Review Article

The Jesuits Did NOT Manufacture
"Confucianism"

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Lionel Jensen’s Manufacturing Confucianism (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 1997) is an important book. It springs from the author’s dissatisfaction with the fact that the ru 儒 tradition has been translated as "Confucianism." The latter term indeed fails to cover the complexity of meanings encompassed by ru. Jensen shows that the meanings of ru have changed in the course of time. He does so by tracing the origins of the term and the considerable variations in its meaning in the pre-Han and Han period, but also in the seventeenth century and in more recent times (pp. 53, 154 ff., 162, 168 ff.). As to the question of what ru really means, Jensen answers that "ru has been a salient term in the common fund of practices, words, and meanings that make up Chinese culture" (p. 155). An important contribution of his work is to remind readers of the diachronic and synchronic variety of meanings of key terms that we all too often use in one sense only.

Jensen, however, does not limit himself to the term ru. He raises a significant question: How is it that the ru tradition has been reduced to what we today call "Confucianism"? Here Jensen begins to trace the history of this term. "Confucianism" is derived from "Confucius," as well as the intermediate term "Confucian." The term "Confucius," as has been generally accepted, was coined by the Jesuits in the seventeenth century as a Latinization of Kongfuzi. But Jensen

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1 I would like to thank Dr. C. Defoort, Dr. A. Dudink, and Dr. N. Golvers (K.U. Leuven) and the participants in the "Seminar on Late Ming Culture" (IIAS, Leiden, 26 November 1998) for their criticism of earlier versions of this review. I owe the quotations to Kongfuzi (see section "Kongfuzi and Confucius") to A. Dudink.

2 For a recent overview of studies about ru in mainland China, see Zhao Shoufeng and Guo Yuliang 1988.

3 Unless indicated otherwise, all page references in this review are to Jensen 1997.
shakes the academic world by pointing out that *Kongfu*zi is almost absent from ancient Chinese texts. From this Jensen concludes that *Kongfu*zi, "Confucius," and also "Confucianism" were Jesuit "inventions." The key interpretative term he prefers, however, is "manufacture," by which he means "created, invented, fabricated" (p. 23). His use of the gerund "manufacturing" in the title of the book is "intended to accentuate the essential and continuing conceptual processes by which *ru* and Confucianism have been made and remade" (p. 24). Though one may wonder whether the academic world needs still another key-term to designate the process of interpretation, it is without doubt Jensen’s strength to point out once more that the terms we use are the result of a complex interaction between different communities, both in China and the West.

The first part of the book, dealing with the Jesuits’ "manufacturing" of Confucius and Confucianism mainly during the seventeenth century, examines the "fictive roots of Confucianism" (p. 26). This inquiry is conducted through historical criticism and analysis of the inventions in the Jesuits’ texts. The second part, dealing with the early-twentieth-century encounter of Chinese with themselves through the intermediary of the West, explores how the struggle to define and organize a national Chinese heritage produced critical reflection on the meaning of *ru*. These two parts are interconnected since Jensen is, for instance, of the opinion that "the critical scholarship of the early-twentieth-century Chinese, in effect, reproduced the seventeenth-century Jesuit equation of *Confucianos* and Chineseness" (p. 177). This link is an original attempt to bridge the distance between these two periods.

In this review I will limit myself to the first part of the book. I will try to follow the steps of Jensen’s reasoning and show that, despite the important questions he raises, the way in which he reconstructs the manufacturing poses some serious problems. Basically I consider it unfortunate that he does not apply the method he uses to examine *ru* with equal accurateness to the terms used by the Jesuits. He mistakes the meaning of some key terms in European languages and some of his conclusions are therefore too hasty. One may indeed wonder whether the Jesuits were the authors of several important statements that Jensen attributes to them. Finally, I will point out some other inventions of the Jesuits which may well be more pertinent to our present-day use of "Confucianism."

**No "Confucianism" in Jesuit Texts**

A first problem in Jensen’s reconstruction is that he asserts a *direct* link between the term "Confucianism" and the Jesuits. One could say that this link is his fiction—in the sense of a work that is feigned (p. 23)—since in the same way that he considers the Jesuits constructed "Confucius" without reference to a term that appears in Chinese texts, he makes them manufacture a term that does not in fact appear in their own texts. An important point, indeed, is that the signifier (p. 144) "Confucianism" seems *never* to occur in any of the Jesuits’ works of the seven-
teenth century nor probably even the eighteenth century.² It certainly does not appear in any of the texts Jensen quotes. Still, Jensen constantly would have the reader believe that the term was invented by the Jesuits by putting this word in their mouths. I would not pay so much attention to this aspect (I myself have used "Confucianism" in connection with the Jesuits), were it not that Jensen insists "that to employ the term ‘Confucianism’ . . . in situations where accuracy is desired, is to create confusion" (p. 144).

What one observes in Jensen’s work, and what interestingly enough confirms the problem with the term "Confucianism," is that Jensen himself is so much influenced by the effect of the term "Confucianism," as we all are, that it becomes nearly impossible to see the difference between our interpretation of Confucianism and the Jesuits’. Maybe Jensen should have taken the "otherness" of the seventeenth-century missionaries more into account.

