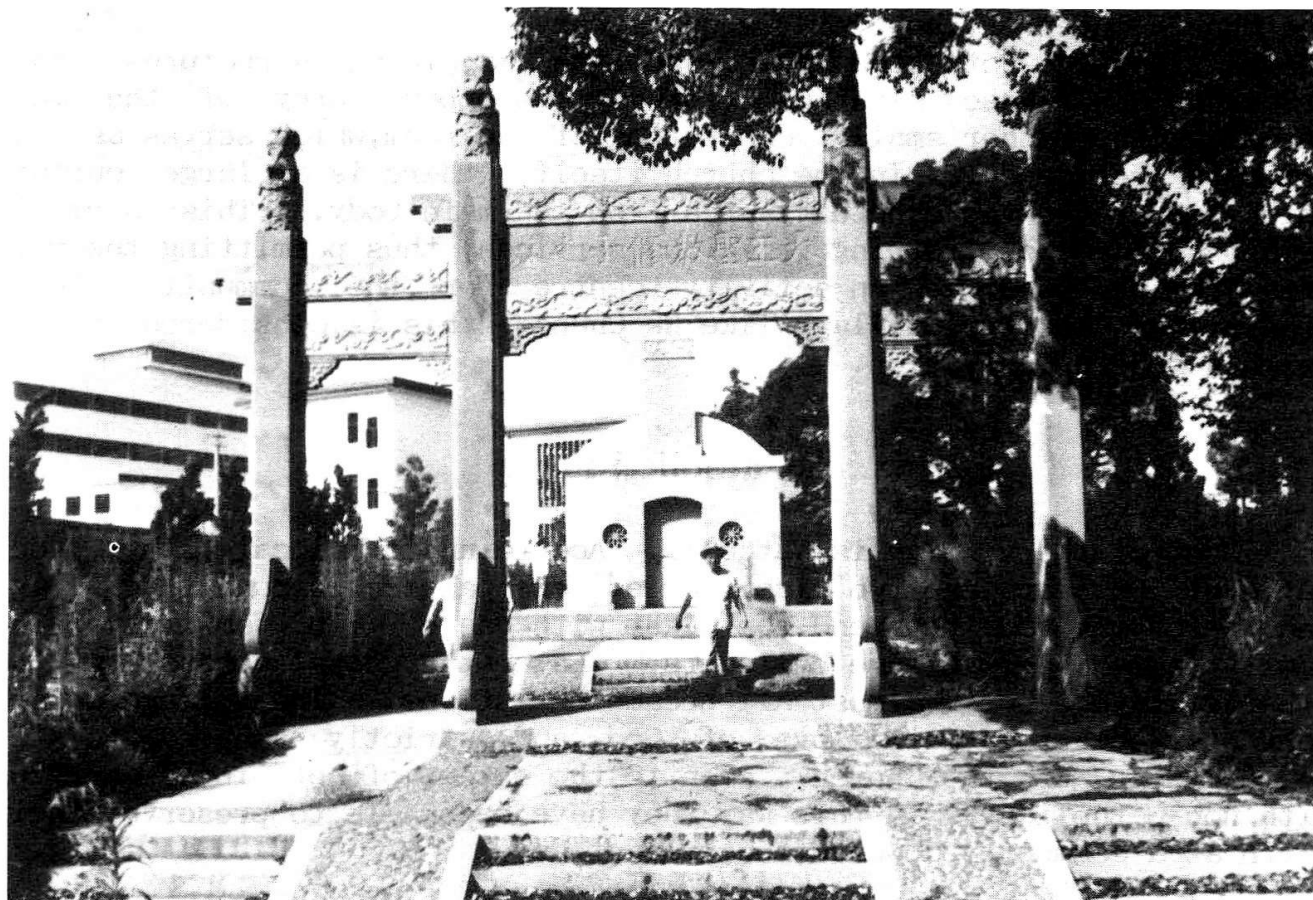


# A TRIBUTE IN STONE TO THE MEMORY OF MARTINO MARTINI



by Angelo Lazzarotto

The authorities of Hangzhou in Zhejiang province have been true to their word and have recently restored a monument in memory of Martino Martini, a 17th century Italian priest, who served his country of adoption so well. Martini was a fine artist, a good historian, but most of all a brilliant cartographer. He arrived in China in 1643 and made Hangzhou the centre of his activity. He died at the age of 47, leaving behind a community of Christians and a church that stands to this present day on Zhongshan Beilu.

Martini's main claim to fame was his "Novus Atlas Sinensis" which was published in Amsterdam in 1655 and which was a complete revision of the maps of China. The work was undertaken at the personal request of the Chinese Emperor. It was a painstaking work of inestimable value to scientists, explorers and government planners in both China and the West. He also wrote an early history of the rise of Manchu power and the defeat of the Ming dynasty, which was published in Italian under the title: De Bello Tartarico. His funeral monument, which had disappeared during the Cultural Revolution, has now been splendidly restored.

Martini was born in the city of Trent in 1614, and in 1980 when that city was organizing an international study congress on his life and work, a delegation was sent to China to unearth some facts about his sojourn there. At the time, city officials in Hangzhou assigned Professor Xu Mingde of Hangzhou University's history department to the project. During the past eight years, Professor Xu has continued to investigate and publish papers on the life and impact of Martini's work in China in the context of the other Jesuit missionaries and scholars who were working in China during that period. It was Professor Xu's suggestion that the original monument must have been located in the old Christian cemetery in the western section of the city.

The present monument is a handsome structure built, it is said, at the cost of 160,000 yuan. The entrance is marked by a beautiful Chinese portal, while the tomb proper can be found within a chapel like structure. Not far from a major thoroughfare, the monument is expected to draw foreign visitors, especially those from Italy, who will wish to pay their respects to this great Christian missionary, who is a symbol of friendship and dedicated service beyond the barriers of race and politics.

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