained from the interviewees and collected materials are valid, reliable and trustworthy. The thesis will be written based on these materials. Generally, the issues obtained through the interview and participant observation will do for the thesis. In doing analysis and application of the data, as a researcher I will consider the reliability, validity and generalization of the study.

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<sup>31</sup> Hammersley, 67.

<sup>32</sup> Robert K. Yin, *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2011), 78.

## Chapter Four

### BACKGROUND OF THE LAI-SPEAKING CHIN MIGRANTS IN NORWAY

#### 4.1 Introduction

Among various causes which make Chin refugees fled their homeland searching for refuge at neighboring countries heavily rested on the political, social, economic and religious situation of the country Myanmar. In order to analyze their present life experience in Norway and in the third countries, it is necessary to study first the background of the Chins in Myanmar. It is important to know about the Chins. Who are the Chins? Why are they scattered all over the world? How did they arrived Norway? This chapter will expose the political, religious and economic situation of Chin State in Myanmar. And the history of the Lai-speaking Chin will also be mentioned in this chapter.

#### 4.2 A Brief Historical Background of the Chins

The people of the Chin tribes reside in a territory surrounded Manipur on the North, Mizoram in the west, and Bangladesh in the south-west. The distance from north to south is 250 miles and its breadth varies from 100 to 150 miles. Its area is 13906.97 square miles or 89004.59 acres. Chin State is bordered by Rakhine State in the south, and Sagaing Division and Magway Division in the east. It consists of high mountains intersected by deep valleys and rivers and is utterly devoid of plains.<sup>33</sup> Chin state is home to an estimated about 500,000 ethnic Chin. There are nine township and three towns in Chin state. It is the only state that where 90 percent is Christian in Myanmar.

According to Lian Hmung Sakhong, a historian, researcher and political leader, the tale goes that the Chin people emerged into this world from the bowels the earth or a cave or rock called `Chinlung`. The tradition of Chinlung as the origin of the Chin has been kept by all tribes

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<sup>33</sup> Sealang.net/sala/archives/pdf4/bawi2001litera... accessed on 23, 2, 2015.



of the Chin in various ways, such as folksongs, folklore and legends known as Tuanbia.<sup>34</sup> The literal meaning of Chin\_lung is ``the cave or the hole of the Chin`. The word Chinlung can also be translated as the cave or the hole where our people originally lived` or `the place from which our ancestors originated`. <sup>35</sup>

Today, scholars, researchers, political leaders and other organizations of the Chin believe the Chinlung tradition not only as a myth but as a historical fact. The traditional memory claimed that their remote original place was a cave in China where, for fear of enemies, they hid themselves, which in interpreted in different dialects as Chinlung or Sinlung. All sources of Chin traditions maintain that their ancestors originated from `Chinlung` or `Cin-lung`. Sometimes the name for `Chinlung` or `Cin-lung` differs, depending on the specific Chin dialect – such as Khul, khur and lungkua, but it always means `cave` or `hole` no matter what the dialect.<sup>36</sup>

As the Chins reside at different places, names are obviously different. We call ourselves as Lai speaking Chins, Zomi Chins, Kuki and Thado Chins, Asho Chins, Khumi Chins, Mizo or Lusai Chins, and Cho or Chu speaking Chin in Myanmar. It is believed that these tribes are the descendent of the Chin. After the advent of the British government, a Deputy Commissioner of Manipur by the name of Colonel Meculluch wrote: The Chins asserted that they hailed from different ethnic tribes of varied customs and cultures and entered into the Chin Hills. But their cultures and other customs and religious rites and investigation into various fields of life show that they belong to one ethnic tribe.<sup>37</sup>

### **4.3 The Lai Speaking Chin**

As I have mentioned, the Lai speaking Chins are one of the Chin tribes live in the central part of Chin State. The Lai or Laiholh is the first official language used by the Lais in Chin State. The first Christian hymns, Bible and books were written in Lai. The Hakhas, Falams, Thantlangs, Matupis and some of the southern Chins used the Bible and hymns books together for a long times.

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<sup>34</sup> Lian Hmung Sakhong, *In Search of Chin Identity: A Study in Religion, Politics and Ethnic Identity in Burma* (Denmark: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2003), 1.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 3.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 6.

<sup>37</sup> Zomi Theological College, *Chin Church History* (Falam: Chin State, 2007), 2.

In order to have a more and deeper communication between the Lai speaking people the Chin Association for Christian Communication (CACC) was formed in 1988. It is an interdenominational organization. The founding members of CACC were Hakha Baptist Association, Thantlang Association of Baptist Churches, Matu Association of Baptist churches, Matu Baptist Association, Zotung Baptist Association, Chin Baptist Association (Kalaymyo), and Gangaw Baptist Association. Today, CACC members consist of thirteen regional Baptist associations and local members in Mandalay, Yangon, and other cities in Myanmar. CACC now has members from Australlia, Europe. And United States. It is mainly sponsored by the Baptist denomination.<sup>38</sup>The population of Lais, who speak the Lai language, affiliated with the CACC is more than two hundred thousand. There are some denominations who speak the Lai but do not connect to CACC. It is estimated that about 15000 are still outside CACC. Thus the Lai speaking groups under CACC are about 35 percent of the Chin population.

About the same number of the Lai speaking Chins live outside the CACC area. It is believed that about 25000 live in Falam, Paletwa, Mindat and Kanpalet townships in Chin State. About 25000 live in Magwe Division and 35000 in Sagaing Division of Burma proper.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, the total population of Lai-speaking Chins in Myanmar is about three hundred thousand in Myanmar.

Since there is no common language or official language in Chin State, Lai or Laiholh is used as a medium of communication among different Chin groups in Hakha, Thantlang, Matupi and Falam and some parts of the Cho speaking Chins. They used the same Bible, hymn book which is written in Lai. Today, the Falam and Matupi speaking Chin have their own Bible and hymn book. Though we have our own Bible and hymn book, we can communicate with Lai till today. Laiholh becomes more useful and learned language in Chin state.

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<sup>38</sup> [En.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chin\\_Association\\_for\\_Christian\\_Communication](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chin_Association_for_Christian_Communication)

<sup>39</sup> Bawi Hu, *Adult Literacy Project* (Chin Association for Christian Communication: Hakha, 2001), 1.

#### **4.4 Political Situation in Chin State**

The Chins used to live as an independent nation or state in what is known as Chinland. Most of Chinland fell under British colonial rule in 1895.<sup>40</sup> In 1933, Chin patriots demanded the independence of Chinland from the British-Burma government in Rangoon. Two years later, the British placed western Chinland under British Indian control, and eastern Chinland under Burma's control. In 1947, Chin representatives joined with representatives from Kachin, Shan and Burma and signed the Panglong Agreement to form a federal union. After Burma gained independence from British in 1948, the ethnic groups became concerned that their autonomy was not respected. Civil war ensued for the next decade until a military coup was staged in 1962 by General Ne Win, Burma Army's Chief Commander.<sup>41</sup>

General Ne Win suppressed all attempts to form a federation, and isolated Burma from the rest of the world, stifling essential human rights such as freedom of expression and association. The desire for basic freedoms drove Chins from different sectors of society to join pro-democracy demonstrations in 1988 in which thousands were killed by the military government. The university students who played the leading role from the capital city of Burma were terribly killed and imprisoned. Since 1988, Burma was ruled by the military junta, first known as State Law and Order Council (SLORC) and later as State Peace and Development Council (SPDC).<sup>42</sup> Chin State is still under the control the military government. The term democracy has been applied in Myanmar since 2010, but practically people do not taste the fruit of democracy till today.

#### **4.5 Economic Condition in Chin State**

Chin State is marked as the poorest state in Myanmar. There are no natural resources in Chin State. Since General Ne Win took political power in 1962, Burma has lost her precious stones, teak, timber and other natural resources. After four decades of military rule, political instability, and economic mismanagement has resulted in widespread poverty across Burma. According to a 2005 United Nations Development Program (UNDP) household survey, one-third of the population in

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<sup>40</sup> Zomi Theological College, *Chin Church History*, 33.

<sup>41</sup> [www.chro.org/index.php/About\\_us/10](http://www.chro.org/index.php/About_us/10). Accessed on 10, February, 2015.

<sup>42</sup> Pa Yaw, *The Church in Myanmar under Successive Governments* (Unpublished, 2004), 14.

Burma lives below the poverty line. In Chin State some 70 percent of the population lives below the poverty line and 40 percent are without adequate food sources.<sup>43</sup>

The Chins have been practicing shifting cultivation for centuries. About 85 percent of Chins today in Chin state rely on rotational farming, slash-and-burn farming for their livelihoods.<sup>44</sup> This type of traditional farming is hindered by the prevalence of steep mountains and deep gorges in Chin State. Farms are established on sloping hillsides, which are prone to erosion. Due to the lack of viable farm land, soil exhaustion is also common. These environmental factors limit crop production in Chin State. Unaided by the military government, Chin farmers are unable to produce enough for their subsistence and are dependent on their low-lying neighbors for food provisions. Besides farming, there are very few job opportunities available for Chin people in Chin State. Ethnic discrimination against non-Burman ethnic nationalities and religious discrimination against Christians hinder Chins from obtaining better-paying jobs with the government.

#### **4.6 Religious Condition in Chin State**

Traditionally, the Chins are people who worship evil spirits. They believe that demons are present everywhere and they encounter them. Actually, they were not worshipping these spirits but rather they exorcized them or appeased them in order that they might not cause them all sorts of trouble, also so that they might have health, strength, and prosperity. Though they worship evil spirits and made sacrifice, the Chins acknowledged the existence of an omnipotent being, nevertheless they never worshipped him.<sup>45</sup> The Chin believe in the existence of a controller of all things, a Supreme Being. They called the Supreme Being in various name according to the tribes: the Cho called him Khuapughi, the Khumi Kha Kah; Lai called Khuazing, Zomi called Zinmang. Although the name was called differently, the nature of this Supreme Being was the same on every count.<sup>46</sup> This concept and belief paved a way the Gospel. Therefore, when the gospel was introduced to the Chins people, they could easily accepted it without reasoning.

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<sup>43</sup> m.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/burma0109w, accessed on 24, 2, 2015.

<sup>44</sup> Chin Development Initiative, *Facts about Chin State and Its People* (Unpublished Document, March 2006).