A clear illustration of this failure to differentiate is the text Jensen quotes at the beginning of chapter 2 (p. 78). He translates (without giving his source) a passage from João Monteiro’s Tianxue lüeyi 天學略義 (ca. 1642). Herein appears the famous sentence by the Christian convert Xu Guangqi (1562–1633) rendered by Monteiro as jue fo bu ru 絕佛補儒 (Monteiro [ca. 1642] 1966, vol. 2: 899). Jensen translates this sentence as "Christianity banishes Buddhism, but complements Confucianism," to which in principal I have no objection. My point, however, is that the Jesuits of whom Jensen is speaking would never have translated Xu Guangqi’s sentence as he does. They translated it as: "Idola resecat, Literatorum legem supplet" (in the French translation: "elle retranche les idoles et accomplit la loi des lettrés") (Trigault 1616: 476 [Ciu fò pu giu]; Ricci and Trigault [1617] 1978: 539).³ There is an important difference between the Jesuits’ translation of ru as "law of the literati" and Jensen’s translation of it as "Confucianism."

In other words, the Jesuits did not invent or manufacture Confucianism; unless he gives better proof, Jensen is wrong in suggesting that they did. Since Jensen places much value on Francis Bacon’s statement that "name, though it seem but an outward and superficial matter, yet it carrieth much impression and enchantment" (p. 92), he should have started by recognizing that there is a fundamental difference between the names the Jesuits used for ru and the names we use. Even if our term "Confucianism" is derived from "Confucius," we use "Confucianism" while they did not.

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² One should further check e.g. the collection of Jesuit letters known as Lettres édifiantes et curieuses 1702–1776.

³ Also paraphrased in Confucius Sinarum Philosophus (Couplet 1687: xiii) as "it fulfills what is lacking in our teacher Confucius and in the philosophy of the literati." See Jensen p. 124 and for the Latin text, p. 335 n122. At another place, Jensen translates the more often quoted expression of Xu, bu ru yi fo, as "supplement ru while excising Buddhism" (p. 102): one could also ask why ru 儒 is transliterated and fo 佛 not (compare with Glossary, p. 287ff).
The next question, then, is when did the invention of "Confucianism" take place. I have no definitive answer, but Jensen's book gives some clues: on p. 4 he mentions that the term "Confucianism" has existed in English only since 1862 (see also p. 132, p. 336 n133). The term seems to have been manufactured in the nineteenth century. If one wants to reconstruct fully this manufacturing, then the real challenge is to investigate when and how the shift from the Jesuit interpretation of *ru* as "law or sect of the literati" to "Confucianism" took place. This would be my first proposal for further research.

The Order of the Literati

How did the missionaries proceed to represent *ru*? What the Jesuits did was very similar to what Jensen tries to do with the term *ru*: on the one hand to represent accurately the other culture, and on the other hand to make it understandable to one's own culture. In order to do so, one has different options: to translate the term (and/or thereby to create a new term), to transliterate it, or to use the two options more or less at the same time. All these options have both advantages and disadvantages.

Jensen shows a preference for transliteration in the case of a key term such as *ru*, which he constantly uses. He does so, I presume, to respect as much as possible the tradition as seen by the Chinese, a "hermeneutics of toleration," as he calls it at one point (p. 281). This does not prevent the term *ru* from also being to some extent an invention since it does not fully account for the variety of expressions in which *ru* appears, such as for instance *rujiao* 儒教, or *rujia* 儒家. In the above mentioned quotation from Monteiro's text, for instance, the expression 今儒家 appears at the beginning of the colophon, rendered by Jensen as *jinru* instead of *jinrujia*. Transliteration is often found in the Jesuits' published texts on China, where it is nearly always combined with translation. But even in the case of translation, which as we all know inevitably betrays, one somehow attempts to respect the other culture. If one does not know the language well enough, a translation may be clearly mistaken.

While in the case of *ru* Jensen uses only transliteration, he uses translation combined with transliteration for the Latin or Italian expressions used by the Jesuits. Some of these translations, however, are mistaken. One of the key terms the Jesuits applied to *ru*, viz. *la legge de' letterati*, Jensen explains as the *order* of the literati (pp. 39, 48, 313 n15), where *order* would mean the same as the *order* of the Jesuits. Jensen refers, among others, to the expression *nostram Legem* (which he translates as "our Order") in Ricci's Latin summary of *Tianzhu shiyi*, 天主實義 (1603), a catechetical treatise explaining the Christian faith to

