

Archivio della Congregazione per l'Evangelizzazione dei Popoli "De Propaganda Fide"

(Archives of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples or "De Propaganda Fide" [For the Propagation of the Faith])

Official Abbreviation: APF

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Date of Compilation of Entry: October 2003 - January 2012

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Historical Background

The Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (*Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*; PF), today officially called "Congregation for the Evangelization of the Peoples," was established in 1622 by Pope Gregory XV. Through this move, the papacy tried to wrest some control of the missionary effort from the Portuguese and Spanish crowns, in order to free as much as possible the church from the political agenda of the colonial powers, and to limit their influence on ecclesiastical matters. This attempt was only partially successful, and encountered fierce resistance from secular governments. The first Vicar Apostolic for China, François Pallu MEP, reached China only in 1684, and the Vicars Apostolic there continued to experience

jurisdictional problems with religious orders and colonial officials for a long time. The APF originated with the documents collected by the first secretary of the Congregation, Francesco Ingoli, and has grown into a large and rich repository on the history of the missions, and of many countries of the world as well. The Archives contain documents from the foundation of PF around 1622 until 1940, and are currently opened for consultation up to 1939, including documents of the pontificate of Pius XI (1922-1939), open for consultation in 2005-2006 (800 boxes; an inventory is in progress).

On-site and published catalogues / other search tools

For a general presentation and a useful inventory, see Kowalsky, N. OMI, and J. Metzler OMI. *Inventory of the Historical Archives of the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of the Peoples or 'De Propaganda Fide'*. Pontificia Universitas Urbaniana - Studia Urbaniana, 33. Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 1988 (3rd edition); a convenient finding list of most volumes on China in APF is contained in D'Arelli 1995.

In the reading room of the Archives are located several ancient manuscript indexes to most documentary series of APF. Among the most useful for research on China (before 1893) are the indexes to the *Acta CP - Cina* ("Indice degli Atti per la Cina," by topic and place). Two binders contain typed inventories to the series *Acta S. Congregationis (Acta)* & *Scritture riferite nelle Congregazioni Generali (SOCG)*, and *Scritture riferite nei Congressi (SC)*. A microfilm of the ancient indexes of APF is deposited in the Vatican Film Library at St. Louis University (St. Louis, Missouri, USA); see Lowrie J. Daly, "Microfilmed Materials from the Archive of the Sacred Congregation 'De Propaganda Fide'," *Manuscripta* 10 (1966): 139-144; and <http://slulink.slu.edu/special/vfl/jsuitca/congdpf.html>

A new typed and detailed series of indexes in 25 volumes called "Rubrica - Indice" covers the modern period (1893-1921). It is based on an organization by code (*rubrica*), and the "Rubrica" for China ("Cina") is no. 130 (see below).

A "Catalogue of Chinese Documents included in the Archivio Storico 'de Propaganda Fide' (1622-1830)," a collaborative project between the Urbaniana University Centre for Chinese Studies and Sinology K.U. Leuven (Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium) is in progress (2012); for more information see <http://hanxueurbaniana.blogspot.com/2010/09/048-progetto-archivio.html>

Major Collections of the Archives on China (Manuscripts and Other Materials)

The organization of the Archives reflects the bureaucratic and functional structure of the Congregation over time. The main business of the Congregation was handled at the regular meetings of the commissions of cardinals attached to it. These gatherings, held every week or two, were called "General Meetings" (*Congregationes Generales*), and the decisions reached at them were recorded in the series entitled *Acta S. Congregationis (Acta)*. Connected to the *Acta* (which are arranged in strict chronological order and indexed), is another archival series, the *Scritture originali riferite nelle Congregazioni Generali (SOCG)*, i.e. "the original papers referred to at the general meetings." These are the original documents on which the cardinals' decisions were based. The First Series of SOCG (until 1669; vols 1- 417) is loosely organized by place, and contains **relatively little on China** (see Fenning 1971 & 1973, Metzler 1988 and D'Arelli 1995); the Second Series of SOCG, or "**Collezione Moderna**" (1669 to 1893; vols. 418-1044), is instead chronologically linked to the *Acta*, and contains a **higher number of documents on China**.

“Special Meetings” (*congregationes particulares*) were also held on topics of great importance. Materials on China can be found in the regular series *Congregationes Particulares*, but are particularly abundant in the documentary series emanating from a “Special Congregation for Chinese and East Indian Matters” (*Congregatio Particularis de rebus Sinarum et Indiarum Orientalium*). This series is divided into two parts. The *Acta Congregationis Particularis super rebus Sinarum et Indiarum Orientalium* (Acta CP; 1667-1856; 24 vols.; 6 volumes of indexes by topics and places are available in the reading room, “Indice degli Atti per la Cina”) contain in compact volumes, mainly in Italian and Latin, the summaries of the original documents received from the missions, and the decisions taken at the meetings of the Special Congregation. The *Scritture Originali della Congregazione Particolare dell’Indie e della Cina* (SOCP; 1667-1856; 81 vols.) are the multi-lingual original letters and reports from the field on which the decisions were taken. The materials are arranged chronologically according to the date of the meeting during which the matter at hand was discussed, and not according to the date of the original documents. These volumes are chronologically linked to the *Acta CP*, which can thus be used as a sort of rough index.