<sup>45</sup> F K Lehman, *The Structure of Chin Society* (Aizawl: Firma KLM private Limited, 1980), 117.

<sup>46</sup> Zomi theological College, 14.

Chin State is considered as a Christian State by the government. As Myanmar is a Buddhist country, the non-Buddhists are banned in government services and other social services. Hundreds of Buddhist missionaries are sent to Chin State. The minority Christians are oppressed in many ways. The military groups were sent to Chin State and people were forced to do what they want. It was supported by some of the Buddhist monks. It seriously affected the lives of many Chins in Chin State. Therefore, they searched a place where there is freedom and livelihood are available.

#### **4.6.1 Baptist Mission**

The first regular appointed missionaries to the Chin by the American Baptist Mission Society were Arthur and Laura Carson, a young couple from Columbus City, Iowa. The Carsons established and built two pioneer stations among the Chin in their twenty-one years of service together, the first in Thayetmyo for the Asho tribe and the second in Hakha for the Laimi and Zomi tribes.<sup>47</sup> After living in Thayetmyo for some years, they planned to move to Hills Chin. They arrived Hakha on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1899. They were a Baptist missionary sent by the American Baptist Mission Union. At the time of arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Carson, the living standard of the Chin people was so low that people were practically without decent clothing to speak of.<sup>48</sup>

But God used the white couple and four Karen preachers to change the lives of the Chins. The numbers of Christians were increasing year by year. The Gospel's arrival into the Chin Hills was 50 years since and the Golden Jubilee for this occasion was celebrated at Hakha on the 1-3 April 1949. 4700 believers as guests came into Hakha and with addition of local believers 5128 congregated then.<sup>49</sup>

#### **4.6.2 Roman Catholic Missions**

In 1890, the Vicar Apostolic of Mandalay, Msgr. Simon, sent one of his best priests, Fr. Laurent (MEP), and Fr. Vestreaten to Chin Hills, 250 miles away. They went towards Northern Chin Hills and settled at Balet, south of Mawlaik, on the western side of the Chindwin River. But after one

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<sup>47</sup> Lian Hmung Sakhong, 122.

<sup>48</sup> Kip Thian Pau, *Trials and Triumphs of the Chin Pioneers* (Yangon: MBC Press, 2009), 15.

<sup>49</sup> Zomi Theological College, 71.

year, they saw that they were still far from the real Chins. The next year, Fr. Laurent went with Fr. Jarre to enter Chin Hills in the south from Pakokku, through Pauk and Thilin. They arrived to the large village of Shon-shi, near the Myittha river. Although it was at the foot of the Hills, they had met with real Chins, and they began to study the language.

At the end of 1891, after the retreat, a third missionary, fr. Accarion, joined them. With the complicity of Chin traders who had come to the plains, they made the project of climbing to Hakha to settle there, in the centre of Chin Hills. Fr. Laurent remained at Gangaw, for health reasons. But as soon as Frs. Jarre and Accarion arrived to Hakha, the capital of Chin State, an English officer, who was a protestant and hostile to the Catholics, obliged them to leave the place and to go back down to the plains saying that Chins were not yet civilized and the life of the priest would be in danger. The Fathers had no choice but to go back to Gangaw.<sup>50</sup>

The second attempt was made in 1934, under Bishop A. Faliere 50 years later than Protestants. Bishop A. Faliere, Fr. Audrain (MEP) and Fr. Alexis U Ba Din, a diocesan priest, with four catechists arrived at Kanpalet, the then capital of southern Chin State, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 1933. Looking for better prospects, the pioneers proceeded to Mindat, on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 1933. The first Mass was offered on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1934. With the strenuous efforts of two pioneers, Fr. Audrain and Fr. Alexis, the good seed of the Word of God was sown in the Mindat area of Southern Chin State to grow in time into big tree.<sup>51</sup>

#### **4.6.3 Anglican Mission**

The Anglican mission was started in 1824. During the Anglo-Burmese War of 1824-1826, the army chaplain of Sir Com Bell introduced the denomination. However, nothing could be seen of their success in missionary works. As a result of the Second Anglo-Burmese War in 1852-1853 the lower Burma became part of the British Empire and then and only then Anglican missionary works were started in earnest. When they started works of the mission, two independent missionary societies, United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (USPG) and the Bible

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<sup>50</sup> [www.Catholicmyanmar.org/dioceses-of-myanmar](http://www.Catholicmyanmar.org/dioceses-of-myanmar), accessed on 5, 4, 2015.

<sup>51</sup> Zomi Theological College, 62.

Churchmen Missionary Society (BCMS) carried out the works.<sup>52</sup> The first missionary to Burma was Mr. Cookey and was ordained in 1895. The USPG sent out John Ebenezer Marks in 1863 and in 1864 he instituted the St. John's College. At this school King Mindon sent four of his sons to learn modern education. Then in 1869 Marks founded a school and the first Anglican Church. The USPG worked among the Burmans, Karens, and the Chins. Moreover, prior to World War II they started works in Arakan and this was their most successful area, among the Khumi. From 1852 to 1957 there was an increase from 100 to 500 membership.<sup>53</sup>

#### **4.6.4 Mara Evangelical Church**

Rev. Reginald Arthur Lorrain went to the Mara people in 1905 and founded the Lakher Pioneer Mission. Their faithful works had been blessed by God and by 1910 they got Thytu, 1911 they added Chiatu, by 1914 Laila, 1915 they got Sei U, Mawhnu, Leipo, Daw Chhai Mapaw, Lado, Photlai, and Laikhah villages all became Christians.<sup>54</sup> After having believers they formed up the Lakher Mara Church, and with the consent of the missionaries in 1960 the name was changed to Lakher (Mara) Independent Evangelical Church (LIEC). After 1961 they decided to hold a general assembly annually and by 1967 their name was once again changed to Mara Independent Evangelical Church (MIEC), and put their Headquarter at Saikao in India.

In 1970, their organization was divided into two, one being Mara Independent Evangelical Church (MIEC) and the other Mara Independent Church (MIC). But in 1987 the two factions agreed to reunite and called the unified church as Mara Evangelical Church. The missionary works which they had started about 1920 to the Khami, Mara, Vakury, and Dai were resumed and worked with zeal.

#### **4.6.5 Presbyterian Mission**

Presbyterianism was firstly introduced into Myanmar when the British soldiers and traders came to Myanmar after the second Anglo-Burmese war in 1852-53. However, they did not have their

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 55.

<sup>53</sup> Scott W. Sunquist, ed., *Dictionary of Asian Christianity* (Grand Rapids, M I.: W.B: Erdmans, 2001), 27.

<sup>54</sup> Zomi Theological College, 56.

own chaplains, as they were very small in number. In 1876, they formed a small congregation of British Presbyterians and purchased a piece of land near Aung San stadium where they built a Church named "The Church of St. Andrew, Rangoon." Later it was called "Scot's Kirk," due to the largest congregation of the Scots. After Myanmar got independence in 1948, the Church membership had been decreased as most English Presbyterians returned to Britain. Therefore, in 1965 after much discussion, the Church building was given to the Methodist Church of Lower Myanmar. There is no record of any English Presbyterian missionaries who came to Myanmar.

The Presbyterian Church of Myanmar was founded through the work of missionaries from Mizoram State, India. In 1897, Rev. D. E. Jones and Rev. Edwin Rowland came to Mizoram State as Presbyterian missionaries. Under their ministry, many Mizos were converted into Christianity. When they celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the introduction of Christianity to the State in 1944, no less than eighty percent of the population had become Christian. The most striking revival came among them in 1906, 1913, 1919, 1935, and 1946. The main theme of revival in 1935 was "the Holy Spirit," and in 1946, it was "evangelism."<sup>55</sup> An evangelistic campaign was started in 1946 under the leadership of Pu Robuanga, a lay preacher. In order to help the needy, two wooden boxes where people could put their contributions, were carried out from Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram State, in two different routes. As the two boxes were carried out village after village, the villagers willingly welcomed the gospel team. They made contributions, put in the box whatever gifts they afford such as the Holy Bible, hymnbook, clothes, money, etc. Later the boxes grew in numbers. An evangelistic campaign was held in every stop.

The advantage of this wonderful revival was that many Mizo Presbyterians were mission-minded. Hundreds of them penetrated into Chin State and preached the gospel. They also distributed the gifts, which had been collected throughout the way, to the needy. Thousands of new converts were gained in Chin State. However, they did not form their own Church. Most of them joined the Baptist Churches that had been established through the work of the American Baptist missionaries. On the other hand, some new converts, who had been strongly influenced by the charismatic characteristics, joined the "Independence Church of Burma" (ICB) which was formed

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<sup>55</sup> Kawl Thang Vuta, "A Brief History of the Planting and Growth of the Church in Burma" (Doctor of Missiology Dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1983), 101.



in Mawng Khun village, Falam, in 1938, with Mr. Lianpianga as their pastor.<sup>56</sup> At that time, the Baptist leaders did not accept the charismatic movement. Therefore, about forty new converts, who were the representatives of the many villages, held a meeting at Losau village, Falam, Chin State, in February 5, 1956, and formed a "Presbyterian Church."<sup>57</sup>

At the same time, Mizo (Lushai) Presbyterians who had migrated into the Kalay-Kabaw valley, Sagaing Division, in their search for fertile land, established a Presbyterian Church in Kanaan village, Kabaw valley, in the summer of 1956. Before them were the Presbyterians of Khampat, one mile away from Kanaan, who had been gathering since 1954. It is said that the Mizo Presbyterians started migrating into the Kalay-Kabaw valley since 1914. However, they did not form their own Church, but joined the Methodist Church until 1956. The Presbyterian Church of Kanaan held the first Presbyterian Conference there in Kanaan in October 1956. The Presbyterians of Khampat also joined that Conference.

The two Presbyterian bodies of Chin State and Kalay-Kabaw valley did not have any contacts with each other. Their representatives, who attended the Synod meeting of the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram, met only in Mizoram. As both of them asked for pastor who would minister them, the Mizo Synod sent Rev. Lalthanga to Myanmar in 1959. Under the leadership of Rev. Lalthanga, the two Presbyterian bodies met together in 1961 and agreed to unite as one single body. In February, 1962, the representatives of the two bodies held a meeting in Falam, Chin State, and officially formed the "Presbyterian Church of Burma," having the headquarter in Falam till 1985.<sup>58</sup> Today the General Assembly office is situated in Tahan, Sagaing Division.