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7 On these different expressions, see also Jensen p. 5.
Chinese scholars. Such analysis results in statements like: "In identifying ru as the principal religious order in China, the Jesuits, then, articulated their own best self-image" (p.50); "the early Jesuit missionaries understood ru by analogy with what they best knew, their own order" (p. 50); and "And yet the only conceptual likeness Ricci could consistently draw of ru was a religious one. He deemed them legge, as his own order was called" (p. 69). The problem, however, is that the term legge in Italian or lex in Latin does not mean order. Jesuits called their order societas. (Only in the rather strict sense of canonical law was the Society of Jesus an order, for which one uses the Latin ordo and not lex). In the seventeenth century, lex commonly meant, among other things, what we would call today a religious teaching (which includes but is not limited to a juridical or prescriptive teaching). In theology lex was used for the three "universal laws": lex naturalis, lex Mosaica, and lex evangelica (c.q. Christiana or gratiae), in Chinese translated as xingjiao 性教, shujiao 書教, and enjiao 恩教. In a broader sense it was used for religions, the Christian, Jewish, Muslim (legge macomettana used by Ricci) (d’Elia 1942, vol. 1: 110), and others. In other words, where we now use "religion," seventeenth-century authors were more inclined to use a term like "law" (this, of course, is also an interpretation). As we will show at the end of this review, that they preferred the term lex to religio is significant.

Another common term used at that time is secta (setta in Italian), which the missionaries also apply to ru, the "sect of the literati." In this case as well, one should be aware of the historical evolution of meanings. In the early seventeenth century, "sect" did not have the strong negative connotation found in Western

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8 Ricci 1985: 462 (Z), see also p. 468 nostra Legis (ZZ); referring to the rules for fasting of the Church (see p. 317).
9 See also pp. 39, 48, 50, 69, 313 n15; and also p. 92: "As the order of the literati, ru were made brethren of Ricci’s beloved Society of Jesus in also being a sect and in effect symbolically christened."
10 Jensen might have confused the term lex with religio, which sometimes means a particular monastic or religious order.
12 On the use of these terms in Confucius Sinarum Philosopbus, see von Collani 1990: 47, in J. Heyndrickx (ed.), Philippe Couplet S.J. (1623–1693) a book Jensen refers to without making reference to this article; this explanation can often be found in Chinese texts produced by Jesuits and converts, see e.g. Monteiro [ca. 1642] 1966: 900, just after the above mentioned quotation of Xu Guangqi.
13 This explains why the modern English translation of Ricci-Trigault sometimes translates the term legge or lex as religion or religious; see for instance the text quoted in Jensen p. 44 n30: Jensen refers to d’Elia 1942, vol. 1: 192 but copies Gallagher's translation (see Gallagher 1953: 154); see also Latin translation (Trigault 1616: 165) and French translation (Ricci and Trigault 1617: 1978: 226); notice that the modern word "religion" encompasses aspects not included in "lex."
languages today. It is a rather neutral term, derived from the verb *segui* (to follow) and refers to, among other things, a following, a body of followers, the adherence to a particular religious or philosophical teacher or faith. In the early seventeenth-century texts the terms *lex* and *secta* are often used interchangeably. Therefore, Jensen’s focus on the shift from Ricci using the term *legge* in the Italian manuscript of his History of the Introduction of Christianity in China to Trigault using *secta* in the Latin translation of the text is an unnecessarily exaggeration: “By identifying *ru* as *secta* and not *legge*, Trigault chose to stress the sect-like character of this group, thus putting them on par with the more obvious sects of Buddhism and Daoism, yet mitigating the preeminence they displayed in Ricci’s account as *legge de’ letterati*. However, at the same time, he tried to deliver the *ru* tradition from a purely religious tradition by insisting on the Latin term ‘litteratorum secta’ rather than ‘legge de’ letterati’ as its equivalent” (p. 69).

A close comparison of Ricci and Trigault, however, does not lead to such a conclusion: Ricci’s *sette* include the one of the litterati, Trigault also applies the term *lex* to Buddhism and Daoism and, finally, it happens that Ricci uses *sette* and Trigault instead *leges* (including the one of the litterati) (e.g., d’Elia 1942, vol. 1: 132, and Trigault 1616: 114). A further comparison with the contemporary French and English translations confirms that the terms *lex* and *secta* were very close in meaning at that time and that it is difficult to grasp a consistent difference in their use. Apparently their function can be somewhat compared with the Chinese terms *jiao* 教 and *jia* 家, which in seventeenth-century usage were also not always clearly distinguished. The first (*lex*, *jiao*) seems to refer to the doctrinal aspect (broader than juridical), and the second (*secta*, *jia*) to the societal aspect. One certainly would like to have a historical dictionary of Chinese terms to further explore this interpretation.

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15 For the difference between Ricci and Trigault see also Foss 1983: 94 pp.; concerning the sixteenth-century texts about China by European authors which Ricci used as a source, see Ricciardolo 1998.


17 E.g. Latin translation (Trigault 1616: 106); note that the term *leges* appears in the subtitle of the work (De christiana expeditione apud Sinas suscepita ab societate Iesu, ex P. Matthaei Ricci eiusdem Societatis commentariis, Libri V, ad S.D.N. Paulum V, In quibus Sinensis Regni mores, leges atq. instituta & novae illius Ecclesiae difficillima primordia accurate & summa fide describuntur).

18 French translation: Ricci and Trigault [1617] 1978: 100 ff, 110 ff; English: Purchas 1625, vol. 3, ii: 395–99; e.g. the English version (p. 399) "retranslates" Trigault’s *leges* (lois) into *Sects* (cf. Ricci *sette*).

19 This comparison does not imply that *lex* only translates *jiao* and *secta* only *jia*.

20 For an analysis of the meaning of *jia*, see Ryden 1996: 5–9, 28–29.
It appears that by translating terms related to *ru* by *secta* or *lex Literatorum*, the Jesuits indeed appropriated a favored native definition (p. 53) but they did not "reduce all the significances of *ru* to a single symbol" (p. 53).²¹ Instead, Jesuits used different terms to translate the complexity of meanings related to *ru*. Maybe these are not the terms we would use today, and perhaps they are not the most adequate ones, but it is clear that none of them was equivalent to the single term "Confucianism." When Jensen says, "The condensed, manifold significance contained by the seventeenth century Jesuits’ Confucianism persists today in our Confucianism" (p. 142), it seems to me that he should have pointed out that our "Confucianism" is much more reduced than their rendering of *ru*. Should we project our problem on the seventeenth-century Jesuits or on the seventeenth-century European reading of their experience (p. 141)? We use "reductive metaphors" (p. 140) like "Confucian" or "Confucianism"; they did not.²² They used others.

In addition, one can in this regard point out that Jensen insists "that the troublesomeness of *ru* is our problem and is caused by the presumption that *ru* and Kongzi are stable, known entities instead of historical products whose significance is generated from a delicate dialectic of ambiguity and invention" (p. 158). This remark highlights one of the methodological strong points of his work, but

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²¹ The word *literatus* has hardly any religious connotation and only appears twice in the Vulgate translation of the Bible. See also the notice in *Oxford Latin Dictionary* 1983: 1028 under the lemma "literati" (men of letters): "The earliest application in Eng. use is as the appellation of the learned class of China, which Burton obtained from the Latin version of the letters of the Jesuit M. Ricci, 1606–1607."

²² In Jensen’s eyes, the “reductive” result of these concepts is important. The effect of reading a passage from *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas suscepta* (Trigault’s Latin translation of M. Ricci’s *Storia*), is for Jensen "an equation of ‘Confucius’ and ‘Chineseness,’" which he also calls the "reducibility of China to ‘Confucius’ and his ‘law of the literati’" (p. 64). And the question implicit in his treatment of the Jesuits is: "Should and can Chinese culture be reduced, as it was by the later Jesuit accommodationists, to a conceptual nexus of ‘Confucius’ and *Confucianos*, so that all of what is traditional about China is, ipso facto, Confucian?" (p. 167). Since the Jesuits generally appropriated the Chinese idea of the *sanjiao* 三教 and in addition considered a number of "superstitions" (almanacs, fortunetellers, etc.) "Chinese," one must wonder whether the "colossal reduction" (p. 64) is not rather on the side of the reader Jensen than on the side of the Jesuit authors. The early history of the reception of their texts confirms this variety. See e.g. part two of Nieuhof 1665, based, among others, on Trigault, Semedo, Martini; see also Demel 1992: 192 ff.; see also the remark in Lach and Van Kley 1993, vol. 3, 4: 1651: "If the travel accounts [by merchants and others] fail to distinguish between the various religious groups in China, the Jesuit accounts perhaps make the distinctions too clearly. They, like the Chinese themselves, discuss three religious "sects": the Confucians, the Buddhists, and the Taoists."
perhaps we should likewise surrender the same presumption with regard to terms like *lex, secta, religio*, and even modern terms such as "accommodation."23

**Ru and "Confucianos"**

One of the key proofs for Jensen's constant use of "Confucianism," however, is the other Jesuit neologism "Confucian" (p. 130), as in the expressions *ritus illi Confuciani* and *ritus illos Confucianos* taken from *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (Couplet 1687), which Jensen correctly translates as "Confucian rites."24 "Confucian" in this English translation, however, is ambiguous since it can refer to rites in honor of Confucius (*Kongzi*) or rites from the Confucian tradition (*ru*). The Latin text is unambiguous, and on p. 129 Jensen also makes the correct interpretation ("performed to him," "in honor of Confucius"). Further in his book, however, he shifts the meaning and equates *ru* with *Confucianos*,25 thereby taking the latter as a substantive, even though it is an adjective in accusative plural form. This is again an instance of the influence of the history of the term (an invention by Jensen) since the Jesuits did not consider *ru* as *Confucianos*. They strictly used the adjective *Confucianus* for things pertaining to the person of *Kongzi*. As a result, a remark such as "the challenge to contemporary interpretation is to disentangle the Chinese traditions symbolized by *ru* from the later Jesuit reductive metaphor, ‘Confucian’" should be highly nuanced since the Jesuits did not do what Jensen believes they did. They simply wrote clear Latin.26

The discussion of the term "Confucian" points to the importance of the history and effect of a text. Jensen is correct in referring to the invention of the adjective *Confucianus*, but fails to take the next step, namely to trace the direct

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23 For the term "accommodation" or "accommodationism," Jensen (p. 306 n3, 313 n16) refers to Betray 1955 and Mungello 1985. One should, however, be aware that Betray’s use is based on a strictly missiological meaning, taken from Thauzen 1927 (as mentioned in his preface), while Mungello’s definition goes a step further since it refers also to the Jesuits’ attempt to achieve the acceptance of Chinese literati "through Confucian-Christian synthesis" (Mungello 1985: 15). Strictly speaking, the missiological definition does not accept such a synthesis. On the missiological definition, see also Luzbetak 1988: esp. 80–83.

