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Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission, 1834-1963

Foundation and Purpose:

The *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission* began to appear in 1834. The journal's early purpose can easily be gathered from the subtitle: "Collection of edifying letters written by the priests of this Congregation employed in the foreign missions." The periodical was founded under initiative of Jean-Baptiste Etienne in his responsibility for the foreign missions of the Congregation. In this, he was following earlier precedents, such as those of the Jesuits, who in the eighteenth century had publicized their missions in *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*; and the Foreign Mission Society of Paris with its *Nouvelles lettres édifiantes des Missions de la Chine et des Indes orientales*, from 1818 to 1823. Etienne most closely copied the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, whose articles he copied and imitated in content, edifying purpose, and format.

Publication:

Volumes 1-10, 1834-1845, had a slightly irregular publication schedule, appearing three times a year originally. Its content had been originally restricted to news from Vincentian missions in the Middle East and China, but news from the American mission was offered in volume 4, 1838.

Beginning in volume 11, 1846, a more general coverage began, and the journal was published four times yearly on the initiative of the general assembly of 1843 that elected Jean-Baptiste Etienne as superior general.

The title of the *Annales* changed over the years to reflect different perspectives. From 1834 to 1861 it was *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission ou Recueil de lettres édifiantes écrites par les Prêtres de cette Congrégation employés dans les missions Etrangères*.

Beginning in 1862, the presence of the Daughters of Charity in the foreign missions was recognized: *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission ou Recueil de lettres édifiantes écrites par les Prêtres de cette Congrégation et par les Filles de la Charité employés dans les missions Etrangères, paraissant tous les trois mois*. 1862-1873.

In 1874, however, the focus broadened beyond simply foreign missions to general news of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity. This caused a change of title: *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission ou Recueil de lettres édifiantes écrites par les Prêtres de cette Congrégation et par les Filles de la Charité, paraissant tous les trois mois*. 1874-1914.

Since 1914, only small alterations were made to the title.

The final publication, volume 127 (1963) was an important book-length history of the Vincentian mission in China.

Content:

The importance of this series lies in its presentation of first-hand reports from the works of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity. Since the purpose was to present “a collection of edifying letters,” material that was controversial or non-edifying was regularly eliminated from these studies. Regrettably, most of the original letters were destroyed after publication, but the few that remain demonstrate that an editorial hand was active.

Besides regular reports, sent often to the general administration of the Congregation, maps, charts, portraits and eventually photographs were also included. Necrologies, the listing of the deceased members of the two congregations, began to be included in volume 61 (1896).

A feature of the later years, under the editor, Alfred Milon, was a large number of important historical studies, of individual works, individual provinces or the entire Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity. Among these was the series “Anciennes Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission,” or a history of the beginnings of the Congregation arranged year by year. It began with “Tome Premier,” 1912 (to 1628), bound with Annales, vol. 77; a revised version appeared 1926-1927, but was not continued.

Biographical notices appeared commonly, either written for publication or copied from other publications. Bibliographical notices also appeared in later years, mainly for books published about the two congregations or by their members (almost entirely by the Vincentians.)

Publication was disrupted during the Second World War, and volumes for several years were edited every two years: 106-107 (1941-1942), with continuous pagination; 108-109 (1943-1944), with continuous pagination; 110-111 (1945-1946), with continuous pagination; 112-113 (1947-1948), with continuous pagination; 114-115 (1949-1950), with continuous pagination. Volumes 119-120 (1954-1955) followed the same procedure.

Finding information:

Each volume has a table of contents at the close.

The individual volumes are searchable electronically.

There are also four indices, three published and one unpublished:

1. *Tables Générales chronologique et alphabétique des cinquante premiers volumes des Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission. 1834-1885.* Paris, 1886.

2. *Répertoire historique...et la table générale des Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission 1834-1899.* Paris, 1900; also, a second edition, begun in 1914 but never completed; pp. 1-200 (stopping in mid-sentence).

3. *Table alphabétique des Auteurs et des Eléments de Biographies. 1834-1937.* = Supplément No. 1, 1937.

4. “Inventaire Sommaire des Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission [1900-1963],” by Felix Contassot, C.M., 1966.

(The *Table alphabétique* has only a very selective listing of topics.)

A collection of the geographical maps published in the *Annales* until 1905 was published separately as *Petit Atlas de la Congrégation des Prêtres de la Mission...* Paris, 1906. Besides the

maps, some historical information accompanies them, with an indication of the currency in use, measures of distance and the like.

Other editions:

At the beginning, these editions of the *Annales* published only materials translated from French. Fairly quickly, however, these carried materials that did not appear in the French original, both written material as well as maps and illustrations. In some cases, original material published in these editions was translated into French for the *Annales*.

Spanish: *Anales de la Congregación de la Misión*, 1893---. This was published by the Spanish, later the Madrid, province. In addition, the Province of Barcelona published its own *Anales*, called *Germanor*, from 1916 to 1938, and then *Anales de la Provincia de Barcelona*, to 1974, with a special single number, 1981, on the mission of San Pedro Sula (Honduras).

Italian: *Annali della Missione*, 1894-1999, published originally in Turin, later Rome; succeeded by *Carità e Missione*. The Table of Contents for each volume is available on Via Sapientiae.

German: *Annalen der Congregation der Mission*, 1894-1915, resumed, 1935-1938; published Regensburg (1894), then Graz, Austria, to 1914; supplemented by *St. Vinzenz*, a publication of the German province, 1926-1938.

English: *Annals of the Congregation of the Mission*, 1894-1925, published at Emmitsburg, Maryland.

Polish: *Roczniki Obydwoch Zgromadzen Sw. Wincentego a Paulo*, Krakow. 1895-1937, interrupted between 1915 and 1920.