



Asiatic Division Mission General Session, May 1-15, 1915, Shanghai, China.  
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## Asiatic Division

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Paul S.S. Song was born in Korea. After graduating with a Bachelor of Business Administration from University of Seoul, he started to serve Korean Union Conference as assistant for departments and moved to Northern Asia-Pacific Division. Since 2015 he has been serving as the associate secretary of the NSD. He received an M.A. in theology from Sahmyook University, Korea, and since 2018 he has been studying in a doctor of ministry program at Andrews University.

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The Asiatic Division was organized in 1909. It consisted of the China Union Mission, the India Mission (including Burma and Ceylon), the Japan Mission, the Korea Mission, the Philippine Mission, and the Singapore Mission.

Prior to forming the Asiatic Division, the General Conference directly took care of the China Mission (established 1901), the India Mission (established 1895, comprising India, Burma, and Ceylon), and the Japan Mission (comprising Japan and Korea) as miscellaneous fields.<sup>1</sup> In 1907 the total population of these three territories was 783,970,499, consisting of the China Mission, 426,000,000; India Mission, 297,970,499; and the Japan Mission, 60,000,000. There were 17 churches: three in China, three in India, four in Japan, and seven in Korea. The combined church membership was 593: China, 111; India, 230; Japan, 111; and Korea, 141.<sup>2</sup>

On April 17, 1908, the General Conference Committee considered a request from the Pacific Union that China be assigned as the special object of their general missionary contribution, and appointed a special representative committee of five to study the whole situation for mission support.<sup>3</sup> However, on May 3, 1908, the General Conference Committee suggested that assigning China to the Pacific Union as a special object of missionary support was not practicable.<sup>4</sup>

On July 13, 1908, the General Conference Committee voted to send a representative from the General Conference to visit China, Japan, and Korea in order to spend time with the members in council for the sites of a general headquarters in China and a new sanitarium in Japan.<sup>5</sup> On July 15, 1908, the General Conference Committee approved I. H. Evans' itinerary to the Far East areas, including China, Japan, and Korea, as a preparatory work to organize the Asiatic Division.<sup>6</sup>

Upon return, I. H. Evans presented at the General Conference Committee on March 14, 1909, a report of his visits and observations. Through Evans' presentations and recommendations, the committee approved the purchase of five acres in northeastern Shanghai for the China Mission headquarters and publishing house, and another three to five acres for organizing the church in Japan.<sup>7</sup> Regarding the mission works in Korea, it was reported that a good location for church headquarters was found in Seoul, but it was decided to delay the purchase of the land until the coming General Conference Session.

From May 13 to June 6, 1909, at the 37<sup>th</sup> General Conference Session, the Asiatic Division was organized, and I. H. Evans was elected the president (regarded as a General Conference vice-president) for the division.<sup>8</sup> The Asiatic Division consisted of the China Union Mission, the India Mission (including Burma and Ceylon), the Japan Mission, the Korea Mission, the Philippine Mission, and the Singapore Mission.<sup>9</sup> The Philippine and Singapore Missions were transferred from the Australasian Union Conference to this division.<sup>10</sup> The headquarters of Java and East Indies was in Singapore, a vast cosmopolitan city where people represented many ethnic backgrounds from adjacent lands, including Malays, Tamils, and Chinese. It was noted that the educated Chinese young people of that region spoke Malay and English as well as Chinese.<sup>11</sup>

The Asiatic Division Headquarters office building was placed in Shanghai, China instead of Lucknow, India. As of 1909, China's population was 435,000,000, India, 297,970,499; Japan, 50,000,000; Korea, 12,000,000; the Philippines, 8,000,000; and Singapore, 300,000, for a total population of 803,270,499 in the entire Asiatic Division. There were 21 churches: China, 5; India, 6; Japan, 4; Korea, 4; Philippines, 1; and Singapore 1. Total church membership was 601: China, 128; India, 207; Japan, 119; Korea, 100; Philippines, 3; and Singapore, 44.<sup>12</sup>

The organization and support of the Asiatic Division brought more missional attention to the General Conference, as well as the churches in the United States which were the major financial supporting entity.<sup>13</sup> At the Autumn Council of the General Conference Committee in College View, Nebraska, October 5-13, 1909, it was recommended that \$300,000 be raised within three years to supply institutions in foreign fields, consisting of schools, publishing houses, sanitariums, and homes for missionaries, especially targeting particular regions, including China, Japan, Korea, India, and Africa.<sup>14</sup>

In 1910, at the fourth biennial session held in Lucknow, India, October 21–November 2, the India Mission was reorganized as the India Union Mission, consisting of India, Burma, and Ceylon. They were divided into five districts: Bengal, North India, West India, South India (including Ceylon), and Burma.<sup>15</sup> This was intended to prepare the way for stronger development of the mission work in the field as a whole. In the same year, Mongolia, Tibet, Manchuria, and Chinese Turkestan became part of the Northern Mission Field under the Asiatic Division.<sup>16</sup>

In 1913 the Asiatic Division Mission was reorganized.<sup>17</sup> The East Indies and Federated Malay States (Singapore and the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, Java, Borneo, Celebes, New Guinea, and the lesser islands of the East Indies) were connected with the Asiatic Division dating from January 1, 1912.<sup>18</sup> The Straits Settlements Mission in Singapore, Sumatra Mission, East Java Mission, and West Java Mission were organized into the Asiatic Division on January 1, 1913.<sup>19</sup> In 1914 Manchuria Mission was organized and became part of Asiatic Division.<sup>20</sup>