24 The *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* was an important and influential work introducing and partly translating Chinese learning.

25 E.g., Jensen p. 147: "ru [represented to us by the fathers as *letterati* and *Confucianos*]"; p.167: "Confucianos . . . seem[s] like a Latin mirror-image of . . . ru."

26 Another example is Jensen p. 159 where he mentions the expression *scholae Confuciani* (Confucian school) (without reference) in the context of *ru*. The original text, which reads (flos) *scholae Confucianae*, clearly shows that the authors meant Confucius (the first generation of disciples of Confucius) and not *ru* (*Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*; p. cxix).
link between this adjective (which apparently only appears three times in the voluminous Confucius Sinarum Philosophus)\textsuperscript{27} and the modern term "Confucian." Is it not curious that both the terms "Confucian" and "Confucianism" seem not to appear in the early reception history of the Jesuits' text in Europe?\textsuperscript{28} "Confucian," referring to ru, seems to be a nineteenth-century manufacture as well.

**Kongfuzi and Confucius**

If "Confucian" and "Confucianism" were not manufactured by the Jesuits, it still remains a fact that these nineteenth-century inventions were based on the term "Confucius," which was without doubt constructed by them. With regard to the latter term, Jensen rightly points out the curious fact that it is said to derive from Kongfuzi, but that the term Kongfuzi "is not the popular Chinese expression we assumed it to be, and it appears that it has never been common. . . . The literature of antiquity, ru and contra-ru, offers no instance of the name" (pp. 83–84). His major conclusion is that "a review of Chinese books read by the Jesuits and of works they produced while in China suggests that 'Kong Fuzi' and 'Confucius' were both created by the fathers" (p. 84). Here again there is need for more nuances.

Even though the term Kongfuzi is indeed not often used in ancient Chinese texts, one wonders whether Jensen’s claim does not depend too much on "invention" theory, borrowed mainly from Roy Wagner (1981).\textsuperscript{29} Certainly one may draw some parallels between the invention of culture by an anthropologist, as explained by Wagner, and that by the Jesuits in China. But some fundamental differences remain: the Jesuits described the native culture after a long period of interaction with it, and not after a short period of fieldwork as in the case of anthropologists. Accordingly, they were much more subjected to a process of appropriateness creation of the native culture than the average anthropologist. One wonders whether Jensen, by insisting so much on the "invention" on the part of the missionaries, does not underestimate the role of the native community in this proc-

\textsuperscript{27} One should study the whole text in detail, and ideally compare it with the manuscript version. On its text history, see Golvers 1998.

\textsuperscript{28} For example, the first lengthy book review of Confucius Sinarum Philosophus by the Protestant scholar Jean Le Clerc in Bibliothèque Universelle et Historique, December 1687: 387–455 (also used by Jensen, see p. 120). The term "Confucianism" does not appear in Voltaire’s Dictionnaire philosophique (which contains many "-isms") nor in L. Moréri’s Le Grand Dictionnaire historique ou le mélange curieux de l’histoire sacrée et profane (1712). One should check the other texts Jensen mentions.

\textsuperscript{29} See, for example, Jensen p. 74; see also the remark on the culture shock of the anthropologist (p. 44). The Jesuits certainly also experienced a culture shock, but one wonders whether this is the right term to apply to people who had stayed twenty-five years in China.
ess. This role is but briefly mentioned in his work. It seems to me that the term "Confucius" is the result of a much more subtle interplay between the "hosts' offering" and the "seekers' manufacture" (p. 157) than Jensen allows.

A first series of doubts about Jensen's strong claim is based on a possible difference between spoken and written language. An aspect Jensen fails to take into account is that the Jesuits spoke Chinese before they read it (fluently). It might well be that they encountered Chinese who often spoke of "Kongfuzi," but did not use this term in writing. Much of the information included in the missionaries' writings is based on such oral information. Ricci's Storia, for instance, contains a detailed description of the Chinese examination system. It would be very difficult to find a contemporary Chinese text on this subject because this was common knowledge, transmitted orally to the Jesuits by their Chinese informants. With regard to the term Kongfuzi, one can point out the stylistic preference for two characters over three characters in written texts, which leads to a preference for Kongzi over Kongfuzi. This results in a fact as remarkable as Jensen's discovery, namely that though the term Kongfuzi has become common today and is used in titles of works by authors as famous as Lu Xun 魯迅, it is still not included as a lemma in common dictionaries such as Hanying cidian 漢英詞典, Cihai 辭海, Ciyouan 辭源, and Hanyu da cidian 漢語大辭典.

