FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Eastern Wisdom
Michael Jordan
Marlowe and Company
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This book is 224 pages long with 163 illustrations. It has huge headings on sections that average two pages in length. And it has a publisher with the audacity to title the book Eastern Wisdom. Can the whole of Eastern thought fit between these covers? Hardly.

Still, this book is an intricately woven and delightfully readable quest through Eastern thought. This is not a dry, scholarly recitation. Instead, like the philosophy he writes about, author Michael Jordan takes the middle ground. He manages to touch on the breadth of Eastern thinking while taking occasional plunges to its depths for a story or quote from the sacred texts.

Jordan begins at the beginning revealing the cacophony of gods and goddesses whose mercurial qualities make up the religion and rituals of India, Japan and China. He even touches art, architecture and skills of various sects. Jordan covers modern Eastern communities, but there is a strange bent towards Britain and no mention of the huge Buddhist and Zen groups in the United States.

There is an excellent section on Jainism, a short, light chapter on Confucius and even several references to Zen. Jordan really shines when he writes about myths and gods, both of which he has written about before.

There is a breadth to what is missing as well. There exists a massive array of delightful Hindu myths that barely get mentioned. There is a rich vein of Zen koans and stories that are bypassed, and there is little exploration of the connections between East and West.

This breadth comes with a cost. It is like trying to train a chef merely by handing him recipes. There needs to be more substance, more depth. Reading this book is as disappointing as finding that the Mona Lisa had only been painted on a postage stamp. Readers are left to wonder if there should be more or is this truly the gist of Eastern wisdom?

Joe Mielke