

Feature Articles

Book Review: *From the Ruins of Empire: The Revolt Against the West and the Remaking of Asia.*

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- **Author:** Pankaj Mishra
- **Paperback:** 356 pages
- **Publisher:** Anchor Canada (2014)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN:** 9780385676120

From the Ruins of Empire is an important contribution to the history of Asian countries from a non-colonial perspective. The book has received justified accolades for its reinterpretation of Victorian and 20th century decolonization as seen by Asians who both lived through the recorded events and are currently facing the 21st century aftermaths and repercussions of European empires. Over and above the author's treatment and perspective on the subject, I found the book useful and of value to librarians as a collection development tool for building academic collections that move beyond history as recorded by the West.

The Bibliographic Essay makes a great starting point to identify key resources that are important for building a balanced collection that reflects multiple perspectives: Asian, European, and Western. The author admits that many Asians were raised with limited knowledge of the histories of their own countries, other than a basic education of their nation's emergence from Western rule as a more-or-less free nation-state. The selected works provide both authoritative overviews and important scholarly publications while keeping in mind that every highlighted title should be of interest to a general reader. Each section in the Essay matches with the chapters of the book thereby allowing the reader to transition between detailed historical sketches within the book chapters, and a more selective and focused list of recommended readings. For those interested in greater detail and additional original sources, the Notes can be consulted.

The author identifies the main thought leaders in Egypt, Turkey, Persia, India, Japan, and China who greatly influence the spread of anti-Western and anti-modernization ideas within their countries. These thought leaders, many of whom are almost unknown in the West, developed their perspectives and reacted to the politics surrounding them in the midst of an increasingly world acceptance that Western ideas of democracy, consumerism, and culture, were the only way forward. The intellectual

decolonization contributions made by Jamal al-din al-Afghani (1839 – 1897), Liang Qichao (1873 – 1929), Mustafa Kemal Ataturk (1881 - 1938), Rabindranath Tagore (1861 – 1941), and Sayyid Qutb (1906 – 1966), along with more recent and better known leaders such as Sun Yat-sen (1866 – 1925), Mohandas Gandhi (1869 – 1948), and Mao Zedong (1893 – 1976), are examined and placed in context with opposing Western beliefs and values.

From the Ruins of Empire can get bogged down in details but it provides a comprehensive and detailed coverage of world history from a non-Western perspective that is well worth reading. It is also a valuable resource for identifying the thought leaders and important historical figures that need to be included in decolonized academic library collections.