A second series of doubts is based on textual evidence, and more precisely texts that emanate from the Jesuit context. Is it not curious, in the first place, that the Jesuits themselves so rarely used a term that they supposedly invented? It does not appear even once in, for instance, Ricci's Tianzhu shiyi. Jensen gives the following explanation for this: "Ricci appeared to know of Kong Fuzi's fictiveness. In the Tianzhu shiyi he consistently maintained a distinction between the

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30 E.g., Jensen pp. 72–74 on Ruggieri's appropriation of the term Tianzhu; see also Ricci's remark of his study of the Four Books and Six Classics "with the aid of good teachers" (Jensen p. 56). Jensen rightly stresses the importance of investigating the textual communities (pp. 54–55; p. 96 ff). One wonders, however, why he does not delve into these communities more deeply or refer to works that have already been written on this topic. E.g. Goodman and Grafton 1991; Zhang Yongtang 1994; Dudink 1996.

31 Compare with the use of Changjiang 長江 and Yangzijiang 楊子江.

32 See, for instance, a recently published CD-rom of the Lunyu 論語 (Zhejiang dianzi yinxian chubanshe, ISBN 7-900309-31-4/B.01): "If mankind wants to continue to live in the twenty-first century, it has to go back to Kongfuzi who lived 2500 years ago to search for wisdom with him."

33 Lu Xun, "You Zhongguo nüren de jiao, tuiding Zhongguo ren zhi fei zongyong, you you ci tuiding Kongfuzi you weibing" 由中國女人的腳, 推定中國人之非中庸, 又由此推定孔夫子有胃病 1933 in Lu Xun quanji 魯迅全集 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue, 1987, vol. 4: 504–10); "Zai xianzai Zhongguo de Kongfuzi" 在現代中國的孔夫子 in ibidem vol. 4: 313–21; the text was first written in Japanese, then translated and published in Japan (1935) under the title "Kongfuzi zai xianzai Zhongguo" 孔夫子在現代中國.

34 On Jensen's use of dictionaries, see Jensen p. 325 n7; 327 n22.
Jesuit invention (Kong Fuzi) that formed the Chinese substrate of the Confucius
dear to his European audience, on the one hand, and the indigenous names for the
sage immediately recognizable to Chinese (Kongzi, Zhongni), on the other” (p.
88). Is not this interpretation too much influenced by Jensen’s own invention
theory? The total absence of Kongfuzi in Ricci’s text is for Jensen nevertheless an
indication of both the Jesuit invention and Ricci’s awareness and avoidance of it.
One can call this analysis into question by looking at another text at Jensen’s
disposal. In his Tianxue liuyi 天學略義, Monteiro uses only Kongzi 孔子
(Monteiro [ca. 1642] 1966: 897), from which one could conclude a similar cautious
awareness as attributed to Ricci. Even more curious in face of this apparent
absence of Kongfuzi in Jesuit texts is the Chinese use of it. The preface to the
same work by the Chinese scholar Zhang Geng 張庚 (ca. 1570–1646/1647; juren
1597) does include the expression Kongfuzi zhi jiao 孔夫子之教 (as well as of
fuzi 夫子) (Monteiro [ca. 1642] 1966: 844). If one follows Jensen’s reasoning,
one should conclude from this that the Chinese partner has adopted the Jesuits’
invention which they did not use. A nice example along the same lines is the
statement which the Kangxi emperor made on 23 November 1706 to, among
others, Li Guangdi 李光地 (1642–1718): ”Do you know that the people from the
Western Ocean are behaving themselves more and more strangely. They have
even railed at Kongfuzi (將孔夫子亦罵了). The reason I like to employ them is
merely to make use of their skills and arts” (see Li Guangdi [early 18th century]
1995, vol. 2: 643). If one takes Jensen’s analysis seriously, the Kangxi emperor
learned the term from his Jesuit advisors and appropriated it so well that he
started to use it for his own Chinese audience. It is noteworthy, though, that this
is a quotation of an oral text.

One can also look at the collection of anti-Christian writings Poxie ji 破邪集
(1640), of which Jensen states that ”the language of these Christian critics reveals
an exchange of insults and interpretations on the ground of a common culture,
and of ru” (p.104). Jensen does not mention that in this collection the term
Kongfuzi occurs once, viz. when Chinese Christians are quoted as saying
”Kongfuzi is not even equal to one in ten thousand Alenis” (again, this is a tran-
script of an oral text) (Xu Dazhou 1623: 206). Herein Jensen might see further
confirmation of his theory, since the term is used by followers of the missionar-
ies. Yet, in the same Poxie ji one finds the term Mengfuzi 孟夫子 at least four
times, used by four different authors (one of whom also uses the term Mengzi)
(Shengchao Poxie ji [1640] 1996: 140, 176, 294, 299). From this one wonders
whether the expression ”name + fuzi” in written texts was as uncommon as Jen-
sen would have us believe. From counting the different expressions used in such

35 The first reference is a preface by Jiang Dejing 蔣德璟 (jinshi 1622), in which he
also uses the term Mengzi (twice) and Kongzi (twice, of which one is wu Kongzi 吾孔子).
One also finds wu fuzi 吾夫子, employed by Xu Dashou for Kongzi (occurring several
吾夫子子路.
a corpus, it appears that the expression fuzzi is not merely "a term of respect used by students for their teacher in Warring States, a common form of address for Kongzi in the Lunyu" (Jensen: Glossary p. 289; cf. p. 325 n8), but in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it is a term of respect applied in the third person. Another point to underscore is the mixed usage of the expressions: Kongzi (most often used), Kongfuzzi, fuzzi, and even Zhongni 仲尼, used simultaneously by the same author in the same text. An illustration of such a mixed use of both Kongzi and Kongfuzzi is the Ming play (clearly a text not influenced by the missionaries) Kongfuzzi zhouyou lieguo dacheng qilin ji 孔夫子周遊列國大成麒麟記 (2 juan) composed by Huanyu Xiansheng gong 寰宇顯聖公 (apparently a descendant of Kongzi).