In November 1915, at the Autumn Council of the General Conference Committee in Loma Linda, California, the Asiatic Division Mission was reorganized to become the Asiatic Division Conference, with 212 churches and 8,006 members in total, by adding the territories of the Australasian Union Conference and the India Union Mission into the former Asiatic Division Mission.<sup>21</sup> It was the biggest territorial reconfiguration in the world church of Seventh-day Adventists at that time, with a huge population of 879,652,115. According to Asiatic Division President R. C. Porter, the division experienced the largest increase of workers ever sent out by the denomination at one time.<sup>22</sup> For more ambitious mission work and support for the needs in these huge territories of Asia where the laborers were few, the Australasian Union Conference contributed significant human resources and finances to India, Malaysia, the Philippines, and China.<sup>23</sup>

At the time of integration into one division, the Asiatic Division Conference's statistics, consisting of the Asiatic Division Mission, the Australasian Union Conference, and India Union Mission, was as follows:<sup>24</sup>

1. The Asiatic Division Mission consisted of Central China Mission (26 churches, 742 members), East China Mission (4 churches, 182 members), South China Mission (11 churches, 421 members), West China Mission (1 church, 10 members), Japan Mission (7 churches, 243 members), Korean Mission (10 churches, 585 members), Malaysian Mission (6 churches, 200 members), Manchuria Mission (1 church, 6 members), and Philippine Mission (3 churches, 300 members), totaling 69 churches and 2,689 members.
2. The Australasian Union Conference consisted of New South Wales Conference (29 churches, 1,404 members), New Zealand Conference (17 churches, 625 members), Queensland Conference (6 churches, 442 members), South Australia Conference (12 churches, 464 members), Victoria-Tasmania Conference (29 churches, 1,261 members), West Australia Conference (17 churches, 503 members), Cook Islands Mission (1 church, 22 members), Fiji Mission (10 churches, 236 members), Friendly Islands Mission (1 church, 22 members), Lord Howe Island Mission (1 church, 34 members), New Hebrides Mission (1 church, 5 members), Norfolk Island Mission (1 church, 43 members), Papuan (New Guinea) Mission (1 church, 9 members), Pitcairn Island Mission (1 church, 60 members), Samoan Mission (1 church, 12 members), Society Islands Mission (2 churches, 29 members), Solomon Islands Mission (1 church, 6 members), totaling 131 churches and 5,177 members.
3. The India Union Mission consisted of Bengal Mission (4 churches, 106 members), Burma Mission (2 churches, 112 members), North India Mission (3 churches, 77 members), South India Mission (1 church, 75 members), and West India Mission (2 churches, 40 members), totaling 12 churches and 410 members.

The first session of the Asiatic Division Conference was held April 5-25, 1917 in Shanghai. Delegates laid broad plans for evangelism to more than half the world population (914,334,339).<sup>25</sup> As of December 1917, there were seven union

conferences and missions, 12 local conferences, 33 missions, 23 schools, eight publishing houses, and five sanitariums. The total membership was 8,217. In April 1917 the East Asian Union Conference was formed, consisting of Japan, Korea, and Manchuria, with Pastor J. M. Johanson in charge, under the supervision of Pastor F. H. DeVinney as a vice president of the Asiatic Division.<sup>26</sup> The Japan Mission became the Japanese Conference, and Korea was organized into the Chosen Conference.<sup>27</sup>

At the 39<sup>th</sup> General Conference session from March 29 to April 14, 1918, the India Union Mission and the Australasian Union Conference were separated from the Asiatic Division. At the council of the Far Eastern section in Shanghai, China, on March 2, 1919, the name Far Eastern Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists was adopted.<sup>28</sup> In 1920 the India Union Mission became the Southern Asia Division of the General Conference, and in 1922 the Australasian Union Conference became the Australasia Division.

Since the India Union Mission and the Australasian Union Conference were separated from the Asiatic Division, the term Eastern Asia Division was temporarily chosen prior to an appropriate name that would be given to the entire Far Eastern field known as the Asiatic Division Conference.<sup>29</sup> The term Eastern Asia Division appeared in the General Conference Committee minutes in 1918. In 1920 the new term Far Eastern Division started officially to be used. The Asiatic Division had functioned officially from the 37<sup>th</sup> General Conference Session, May 13-June 6, 1909, to the 39<sup>th</sup> General Conference Session, March 29-April 14, 1918.

## List of Executive Officers

Presidents: I. H. Evans (1909-19013), R. C. Porter (1913-1917), John. E. Fulton (1917-1918).

Secretaries: C. N. Woodward (1913-1915), J. E. Fulton (1916-1917), C. C. Crisler (1917-1918).

Treasurers: C. N. Woodward (1913-1915), H. W. Barrows (1916-1918).

Vice Presidents: F. H. DeVinney (1918), J. S. James (1918), C. C. Crisler (1918).

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## NOTES

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5. 292<sup>nd</sup> General Conference Committee, *Minutes*, July 13, 1908, 521.?
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