



# Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization

*Lionel M. Jensen*

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Could it be that the familiar and beloved figure of Confucius was invented by Jesuit priests? In *Manufacturing Confucianism*, Lionel M. Jensen reveals this very fact, demonstrating how sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Western missionaries used translations of the ancient *ru* tradition to invent the presumably historical figure who has since been globally celebrated as philosopher, prophet, statesman, wise man, and saint.

Tracing the history of the Jesuits' invention of Confucius and of themselves as native defenders of Confucius's teaching, Jensen reconstructs the cultural consequences of the encounter between the West and China. For the West, a principal outcome of this encounter was the reconciliation of empirical investigation and theology on the eve of the scientific revolution. Jensen also explains how Chinese intellectuals in the early twentieth century fashioned a new cosmopolitan Chinese culture through reliance on the Jesuits' Confucius and Confucianism. Challenging both previous scholarship and widespread belief, Jensen uses European letters and memoirs, Christian histories and catechisms written in Chinese, translations and commentaries on the *Sishu*, and a Latin summary of Chinese culture known as the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* to argue that the national self-consciousness of Europe and China was bred from a cultural ecumenism wherein both were equal contributors.

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