Joseph Balan Selin wrote in a letter dated 7 November 1973:\footnote{Extract from the copy of a personal letter by Joseph Balan Selin to the missionaries couple, Shirley Lees and husband, who were the BEM missionaries in the 1950’s and 1960’s (Bulan 1996:32).}

This is the most exciting letter I have ever written to anybody in my life. The Holy Spirit has come down upon the Kelabits. This is the most exciting letter I have ever written to anybody in my life. The Holy Spirit churches in the Bario Highlands in a mighty force some what similar story recorded in the Book of Acts, the Congo and the Indonesian Revivals.

The services are so different from what I have ever experienced before. When the Holy Spirit comes down upon the congregation, people begin to cry out in loud wailing (some twenty or thirty people at the same time) calling out to God for forgiveness of sins, and some crying out calling the names of people whom they have been having enmity or quarreling in a desperate desire to get reconciled and to ask for forgiveness. Many pending court cases have been cancelled because the parties involved have been reconciled in a very dramatic manner, in tears and embraces of godly love, and they don’t want to go to the court, they are now reconciled to God and to each other now.

Revival, according to a religious perspective is, “essentially the restoration of the whole spirit, soul and body, thus it is the utter dedication and consecration of our spirit, soul and body and dependence on God to work out His will in our lives” (Choo 1994:1). Revival concerns the renewal of the pattern of worship in the church, and the renewal of individuals’ dedication and beliefs in the supernatural being. In Western Christianity this situation is often described as evangelical awakening, evangelical experience or spiritual revival (Orr 1965:265-26). According to Barr (1983:110), such phenomena involve mass meetings where individuals are seized by intense religious feelings leading to confession and an outward, public commitment to Christ as
saviour. Evangelical Christians\textsuperscript{71} equate the awakening or revival with a restoration of New Testament Christianity, the Holy Spirit being seen to be an agent responsible for convicting and revitalising people as they are empowered by what Orr calls the Divine Dynamic (Orr 1976:vii).

Revival was not just about awakening or renewal but in a more specific sense, it was about religious experience. According to Glock & Stark (1965:41), the essential characteristic of religious experience, distinguishing it from all human experience, is some sense of contact with a supernatural agency, which involves feelings, perceptions, and sensations which are experienced by an actor or individual or defined by a religious group, as involving some communication, however slight, with a divine essence, \textit{i.e.} transcendental authority. Nevertheless, various events or feelings are only religious if a person defines them as such.

Glock & Stark (1965) distinguished three levels of religious experiences: the confirming experience, the responsive experience, and the ecstatic experience. The confirming experience indicates only an awareness of the existence or presence of divinity. The responsive experience refers to occurrences when a person feels this awareness is mutual, that the divine has also taken specific notice of the individuals' existence (Glock & Stark 1965:46). The ecstatic experience is defined as a deepening of this sense of mutual awareness into an effective personal relationship (Glock & Stark 1965:51).

The confirming experience involves experiences that are associated with sacramental acts such as communion or baptism, or other special church occasions such as marriage and death, or in other words, a generalised sense of sacredness (Glock &

\textsuperscript{71} Evangelical Christians are Christians who are committed to the evangelical church (which emphasises mission and evangelistic work, for example, SIB).
Stark 1965:44). It consists of a feeling that individuals are sure that they are in the presence of God, or in other words, a specific awareness of the presence of divinity (Glock & Stark 1965:44). Glock & Stark (1965:43) used the word to denote that such experiences provide a sudden feeling, knowing, or intuition that the beliefs one holds are true, that one’s Weltanschauung provides an accurate interpretation of the ultimate meaning of reality.

The responsive experience includes a salvational subtype which refers to Christian conversion, described by Glock & Stark (1965:46) as states during which persons feel that the divine has chosen them among his own, to remark their existence by sealing their election into eternal reward. Many fundamentalist Christian bodies, for example, the Assemblies of God, count only born again Christians who have experienced salvation through the Holy Ghost as formal members of the church\(^2\) (Glock & Stark 1965:47). According to Glock & Stark (1965:47), the salvational experience is formed as a consequence of building up a sense of sin and guilt triggered by the pleading and urging of preacher, congregation, and often close friends, during prayer meetings specifically intended for saving souls. Given the preoccupations with guilt, and its role in salvational experiences, it is no wonder that the common theme in accounts of such experiences is cleansing and purification (Glock & Stark 1965:48).

The ecstatic experience involves the “visitations of the Holy Spirit”, often expressed by jumping, shaking, screaming, and “...[speaking] in other tongues as the Spirit gave utterance” (Glock & Stark 1965:53). Actually, the salvational experiences lead directly into ecstatic experiences during a single divine encounter\(^3\), so it is hard to

\(^2\) This account was applied in the SIB institution after the revival in 1973.