This limited number of examples may not convince those taken by Jensen’s interpretation, but it should at least put some question marks behind the strongest of Jensen’s claims, namely that there was no "native referent" (p. 91) or "native substrate" (p. 84) for the term Confucius, that the Jesuits granted Kongzi the superlative honorific "Kong Fuzzi," that the term Kongfuzzi was perforce a "Jesuit fiction" (p. 86). in short that it was a clear example of the "fetishization of Confuti" (p. 91).

The result of the use of such strong language, which aims at "bringing home that one must criticize the obvious" (p. 280), is that any more obvious interpretation (such as the appropriation by the Jesuits of a native [oral] term) is subjected to Jensen’s construct, which in itself is insufficiently founded. Consequently, one arrives at a curious pair of conclusions: If the term Kongfuzzi is not mentioned in a Chinese text by a Jesuit author, this is proof that the Jesuits were aware that the term was their invention. On the other hand, if the term is found in a text by a Chinese author, then this is proof that the Chinese adopted it from the Jesuits. Jensen’s invention scheme does not sufficiently take into account the role of

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36 A nice example is also Shengchao Poxie ji [1640] 1996: 198 where the barbarians (missionaries) speak about Kongzi and Xu Dashou about fuzzi. The form fuzzi for Confucius appears in the writings of authors as different as Luo Qinshun 羅欽順 (1465–1547) (Kunzhiji 困知記) and Zhu Hong 朱宏 (1535–1615) (Yunqi fahui 雲棲法彙). The term is also used for Zhu Xi (Zhufuzzi).

37 In the Beijing Library and the Bibliothèque de France. The author usually employs the term Kongzi, but sometimes (as in the title) also Kongfuzzi (e.g., Juan 1, f. 15a). Unfortunately, at present there is no further information about this Ming play. The author is apparently a descendant, the correct hereditary title being Yansheng gong 衍聖公. If this is the case, it would invalidate Jensen’s contention that "Jesuit invention began with the use of a Chinese proper name without precedent in the texts bearing the signature of his school and not evident in even the numerous commentaries generated by pious descendants seeking to construe the words of their ‘ancestor’" (p. 92).

38 Jensen offers a selection from the Tianzhu shiyei 天主實業 to demonstrate that the Jesuits were aware that they had created a fiction. It is unclear to me how he reads this awareness in the quotation he gives. Note also that Jensen translates the term Mengshi 孟氏 (used by Ricci) as Mengzi.
native culture in the appropriation by the foreign culture. To be sure, as mentioned before, in any translation there is invention and the Jesuits opted for Confucius and not for something like Concio (in Italian) or Concius (in Latin, based on Kongzi), but Jensen has yet to convince me that "they pronounced Kongzi 'Confucius'" (p. 139). Why totally exclude the possibility that they pronounced the native Kongfuzzi "Confucius"? And furthermore, was it really the Jesuits who "felt compelled to confer an incomparable respect upon Kongzi and, for that reason, granted him the superlative honorific 'Kong Fuzi'" (p. 86)? Anyone who has visited a Confucian temple knows the status the Chinese accord the sage. Are we not giving the Jesuits too much credit by making it their invention?

What did the Jesuits invent?

The Kongfuzzi discussion, though it symbolizes Jensen's argumentation well (cf. Jensen's premise, p. 5), is after all a minor aspect of the whole discussion of invention. By making it the focus of his book, Jensen discards in my eyes some other inventions of the Jesuits which possibly influence our present-day understanding of Confucianism more profoundly. Though the Jesuits must be credited with several inventions, such as considering Confucius to be "philosopher," I would like to briefly speculate about their role in the birth of the present-day concept of "religion."

Here one must return to the discussion of the terms lex and secta. The major negative or positive evaluation of a certain group or thought does not reside in the term secta (or lex) but in the name added to it: in the above quotation of Xu Guangqi, fo 佛 was translated by the Trigault as Idola (Jensen "Buddhism"). In an influential text by Longobardo, the sects IV-XE-DAO are explained as "la Secte des Lettres, la Secte des Idolatres et la Secte des Sorciers" (Longobardo 1735, vol. 2: 168). The twentieth-century reader will be scandalized by the fact that the Jesuits used "secta Idolatrorum" for Buddhism. This, however, was the common term used for anything that was "false religion."

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39 Note that concio is an existing word in Italian, which means, among others, "tanned"; this might partly explain why the Jesuits did not use the term but opted for Confucio (Confutio).

