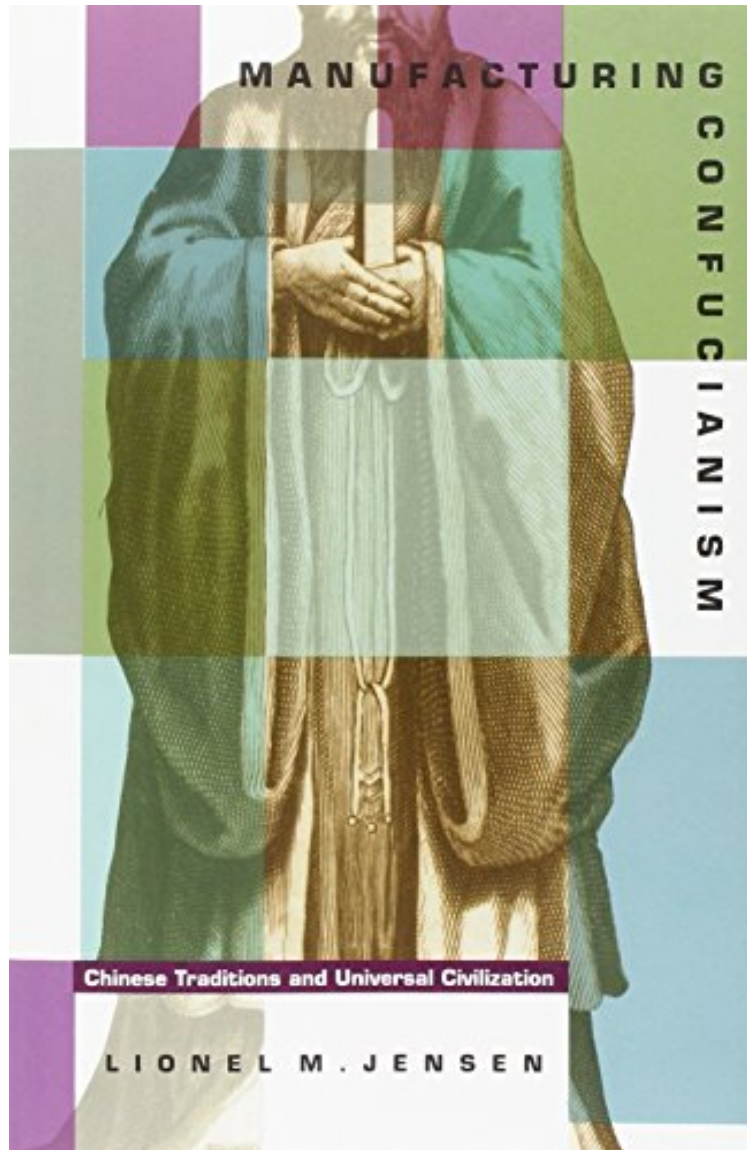


Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization

Lionel M. Jensen

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Lionel M. Jensen : Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization:

7 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Confusing ConfuciusBy reader 451 Manufacturing Confucianism

expounds the argument that it is seventeenth-century Jesuit missionaries who invented the Confucius that is known today as a founding figure of Chinese national culture. Thus Jensen writes that Matteo Ricci (who was in China 1583-1610) picked selectively at Zhu Xi's Four Books in shaping his own account of Confucianism, this for the purposes of presenting a version of it that was compatible with Christianity. This then became orthodoxy in Europe, where Ricci's vision was cemented by the Chinese Rites controversy. Jensen believes that a European vision of Confucius as embodying the true and original Chinese identity was re-imported, by Chinese writers, in the twentieth-century nationalist era. I can't comment on twentieth-century Chinese writing, but I have read a bit on the Ricci mission, and the evidence here seems stretched. My impression is not that Ricci obsessed with Confucius as a man. Ricci got his ideas, moreover, from a movement among the Mandarins, labeled the Donglin academy, that aimed to strip the Four Books and their exegesis from what they already judged were non-Chinese accretions from Buddhism and Taoism. Indeed, Jensen's argument revolves essentially around the name (the Chinese name was Kongzi, not Kong Fuzi, so what?) not the person or his writings, whose roles were always evident in the official cults and examination system. And Jensen himself admits that, besides 'ru' or what he contends was re-labeled as the 'Confucian' philosophy, there always existed a cult of Confucius, and that the ancient writings that were central to mandarin examinations were, in the Ming era, already attributed to Confucius or Kongzi. Though this is written respectfully and by someone who reads Chinese and has clearly studied its classics, I would be outraged if I were Chinese. And Jensen's style is opaque. It is unsurprising that, to be followed, the book should require some knowledge of Chinese history. But I got the feeling Jensen's obscurity and grand words at times serve as cover for a tenuous argument. Manufacturing Confucianism is, in every respect, hard to follow. 12 of 15 people found the following review helpful. A helpful thesis that helped shaped my perspectives about "Sinology" By Alex Hsu "Jensen's thesis is that the concepts that later Neo-Confucianist scholars and philosophers attribute to him are later interpolations of Jesuit missionaries..." - Morton the "Sinologist" No, it's not. This book is more about who Confucius and his teachings were *to* the very first Sinologists, and then, the first Chinese nationalists. It's less about Confucius than those who have imagined him! Can "Asian Studies" understand itself? What does an intercultural exchange look like, and how does it change them? Read this book! 15 of 37 people found the following review helpful. A ridiculous thesis that furthers euro-centricism By Stephen Jensen's thesis is that the concepts that later Neo-Confucianist scholars and philosophers attribute to him are later interpolations of Jesuit missionaries is insulting and inaccurate. One need only read the court documents from the Tang dynasty (618 to 907 CE), far before any missionaries (except Buddhist missionaries from India) travelled to the lands of China, to see the monumental impact that the ideas of Confucius had on imperial Chinese culture. This should go along side the many texts of historical revisionism (such as those scholars who believed the Jewish Holocaust never occurred). If you want to read the truth regarding Confucianism read professor Wing-Tsit Chan's

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.

A thesis that will scandalize cultural purists: the Confucius we love, honor and emulate springs from the intercultural trafficking of seventeenth-century Jesuit missionaries. Jensen argues his case on many planes, with nuance and bedrock affection for both China and sinology. Haun Saussy, Stanford University, and author of *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic*