Reading the World: An African Perspective on World History

Kwasi Konadu
Borough of Manhattan Community College, kkonadu@bmcc.cuny.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/adan

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/adan/vol13/iss3/23
New Book

*Reading the World: An African Perspective on World History*
By Kwasi Konadu
Diasporic Africa Press, Paperback

Description from the Publisher:

What and who constitutes world history? What makes a history a "world" history? What is the "world" with which world history is concerned? Can another "world" be considered? Scholars of African birth or descent are acutely absent in the writing of and debates concerning world history, inept when it comes to the foregoing questions, and invisible in the production of worldly historical knowledge. Once known as the continent without history or historical consciousness, Africa and its intellectuals represent a much larger segment of the marginalized intellectual world. In fact, the African Network in Global History, founded in 2009 at the University of Ilorin (Nigeria), is the clearest evidence of African scholars' tardy entry into a world history discourse, as well as support for studies in world history that address Africa and the world as seen from African perspectives. We can only begin to answer the above questions when the former peoples and places without history rewrite world history. Certainly, the world should constitute and make a "world history" driven by perspectives on the world rather than a Eurasian world of perspectives. In the past three decades, writers of world history have focused comparatively on historical themes and recurring processes. In their history and traditions, writers of world history and their past exemplars share more than a Eurasian origin; the older traditions modeled by Herodotus of ancient Greece and Sima Qian of China viewed the world through the superiority of their own societies, and current European or white historians honed their views in the context of imperialism and colonialism. Implicit in those traditions is that world history research and writing began when Europeans discovered the world outside of Europe. Consequently, formerly unknown peoples of Africa and the Americas had to fit within Christian frames of history that remained until the twentieth
century and, in some cases, the twenty-first century. *Reading the World* combines the strength of recent scholarship and research-based monographs, the coherency of single authorship, and the presentation and somewhat narrative style of textbooks. This book provides an intellectually stimulating, authoritative, and engaging history that is both concise and global in scope, and offers a readable introduction to a challenging topic. The text also aims to challenge the way readers think about the histories of people and places of the globe and how they and others might interpret or write their own "world" histories. This book does not attempt a "grand narrative" or provide a recipe textbook with prefabricated questions, test banks, audiovisual supplements, and indigestible sequences of "facts" and historical events packaged in such a way that you think less and forgo your creativity. Rather, *Reading the World* is but one of what should be a number of world history monographs representing an integral contribution from the historically marginalized in worldly historical knowledge and its production, engaging in the unfinished and fascinating conversation of a composite world history.