

Southeast China Union Mission (1949-1951)

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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.

Southeast China Union Mission was one of the short-lived church administrative units organized in 1949 under the China Division, just before the latter severed its connection with the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church. The union existed from 1949 to 1951.

The territory of Southeast China Union Mission consisted of the Fujian (Fukien) province and the Shantou (Swatow) Mission on the eastern slope of Guangdong (Kwangtung) province. In 1950, the territory, with a population of 36,200,000 had twenty-four churches and 3,004 members in the union comprised of three local missions: the North Fukien Mission, with headquarters in Fuzhou (Foochow); the South Fukien Mission, with headquarters in Xiamen (Amoy); and the Swatow Mission, with headquarters in Shantou (Swatow).¹

Organizational History

On August 14, 1949, just before the formal establishment of the People's Republic of China, a joint meeting of the China Division and South China Union executive committees was held. At the time, much of the territory of the original South China Union was under the control of the new Communist government. Since the territory and membership of the original South China Union Mission were large, it was thought that to administer the territory from one single office would be difficult, especially with the political changes. Members of the committee voted to reorganize the original South China Union Mission into three smaller union missions: the South China Union Mission, the Southeast China Union Mission, and the South China Island Union Mission. The new organizational structure became effective on September 1, 1949.²

The officers for the three new unions were also elected on August 14, 1949.³ For the Southeast China Union Mission the officers included Liang Naitao (梁耐陶, Leung Noi To), president; Xu Yanjin (徐彦瑾, Y. C. Hsu), secretary-treasurer; Hong Jinxi (洪金禧, Hung Ging Hsi, Ang Kim Hi), educational and Young People's Missionary Volunteer department secretary; and K. H. Hung, home missionary and publishing department secretary.⁴ Later, Liang Naitao was also appointed the Sabbath School secretary.⁵ As the Southeast China Union Mission existed but for a brief period,

all church officers only served for two years between 1949 and 1951. N. F. Brewer, secretary of China Division, was authorized to visit Xiamen with C. H. Davis, president of the original South China Union Mission, to arrange for the setting up of the new union.⁶

After World War II, the mission property at Xiamen, where the headquarters for the Southeast China Union was located, was severely damaged by gunfire, and the school on Kulangsu had only a very small enrollment.⁷

Members of China Division committees voted to authorize repairs on the mission property.⁸ The committees also authorized the Southeast China Union to repair the foreign homes in Swatow⁹ with a budget of not more than SU500.¹⁰

Towards the end of 1949, after Xiamen was taken over by the new government, Liang Naitao wrote to describe the serious damages done to the union and local headquarters by the opposing armies during the siege of the city. He closed his letter with the following courageous statement:

As we look forward to the coming new year we can with confidence put our trust in God's guidance and help. At present the work throughout the union is in general functioning normally. We do not know what is in store for us in the future, but we shall do our very best and pray that the Lord will not allow His work to suffer.¹¹

In 1950, famine broke out in Fujian and the China Division appropriated SU300 to the Southeast China Union for distribution.¹²

All regular relation between the General Conference and Chinese Seventh-day Adventists was broken after 1951. With the exception of South China Island Union Mission, the Church's administrative units in China all became defunct.

Educational Institutions

The major educational institutions in Southeast Union China included North Fukien Junior Academy in Fuzhou and Southeast China Union Academy in Gulangyu (Kulangsu), Xiamen.¹³ The Anxian Hall of the Southeast China Union Academy in Gulangyu, has been preserved with minimal damage and was added to the World Heritage List on July 8, 2017, at the 41st session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.¹⁴

SOURCES

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China Division Committee, August 14, 1949. Folder: China Division June-Dec 1949. General Conference Archives, Silver Spring Maryland, United States.

China Division Committee - Section II, August 17, 1949, 94. Folder: China Division (Section II) 1949. General Conference Archives, Silver Spring Maryland, United States.

China Division Committee - Section II, December 11, 1949, 94. Folder: China Division (Section II) 1949. General Conference Archives, Silver Spring Maryland, United States.

China Division Committee, February 28, 1950. Folder: China Division June-Dec 1949. General Conference Archives, Silver Spring Maryland, United States.

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NOTES

1. "Southeast China Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1951), 111-112.
2. China Division Committee, August 14, 1949, 193-194, folder: China Division June-Dec 1949, General Conference Archives; "Re-organization of South China mission," *The China Division Reporter*, September 1949, 7.
3. China Division Committee, August 14, 1949, 194.
4. *Ibid.*, 195.
5. *Ibid.*, 229.
6. China Division Committee - Section II, August 17, 1949, 94, folder: China Division (Section II) 1949, General Conference Archives.
7. David Lin, "Open Doors in China," *The China Division Reporter*, May 1950, 5.
8. China Division Committee - Section II, December 11, 1949, 129, folder: China Division (Section II) 1949.
9. China Division Committee, February 28, 1950, 13, folder: China Division Jan-Dec 1950, General Conference Archives.

10. The acronym SU stands for "Standard Unit", which was a unit of budgetary measure adopted by China Division in 1949 to minimize confusion in accounting records as the country was about to transit from the Nationalist Government to the People Republic of China. For further explanation, see China Division Committee minutes, January 17, 1949, 10, Folder China Division Jan - May 1949, General Conference Archives; detail for the accounting procedure on standard unit basis was recorded on pp.19-20 in the same minutes.
11. W. H. Branson, "The China Division," *ARH*, July 19, 1950, 175.
12. China Division Committee, May 7, 1950, 37.
13. "Institutions in the China Division," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1951), 115.
14. Paul Wu, "Gulangyu Joins UNESCO's World Heritage List, Covering Ten Christian Heritages," *China Christian Daily*, June 9, 2017, accessed March 8, 2019, http://www.chinachristiandaily.com/news/category/2017-07-09/gulangyu-joins-unesco-s-world-heritage-list--covering-ten-christian-heritages_5236.

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