\(^3\) It is shown by the conversion during the event of the revival in 1973, which involved salvational and ecstatic experiences.
decide the status of borderline encounters. Confession was the catalyst for individuals to go through these religious experiences.

Evidently, to a certain extent, confession was common to the responsive and ecstatic experiences observed in the 1973 Bario revival. During pre-revival times, confession was not made widely in public (Ngelinuh Bala 1997, an interview). It was a discreet event between the missionary and the individual who wished to confess. Few Kelabit confessed during pre-revival times. Confession and repentance focussed on issues of practising charms and fetishes that were the wrongs emphasised by the BEM and SIB missionaries. Potential converts repented by announcing during the prayer service that they were willing to give up the practices of charms and fetishes as these were the wrong doings emphasised during the pre-revival times). The issue of charms and fetishes were not as relevant to relations between individuals as to the individuals themselves.

The revival itself seemed to emphasise more the improvement of relations between Kelabit individuals. During the revival, people confessed to and were more concerned about the conflict they were having with other individuals (either with relatives, friends, parents or siblings). They apologised to the individuals with whom they had a conflict or bitterness. In this sense, when they repented, the issue was not so much related to charms and fetishes as to interpersonal relations.

In both pre-revival and revival periods, confession and repentance were common because both actions were inspired by the missionaries and the testimony of other people who came over to accompany the missionaries to preach and evangelised. However, there was a difference between the confession and repentance made during pre-revival and during the revival. Inspired by others, particularly the students during
the revival, the Kelabit at Bario were struck by a fundamental ecstatic spiritual experience.

4.7.1. Personal Spiritual Experience

Personal spiritual experience was one of the features of the 1973 Bario revival. The local people had experiences of personal individual encounters of the spiritual during the revival and this continued to play an important role in SIB institution. This experience persuaded individuals to convert or convinced individuals to renew their belief in Christian values and commitment. This situation may be appropriately described as the transformation of one’s world view or as Baker notes, the transformation of people’s cosmological and moral assumptions (1993:109). Thus, the process of conversion in the revival period is to borrow Jordan’s expression, a self-conscious change to more or less enduring religious beliefs (Jordan 1993:285), a religious faith, that was to create and sustain the salience of both religious belief and membership in a community of believers (Jordan 1993:286).

The individual personal encounter of the spiritual significantly contributed to self-conscious change during the period of revival. It was detected through spiritual communication in ecstatic speech (speaking in tongue), spiritual songs and musical sounds (Martin 1990:174-175). “The communication was more oral than written, more extempore than bound by a text and this was what gives it spontaneity, power and immediacy” (cf. Martin 1990:177). At the same time, this spontaneity creates an intimate personal and familial contact between an individual and the spiritual. This is recognised by others because the individual demonstrates this particular action in front of the congregation. The significance of this situation is that it changed personal attitudes and social behaviour, affected cognitive organisation and emphasised the
break with the non-Pentecostal world (Martin 1990:172). The dramatic self-conscious change led converts to understand the religion differently. By this description, the revival may be seen as offering the experiential conversion, and the opportunity to be born again Christians, or pious Christians.

The experiential conversion was heavily emphasised by SIB leaders who saw Christianity as an individualised religion (Gerawat Maran, 199774). In this context, the converts probably realised that to understand the doctrine of Christianity was to experience Christianity itself through the personal experience of individual spiritual encounters, not just by practising the values. SIB emphasised that the individual seeks his/her intimate relationship with God, not through any mediator.

It is not surprising that the experiential conversion was formalised in SIB as it became a common practice among the converts. This led to rationalisation as well as the institutionalisation of the experiential conversion as the formal part of Christianity in SIB. In the Pentecostal church, the Christian message of individual salvation has often been marginalised to meet communal needs (Schneider & Lindenbaum 1987:2). As a result, the experiential conversion may no longer be only an individual thing but a communal experience and this communal aspect is observed as the mission or church pattern. This does not imply that experiential conversion among individuals has disappeared, but apart from being an individual thing it also becomes part of the ongoing life of the converts’ society.

The personal spiritual experience became an important practise in the SIB especially when it was utilised as a tool for evangelistic work. According to Samporoh (1992:97) the SIB church was active in evangelism as an on going process, a

74 An interview with Gerawat Maran, the President of SIB, in July 1997.
continuous propagation with a two-fold ultimate goal, firstly to make responsible, “reproducing” Christians, and secondly, to make responsible, “reproducing” congregations. The meaning of “reproducing” in this sense was not just evangelising to increase the number of the congregations, but also preaching the Gospel to the other Christians who were considered erroneous by SIB Christians.