#### **4.6.6 The Assemblies of God Mission**

The first Assemblies of God missionary who set foot in Myanmar was Leonard Bolton. He sailed from England and landed in Yangon in 1924. After his preparation, he continued his trip up the Ayeyarwady by boat to Bhamo in Upper Myanmar. From Bhamo, he acrossed the China border

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<sup>56</sup> Pa Yaw, *The Introduction of Christians Mission in Myanmar* (M. Div., Thesis, Myanmar Institute of Theology, 2004). 34.

<sup>57</sup> Kawl Thang Vuta, 101.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 104.

by mule train. However, no record of his successful evangelization in Myanmar was found. Station in China, he only paid a certain visits to Myanmar in 1933, 1941, and 1942. It was through the work of Rev. and Mrs. J.C. Morrison who later joined Bolton that evangelization among the Lisu people in Salween (Thanlwin) valley was begun in 1931.<sup>59</sup>

During World War II, Rev. Morrison and his family went to India. After the war, he returned to Myanmar in 1947 and continued his ministry. His wife and daughter (Geraldine) joined him in 1951. After World War II, the Assemblies of God mission, which was started among the Lisu people in Upper Myanmar, was extended even in Lower Myanmar, having visible success. In 1957, Rev. Stafford and his wife came to Myanmar and ministered not only in Yangon but also in Upper Myanmar.

In the year 1970, there was great awakening among the churches in Tidim Township. It was led by Hau Lian Kham (the free evangelist) and friends. Within few years, the movement reached to Falam Township. He introduced new doctrines and practices. This new teachings divided the churches. And there occurred conflict over doctrines in the churches. The people who involved in this movement were against by the existed churches. Their movement was not accepted by the church leaders. Therefore, the people who involved in this movement decided to form a new church in 1973. It was named the Assemblies of God and Hau Lian Kham was appointed as church pastor.

In the same year, the movement reached to Hakha Township. Mr. Phun Uk, from Bungkhua village, Thantlang Township, continued preaching to Thantlang and Hakha Township. There were hundreds of people who accepted this teaching and left their churches in Hakha and Thantlang. By the leadership of Hau Lian Kham, the Assemblies of God (A G) was established on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1979 at Hakha.<sup>60</sup> The members are increasing every year. Today, there are 1024 Churches, and 7 Bible colleges run by the Assemblies of God in Myanmar.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Kawl Thang Vuta, 204.

<sup>60</sup> Assemblies of God, The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration 1979-2004 (Assemblies of God: Hakha, 2004), 2-5.

<sup>61</sup> Myo Chit, "Beginning of Pentecostalism in USA and the Formative Years of the Assemblies of God," a lecture presented at the MIT for M. Div. & MTS students, August 28 2003.

#### **4.6.7 Hlimsang Movement**

It has been mentioned briefly in the above chapter. This movement came over the border into Burma (Myanmar) to the Hualngo people of Falam subdivision during the Second World War. Hualngos are most like the Luseis. The Chin Hills Baptist Association (Now called Chin Baptist Convention) meeting at Satawm in 1948, it is said that people at Satawm showed some manifestations, such as dancing, crying, heavy breathing and bowing up toward heaven. After the Satawm meeting, the Chin Baptist under the leadership of missionaries Franklin Nelson and Robert G. Johnson took a strong stand against Hlimsang, but the Hualngo Christian refused to give it up and gave an ultimatum, setting a time limit. As a result, the bulk of Christians in the Hualngo area broke from Baptist and they remained as ‘independent’ or else became independent.

This movement spread into the Hakha area, affecting first border villages of Dawn, Ralpel, Bungtlang, Lungler and Ruabuk etc... Then it continued south, along the border, down to Ngalang, and other villages among Mara, Zophei and Thantlang.<sup>62</sup>

#### **4.7 Denominations in Chin State**

1. Baptist Church
2. The Presbyterian Church of Burma
3. The Methodist Church
4. The Assembly of God Church
5. The United Pentecostal Church of Myanmar
6. Foursquare Gospel Church of Myanmar
7. The Independent Church of Burma (Myanmar)
8. Church of Jesus Christ
9. Believer Church of Jesus Christ

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid. 119.

10. Jesus Christ's Church
11. Church of Christ
12. The Living Church of Christ
13. Biblical Church of Christ
14. Evangelical Free Church
15. Evangelical Baptist Church
16. Evangelical Presbyterian Church
17. Evangelical Reformed Baptist Church
18. Fundamental Baptist Church
19. Full Gospel Baptist Church
20. Revival Baptist Church
21. Faith Baptist Church
22. Redeemer Baptist Church
23. Original Baptist Church
24. United Reformed Church
25. Reformed Presbyterian Church in Myanmar
26. Independent Presbyterian Church of Myanmar
27. Church of the Nazarene of Myanmar
28. Church on the Rock
29. End Time Message Church
30. Church of God
31. Christian Mission Alliance
32. Myanmar Presbyterian Community Church

33. Tabernacle Missionary Church
34. True Jesus Christ, Sabbath
35. United Church of Myanmar
36. Beth Israel Church
37. Wesleyan Church
38. The Roman Catholic Church
39. The Jehovah Witness Church
40. The Church

Now, the majority of the Chins belongs to Baptist. As the numbers of newly founded Christian denominations are increasing, the churches are encountering with numerous issues in Chin State.

#### **4.8 Chins Migrations**

Like many other ethnic nationalities in Burma, widespread human rights abuses have caused tens of thousands of Chin from Burma's western hills to flee Burma in search of survival elsewhere. While Thailand plays host to a majority of Burma's refugees, the Chin population in Thailand remains very small. Most Chin instead seek refuge in Malaysia and India. There they face challenges, hardships and difficulties.

Chins refugees in Malaysia are in a very risky situation. They came to Malaysia to flee persecution in Burma, hoping to find safety and protection, dreaming of resettlement in another country. Most of them arrived and stayed in Malaysia illegally. However, they remain vulnerable in Malaysia, primarily because its government has not signed international agreements that protect refugee rights. Consequently, they are considered illegal immigrants until they are officially recognized as refugees by the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees (UNHCR).

As the exodus of Chin to Malaysia continues, more and more Chin find themselves waiting to be registered. Holding the UNHCR documents at least provides hope of resettlement to the third country even if it provides no guarantee of protection or access to benefits in Malaysia. The majority of Chin refugees live in devastating poverty in extremely cramped accommodation in the capital, Kuala Lumpur. Others live in makeshift camps outside the city or in the distant Cameron Highlands, where they work for low wages on farms, with unreliable water supplies and inadequate protective gear.<sup>63</sup>

Harassment and abuse by the authorities is a daily reality for the Chin in Malaysia. In addition to raids on neighborhoods and workplaces, immigration officials approach and threaten individuals in public areas. Those unable or unwilling to pay bribes risk arrest, detention or deportation. Refugees who are detained in Malaysia are often kept in overcrowded, unhygienic cells. They are inadequately fed and given little access to basic amenities.<sup>64</sup> Illness is common. Complaints of harassment and physical abuse by guards and officials are widespread.

Due to severe persecution in Chin State, a majority of Chin flee to India and settle in Mizoram hills, which are adjacent to the Chin Hills. It is estimated that about 80000 Chin live along the Indo-Burma border. A smaller number journey onward to New Delhi, hoping to gain UNHCR protection. Both locations provide little protection for Chin refugees and daily existence is fraught with difficulties and hardships.

Obtaining refugee status through UNHCR, however, has become increasingly difficult for the Chin community in India. Most of them live in Mizoram, where UNHCR is not operational. As a result, Chin living in Mizoram seeking UNHCR recognition must take an arduous and expensive journey to Delhi. Once registered, they are required to remain in Delhi, where it is difficult to make a living and assimilate culturally.<sup>65</sup> Life for Chin refugees in Delhi is extremely difficult as they must compete for limited resources with the local poverty-stricken population who are struggling for their own survival.

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<sup>63</sup> Document collected by Rev. Van Bik for his Ph. D. dissertation, 2008.

<sup>64</sup> Mang Ling shared his experienced. He was prisoned for two times in Malaysia. Currently, he is president of the Stavanger Chin Organization (SCO) and was Chairman of Stavanger Chin Church.

<sup>65</sup> Amy Alexander, *Without Refuge: Chin Refugees in India and Malaysia* (Unpublished), 37.

In addition, tension with the local population is an enormous obstacle to achieving self-reliance for the Chin in Delhi. In Delhi, discord between the Chin and the local population is accentuated by the general lack of resources. As they compete with the locals for scarce commodities, the Chin live in constant fear of eviction, physical violence and other abuses. Most abuse is perpetuated with impunity, either because it is unreported or through a lack of law enforcement.<sup>66</sup>

#### **4.9 Chin Immigrants**

By the help of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the Norwegian Government, the Chin arrived Norway by two ways. The first Chin refugee name Van Thang was accepted by Norwegian government in 2002. He arrived at Moi town in Rogaland County on November 28, 2002 from Malaysia. He was joined by several Chin refugees a few months later. He was directly sent to Norway from prison.<sup>67</sup> Most Chins in Norway came from Malaysia under the arrangement of the UNHCR Malaysia which is working tirelessly to protect and send Chin refugees to Norway and third world countries. As of today, there are about 1500 Chin refugees in Norway.

Most of the Chins in Norway are the Lai-speaking Chin who are from Hakha, Thantlang, Matupi and Falam Township. There are some Zomi Chin who came from Tidim and Tonzang Township and Cho speaking Chin from Mindat and Kanpalet Township. As I have mentioned, the majority belongs to Baptist denomination. There are few number who come from Assembly of God, Church of Jesus Christ, The United Pentecostal Church, The Methodist Church, The Presbyterian church and the Roman Catholic Church. The Chin churches in Norway are mixed with different denominations.

October 14, 2003, is the day of starting the history of the Chin refugees in Stavanger. On 14<sup>th</sup> of October 2003, 14 Chin refugees arrived at Stavanger from Malaysia. They are:-

1. Pu Adam Ral Hup Thang

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<sup>66</sup> [www.fmreview.org/en/FMRpdfs/FMR30/36-37.pdf](http://www.fmreview.org/en/FMRpdfs/FMR30/36-37.pdf), accessed on 27, 2, 2015.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Van Thang on 29, 10, 2014. He is the first Chin refugee, arrived in Moi on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2002.