40 See also p. 103: "with 'Kong Fuzi' the Jesuits accorded the sage a superlative status in the pantheon of Chinese philosophers and officials."

41 See my forthcoming article "The Classification of Sciences and the Jesuit Mission in Late Ming China" (in a forthcoming, and still untitled volume, edited by Peter Engel- friet and Jan De Meyer, to be published by Brill in October 1999).

42 lu is a typographical error for ju; compare in same work p. 271 (Traité sur quelques points importants de la mission de la Chine by A. de Sainte Marie); these terms are also used in Moreri 1712.

43 or "Idolataeorum" or "Idololatrorum."
It is at this level that an important Jesuit invention can be found. In a remarkable book, Carmen Bernard and Serge Gruzinski (1988) explore the use of the term religion (and others) in relation to the description of "religions" by missionaries in South America. They show that in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries there was no real distinction drawn between "religion" and "non-religion" (secular), but only between "true religion" and "false religion" (i.e., "idolatry"). The Jesuits who went to China at that time applied the same categories to what they found there (e.g., they called Buddhism and Daoism "false religions" or "idolatry"). Bernard and Gruzinski, however, search for the birth of the modern religious sciences, and in two short passages (Bernard and Gruzinski 1988: 138–42, 200) they identify the possible influence of China and the Jesuits in this birth. Indeed, the Jesuits’ encounter with ru (with what we call today Confucianism), which normally should have fallen under the category of "false religion," profoundly called into question the "true religion" / "false religion" dichotomy. Impressed by its moral and ethical teachings, Jesuits found it difficult to call ru "false religion" or "idolatry"; they preferred to use terms like "civil" or "political" for their rituals. Moreover, they considered ru a "philosophy."

This analysis (or invention) was re-imported into Europe and taken over by Enlightenment thinkers, such as Voltaire, who used it to distinguish between religion and non-religion. It is only because of the birth of something like non-religion that religion as such became the subject of a science. In other words, the Jesuits' invention of ru as political and civil rather than idolatrous is of much greater importance for the contemporary use of the concept of "religion" than one might have previously assumed.

Bernard and Gruzinski's theory, which I can only touch on here, deserves more investigation. With their remarks in mind, one could profitably analyze the words and categories ("true," "false," "religion," "idols," "superstition," "profane religion," etc.) used in the early and late seventeenth century Jesuit writings and investigate as well how the European reception of the Jesuit texts changed

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44 A good translation of religio in the seventeenth century seems to be "pratique culturelle" ("pratique liée à une foi déterminée et à une certaine doctrine de la divinité"); see von Wartburg 1948–, vol. 10: 230–31 It did not so much refer to a "system" to be academically investigated.

45 Cf. title of chapter 10 of book 1 in Trigault (1616: 100): "Variae apud Sinas falsae Religionis sectae."


47 As is well known, this interpretation was not readily accepted. See also Le Clerc 1687: 401: "malgré tout cela, les R.R. P.P. Jesuites auront beaucoup de peine à persuader aux Européens que la vénération excessive des Chinois, pour ce Philosophes, ne soit qu’un respect purement civil, & qu’on ne lui rende pas les honneurs divins."

48 This will throw a different light on the concept of "true literati" used by Ricci; cf. Jensen 94 (note that on p. 122 Jensen translates the expression Sinicas vero litteres as "China’s true literati"; it should be "but [=vero] the Chinese letters/writings").
these categories. This investigation might well lead to a further confirmation of the difference between the Jesuits’ interpretation of ru and our own. By using the term "Confucianism" one enters into a paradigm that entails basic questions such as whether "Confucianism is a religion or not." The meaning of "religion" in this question functions in a context where religion, belief, and cults are often opposed to science, rationality, and objectivity. By translating the term as "secta of literati" one enters into a very different paradigm. Here the "following" refers not only to practices we would consider "religious" today, but includes a wide variety of aspects: liberal and mechanical arts (which we call sciences today), an examination system, classics that are entitled "philosophy," academies, rituals, and so on. The question raised in this context is whether a ritual practice is "true" or "false."

Strikingly, one arrives at an astonishing paradox. By considering ru as lex or secta of the literati, the Jesuits invented ru as not idolatrous. The implication of this was that ru was a non-religious group in the modern sense of the word, and the Jesuits even insisted that its ritual practices (in seventeenth-century language, religio) were "political" and "civil" (something that any anthropologist today would deny). This invention was taken over and reformulated by eighteenth-century European thinkers who, among others, took China as a place where "religion" was not needed. This birth of non-religion led to the birth of the modern category of religion (as opposed to science, rationality, etc.). In the nineteenth century, possibly parallel to the development of the academic study of religion, the "three sects" of China started to be translated as "three religions" and also the "sect of literati" was manufactured as "Confucianism." The question whether it should be considered a "religion" in the modern sense of the word is still open to debate. All this deserves more investigation; that is my second proposal for further research.

In conclusion, as I have pointed out several times, the value of Jensen's book resides in the fundamental questions it raises. Unfortunately, its conclusions are based on too many mistakes to be convincing. One nonetheless looks forward to further research on the topics Jensen has brought forward.
References


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