

Matteo Ricci Encyclopedia Article

Matteo Ricci

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Matteo Ricci

1552-1610

Italian Jesuit missionary who brought European mathematics, geography and Christian teachings to the Chinese, who called him Li Ma-tou. After attending a Jesuit college, Ricci volunteered for missionary work in the Far East and voyaged to the Portuguese colonies at Goa (1578) and the island of Macao near Canton (1582), before being chosen to establish a Christian mission in mainland China. He settled in Chao-ch'ing in 1583, studying the Chinese language and culture and introducing the locals to the culture of Europe. Ricci also introduced the Chinese to Western geography, creating several influential maps, including a large world map with extensive geographical annotations (1584). From 1601, when he established a new mission in Peking, until his death in 1610, Ricci published several books in Chinese and conducted explorations of China's interiors.