2. Pi Sang Ling Sung Hluan
3. Val Ral Hup Thang Hrang Hei
4. Val Ral Hup Thang Denis
5. Val Ral Hup Thang Ngun Za Sang
6. Leng Ral Hup Thang Kil Meng
7. Leng Ral Hup Thang LiLi Sui
8. Pu Lianbik Mualcin
9. Pu Pum Za Cin
10. Pu Siakhel Za Biak Chin
11. Pi Sylvia Zathang
12. Pu Wonkhar Dimkam Lianhlong
13. Pi Hram Meng Khuapeng le
14. Pi Lun Don Niang hna an si.

After a week ago, on October 28, 2003, Mr. Mangling and family arrived in Stavanger. They are:-

1. Mr. Kyawkung Mangling
2. Ms. Myint Myint Khin Taicin
3. Biak Cung Hnin and
4. Hmun Ceu Lian

These refugees were put together at refugees' center, Kalhammarevn 46, B\_C\_N\_ 4007 in Stavanger. They were picked up by Sylvana, Ellen, Hilder and Van Thang Lal Bik at Sola airport. The office of refugee's center arranged food, clothing and everything for them.<sup>68</sup>

The number of refugees are increasing year by year and today, it is estimated that there are about 1500 Chin refugees in Norway. Most of the Chin refugees live in Rogaland County, Norway. There are about 260 in Stavanger, 180 in Sandnes, Briney and Ålgore, 160 in Egersund and 60 in Moi, altogether there are about 700 Chin refugees in Rogaland County and 90 percent is Lai-speaking Chin.

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<sup>68</sup> Interview with Adam Ral Hup Thang on 14, 11, 2014. He is one of the Chin leaders and educated person. Currently, he is Chairman of Grace Believer church in Stavanger.



## Chapter Five

### ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LAI-SPEAKING CHIN MIGRANTS CHURCHES IN NORWAY

#### 5.1. The Establishment of the Lai-speaking Chin Churches in Norway

There are many churches established by the Chin migrants in Norway. As the Chin State is a Baptist missionary field, the majority belongs to Baptist denomination. There are Lai-speaking Chin, Zomi Chin and Cho<sup>69</sup> speaking Chin in Norway. Among the three, the Lai-speaking Chins are majority in number. All the Chin churches in Norway are established by the Lai-speaking Chin. According to the report of Norway Chin Christian Federation (NCCF), there are 15 churches and 3 fellowships established by the Lai speaking Chin in Norway.<sup>70</sup> Unfortunately the United Pentecostal Church (UPC) in Stavanger is not enrolled in NCCF. The name, place and year of establishing the Chin churches are as follows.

The Stavanger Chin Church was founded without considering there are different beliefs, doctrines, practices and values in Chins community. The aim and purpose of establishing the church was to have unity among the Chins migrants in Norway. The church will be a center for learning Chin culture, language and identity.

<b>Name of the church</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Year of Establishment</b>
1. Stavanger Chin Church	Stavanger	2008
2. Grace Believer Church	Stavanger	2009
3. Immanuel Baptist Church	Sandnes	2008

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<sup>69</sup> The Hakhas, Thantlang, Falam and Matupi Chins called themselves as Lai when the Tidim, and Tonzang called themselves as Zomi. The Mindat and Kanpalet Chins are called Cho.

<sup>70</sup> Annual Report on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Norway Chin Christian Federation Board of Management meeting held in Stavanger on 23, 07, 2014 at Stavanger, Norway. The NCCF is one of the biggest organization of the Chin in Norway.

4. Zion Baptist Church	Egersund	2008
5. Bethlehem Chin church	Moi	2011
6. Carson Baptist Church	Arendal	2009
7. Ebenezer Chin Church	Langesund	2013
8. Grimstad Chin Baptist church	Grimstad	2008
9. Norway Chin Baptist Church	Aurskog	2011
10. Peniel Matu Church	Elverum	2013
11. Telemark Chin Church	Telemark	2011
12. Vest Agder Chin Church	Kvinesdal	2012
13. Ålesund Chin Christian Church	Ålesund	2011
14. Calvary Chin Church	Hamar	2010
15. Norway Chin Mission Church	Oslo	2007
16. New Life Apostolic Church	Stavanger	2011

There are three fellowship groups. They are:-

1. Oslo Chin Christian fellowship
2. Langesund Chin Family
3. Gjøvik Chin Christian Fellowship

As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, this research mainly focuses on the Lai-speaking Chin churches in Stavanger.

## **5.2 Formation of Stavanger Chin Church**

The history of Chin migrants in Stavanger, Norway was started on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2003. On that day 14 Chins refugees arrived Stavanger from Malaysia. After two weeks ago, on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2003 Mr. Mangling Kyawkung and family arrived to Stavanger as refugees. Norway became a new world for them. Everything was totally different in compare with Burma (Myanmar). They entered into a new culture, life style, values, norms and behaviors. They have to struggle for their survival. Everything needs to be learned from the beginning. What they need to learn is the language (Norwegian). It is the basic foundation and key for living in Norway. Therefore, all of the Chins refugees were asked to learn the Norwegian and sent to Norsk Voksenopplæring center on 20

October 2003. It is a new school for the Refugees. It is called Chins' University.<sup>71</sup> It was quite difficult for them to learn a new language since they have been away from school for many years. But by helping each other, they all overcame this difficulty.

As they are one of an ethnic groups, the Chins refugees understood the need of keeping their own language, culture and identity. They realized that the best way of keeping their language and culture was founding the church and worshipping in their own language. The church has been used as a center of teaching Christian beliefs as well as culture and ethics when they were in Myanmar. The Myanmar government banned teaching ethnic's languages in government school from 1984. Thus, church became learning center for the Chins Christian in Myanmar. Children were taught Lai culture, laica, ethnic and religious education in the church. By dreaming of the future of the young Chins and keeping the Chins' identity in Norway, they planned to form Stavanger Chin Christian Family. On 8<sup>th</sup> September 2004 they gathered together at Mr. Lian Bik Mualcin's residence and formed Stavanger Chin Christian Family (SCCF).<sup>72</sup>

The numbers of refugees were increasing year by year. All the new Chins refugees automatically joined to SCCF and in 2006 the number of SCCF reached to 60. As the family members were increasing, the leadership and rules of SCCF also needed to be extended and amended. They made a new rules and regulations for the fellowship in 2006.

Chin State is the only State where 90 percent is Christians in Myanmar. The Baptist missionary from the United States of America by the name Auther E. Carson and his wife along with four Karen Evangelists arrived Hakha on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1899.<sup>73</sup> As Chin State is a Baptist missionary field, Baptist denomination becomes majority Christian in Chin State. When they arrived Stavanger, what they did first was searching for Baptist church. By the help of Mr. Pum Za Cin, they found two Baptist churches in Stavanger, Stavanger Baptist church and North Sea Baptist church. Before they took membership at Stavanger Baptist church, they attended Sunday worship at North Sea Baptist church for some weeks. They were warmly welcome and treated by the church members. They enjoyed together with the North Sea church members. But due to

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<sup>71</sup> Interview 4.

<sup>72</sup> Interview, 6.

<sup>73</sup> Hakha Baptist Church, *The History of Hakha Baptist Church 1908-2008* (Hakha, Chin State, 2008), 57.

transportation, they decided to take membership at Stavanger Baptist church on 28, March 2004. They have been in Stavanger Baptist church till 2008.<sup>74</sup>

The first reason of founding a new church was language problem. It was difficult to understand the Sunday sermon for a new refugees and elderly people. They did not understand what the preacher preached from the pulpit. It was not possible to translate the sermon every Sunday. The second reason was form of worship. The Chins enjoy singing hymn with clapping hands and offering prayers with loud voice. Here, in Stavanger Baptist church, people worship quietly. The third reason was culture. They are different in all ways of living which is incompatible. They have different norms and values. And, the last reason was language for the new Chins generation. Children were taught in Norwegian at Sunday school. There is no time for speaking and teaching the Lai (Laiholh). Parents could not communicate with their children properly. Because of these they wanted to conduct worship service by their own language which is Lai (Laiholh).<sup>75</sup> Therefore, on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008, they held general meeting at Mr. Hre Tum Lian's residence and decided to establish the church. The church was enrolled in Det Norske Baptistsamfunns (DNB) on 9 July, 2008.

### **5.3 Establishment of Grace Believer Church**

The first Lai-speaking Chin church, called Stavanger Chin Church (SCC) was established on May 1<sup>st</sup> 2008 at Stavanger. The structure and leadership of fellowship needed to be changed in accordance with church structure and polity. Therefore, the church constructed a new constitution and by-laws. The church was officially enrolled in DNB at the Conference of Norway Baptist Union on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2008.

As soon as the church was established and decided to affiliate with Norway Baptist Union, the none-Baptist especially the Roman Catholic members left the church. And other none-Baptist members were not willingly participated in the church. There were also some Baptist families who did not want to establish the church, for they wanted to keep the spirit of fellowship and unity. These families did not enroll to membership to Stavanger Chin Church for a long times. It showed

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<sup>74</sup> Interview, 6.

<sup>75</sup> Laiholh is a language that the Lai speaking Chin use. It is understood by all the Lai people.

that the church was started with some issues. After a few months of running, there occurred conflict over church worship, leadership role and denominationalism. The issues was increasing and the church members were divided into two groups. The people who came from Pentecostal churches did not enjoy and satisfy worshipping with others. Misunderstanding and mistrust among the church members were rapidly growing.

Under the leadership of some people, some families gathered together and had worship service on every Saturday night at home.<sup>76</sup> People came and joined to the fellowship and the members were increasing day by day. Finally, about 40 members prepared to leave the church and have worship service separately. On 6<sup>th</sup> of November 2009, they wrote official letter to the church and asked blessing. But the church rejected the request letter. Therefore, they held a meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2009 and decided to establish a new church. And the church was named as Bethel Living Church. When the Bethel Living Church was established, the United Pentecostal Church members were included. But, since they are different in doctrines, they still searching for the UPC community. And, in 2010 the United Pentecostal Church (UPC) member left Bethel Living Church and founded a new church.

