

## PORTRAYING AN ‘ANTE LITTERAM CHRISTIAN’: PROSPERO INTORCETTA AND HIS BIOGRAPHIES OF CONFUCIUS

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**ABSTRACT** This article offers an in-depth examination of the portrayal and reconstruction of *Confucius's life* (*Confucii Vita*) by the Sicilian Jesuit missionary Prospero Intorcetta (1625–1696) across three of his principal Latin works: *Sapientia Sinica* (1662), *Sinarum Scientia Politico-Moralis* (1667–1669), and *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus, sive Scientia Sinensis latine exposita* (1687). These seminal texts present Latin translations of three of the Four Confucian Classics and each contains a biographical narrative of Confucius. Intorcetta's account of Confucius's life is grounded in unacknowledged historical sources, enriched by his own interpretative frameworks and reconstructions. His narrative strategy seeks to reshape the figure of Confucius by endowing him with ethical and philosophical attributes that align with Christian ideals. This reframing responds to the escalating Chinese Rites Controversy of the late seventeenth century and reflects Intorcetta's considered endeavour to uphold the cultural and theological legitimacy of the Jesuit mission in China. Through a comparative analysis of the biographical sections in the aforementioned works, this study investigates the textual selections and narrative strategies employed in Intorcetta's reconstruction of Confucius's life. It further explores how this reconstruction contributed to the formulation of a potential theological dialogue between Confucianism and Christianity, thereby illustrating the Jesuits' practices of cultural accommodation and doctrinal adaptation in the transmission of the Christian faith in late seventeenth-century China.

**KEYWORDS** Confucius, Jesuit Missions, Biographical Reconstruction, Theological Accommodation, Doctrinal Adaptation

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## 描繪一位“早於基督教的信徒”：殷鐸澤及其孔子傳記

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**摘要** 本文旨在深入探討西西里籍耶穌會傳教士殷鐸澤 (Prospero Intorcetta, 1625–1696) 在其三部重要拉丁文著作中對“孔子生平” (*Confucii Vita*) 的描繪與重構。這三部代表性作品包括：《中國之智慧》 (*Sapientia Sinica*, 1662)、《中國政治與道德之學問》 (*Sinarum Scientia Politico-Moralis*, 1667–1669) 以及《中國哲學家孔子，或以拉丁文解讀的中國智慧》 (*Confucius Sinarum Philosophus, sive Scientia Sinensis latine exposita*, 1687)。三部著作精選了儒家四書中的三部經典，並進行了拉丁文的翻譯，還各自附有孔子生平的傳記性敘述。殷鐸澤關於孔子生平的描寫主要基於未被引用的歷史資料，並輔以他自身的解讀與重構。其敘述策略旨在重塑孔子形象，使其具備與基督宗教精神相契合的倫理與哲學特質。這一形象塑造不僅回應了17世紀末日益激烈的“中國禮儀之爭”，同時也反映了殷鐸澤為耶穌會在華傳教爭取文化與神學正當性辯護的深思熟慮與努力。通過比較分析上述三部著作中孔子傳記部分的異同，本文探討殷鐸澤在重構“孔子生平”過程中所採取的文本取捨與敘事策略。此研究有助於揭示殷鐸澤如何在儒學與基督教義之間建構神學對話的可能路徑，進而展現耶穌會在17世紀後期中國傳播基督信仰過程中所進行的文化適應與宗教整合實踐。

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