

Giovanni Da Montecorvino Encyclopedia Article

Giovanni Da Montecorvino

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Giovanni Da Montecorvino

1246-1328

Founder of the Catholic mission in China. After the Nestorian priest Rabban Bar Sauma (c. 1220-1294) visited from China, Pope Nicholas IV decided to send Giovanni, then serving as a missionary in Persia, further east. Giovanni departed in 1289 with letters to a number of rulers along the way, from the king of Armenia to Kublai Khan (1215-1294) himself. He stopped in India for more than a year and converted some 100 people, but by the time he arrived in China in 1294, Kublai was dead. In 1299 and 1305 he established two churches in Peking, and during this time bought from slavery around 150 boys. These he educated, using the Chinese language as well as Latin and Greek, in Christianity and the Catholic liturgy. He eventually translated the New Testament and Psalms into Chinese, and by the time he died, the See of Zaiton was well established.