The personal spiritual experience probably encouraged a more focused evangelistic approach towards the individual. Although the congregation may be enormous when a Christian gathering is held, stress is put on a few individuals who seem to demand a closer evangelism. The pastors or missionary persons may assist them individually to recognise their needs in the spiritual matter. Each individual is encouraged to reveal through confession what is on their mind. Brief counselling helps the individual to speak their mind, to reveal what sort of attitude or behaviour the individual thinks is inappropriate. This action leads the individual to feel and admit regret about the inappropriate attitude or behaviour to the other individuals involved. This situation was very unconstrained, and the individual frequently sobbed.

It was understood that the “radiant personal faith” of every individual in SIB contributed towards the growth of the church, and also that “the church may have the method, but without personal faith the church growth would not grow” (Samporoh 1992:99). This statement suggests that individual commitment and belief in the SIB contributed towards the expansion of the church.

4.8. The Significance of Revival to the Pattern of Worship and Interaction

Instead of observing silence and leaving the sermon to be preached by the pastors, SIB leaders encouraged the members of the congregations to give sermons during the
Sunday service. Individuals inclined to give testimony, or speak of their experiences of their Christian life, were asked to speak. Church members started to use musical instruments such as guitars, drums, piano, or organ to accompany the singing during the service. The congregations were free to choose the style of prayer. The congregations lifted up their hands when singing, and sang their prayer. In short, when the new pattern of worship was practised in the SIB churches, the atmosphere was much more vigorous and boisterous. Basically, this style is similar to the Pentecostal Church, Baptist Church, and Assembly of God.

Apart from the changes in the pattern of worship, the revival to a certain extent encouraged unity among the congregation. This occurred especially during counseling or requests for prayers by individuals. The counseling given by an individual to another who wanted to confess gave the opportunity for them to interact with each other. In addition, individuals interacted with each other indirectly when they prayed for each other.

Among the Kelabit community, the revival improved the interaction between individuals. This does not imply that before the revival, the Kelabit were not united as a community. The understanding of unity in this situation refers to Christian activities among the Kelabit, especially their unity in prayer, as they acknowledged others' needs and assistance. In every church service or prayer meeting, the leader normally asked the people in the group if they needed the people to pray for their needs. Together, they prayed for each other’s needs. This activity developed a unity in prayer. The following week in the same prayer meeting, the individuals whose needs had been prayed for would acknowledge the progress of those needs.
The prayer activity became communal because these individuals formed gatherings to pray together. After the 1973 revival, the Kelabit community in every longhouse at Bario had their prayer meeting daily, early in the morning. Instead of just an individual praying alone, everyone in the longhouse got together to participate in the prayer meeting that usually started at 5.00 AM in the morning and ended at 6.00 AM. The prayer meeting became a routine where Kelabit prayed individually for everyone’s needs before they started the day. Normally, they prayed for each other’s safety in whatever work they would pursue for that day. At the end of the day, when they finished having dinner, they gathered once more around 8.30 in the evening for a prayer meeting where everyone prayed together, expressing gratitude because they were safe and satisfied with their work. They also prayed for any specific needs of individuals.

SIB in general has adopted this activity as part of its church practice. Hence, SIB has been characterised as a praying church. Barclay (1990:119) noted that among the SIB people, the prayers continued in rotation hour after hour. The chief deacon of SIB church described the prayer activity in the church:

“We prayed without ceasing for them. Everyone in the congregation prays all year long, by name for friends and relatives or loved ones, that they may be saved. Before our weekly prayer meeting starts, the congregation assemble to write these names on the board and to pray united for them.” (quoted from Samporoh 1992:101).

The congregations prayed not only for their needs but for the whole church. Later they noticed how members overcame difficulties, whether in finances, family problems, sickness, or inability to cope with responsibilities (Samporoh 1992:101). In short, the congregations were praying together to solve many existing problems that involved the needs of the church, and the congregation’s needs.
Essentially, the unity in prayer that involved the whole congregation in the church gave an impression to the individuals who requested prayer that their problems and needs were actually being cared for. As a result, these individuals showed similar response towards others’ needs. By participating in the prayer activity, everyone among the congregations actually contributed to the unity of the people in the church.

The unity among the congregation in the SIB church was portrayed in the way they identified themselves with the denomination. Normally, when asked about their religion or denomination, the SIB members would reply, “I’m SIB”.

