

Chongzhen, Han (1859–1927)

MILTON HOOK

Milton Hook, Ed.D. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, the United States). Hook retired in 1997 as a minister in the Greater Sydney Conference, Australia. An Australian by birth Hook has served the Church as a teacher at the elementary, academy and college levels, a missionary in Papua New Guinea, and as a local church pastor. In retirement he is a conjoint senior lecturer at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored *Flames Over Battle Creek*, *Avondale: Experiment on the Dora*, *Desmond Ford: Reformist Theologian*, *Gospel Revivalist* the *Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series*, and many magazine articles. He is married to Noeleen and has two sons and three grandchildren.

Han Chongzhen (), also known as Han Tsung Dien, became a Christian in his thirties and served as a gospel evangelist with the China Inland Mission and the Seventh-day Adventist Mission for a total of thirty-six years.

Early Ministry

Han Chongzhen was born in 1859 at Siang Cheng Hsien () in Honan (now Henan) Province, central China. When he was thirty-two years of age, he met a member of the China Inland Mission, the British-based Protestant enterprise founded by James Hudson Taylor. The encounter was the catalyst that prompted Han to accept Christ as his Savior. He returned home and despite initial opposition, his extended family and many neighbors were won to Christianity by his testimony. He was persuaded to be a full-time missionary himself. The Boxer Rebellion (1899--1901), which was anti-Christian and anti-foreigner, hampered Han's mission activities. He determined to report the true situation to government authorities; so, he set out on foot for Shanghai. His plea was heeded, but the real relief from persecution came soon after with the defeat of the uprising by overseas militia!¹

After the Boxer Rebellion, Han began witnessing in the northern parts of Jiangsu Province and later nurtured an independent Protestant church in Yingshang (), Anhui Province. While in this ministry in around 1909, there came into his hands some Seventh-day Adventist literature distributed by his friend Liu Zhenbang (, a.k.a. Liu Djen Bang). He was impressed by the nature of the tracts but had some questions. So, he wrote to his friend Liu to see if Liu could go to Yingshang for further discussion. Upon receiving the letter, Liu immediately went to Yingshang with Elder Arthur Allum to meet with Han. After they explained some of the finer points of the Adventist beliefs, Han decided to keep the Sabbath.² But when Han shared the new-found faith with his fellow ministers in the independent Protestant group, they ostracized him.³

A Change in Ministry

In 1910 Han united with the Seventh-day Adventist Church by baptism.⁴ He remained a zealous missionary but adopted a new emphasis for his faith. He located at Ying Shang Hsien (), Anhui, which became a provincial hub

for his mission activities. His converts included a Taoist priest.⁵ He gathered a group of 21 baptized members, and these were organized into the first Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Anhui Province.⁶ His wife was equally focused on his work and assisted him by conducting Bible classes. She also taught the congregation to sing Christian hymns.⁷ Together they traveled throughout the Jiangsu⁸ and Anhui Provinces, exploring possibilities for expansion and pioneering new pockets of gospel interest.⁹

Han was listed as an ordained minister for the first time in the 1918 *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*.¹⁰ He was apparently ordained in Shanghai at the April 1917 First Biennial Session of the Asiatic Division (allowing for a misspelling of his name).¹¹ At the same series of meetings he was elected to the executive committee of the newly-formed North China Union Conference.¹² Later, under a reorganization of the Chinese mission field, he was elected to the executive committee of the East China Union Mission.¹³ Toward the end of his ministry, he served on the executive committee of the Anhui Mission.¹⁴ During his last years, he gathered together a community of believers at Taiping, Anhui Province. It was estimated that during his seventeen years of service he won 280 individuals to the church, some later being ordained as ministers and others working as mission school teachers, colporteurs, or office secretaries.¹⁵

Closing Days

On Sabbath, October 8, 1927, Han preached to a group of soldiers and concluded by saying, "I have done my duty." There was an air of finality about it as if he had a premonition that his ministry would soon close. Three days later, October 11, he passed away peacefully at Taiping. His wife, together with son Isaac and the Christian community, mourned the loss of one they spoke of as "a wise and faithful counselor, a true friend and brother."¹⁶

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NOTES

1. John G. Gjording, "Han Tsung Djen," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, April 1928, 22.
2. David Shen, "Han Chongzhen ()" *Zhōng Huá Shèng Gōng Shǐ* [*Chinese SDA History*], Samuel Young (editor), Hong Kong: Chinese Union Mission, 2002, 506-507.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Orrin A. Hall, "East China," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, December 1, 1913, 5.
6. William A. Wentworth, "China," *ARH*, July 7, 1910, 9-10.
7. "China," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, May 1, 1913, 11.
8. Elizabeth B. Hall, "Notes From East China," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, April 1, 1917, 3-4.
9. Orrin A. Hall, "Anhui Mission," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, January 15, 1917, 3.
10. "Anhui Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1918), 157.
11. "Summary of Proceedings," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, April-June 1917, 45-60, 66.
12. Nelson Z. Town, "Organisation of the North China Union Conference," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, July 1, 1917, 13-14.
13. "East China Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1920), 160.
14. E.g., "Anhui Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1924), 128-129.
15. John G. Gjording, "Han Tsung Djen," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, April 1928, 22.
16. Ibid.

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