In 2014, there occurred conflict over church leadership particularly on Baptism in Stavanger Chin church. On 9<sup>th</sup> of February 2014, six members from Stavanger Chin Church took baptism at bethel Living Church under the leadership of free evangelist from America. The church pastor admonished them that it was not appropriate to take baptism without the acknowledgement of pastor.<sup>77</sup> Baptism should not be taken to other denomination, or church, for it is related with church doctrines and practices. It should not be done in the future without the acknowledgement of the church pastor and leaders. The admonishment of the church pastor seriously hurt the related family members. Therefore, 41 members left the Stavanger Chin church and joined to Bethel Living church on May 26, 2014. After they were together for a few months, they changed the name of the church from Bethel Living Church to Grace Believer Church in 2014. There are about 100 members in Grace Believer church in Stavanger.

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<sup>76</sup> Interview 3.

<sup>77</sup> Interview 5.

#### **5.4 Establishment of New Life Apostolic Church**

Originally, the United Pentecostal Church is unique in church beliefs and doctrines. They are not the same in doctrine with other denominations. They take baptism in the name of Jesus only. They do not accept the doctrine of trinity (Father, Son and the Holy Spirit) in church belief. They offer a prayer to Jesus not to God. Jesus is the supreme God. This belief and practice have separated from other denominations. As one of a Chins, they heartily participated at Stavanger Chin Christian Family and Fellowship. But when it came to founding the church, they did not want to get involve with the other denominations. They are very strict in doctrine. Their children are trained to keep their doctrine and beliefs.

According to, Mr. Sang Cung Lian, one of the leaders of the United Pentecostal Church, “We agree and support to establish the church but we are United Pentecostal Church. The UPC is not the same with Baptist and other denominations in doctrine and practices.” They have been searching for the UPC community in Stavanger and in Norway. He said,” As soon as we find the UPC community, we will leave the church”.<sup>78</sup> In 2010, they have connection with the UPC community. As soon as they found the UPC community, they left the Grace Believer Church and founded the New Life Apostolic Church (NLAC) in Stavanger in 2010. They conduct worship service in accordance with their belief. The form of worship of the UPC and of other denominations are different. There are 22 members in the church.

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<sup>78</sup> Interview 3.

## **Chapter Six**

### **REASONS OF CHURCH SPLIT IN STAVANGER: PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter is a presentation of findings, results of the field research on “Reasons of Church Split among Chin Migrant Churches in Stavanger”. The research was done in the three Chin migrant’s churches in Stavanger. The main purpose of the study is to explore the causes of church split in Stavanger Chin Church and Bethel Living Church (Grace Believer Church). As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, Church splits have occurred three times among the Chins churches in Stavanger. The first split was happened in Stavanger Chin Church in 2009, and about 40 members left the SCC and founded a new church, called Bethel Living Church.

The second split was happened in Bethel Living Church in 2010, and about 20 members left the Bethel Living Church and founded New Life Apostolic Church (NLAC). The people who came from the United Pentecostal Church have been searching for the Pentecostal community since they arrived to Stavanger. In 2010, they found the Pentecostal community and established their own church.

The last split occurred in Stavanger Chin Church in 2014, and 41 members left the Stavanger Chin Church and joined to Bethel Living Church in June 2014. After living together with Bethel Living Church for a few months, they changed the name to Grace Believer Church (GBC) in the same year.

The collected data covers the related research questions which have been mentioned in chapter one like; what are the main causes of church splitting? Sub research questions are: What are the conflicts in the Stavanger Chin Church? Is it because of theological, doctrinal or denominational issue? Is it because of personal attack and opposition? Or are there issues which are important? Was there conflict over leadership role? How did they handle the conflicts? The findings are as follows.

## 6.2 Reasons of Church Split in Stavanger Chin Churches

All the interviewees said that the Chins in Stavanger have been under the leadership of Stavanger Chin Christian Family for two years. After two years the SCCF was changed to Stavanger Chin Christian Fellowship (SCCF). They all were under the umbrella of SCCF for two years. During these periods, they had visitors from abroad and were encouraged to establish the church. Therefore, living together in SCCF, there emerged a new idea of forming the church in 2008. By the leadership of Stavanger Chin Christian Fellowship (SCCF), the 2<sup>nd</sup> SCCF General Meeting was held at Mr. Hre Tum Lian's residence on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008. The new agenda which was formation of the church was open and well discussed. After discussing the agenda well, the majority voted to establish the church.<sup>79</sup>

Mr. Mang Ling (President of SCCF) said that they all agreed to establish the church, but there was conflict over church affiliation and the name of the church.<sup>80</sup> As soon as the decision was made the Roman Catholic members decided to leave the church. The none-Baptists church members did not want to affiliate with the Baptist Union. And they proposed not to put the term Baptist in the name of the church. In terms of naming the church Mr. Sang Cung Lian, who belongs to UPC, said "The church should be named Baptist as the majority are Baptists."<sup>81</sup> But, according to the church leadership, the majority voted to name the church as Stavanger Chin Church (SCC) and to affiliate to Norway Baptist Union.<sup>82</sup> According to Mr. Adam Ral Hup Thang,

*"We all wanted to be in one church. Therefore the term Baptist should not be put in the name of the church. If we put the term Baptist, it will divide us."*<sup>83</sup>

Although the general meeting decided to establish the church, there were some families who did not enroll in the church for they enjoyed the fellowship (SCCF). These families were met by the church leaders to enroll in the church. After one year they enrolled in the Stavanger Chin Church as full member. One of the leaders of these families said, "We want to keep the spirit of

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<sup>79</sup> SCCF Avoi 2 nak Zapi Meeting, Pu Hre Tum Lian Inn, May 1, 2008.

<sup>80</sup> Interview 2.

<sup>81</sup> Interview 3.

<sup>82</sup> Mangling Kyawkung was President of the Stavanger Chin Christian Fellowship. The church was established under his leadership.

<sup>83</sup> Interview 4.



fellowship. There are Roman Catholic, United Pentecostal church, and other denominations in fellowship. If the church is established the spirit of fellowship will be disappeared”<sup>84</sup>

There were few members from the United Pentecostal Church (UPC). Even though they were under the leadership of SCCF, they were searching for the UPC community in Norway. In terms of doctrines, the UPC is totally different for they use the name of Jesus only. They took Baptism in the name of Jesus and offer a prayer to Jesus Christ. They do not believe trinity (the triune God). One of the leaders of the UPC said;

*“In terms of doctrine, we are not the same. We attend the church and involve in every church activity. But as soon as we find the UPC community we will leave Stavanger Chin Church and found the church”*.<sup>85</sup>

By the majority vote, the Stavanger Chin Church was founded and made affiliation to Norway Baptist Union. The church was accepted as one of the members of Norway Baptist Union on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2008. But, within a few months of running the church, there occurred conflicts in the church.

### **6.2.1 Form of Church Worship**

As the church was established they needed a place for worship. By the help of Rev. Magnar Maeland (Pastor of Stavanger Baptist church), the Stavanger Baptist Church provided them a place for worship with a limited times. Officially, the church was opened on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2009 at Stavanger Baptist Church. The service was conducted with Laiholh.<sup>86</sup> They started worship service at 4:30 pm on Sunday. They all enjoyed conducting worship with their own language at Stavanger Baptist Church. Because, most of the Chins migrants in Stavanger have been in Stavanger Baptist Church (SBC) for four years as members.

Stavanger chin Church was run without pastor. In order to administer the Lord’s Supper, the church invited an ordained pastor from Stavanger Baptist Church and other ordained pastor from nearby churches. And the church also invited a guest speakers and evangelists for spiritual renewal. But, when the church invited guest speakers, and evangelists, the service lasted too long.

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<sup>84</sup> Interview 1.

<sup>85</sup> Interview 3.

<sup>86</sup> Laiholh simply means language, spoken by the majority Chins in Norway.

It was not accepted by most of the Baptist members. And it was difficult for some families who attended the church along with their children. Therefore, most of the church members wanted to shorten time of worship service. But, it was not accepted by people who came from Pentecostal churches. And there occurred conflict over form of worship.

All the interviewees highlighted that the main issue that caused church split was conflict over church worship. There were two groups in the church, mainly the *Piangthar*<sup>87</sup> (born again) and Baptist (None-Piangthar). This *Piangthar* group enjoyed singing a hymn and modern revival songs repeatedly and danced with shouting Hallelujah without time limit. The church worship became boring for some members. Traditionally, Baptists ways of worship is quiet. Most of the church members wanted to run the service orderly. They prefer conducting worship according to the order of church worship. The newly born again people took a lot of times in church worship by witnessing, singing and dancing. Generally, when they led the worship service, the service took more than three hours. The *Piangthar* groups used to scorn the Baptists member through witnessing and preaching. Witnessing became a tool for opposing the Baptist. The newly born again Christians opened and read the Holy Bibles from the pulpit and mocked others. There was no respect to each worshippers. After service, opposing and quarrelling was on the air.

One of the interviewees said that many times church worship became meaningless for some members. He said that listening the opposing and denigrating message, it is better to be at home. The pulpit became a place of expressing personal feelings and opposing each other. There was no respect and honor to each other. This type of worship was not comfortable acceptable for the majority members. During worship service all worshippers were asked to raise their hands their hands and shout Hallelujah. If they did not obeyed the order, they were considered as not Piangthar. He continued that this movement was not practice among the Baptist community. This is Hlimsang movement, the Baptists never practiced this kind of worship before.

According to Robert G. Johnson, in his book History of the American Baptist Chin Mission, the word “*Hlimsang*” is used to mean the type of religious frenzy characteristic of holy-rollerism among the Mizos and among some Chins. The name itself in Mizos (Lusei) means

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<sup>87</sup> The term Piangthar simply means born again or regenerated. The term is very much popular among the Chins.

literally “high-joy” “hlim” is joy or ecstasy, and “sang” means high.<sup>88</sup> The name is used also in Chin dialects and the meaning is well understood. This movement is strongly opposed by Baptists. One of the interviewees said, “This Piangthar group claim that they are more spiritual, and see others as less or unspiritual. This kind of practice and concept is popular among the Chin migrant churches in Norway.”<sup>89</sup> Some of the interviewees from the Piangthar group said, “We do not have time for worship freely. We want to praise God and sing a hymn freely. But, we feel that we are captured and tied with something.”

