

Khasi Jaintia Conference

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Khasi Jaintia Conference is an administrative unit and part of Northeast India Union Section in the Southern Asia Division of Seventh-day Adventists. Khasi Jaintia Conference was organized in 1938 and reorganized in 1975 and 1996. Its territory consists of the districts of East Khasi Hills, Khasi Hills, Ri-Bhoi, and West Khasi Hills in the state of Meghalaya, India.

Beginnings

Adventism entered Meghalaya with the E. E. Hardinge family in 1915. The Hardinges had learned of Adventism in Calcutta through the purchase of a vegetarian recipe book in 1908 and Bible studies that followed.¹ In 1915 the survey department of the government of India transferred Hardinge to Shillong to make maps of the remote portions of Assam. They invited friends for worship and Bible studies to their home. Pastors Wellman, Wilson, Wyman, and Raymond came for summer vacations and E. A. Gilliard and family stayed for a year, fostering interests.² S. A. Wellman, who conducted a week of prayer at the home of the Hardinges in 1925, reported that E. E. Dorum had accepted the Adventist message and helped Hardinge translate and print a tract on Christ's second coming which they distributed widely.³ In 1928, 84-year-old Mr. Mathews and the Hardinge's sons, Leslie and Mervyn, were baptized in Shillong.⁴

Luther and Georgia Burgess who had pioneered Adventism in Calcutta and UP/Punjab, had retired in 1926 and moved to La Mesa, California,⁵ but returned to India in 1930. Though they initially went to Ranchi,⁶ they soon moved to Shillong. W. A. Barlow who had pioneered the work among the Santals, made frequent trips to the Khasi hills after his wife and daughter passed away, to sell books and distribute literature during the 1930s.⁷ He eventually retired in Shillong and died there in 1942.⁸ The Hardinges, the Barlows, and the Burgesses all held meetings in their homes.⁹

The Hardinges left Shillong in 1933. They donated a portion of the proceeds from the sale of their home to be held for the establishment of a training school.¹⁰ The Burgesses left Shillong permanently at the end of 1934 for California.¹¹ They donated their home, "Pisgah," to the church, and the income from rent added to the Hardinge Fund.¹² The first local persons to be baptized in Shillong were R. E. Rajee and his wife whom Luther Burgess

baptized just before he and his wife departed in 1934.¹³

Several Seventh-day Adventist Yearbooks date the beginning of the Shillong Mission Station to 1930, the time when the Burgesses moved to Shillong. Though they were retired, they continued to start new work.¹⁴

The first regular missionary posted in Shillong was C. A. Larsen in 1934. A note in the *Eastern Tidings* reads: "It has been arranged for Brother and Sister Larsen to spend some time in working for the people in Assam, and they are now located in Shillong for that purpose."¹⁵ Barlow confirmed their arrival and mentions that they were engaged in study of the Khasi language in 1934.¹⁶ However, in about a year Larsen left to assist in institutional administration in the Northwest India Union Mission.¹⁷

The Assam Mission Field organized in 1935 when J. F. Ashlock, former home missionary and youth secretary for the division, accepted a call to Assam. He had just returned from furlough, and because of the shortage of pastors, the division requested him to consider pioneering in Assam.¹⁸ Ashlock held his first communion service with three converts, which included R. E. Rajee and his wife.¹⁹

The Langes moved to Assam Mission Field in the Northeast India Union Mission in 1939.²⁰ Oliver Lange had charge of education and Young People's Missionary Volunteers (now Youth Department). He soon started a school in Jowai and established the Jowai Mission Station.

From Assam Section to Northeast India Section

In 1937 administration, which had downgraded the Northeast India Union Mission to mission status during the worst years of the depression, restored it to a union after a gap of five years. At this time leaders organized the Assam Mission Field, one of several new local missions. The Assam Mission Field encompassed the former state of Assam, now currently divided into seven states and Bhutan.²¹

With the North East Reorganization Act of 1972, the Government of India granted full statehood to Manipur, Meghalaya, and Tripura, and converted the Mizo Hills and NEFA (North East Frontier Agency, today Arunachal Pradesh) into Union Territories. They had previously all been part of the state of Assam. Reflecting this new situation, the church renamed the "Assam Section" as the "Northeast Section."²² Later leadership adjusted the title to the "Northeast India Section."²³

From Northeast India Section to Khasi Jaintia Conference

For about 20 years Adventists confined their work in Assam to the Shillong and the Khasi-speaking people. However, soon missionaries started moving into interior regions that spoke other languages. When Adventism entered the other hill areas, the people responded, and the work progressed rapidly, especially among the Mizos and the Manipuris, but also among the Nagas and the Garos.