4.9. Conclusion

The main goal of BEM was to evangelise all tribes and to establish an indigenous church and leadership amongst the converted. Therefore, their educational work took the focus of the establishment of a Bible School with a purely religious curriculum. To form an indigenous church, BEM basically emphasised the indigeneity of the church by introducing the indigenes to governing a church. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that indigeneity was still in the form of Western ideas. The indigeneity of the church, although allowing the absorption of indigenes’ values by the church did not stress the values and practices of the traditional religion but the values constructed by the indigenes who governed the church.

The SIB was indeed a product of the BEM that became a tool of evangelism and has been utilised to integrate individuals from different ethnic groups. SIB was formed through the collaboration of individuals from many ethnic groups such as the Lun Bawang, Kayan, Kenyah, Tagal and Bisaya in Sarawak, and the Dusun in Sabah. SIB churches were geared towards the unity and diversity of individuals. Its policy on
inter-ethnic relations clearly emphasised that “there’s no group which may consider itself higher than the others, and there is no group which may be rejected by the others”. In SIB, ethnic hostility was to be reduced as much as possible by having a common belief system. Thus, through the Christian rituals and values, interactions between individuals was conceivable.

With the 1973 Bario revival SIB further integrated people into the church through the ecstatic experience of the Kelabit. This affected not only individual Kelabit understanding of Christianity but encouraged the improvement of interpersonal relations. Revival indeed was a religious experience in which people no longer just acted as ritual participants but conducted the rituals with a greater understanding of their spiritual purpose. The revival stimulated people’s consciousness about the importance of closer interaction in order to reduce mutual suspicions.
Chapter Five
Interactions in Sidang Injil Borneo Institution

5.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the reasons why social status continues to be important in SIB churches despite a common set of values that emphasise social equality. It also discusses how SIB tackles this situation in order to reduce the gap between the individuals in the church.

5.2. The Ethnic Relations in SIB

In the earlier years of SIB’s formation, particular ethnic groups, the Lun Bawang, Kelabit, Kayan, Kenyah, Bisaya, and Tagal, comprised the majority of the congregation (Chapters 3&4). Gradually, the Iban, Bidayuh, Chinese and others joined them. After the 1973 revival, it was estimated that about 1,000 to 2,000 people annually joined SIB, among them members from other churches, such as Anglican, Roman Catholics and Methodists. SIB’s pastors and members emphasised that these people joined SIB because of SIB’s Gospel approach. Others were drawn towards the pattern of worship in SIB (see Chapter 3).

The most recent statistic taken by SIB in 1990 showed, that there were about 60,000 members in the SIB register of membership, from 20 different sub-

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76 The information was shown on the display board at SIB headquarters. However, the specific data in figures is not available.
ethnic and ethnic groups (see Map 5.1 & 5.2), scattered around 17 districts (see Map 5.3). At present, there are about 335 SIB churches around Sarawak.

Multi-ethnic congregations are mostly found in SIB churches in the urban area, where people have moved for work and education. Villages have their own churches which are normally attended only by the villagers. Thus, there is no more than one ethnic group attending the church in the village, unless there are intermarriages between the people in the village with people from other ethnic groups. However SIB congregations in urban areas comprise people from many different ethnic backgrounds who act as a larger unity.

The main objective of the SIB institution within multi-ethnic congregations was to gain as many members as possible. In other words, the SIB leaders and missionaries were struggling to build up SIB congregations. The membership was opened to individuals from various ethnic backgrounds. In this situation ethnic difference was not an important issue. However, recently congregations have begun to impute higher status to leaders and missionaries particularly on the basis of ethnic identity. The SIB identity as defined by the Orang Ulu congregation is viewed by certain individuals among the Orang Ulu as not to be shared with the non-Orang Ulu in SIB churches because of certain perceived ethnic differences in values and practices.

5.2.1. Social Status in SIB

SIB church members are aware of which ethnic groups form the majority in the congregations, and which hold important positions in the SIB administration. Social status in SIB is not clearly defined but it does exist, and
Map 5.1: SIB evangelism movement in Sarawak.
Map 5.2: SIB branches in Sarawak.

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<th>No. in the map</th>
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<td>17</td>
<td>29/9/1978</td>
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Map 5.3: The Division of Districts of SIB Mission Centre

REFERENCE
- International boundary
- State boundary
- District boundary
- River

KUCHING
(3 ZONES)
- Londu
- Kpg. Duras
- Kuching Evangelical
- Lemukung & Simunjan

SIBU
(4 ZONES)
- Oya Road
- Mukah, Dalat, Balingan
- Kanowit
- Kapit & Song

MIRI
(3 ZONES)
- Niah
- Sash
- Palm Oil Estate
- Bako
- Bisai

MARUDI
(3 ZONES)
- Marudi
- Tinjar

BELAGA
(2 ZONES)
- Penan
- Belaga Hilir

PAPAR
(2 ZONES)
- Kg. Batu Lintang
- Tuaran

KALIMANTAN (INDONESIA)
the acknowledgement of social status by the congregation means that certain individuals are ranked higher than the others. The term social status in this study is based on Bilton’s (1987:34) definition of social status, “the prestige or high standing in the eyes of other members of the society”.

