

Central China Mission (1909–1917)

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Between the years 1903 and 1908 Seventh-day Adventist missionaries were active in Central China.¹ Medical work was used to pioneer mission efforts in the province of Honan (now Henan) and was conducted by Drs. Arthur and Bertha Selmon and Drs. Harry and Maud Miller. In 1905 the first Sabbath School was organized, with a membership of only ten individuals. In 1906 Francis Arthur Allum and Percival Laird, followed by Roy Cottrell, evangelized further south in the province of Hunan.² At the same time the team in Henan was augmented with Eric Pilquist and John Westrup.³

The success and growth of mission efforts in China prompted a major organizational restructure in 1909. The entire China Union Mission was divided into ten separate mission fields, each encompassing up to four provinces. Some were mission fields on paper only, because no work had been attempted in the territory at that point in time. Much of inland China was designated the Central Mission Field. It comprised the provinces of Henan, Hubei, Hunan, and Jiangxi, and was placed under the management of Arthur Selmon.⁴ The following year this arrangement was refined with the Central Mission Field subdivided into two separate missions, the North Central China Mission (Henan and Hubei) and the South Central China Mission (Hunan and Jiangxi). Arthur Allum was the elected director of the North Central China Mission, and Roy Cottrell was director of the South Central China Mission.⁵ These two territories were reunited in 1912 to form the Central China Mission (CCM) () under the leadership of Roy Cottrell.⁶

The three principal figures in the history of the CCM were Selmon, Allum, and Cottrell. Other American missionaries who arrived to assist them were Orrin Hall, Esta Miller, Dr. Andrew Larson,⁷ Charles Lillie, Frederick Lee, S. G. White,⁸ J. O. Ryd, and Orvie Gibson.⁹ From 1914 onwards two national men featured in the missionary team. They were Liu Djen Bang (Liu Zhenbang) who was placed in Henan, and Hwang Dzun Dao (Huang Chongdao) located in Hunan.¹⁰

The work of a large team of self-supporting canvassers proved to be vital for the expansion of the mission influence,¹¹ extending into neighboring provinces such as Shensi (Shanxi), further inland.¹² The first canvasser's training institute in China was held by Charles Lillie in 1913 in the province of Hunan.¹³ In addition to book sales, the team gained thousands of subscriptions for the magazine *Shi Djao Yeuh Bao* (*Signs of the Times*).¹⁴ Not

everything went smoothly for the missionaries. Opposition arose from adherents of another faith. At one time the situation degenerated into assaults on church members and looting and destruction of mission property by the antagonists until the local magistrate intervened.¹⁵

Elementary schools were begun at provincial headquarters and various out-stations. In 1913 it was reported that six schools were started in the vicinity of Chowkiakow (Zhoujiakou), Henan province.¹⁶ The better students advanced to the China Union Mission Training School in Nanjing, Jiangsu province. When this senior school first opened in 1912 there were 32 students enrolled, six each from Henan and Hubei, nine from Hunan, and the remainder from other areas.¹⁷

The mid-1917 progress report from the CCM painted a pleasing picture of evangelistic results. Twenty-five churches were operational with a combined baptized membership of 936. From these national converts, 50 men and 17 women were fully employed on the ministerial staff. The number of Sabbath Schools had grown to 58, with a total membership of 1,575. Eighteen church schools and a central provincial school were conducted with a total enrollment of 300 students. The vast majority of activities took place in Henan, Hubei, and Hunan; but a late opening was secured in Jiangxi in 1914 that welcomed 50 converts, with ten of the young people training in the school at Nanjing.¹⁸

The strength of the CCM brought about a further organizational restructure in 1917. At that time the CCM was dissolved and the four central provinces were each established as separate missions. At the same time some surrounding provinces also became mission entities. Mission expansion in China essentially spread in a ripple effect from the central provinces.¹⁹

Directors of the Central China Mission

Arthur Selmon (1909); Francis Allum (North Central) and Roy Cottrell (South Central) (1910-1911); Roy Cottrell (1912-1917), with Selmon acting during Cottrell's 1915-1916 furlough.

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. For an overview see Joshua S. Chiu, "China Union Mission (1901-1912)," *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, July 29, 2022, accessed April 7, 2022, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=C8AX&highlight=China|Union|Mission>.
2. Nannie L. Woodward, "Sabbath School Work," *Asiatic Division Mission News*, August 1, 1915, 22-24.
3. "China Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1907), 101-102.
4. "China Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1910), 133-134.
5. "China Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1911), 132-134.
6. "Central China Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1913), 142.
7. "North Central China Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1912), 148-149.
8. "Central China Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1913), 142.
9. "Central China Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1915), 129.
10. "Central China Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1914), 126-127.
11. E.g., "Brother F.A. Allum, writing from..." *Asiatic Division Mission News*, May 1912, 4-5.
12. Roy F. Cottrell, "Report of Central China Mission," *Asiatic Division Mission News*, April-June 1917, 31-33.
13. "Brother C.P. Lillie sends the following..." *Asiatic Division Mission News*, June 1, 1913, 9.
14. Arthur C. Selmon, "Hunan General Meeting," *Asiatic Division Mission News*, November 15, 1915, 1.
15. "A Thrilling Experience in Hunan, China," *Asiatic Division Mission News*, July 1, 1912, 8-9.
16. "Brother J.J. Westrup writes as follows..." *Asiatic Division Mission News*, April 1913, 2-3.
17. "Opening of the Training School," *Asiatic Division Mission News*, November 1, 1912, 9.

18. Roy F. Cottrell, "Report of Central China Mission," *Asiatic Division Mission News*, April-June 1917, 31-33.

19. "North China Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1918), 156-160.

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