On one day in 2009 one of a women from the Piangthar group was assigned to lead worship service. The service was disorder and was too long for they sang a hymn and a revival song repeatedly and dance without time limit. After service, her way of leadership was condemned by none-*Piangthar* group. She and her fellow friends were very much disappointed. From that time, the *Piangthar* group did not enjoy attending the church service and started other worship on Saturday night. By doing and meeting on Saturday night at home, they planned to conduct worship service. Finally, the *Piangthar* group left the church in November 2009 and established a new church.

During the second division in Stavanger Chin church in 2014, the two groups met two times to discuss the issues. The main issues were form of worship, Baptism and the term Baptist. Eleven members wrote a letter to the church. They wanted to put the term Baptist in the name of the church. The issues were discussed at executive committee meeting and the majority voted to put the term Baptist in the name of the church.<sup>90</sup> After the meeting, 15 members including the executive committee members wrote a letter to the church to reconsider the meeting solution. The issue was discussed and the letter written by the 11 members was withdrawn. Even though the letter was withdrawn, the other group prepared to leave the church. Finally, the leaving group was asked what the main reason of leaving the church was. Mr. Sui Thawng, one of the representatives from the leaving group answered the question by saying, “The form and types of worship is

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<sup>88</sup> Robert G. Johnson, *History of the American Baptist Chin Mission*. Vol.2 (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, 1988), 1194.

<sup>89</sup> Interview, 6.

<sup>90</sup> The 11 Members sent a letter to the church on 21, April, 2014.

different. We want to conduct worship service freely.”<sup>91</sup> On 26 May 2014, 41 members left the Stavanger Chin Church.

### **6.2.2 Doctrinal Issues**

The aim and purpose of establishing the church was to be an officially recognized by Brunnøysund and to do more and wider activities for the Chins both in Norway and abroad. They did not deeply consider about church doctrines and practices. The church was run without drawing a specific doctrines. All most all the church members did not have experience on church leadership. The church was founded with mixed denominations. There were Baptists, Assemblies of God, Church of Jesus Christ, Full Gospel Baptist church, Methodist and United Pentecostal Church.<sup>92</sup>

Eight out of ten interviewees highlighted that the church split occurred because of church doctrines. Most Chin Christian has been generally Conservative and some even Fundamentalist in theological view point. Especially related to this are such points as: biblical interpretation, some specific doctrines (e.g. the historical fall, the bodily and imminent return of Jesus, biblical criticism, authority, the necessity of being born again, spiritual, the name of the church, etc.). Therefore, many people shifted to another denomination and church due to the critical interpretation of Bible by some preacher either higher theological education.<sup>93</sup>

The Stavanger Chin church was run without a pastor for many years. Due to lack of church leadership the church did not have a specific statement and beliefs. In order to have spiritual renewal, evangelists and preachers from different denominational backgrounds were invited every year. Different doctrines, beliefs and practices were introduced to the church. The church did not know how to handle these issues.

Notably, on February 9, 2014, 6 members from Stavanger Chin church took baptism at Bethel Living Church (Now the name was changed to Grace Believer church) by the free evangelist by the name Mr. Tial Lian Thang.<sup>94</sup> Two weeks ago, the church pastor told them not to

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<sup>91</sup> Mr. Sui Thawng, on 29, 5, 2014, at the second General Meeting conducted at Stavanger chin Church.

<sup>92</sup> Interview, 2.

<sup>93</sup> Zomi Theological College, 178.

<sup>94</sup> Mr. Tial Lian Thang is a free evangelist, live in the United State of America. For spiritual renewal many evangelists are invited to Norway and Denmark every year.

do this again for it is related with church doctrine and practices. Each denomination has its own stand, belief and practices. This kind of activity should not done without the acknowledgement of the church pastor and leaders.<sup>95</sup> The six members who took baptism at Bethel Living church were children of the Executive Committee of the Stavanger Chin church. They took serious action on the pastor's word. On the other hand, all the Baptist members want to keep the belief of one Lord, one faith and one Baptism (Ephesians 4:5) Most of the Chin churches in Norway have been facing on the doctrine of Baptism. It was one of the main issues that causes church split in Stavanger Chin Church. One of the interviewees shared his experience like this:

*“Instead of trying to accept and recognize our differences, we against each other by words and actions. The church pulpit becomes a place of fighting (battle ground).”<sup>96</sup>*

### **6.2.3 Leadership Issues**

Since the Stavanger Chin Christian Family was formed in 2004, they drew rules and regulations for the family. According to the rules of SCCF, new election was held every year. But after the name of Stavanger Chin Christian Family was changed to Stavanger Chin Christian Fellowship in 2006, the election rule also was amended and the term was changed to two years. According to the rule, one person can be elected for two terms (four years).<sup>97</sup>

Most of the interviewees mentioned that reason of church split was because of wishing to become leaders. They said, “Conflict occur in every election.” During election, each groups invited their group members to attend the meeting. Generally, the two groups are always competing for church leadership role. It becomes a tradition for the Chins that whenever the election is done there is conflict in the church. The Chin churches in Norway are still encountering with this issue.

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<sup>95</sup> Interview, 5.

<sup>96</sup> Interview, 2.

<sup>97</sup> Rules of Stavanger Chin Christian Family.

#### **6.2.4 Socio-cultural Reason**

The fourth reason of splitting the church was a socio-cultural reason. According to my observation it is acceptable and real issue happening in Chin community. The social relationship and culture of the Chin people had been such that kinship, easily and warmly welcoming of strangers played very important roles. The attitude of the Chin had been that when one kinsperson or relative do something different they support him/her financially and in person as well. This result in their willingness to support their kinspersons and relatives financially or in person when they move to a different denomination or church. These cultural traits came to be evident in their Christianity, especially when they intend to shift to another church and denomination. They thus invite or persuade their relatives and kinspersons to support and join them personally.

Many fellowship groups were formed based on village, tribes and language. When there is any issue and conflict in the church, they stand for their fellowship members without reasoning the issue. These kinds of fellowship spirit divide the spirit of the church. When the church hold election for new leaders they voted a person who is in their group. This kind of spirit can be seen in some of the Chin churches in Norway. Regarding my research paper, I have visited many Chin churches in Norway and seen this spirit. I observed that this village, areas and tribes based fellowship become one of the sources which brings disunity in Chin community and churches. The majority group wanted to hold the whole power of the church or community. The more they misuse their power, the more it brings disunity.<sup>98</sup>

#### **6.2.5 Personal Oppositions**

One reason of church split among the Chin was personal opposition. Seven out of ten informants told that most elected church leaders opposed each other. They could not work together. They expressed their ill feeling by mailing, phone and even preaching on the church pulpit. Many times, church pulpit became a place of opposing and fighting to each other instead of proclaiming the good news. It became a stumbling block for the new generations. It seriously affected church unity. The person who divided the church unity were considered as church leaders.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Interview, 2.

<sup>99</sup> Interview, 4.

There were also conflict over the pastor. It was also understood as personal conflict between the pastor and the leaders. Some of the church leaders against the pastor. These leaders tried to control the pastor. But, the pastor was supported by the majority. It escalated tension between the pastor and leaders. One of the interviewees said that, “It is not appropriate to oppose the pastor through preaching. Church pulpit should be a place of preaching pure Gospel.”<sup>100</sup> Personal opposition between pastor and leaders, between church leaders and among the church members became one of the main reason in splitting the church.

### **6.2.6 Denominationalism**

Denominationalism also became main issues that caused church split in Stavanger Chin church. The church was established with the acknowledgement that there are people who came from different denominational background holding their doctrines, beliefs and practices. They all agreed to be one in Stavanger Chin Church.<sup>101</sup> In order to have unity and understanding they named the church without giving a denominational name. They were aware of that giving a denominational name will bring division and misunderstanding in the church. By aiming unity in the Chin community in Stavanger, the church was named as Stavanger Chin Church. There are Baptist, Church of Jesus Christ, Methodist, Assembly of God, United Pentecostal Church, and Gospel Baptist Church.

In terms of doctrines and practices (Baptism and Christian wedding), each denomination wants to invite their related denominational leaders. They wanted their children to be baptized by their related church pastor.<sup>102</sup> One of the interviewees said that if we all follow the decision made by representatives of the church, there should not be division. The concept and stand on denomination became one of the main issues that caused church split among the Chins.

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<sup>100</sup> Interview, 10.

<sup>101</sup> Interview, 4.

<sup>102</sup> Interview 1.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF CONFLICTS IN STAVANGER CHIN CHURCHES**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

The research findings on reasons of church split among Chin migrant churches in Stavanger were presented in the previous chapter. Issues which caused church split have been found through interviews. The issues that dealt with in the Chin churches in Norway, particularly Chin churches in Stavanger are complex. It has long history. It is seen that the Chins churches have been encountered these issues since in Chin State and these issues have caused church split among churches in Chin State.

The main reasons of church split were denominational issues, doctrinal issues, form of worship, different social identity (cultural differences), power issues and wishing to become leaders (leadership issues). These issues are interrelated. This chapter discusses and analyses causes (reasons) which were obtained through the interviewees. The discussion and analyses will reflect on why and how the Chin churches in Stavanger encountered these issues. The motivation, specializing and focusing on this splitting issue is to explore the real causes which bring division in Chin Christian community in Stavanger. This chapter gives answer on the research question, i.e., what are the main causes of church split in Chin migrant churches in Stavanger. Why did the church split?

