



The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci

By Jonathan D. Spence

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From the renowned historian and author of *The Death of Woman Wang*, a vivid and gripping account of the 16th-century missionary's remarkable sojourn to Ming China

In 1577, the Jesuit Priest Matteo Ricci set out from Italy to bring Christian faith and Western thought to Ming dynasty China. To capture the complex emotional and religious drama of Ricci's extraordinary life, Jonathan Spence relates his subject's experiences with several images that Ricci himself created—four images derived from the events in the Bible and others from a book on the art of memory that Ricci wrote in Chinese and circulated among members of the Ming dynasty elite. A rich and compelling narrative about a fascinating life, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* is also a significant work of global history, juxtaposing the world of Counter-Reformation Europe with that of Ming China.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Matteo Ricci (1552-1616), an Italian Jesuit, entered China in 1583 to spread Catholicism in the largely Confucian country. In order to make a persuasive argument for the educated Chinese to abandon their traditional faith for the new one he was carrying, Ricci realized that he would have to prove the general superiority of Western culture. He did so by teaching young Confucian scholars tricks to increase their memory skills--an important advantage in a nation with countless laws and rituals that had to be learned by heart. Ricci attracted numerous students with this method; more important, Ricci came to have a sympathetic understanding for China that he communicated to Rome, and thence to the European nations at large.

Spence's portrait of Ricci is a gem of historical writing. --*Gregory MacNamee*

Review

Praise for *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*:

“An extraordinarily delicate achievement . . . Resembles the portrait of an age.”

—*The New York Times Book Review*

“A gripping portrait of late-sixteenth-century cultural history in both the West and the East.”

—**Natalie Zemon Davis, Princeton University, author of *The Return of Martin Guerre***

“An extraordinary tour de force, a work of literature and at the same time a remarkable wide-ranging use of historical sources. This is the kind of history that most people in the profession cannot even begin to write.”

—**John King Fairbank, Harvard University**

About the Author

Jonathan Spence's eleven books on Chinese history include *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*, *Treason by the Book*, and *The Death of Woman Wang*. His awards include a Guggenheim and a MacArthur Fellowship. He teaches at Yale University.

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