

East China Union Academy

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Joshua C. S. Chiu was born in Hong Kong, China. After graduating with a B.Ed. (Hons) from the Open University of Hong Kong and an M.Div. from the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Joshua was first employed as a teacher in a church school of Hong Kong-Macao Conference. Subsequently, he served as an editor and Internet Evangelist in the Chinese Union Mission.

The East China Union established the East China Union Academy when the Japanese then occupied most of the union's territory. However, the school continued to operate throughout the period of the Pacific War.

Background

Shanghai served as an important city for Adventist work in China and other parts of Asia. In 1909 the church established its Asiatic Division with headquarters in Shanghai,¹ after the publishing program had already moved there a year earlier.²

In 1919 the East China Union Mission reorganized its territory,³ though its headquarters continued to remain in Shanghai.⁴ For a time the East China Union operated three mission-supervised schools: Anhwei Junior Middle School, Kiangsu Junior Middle School, and South Chekiang Junior Middle School.⁵

However, after the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out on July 7, 1937, the Japanese swept across the East China Union, and it lost nearly all of its senior educational institutions.⁶ It was during this uncertain time that, the East China Union sought to establish a union-supervised school that could provide a 12-grade education system.

Founding of the School

First proposed in December 1939,⁷ church publications listed the academy as one of the 1940 Harvest Ingathering projects and the 1940 Big Week projects.⁸ During the early part of 1940 church leaders considered various alternative sites as well as how to fund and integrate it with other church entities, such as the Fireside Correspondence School (now Home Study Institute) and the Far Eastern Academy, in or near the Ningguo Road property in Shanghai.⁹

In July leadership proposed that the new school be located at 458 Ningguo Road in the Chinese workers' compound. Administration appointed a seven-member committee to adjust the use of the Ningguo Road property¹⁰ and the school temporarily received permission to use the land on the eastern and northern sides of the Ningguo Road walled-in compound for agricultural purposes. An additional allocation from Rehabilitation

Funds was approved for the school to replace equipment and furnishings at the Ningguo Road compound.¹¹

In the fall of 1940 W. H. Branson, then president of the China Division, wrote to the Sabbath School members of the world church about urgent needs in China, requesting assistance from the Thirteenth Sabbath Overflow offerings. Building a school for the East China Union was one of the six projects he cited.¹²

The new school, known initially as East China Union Junior Training Institute, opened October 1, 1940.¹³

History

The school started with 12 teachers and 78 students enrolled in grades 7 to 11.¹⁴ The first academic year was a tremendous success spiritually. With good cooperation from the East Shanghai Church, the school took part in the church's Harvest Ingathering Campaign,¹⁵ and by January 1941 the church had organized a baptismal class for the students that resulted in 17 baptisms at the end of the school year.¹⁶ Then a colporteur institute convened at the school from May 25 to 31. About 25 students received training, most of them canvassing in the territory of the East China Union during the first summer holidays.¹⁷ At the close of the academic year 1940-1941, seven students graduated from the tenth grade.¹⁸

On the evening of August 17, 1941, the East China Training Institute Dispensary began under the directorship of Miriam Hsia, a nursing graduate of Shanghai Sanitarium. The dispensary, housed in the two carport rooms vacated by the Far Eastern Academy, served not only faculty and students of the training institute, but also the employees and their families in the Ningguo compound and the elementary schools, and even the nearby community. Individuals and local business donated the equipment and medicines, costing more than \$3,000 N.C.¹⁹

After the Pacific War broke out, the Japanese military took over the division office, and many of the staff at the Ningguo Road compound evacuated to unoccupied regions of China. The publishing house stopped printing the *Signs of the Times* but was able to produce small books or brochures. However, the East China Junior Training Institute did continue to operate throughout the war period.²⁰

In 1946 the school received additional funding.²¹ During the same year it considered moving to Qiaotouzhen, but the campus there was too damaged to easily restore.²² The next year the campus of the China Training Institute was rebuilt on the West Hill at Qiaotouzhen. It converted a silk factory on the East Hill for school use.²³ The Institute reopened October 1, 1947.²⁴ The East China Union Junior Training Institute moved to the East Hill site at Qiaotouzhen as the academy section of the China Training Institute during the school year 1947-48.²⁵ The school seems to have been renamed East China Union Academy in 1948 with Shen Xucheng (申旭程, Shen Hsu Chen) as the principal.²⁶ Approved as a 12-grade academy,²⁷ it was now independent of the China Training Institute after the school year 1948-1949.

When the Battle of Huaihai broke out between November 6, 1948, and January 10, 1949, the campus of Qiaotouzhen became unsafe. During the 1948-1949 school year it became increasingly obvious that a change of government would occur on mainland China, and the American consular authorities issued an urgent warning to foreigners to evacuate. Leadership decided to move all college sections of the China Training Institute from Qiaotouzhen to Hong Kong, while the East China Union Academy would remain at Qiaotouzhen.²⁸

After the spring holiday in 1949, some students did not return to the school, so the buildings on the East Hill site were not fully used. Furthermore, the possibility loomed that the military would occupy the East Hill property. The division committee recommended that the East China Union Academy transfer to the West Hill location as soon as the buildings under construction were completed.²⁹

Beginning with the spring semester of the school year of 1949-1950, Wang Xiantong (王先桐, S. T. Wang) became the new principal of the East China Union Academy. He was also the final principal.³⁰

During the summer of 1950 the China Training Institute moved back to Qiaotouzhen from Hong Kong and operated its last school year with the East China Union Academy.³¹ Even at this late stage, 16 academy students worked with evangelists in several series that summer.³²

The East China Union Academy closed its doors permanently when the Jiangsu Provincial People's Government in 1951 took over the Qiaotouzhen campus of the China Training Institute and it became the Jiangsu Polytechnic College of Agriculture and Forestry.³³ Currently the Qiaotou Campus of Nanjing University of Finance & Economics Hongshan College uses the facility.³⁴

Principal Chronology

East China Union Junior Training Institute (1940-1947): Huang Dawei (黄大伟, David Hwang) (1940-1941); Pan Shuiru (潘水如) (1941-1946), Shen Xucheng (1946-1947).

The academy section of China Training Institute (1947-1948): T. S. Geraty (president of China Training Institute) (1947-1948).

East China Union Academy (1948-1951): Shen Xucheng (1948-1949); Wang Xiantong (1950-1951).

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