#### **7.2 Denominational Issues**

The first Christian mission was introduced among the Chins by the American Baptist Chin Mission in 1899. Round about 1935 other missionaries from different denominations arrived in Chin State and established churches. There emerged Roman Catholic Church, Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church and Pentecostal churches such as Assemblies of God, Church of Jesus Christ, United Pentecostal Church, Full Gospel Church and Church on the Rock. Different doctrines, practices and beliefs were introduced among the young Chin Christians. The churches established



by the American Baptist Chin Mission have been divided by these new doctrines.<sup>103</sup> The Chin migrants in Norway came from this backgrounds. Originally, they are different in denomination and doctrines. They are captured by the spirit of denominationalism.<sup>104</sup>

Denominationalism, however can be understood as:

*The system and ideology founded on the division of the religious population into numerous ecclesiastical bodies, each stressing particular values or tradition and each competing with the other in the same community under substantial condition of freedom.*<sup>105</sup>

The interviewees argued that the concept of this denominationalism have brought the spirit of supporting the alike (in-group) and denigrating other groups. Fisher argues that when there are attempts to control the other party (out-group) in order to deal with the incompatibility, and when such interactions result in are fuelled by antagonistic emotions, there destructive conflict exists.<sup>106</sup> As denominational churches were increasing and there appeared the spirit of in-group favoritism in Chin community. Nowadays, there are more than 40 denominations in Chin State, Myanmar.<sup>107</sup>

All the interviewees cited that the church (Stavanger Chin Church) was established without thinking and considering denominational and doctrinal differences. There were people who came from different theological, and doctrinal background. But in practice, these differences became the source of conflict in the church. Fisher mentions that ‘these realistic sources of conflict are typically exacerbated by subjective processes in the ways that individuals see and interpret the world and in the ways that groups function in the face of differences and perceived threat.’<sup>108</sup> The aim and purpose of founding the church was just to have unity in Chin community. But practically, their dream did not come true. After a few months of running the church, there occurred conflict over denominational issue.

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<sup>103</sup> Zomi Theological College, 57-63.

<sup>104</sup> Interview, 2.

<sup>105</sup> Jerald C. Brauer, ed., *The Westminster Dictionary of Church History* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 262.

<sup>106</sup> Ronald J. Fisher. 178.

<sup>107</sup> Zomi Theological College,

<sup>108</sup> Ronald J. Fisher. 184.

People who came from the same denominational background and movements tried to maintain their denominational spirit. They wanted their children to keep their denominational identity, practices and values. This spirit divided and affected the relationship between friends, relatives and church members. The Chin churches in Stavanger have been dealing with this issues. The spirit of denominationalism is still existed among the Chin churches in Stavanger. The mindset of this denominationalism hindered to develop the unity of the church. It seriously affects the fellowship spirit of the new generations.

### **7.3 Doctrinal Issues**

According to the interviewees, there were two main groups who were different in doctrines and practices in the church. The Pentecostal churches such as Assemblies of God (AG), Church of Jesus Christ (CJC), United Pentecostal Church (UPC), Full Gospel and Church On the Rock (COTR) and the Baptist, Methodist. The Pentecostal churches are called *Piangthar* (they called themselves as living, born again) and the rest (Baptist, Methodist and Roman Catholic) are considered as none-Piangthar. These two groups have the incompatible doctrines and practices.

The main issues were over the Holy Spirit and baptism. This doctrine of the Holy Spirit is most popular among the Pentecostal groups. They very much depend on the movement of the Holy Spirit. The term, revelation is common among them. They say that the Holy Spirit revealed to me and asked me to do this and that. They are very fond of talking the eschatology and coming of the Holy Spirit. According to my experience and observation, it is not the movement of the Holy Spirit rather it is assumed as emotion. Worshippers are asked to raise their hands and invite the Holy Spirit in church worship. This actions and movement is not supported by the none-Piangthar groups. This Pentecostal movement was strongly opposed by the Baptists denomination.<sup>109</sup> These new doctrines and practices divided the existing spirit of the community. The Chin churches in Norway are dealing with this doctrinal issue.

The second issue is baptism. Usually, baptism is conducted by the church. The church invited the ordained minister and arranged everything for baptism. Baptism is highly valued by the majority. Baptism is an important way of professing one's faith in Christ. Unexpectedly, under

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<sup>109</sup> Zomi Theological College,

the leadership of the evangelist, six members from the Stavanger Chin Church took baptism at Bethel Living Church. For some, it was the second time of taking baptism. This issue was discussed and was condemned by the church pastor and the executive members. The majority members did not support their action because they believe that Baptism should be taken once in a life time. In Baptists beliefs, there is one Lord, one Faith and one Baptism (Ephesians 4:5). Therefore, the people who took baptism outside the SCC were not recognized by the church. The six people and related family members and relatives did not enjoy attending the church worship. These doctrinal issues became one of the mains issues which caused church split in Stavanger Chin Church.

#### **7.4 Form of Worship**

Another conflict occurred in Stavanger Chin Church was form of worship. All the interviewees highlighted that it is one of the main issues which caused church split in Stavanger Chin Church. As the church was established with mixed denominations, each denomination wanted to introduce their ways and forms of worship. Order of worship could not be drawn properly. Therefore, church worship was conducted without orderly. The form of worship was always changing. When the worship was led by the Pianthar group, the service was too long for the worship leader consumed too much times and it was not worshipful for the none-Piangthar. On the other hands, when the worship service was led by the none-Piangthar, it was boring for the Piangthar groups.

The people who belong to Baptist and Methodist were not satisfied with church worship. Therefore, they murmured over the form of church worship. They wanted worship which is spiritual and meaningful for the worshippers. In terms of worship James E. White stated:

*“Worship is the expression of honor and respect to someone or something. For Christian, it is expressing honor and love to God. This worship should not only be biblical but meaningful, for to attempt to express honor to God in a way that is not meaningful would not be worship”<sup>110</sup>*

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<sup>110</sup> James E. White, *Rethinking the Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books House Co., 2003), 96.

They wanted that in worship every congregations should pay honor, and respect to God and to each other. There should be mutual respect between the worshippers. In his book, *The New Hiscox Guide for Baptists Churches*, Everett C. Goodwin mentioned that:

*“Worship is a universal human response to forces and personalities that give meaning to individual lives. Divine worship is an act of adoration, praise, or sacrifice offered to God. Christian worship is such an act performed in the name of Jesus Christ in response to Christ’s own invitation to come into God’s presence in the name. In churches that are organized in the name of Jesus Christ and confess to be the head of the church, worship is the central activity that binds the church to Christ and its members one to another.”*<sup>111</sup>

Members of the Stavanger Chin Church were not the same in understanding and conducting on church worship. Interviewees from the Baptists background said that traditionally, in worship, teaching Christian educations, and ritual like holy matrimony, and funerals that are valued and marked as important life events in Baptist community. Our children should maintain our ways of worship and what we have valued throughout the history. In her book, *Congregations in Conflict: Cultural Models of Local Religious community*, Penny Edgell Backer mentioned that “Their primary goals are to provide an intimate and uplifting worship experience and to train members, especially children, in the denomination’s heritage, doctrine, and rituals.”<sup>112</sup>

The different between the Pianthar and Baptists is especially on denominational values. The Piangthar groups enjoy witnessing, singing hymns especially modern revival songs with dancing and clapping their hands. They (none-Piangthar) want to worship God with silence and orderly. They enjoy and value taking the Holy Communion every month. They wanted their children to maintain traditional practices such as teaching Christian educations, conducting holy matrimony, and Holy Communion (the Lord’s Supper). These are highly valued in Baptist community.

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<sup>111</sup> Everett C. Goodwin, *The New Hiscox Guide for Baptist Churches* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1995), 105.

<sup>112</sup> Penny Edgell Backer, *Congregations in Conflict: Cultural Models of Local Religious Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 13.

## **7.5 Identity Issues**

### **7.5.1 Denominational Identity**

One of the conflicts that the Chin churches in Norway deal with is identity issues. It is a denominational identity. This denominational identity has been mentioned on the above chapter (7.2 Denominational Issues). Being a member of Baptist, each members and families still hold their denominational identity. This denominational identity is common in the Chin churches in Stavanger. The first Chin church in Stavanger was established in 2008 and was voted to affiliate to Norway Baptist Union (NBU). The SCC was recognized as full on 9 July 2008.

As one of the members of NBU, the majority church members considered themselves as Baptist. All the Chin migrant churches in Norway are affiliated to NBU. But, there are families and members who considered themselves not as Baptist but as Assemblies of God (AG), Church of Jesus Christ (CJC), Full Gospel Baptist Church and United Pentecostal Church (UPC). These Pentecostal churches are still holding their denominational identity. When it comes to baptism, some families wanted to invite their denominational leaders to baptize their children. This identity issue divided the spirit of unity in the church.

### **7.5.2 Social Identity**

There are compositions of social groups, based on region, villages, clans, relatives and same dialects in Chin community (see in appendix.1). One of the interviewees said, “Composition of group is meaningful for our family because it makes us closer with friends when we are in trouble, especially when we are left by our beloved one.”<sup>113</sup> The group activities are confined within their own members. They have strong tie and support each group members when they are in crisis in terms of social, economic and denominational affair. Some of the interviewees from the Baptist said that these compositions of groups automatically excluded others.

Social identity theory tells us that the simple perceptual act of group categorization in a minimally competitive context will set in motion a process of group differentiation with resulting

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<sup>113</sup> Interview 4.

in-group favoritism. This concept of group favoritism escalated tension between the two groups.<sup>114</sup> This concept was strengthened by accepting and glorifying who are alike (the in-group), and to denigrate, discriminate against, and reject those who are unlike (the out-groups). I observed that the composition of social groups become one of the major sources which divide the spirit of unity among the Chin community.

## 7.6 Power Issues

One of the issues which the Chin churches in Stavanger are dealing with is power issues. According to my observation, there were two main groups who are competing in terms of church leadership. It was between the people who came from Pentecostal backgrounds and the rest (Baptist and Methodist). Each group wanted to become powerful and to take church leadership role. In order to have more power, they persuaded other small groups and friends. It is good if the power is used to increase and promote unity of the church. One of the interviewees said. “But it is not good if the group is formed for willing to have more power in the church and community.”<sup>115</sup> As Keller has said, “Power conflict as a group level construct that focuses on members’ awareness of struggles for control and dominance within the group. It is a process that begins when an individual or group perceives differences and opposition between oneself and another individual or group about interests and resources, beliefs, values, or practices that matter to them.”<sup>116</sup>

When two or three groups are combined and stand as a group, they became more powerful in the church. Majority group hold advantages over minority groups in the power structure of the church. This discrepancy of power is a primary source of conflict in the church. When these groups were meeting to make decision, there always occurred conflict and quarrelling over the agendas. Each group wanted to control the church authority by using the group power. Cox mentions that ‘collectively the theory and research of minority-group-size-inequality (MGSI) provide considerable support for the idea that the distribution of power is key to majority-minority group conflict.’ This MGSI holds that majority group members tend to lower levels of support for, and

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<sup>114</sup> Ronald J. Fisher, 185.

<sup>115</sup> Interview, 2.