Another important series is called *Scritture riferite nei Congressi* (Documents referred to in the Weekly Meetings; SC; 1622-1892; 1451 vols.). This section contains documents which were not discussed in the so-called General Meetings (i.e. “Congregazioni Generali,” held every few months), but rather used in the weekly meetings of the Cardinal Prefect. The *First Series* of the SC consists of multi-lingual original letters and reports from individuals in Europe and, less frequently, in missionary territories. They mostly concern routine matters (**90 volumes** are specifically on China and East Asia, under the two sections entitled *Indie Orientali e Cina* [1623-1799], and *Cina e Regni Adiacenti* [1798-1892]), and, together with the SOCP, is the “most precious from a historical point of view because [it] reflect[s] in a certain way the daily life of the missions” (Kowalski-Metzler 1988, p. 49). The materials are arranged chronologically by date of the letters. After the relocation of the Archives to the campus of the Urbaniana University in 2002, previously inaccessible volumes of *Miscellanea* have been added to the sections of the *First Series* **regarding China (69 new volumes**, including materials on the Chinese Rites Controversy, **in the section *Indie Orientali e Cina*, and 18 new volumes in the section *Cina e Regni Adiacenti***). The *Second Series* of the SC contains administrative documents regarding PF and some religious congregations connected to PF (160 vols.). A typed simple inventory of the SC collection is available in the reading room, and on the archives’ website (see tab “Fondi”).

The old **Archives of the Procurator of Propaganda Fide in East Asia** (*Archivio Procura*, located at different times in Canton, Macao and Hong Kong) were transferred to Rome in the 1920s, and are also kept in APF. They consist of 47 containers of letters by missionaries and Chinese priests, and of all kind of administrative materials related to the financial and disciplinary functions of the Procurator, for a total of around 20,000 documents. These materials are in a poor state of preservation, and so far they have only been cleaned and partly inserted in transparent envelopes. After being inventoried and microfilmed, it might be possible that portions of the Procure Archives will be gradually opened to the public in the future (for details see Metzler 1985; D’Arelli 1995). A few other series also contain some materials on China.

Modern materials (1893-1939) are found in the so-called *New System*. Starting in 1893, documents were archived according to *Rubriche* (i.e. code numbers corresponding to topics) and *Protocollo* (i.e. protocol numbers according to the order in which the documents were received). An explanation of the system and a list of the topics and code numbers can be found in Kowalski-Metzler 1988, pp. 89-94. China’s code number is 130.

Location

Previously located in the historic palace of Propaganda Fide near Piazza di Spagna, at the center of Rome, the APF have been transferred in 2002 on the campus of the Pontifical Urbanian University, close to the Vatican City. For the location of the university, see <http://www.urbaniana.edu/>; or also <http://www.archiviostoricopropaganda.va/>

Access and Restrictions

A letter of introduction and a form of identification is necessary. Thereafter, formalities are minimal, and follow standard archival procedures (for the rules of APF, see website and Kowalski-Metzler 1988, pp. 101-103).

Facilities and Services

The APF is located in a modern building, air-conditioned and controlled by cameras. It consists of a reception hall, a reading room with space for around 20 readers (tables are equipped with electric plugs), a wardrobe where visitors' belongings can be stored, a small specialized library of around 14,000 volumes, two climatized repository rooms, a room for precious parchments and other rare documents, and a restoration cabinet. Microfilms, photocopies and photographs can be ordered, and will be mailed upon payment. See <http://www.archiviostoricopropaganda.va/> for further details on personnel and schedules.

Schedule

The APF is open from Monday to Thursday, 8.30 to 17:30, and on Friday, 8:30 to 13:30; it follows the calendar of holidays of the Vatican City. It has a 2-month summer closure to the public (July 15 to September 15).

Literature on the Archives:

Blouin, Francis X. Jr., and et alii, eds. *Vatican Archives. An Inventory and Guide to Historical Documents of the Holy See*. New York - Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 38-62.

D'Arelli, Francesco. "The Catholic Mission in China in the 17th-18th Centuries. Archives and Libraries in Italy: Preliminary Repertoire." *East and West (IsIAO)* 47, no. 1-4 (December) (1997): 293-340.

D'Arelli, Francesco. "La Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide e la Cina nei secoli XVII-XVIII: le missioni, la Procura ed i Procuratori nella documentazione dell'Archivio storico di Roma." *Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale* 55, no. 2 (1995): 218-231 & 326-352.

Fenning, H. OP. "The Dominicans and Propaganda Fide, 1622-1668. A Catalogue of the First Series of the SOCG, volumes 1 to 30 [Part 1]." *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 41 (1971): 241-323; and "The Dominicans and Propaganda Fide, 1622-1668. A Catalogue of the First Series of the SOCG, volumes 31 to 55 [Part 2]." *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 43 (1973): ?

Kowalsky, N. OMI, and J. Metzler OMI. *Inventory of the Historical Archives of the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of the Peoples or 'De Propaganda Fide'*. Pontificia

Universitas Urbaniana - Studia Urbaniana, 33. Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 1988 (3rd edition).

Metzler, Josef. "Das Archiv der Missionsprokur der Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide in Canton, Macao und Hong Kong." In *La conoscenza dell'Asia e dell'Africa in Italia nei secoli XVIII e XIX*, ed. Ugo Marazzi et al., vol. II, 75-139. Napoli: IUO, 1985.

Published Materials from the Archives on China (sample)

Willeke, Bernward. "The report of the apostolic visitation of D. Emmanuele Conforti on the Franciscan Missions in Shansi, Shensi and Kansu (1798)." *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 84, no. 1-2 (1991): 197-271. [A report in APF, SOCP *Indie Orientali*, 1796-1801, ff. 469-489.]

Several reports and letters in the collection *Sinica Franciscana*.