The SIB President is respected as the person who is responsible for leading the management and administration of the institution. However, it is not clear if he is regarded as the spiritual leader in the SIB institution. The leaders, missionaries and administrators are the people whom the congregation would regard as those who have high status in the SIB society. Most of the individuals among the congregation would assume that the work of the administrators is unpaid. However they are actually rewarded monthly. The salary is determined by what position the person holds in the administration. The President of SIB receives approximately RM1000.00\(^7\) per month. Some of the administrators are provided with accommodation and travelling expenses\(^8\). The issue here is that positions are no longer held solely on the basis of spiritual convictions, instead there are certain people willing to become a missionary or the administrator of the institution because they cannot get any other job. People will not take such a job if it is unpaid. Sometimes, the claim of certain individuals of being “called to do God’s work” is false.

In the SIB institution, congregations are Orang Ulu (this term is discussed in Chapter 1). Since 1960, when SIB was newly formed, the elected President and Deputy, Secretary, and Treasurer have been Orang Ulu. The Chinese, and

\(^7\) RM1000.00 converted to Australian Dollar would be about AUD$450.00 (according to the most recent rate RM2.5 to AUD$1.00.

\(^8\) An interview in June 1997 with one of the SIB administrators who does not want his name to be mentioned.
the Dayak, who are the Iban and Bidayuh, have formed the minority groups in the SIB institution, and thus have little chance to be elected to hold such key positions. The Orang Ulu dominate the administration of SIB and comprise the majority of the missionaries because the early evangelistic work by BEM was focused among these groups (see Chapter 4). Furthermore, because they were living in close proximity to each other evangelistic work was convenient (see Chapter 2) and they were easily grouped together in the SIB institution. Consequently, SIB Christianity and the church is referred to as “Kristen Orang Ulu” (Orang Ulu Christianity) by non-SIB and non-Orang Ulu members. This recognition fundamentally allows the Orang Ulu to feel exceptional as they are also recognised as the indigenous initiatory group of the SIB institution. Nevertheless, this situation seems to be of little concern to non-Orang Ulu. The non-Orang Ulu, such as the Iban, Bidayuh, and Chinese are still enthusiastic to join the SIB, because of the spiritual experience (see Chapter 4), rather than be concerned that Orang Ulu dominate the administration and the church.

Although social status does not cause a major tension between the non-Orang Ulu and Orang Ulu, differences do occur between two main sections of church defined by their use of either English or Malay language. The English service is attended by those involved in government administration or professionals who feel more comfortable in attending the English service because they communicate more fluently in English (apart from their own native languages). The Malay language service is attended by the people who do not understand or speak English fluently, among them elderly people, students.

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Since 1977, the language that used as the medium of instruction in schools in Sarawak is Bahasa Malaysia. English is taught as a subject. Lack of the practise of spoken English, most students, especially among the indigenous people, English is not widely spoken.
and less educated people. Both English and Malay language groups organise their own activities for the Sunday service, inviting different speakers and singing different songs of praise, even though some of the English songs are translated into Malay language. Basically, what separates the Malay language group and English language group is their separate program of church activities. The people from both groups do interact with each other in other less formal matters because the people who attend the Malay language service may be the grandparents or parents of the people who attend the English language service. However, if they were non-relatives there would be a limited interaction between them. Recently, Chinese services are also available and only for Chinese or those who speak Chinese. The Chinese services clearly limit the interaction between the Chinese and the non-Chinese unless the Chinese choose to attend either English service or Bahasa Malaysia service.

In Sarawak, because English is widely spoken in the government bureaucracy and in business, it symbolises social status, and ‘high standard’, as perceived by the people who do not speak English, particularly those who are of a different ethnic group or non-relatives of the people of the English-speaking group. The English-speaking group may not be fully aware of their status but the non-English speakers treat this difference as an obstacle. Actually, they could communicate in Malay language but the non-English speakers are very self-conscious about their inadequacy in the English language.

Tension also derives from a perception of certain individuals in the church as being gifted. Many people in SIB are aware of the egotism of the so-called ‘gifted’ individuals in SIB churches. They pride themselves on the ability to heal people through prayer and touch, “speaking in tongues”, and the ability to