<sup>116</sup> Kirsten Michelle Keller, *Power Conflict: Struggles for Intergroup Control and Dominance* (Ph. D. Thesis, University of Maryland, 2009), 7.

increase levels of discrimination against, minorities when their percentage representation increase beyond a certain, relatively low.<sup>117</sup>

This group spirit increased tension between the Piangthar (minority groups) and non-Piangthar (majority group) in the church. In order to become powerful in the church, one group try to dominate other groups by using various methods. Therefore, it is assumed that power issue is one of the major issues that caused church split in Chin churches in Stavanger.

### **7.7 Leadership Issues**

There are some people who wanted to apply Chin traditional practices of the ruling system of the chiefs and headmen in Chin community. In previous times, the chiefs and headmen were highly respected and honored by all the villagers. All the villager obeyed their orders.<sup>118</sup> The people who grew up with this background have strong wish to become leaders of their surroundings and community. This spirit and concept brought conflict in the church.

Most of the interviewees said that church conflict occurred especially when the church held election for new leaders. According to the constitution of Stavanger Chin Church, election is held in every two years (One term is two years). One person can be elected for two terms.<sup>119</sup> Whenever the church held election, there was conflict over leadership role. There were dirty politics in the church. This dirty politic increased the existed tension between the two groups. Each group wanted their leader to become church president. These dirty politic sadly got into the Chin churches and made some people contentious competitors rather than co-operative colleagues.

One of the interviewees mentioned that “During this period competition was stronger than other church issues. This spirit and concept widened the gap between the opposing two groups. It should not be happened in the church for the church is a place of gathering believers for worship. As long as there exists the spirit of wishing to become leader and strong competition over church leadership role, there will occur division in the church and community.<sup>120</sup> This mindset of wishing

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<sup>117</sup> Taylor H. Cox, Jr. 195.

<sup>118</sup> Zomi Theological College, 187.

<sup>119</sup> Constitution of Stavanger Chin Church, Article 6, No.2.

<sup>120</sup> Interview, 4.

to become leaders affected church unity. Rev. Lalthanliana said that the divisions within the Chin Churches were not only on account of the love of money but also because of the desire to become leaders.<sup>121</sup> If a person has strong desire to become a leader and he/she is voted by the members, it is believed that God choose him/her as a leader. Issue among the Chin migrant churches in Norway is to become a leader in Chin community and the church. If they were elected, church split would not be occurred.

## **7.8 Summary**

For the sake of unity among the Chin migrants in Stavanger, the Stavanger Chin Church was established in 2008. But what they did not realize is that in Stavanger, there were people who came from different theological and cultural backgrounds. There were/are people who belong to Pentecostal churches, Methodist and Baptists. The church was mixed with different denominations. When it came to worship, each denomination wanted to introduce their practices and beliefs in the church. The church was in complex situation. On the other hands, the church became a place of meeting of people who have incompatible goals and values.

Within a year of running, there occurred various issues in the church. The church have been dealing with many issues, such as denominational issues, doctrinal issues, form of worship, identity issues, church leadership and power issues. These issues become burden for church members. These issues divided the spirit and unity of the church. People did not enjoy attending the church worship. And there occurred tension between Piangthar and none-Piangthar in the church. They were against each other through witnessing and preaching. These actions increased tension between the two groups and it produced the spirit of group favoritism. Therefore, it was assumed that conflict that the Chin churches have dealt with was the intergroup conflict. It was conflict between the minority groups and the majority group that caused church split in Chin churches in Stavanger.

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<sup>121</sup> Zomi Theological College, 187.



## Chapter Eight

### CONCLUSION

#### 8.1 Conclusion

Concerning the research topic, which is reasons of church split among Chin migrant churches in Norway: Specializing and focusing on church split in Stavanger, the research was done among the Lai-speaking Chins migrants in Stavanger. To explore and investigate the reasons of church split, the researcher applied qualitative research method which is more appropriate and effective in doing a research and finding out the real issues. It is more descriptive and is designed to reveal a target audience's range of behavior and the perceptions that drive it with reference to specific topics or issues.

According to the interviewees, the Stavanger Chin Church have dealt with many issues such as denominational issues, doctrinal issues, form of church worship, identity issues, leadership issues and power issues. These issues became burden for the church members. They came from different theological, denominational practices and cultural background. People wanted to introduce their denominational practices and beliefs. Worship service was conducted without orderly. All the interviewee said that there were two main groups in the church which were Piangthar and none-Piangthar. Historically, these two groups have been different in church doctrines, leadership and practices.

To sum up the finding, it was an intergroup conflict which caused church split among Chin migrant churches in Stavanger. There were two main groups in the church. Each group has its own ways of beliefs and practices. According David J Fisher, they have incompatible goals and values. Ronald J Fisher has mentioned that, 'it is important to note that conflict between minorities and majorities lead to frustration and alienation on both sides. In fact, whenever important differences exist between groups, there in the potential for destructive intergroup conflict.'<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Ronald J Fisher, 176.

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#### D. Word Clarifications

The Term Piangthar simply means born again or regenerated. The term is very much popular among the Chins particularly in Pentecostal churches.

Laiholh is a language that the Lai speaking Chin use. It is understood by all the Lai people.

The Hakhas, Thantlang, Falam and Matupi Chins called themselves as Lai when the Tidim, and Tonzang called themselves as Zomi. The Mindat and Kanpalet Chins are called Cho.

## APPENDIX 1

### List of Social Groups

Norway Falam Pawlkomh

Hriphi Fellowship

Khuabung Fellowship

Lautu Fellowship

Matu Christian Fellowship

Zephai Fellowship

Zomi Chin Fellowship

Zokhua Fellowship

## APPENDIX 2

### LIST OF CHURCH LEADERS

#### Stavanger Chin Christian Family

##### **2004**

- |                         |           |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Mr. Zabiak Siakhel   | President |
| 2. Mr. Chan Bawi        | Secretary |
| 3. Ms. Myint Myint Khin | Treasurer |

##### **2005-06**

- |                          |                 |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Mr. Zabiak Siakhel    | President       |
| 2. Mr. Zo Hram Hlawn Ceu | Secretary       |
| 3. Mr. Tun Mun Muang     | Treasurer 1     |
| 4. Ms. Gracy Lian        | Asst. Treasurer |
| 5. Mr. Kyawkung Mangling | Auditor 1       |
| 6. Mr. Lal Bik Van Thang | Auditor 2       |

#### **Stavanger Chin Christian Fellowship**

##### **2006-07**

- |                           |                 |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Mr. Adam Ral Hup Thang | President       |
| 2. Mr. Lian Bik Mual Cin  | Secretary       |
| 3. Mr. Lal Bik Van Thang  | Treasurer 1     |
| 4. Ms. Mynit Myint Khin   | Asst. Treasurer |
| 5. Mr. Kyawkung Mangling  | Auditor 1       |
| 6. Mr. Dinkam Lianhlawng  | Auditor 2       |

## **2007-08**

1. Mr. Kyawkung Mangling      President
2. Mr. Hre Tum Lian              Vice President
3. Mr. Pum Za Cin                 Secretary
4. Mr. Bawi Cin Thang            Asst. Secretary
5. Ms. Sung Hnem Tial            Treasurer 1
6. Ms. Nidum Ngun Kil            Asst. Treasurer
7. Mr. Ral Tu Lian                 Auditor

## **Stavanger Chin Church**

### **2008-09**

1. Mr. Kyawkung Mangling      President
2. Mr. Adam Ral Hup Thang      Vice President
3. Mr. Ral Tu Lian                 Secretary
4. Mr. Pum Za Cin                 Asst. Secretary
5. Ms. Sung Hnem Tial            Treasurer 1
6. Mr. Hre Tum Lian              Asst. Treasurer
7. Ms. Esther Ngun Thluai Cin   Auditor

### **2008-09 (Due to some reasons new election was held and the following person were elected)**

1. Mr. Kyawkung Mangling      President
2. Mr. Lal Chum                    Vice President
3. Mr. Ral Tu Lian                 Secretary
4. Mr. Adam Ral Hup Thang      Asst. secretary
5. Ms. Sung Hnem Tial            Treasurer
6. Ms. Esther Ngun Thluai Cin   Asst. Treasurer
7. Mr. Tawk Hmun                 Auditor 1
8. Mr. Hre Tum Lian              Auditor 2



**2010-11**

1. Mr. Kyawkung Mangling      President
2. Mr. Zo Hram                      Vice President
3. Mr. Ral Tu Lian                  Secretary
4. Mr. Zabiak Siakhel              Asst. Secretary
5. Ms. Sung Hnem Tial              Treasurer
6. Mr. Ram Thang                  Asst. Treasurer

**2012-13**

1. Mr. Lian Bik Mual Cin          President
2. Mr. Zo Hram                      Vice President
3. Mr. Zabiak Siakhel              Secretary
4. Mr. Dinkam Lian Hlawng        Asst. Secretary
5. Mr. Lal Bik Van Thang          Treasurer 1
6. Mr. Sui Thawng                  Asst. Treasurer

**2014-15**

1. Mr. Zo Hram                      President
2. Mr. Biak Cung Nung              Vice President (2014)
3. Mr. Chan Bawi                    Vice President (2015- )
4. Ms. Sung Hnem Tial              Secretary
5. Mr. Dinkam Lian Hlawng        Asst. Secretary(2014)
6. Mr. Thawng Tha Hlei            Asst. Secretary (2015- )
7. Mr. Lian Bik Muan Cin          Treasurer (2014)
8. Mr. Dinkam Lian Hlawng        Treasurer (2014- )
9. Mr. Sui Thawng                  Asst. Treasurer (2014)
10. Mr. Phun Sang                  Asst. Treasurer (2015- )

## Appendix 3

### The Interviews

Interview 1 .....	Interviewed on 29 October 2014
Interview 2 .....	Interviewed on 24 October 2014
Interview 3 .....	Interviewed on 24 October 2014
Interview 4 .....	Interviewed on 30 October 2014
Interview 5.....	Interviewed on 30 October 2014
Interview 6 .....	Interviewed on 26 October 2014
Interview 7.....	Interviewed on 30 October 2014
Interview 8 .....	Interviewed on 4 November 2014
Interview 9 .....	Interviewed on 3 December 2014
Interview 10 .....	Interviewed on 3 December 2014

Appendix 4

Map of Chin State