In 1975 the church separated Mizoram off and organized it into the Mizo Section. The reasons cited for the decision concerned the distance and therefore time and expense for travel from Shillong and the increase in membership of the Northeast and the Mizo region.²⁴ The Mizo Section also included the Tripura and Kachar areas. The Northeast India Section retained Arunachal, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Tripura.

At the end of 1981 church administration organized the Manipur/Nagaland Section with headquarters at Imphal,²⁵ though it was not until April 1982 that they appointed the officers and executive committee.²⁶

When the church split off Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, they became the new Himalayan Region, it left the Northeast India Section with only Meghalaya, so the latter became the Meghalaya Section.

The 1995 year-end meetings removed the Garo Hills area from the Meghalaya Section and organized it into the West Meghalaya Section. The remaining Khasi and Jaintia Hills area became the East Meghalaya Section.²⁷

The year-end division committee meetings formed a study commission with J. M. Campbell as chairperson to look into the request of the Northeast India Union Section to grant conference status to the East Meghalaya Section.²⁸ On January 24, 1998, the East Meghalaya Section became the Khasi Jaintia Conference.²⁹

Institutions

Brookside Adventist Higher Secondary School, Post Laitumkhrach; Shillong 793 003, Meghalaya; India.

Voice of Prophecy Correspondence School, Nongthymmai; Shillong 793 014, Meghalaya; India. Language: Khasi.

Executive Officers

Presidents: J. Frank Ashlock (1938-1942); Christian J. Jenson (1943-1946); J. F. Ashlock (1946-1949); N. O. Dahlsten (1949-1952); W. C. Rick (1952-1955); Harold T. Burr (1955-1959); B. Jack Williams (1960-1961); Charles A. Boykin (1962-1967); Ron N. Baird (1968-1971); Dapsingh Nongtudu (1972-1980); Jon I. Konghat (1981-1984); Dapsingh Nongtudu (1985-1990); Janmiet M. Dkhar (1991); Dennis Marang (1992); Malaki M. Rimsu (1993-1996); L. F. Lyngdoh (1997-2000); Hesland Nongkhlaw (2001-2005); Khrawbor B. Kharbteng (2005-2014); Wilson Lapasam (2015-).

Secretaries: J. F. Ashlock (1938-1939); R. S. Fernando (1940-1945); Chad B. Israel (1946-1947); Patrick Poole (1948-1949); R. J. Borrowdale (1949-1950); Patrick Poole (1951-1952); P. K. Peterson (1953-1954); M. D. Spicer (1955-1957); H. Hmingliana (1958); V. L. Chamliana (1959); Dapsingh Nongtudu (1960-1962); Richard Jonathan (1963-1964); Jon I. Konghat (1965-1970); Lal Hmingliana (1970-1975); Ripsung Hungyo (1976-1982) Dennis Marang (1983-1991); Malaki M. Rimsu (1992); Lionel Lyngdoh (1994-1996); Khrawbor Kharbteng (1997); Hesland Nongkhlaw (1998-2000); Khrawbor Kharbteng (2001-2004); Wilson Lapasam (2005-2014); Aibok Kharpran (2015-).

Treasurers: J. F. Ashlock (1938-1939); R. S. Fernando (1939-1946); Union treasurer-L. E. Allen (1947-1948); R. J. Borrowdale (1949-1950); Patrick Poole (1951-1952); P. K. Peterson (1953-1954); M. D. Spicer (1956-1958); B. J. Williams (1959-1960); Emmanuel Lakra (1961-1962); O. Richard Jonathan (1963-1965); C. J. Gorde (1966-1968); I. D. Solomon (1969-1971); Jon I. Konghat (1972); L. K. Neitham (1973-1976); K. C. Dass (1977-1980); B. Rimsu (1981-1984); D. Marang (1985-1986); James L. Konghat (1987-1989); K. C. Dass (1990-1992); James L. Konghat (1994-).

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