

# Uses of Social Theory in Comparative Religious Studies: Assessing Chidester's Sociological Analysis of 'Wild Religion' in Post-apartheid South Africa

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## Abstract

In analysing 'sociality' (the formation of inclusive or exclusionary collective identities), 'materiality' (the desire for material objects, sensory experiences and gendered bodily performances of rituals) and 'exchange' (communist or capitalist economic exchanges in rituals of gift-giving and expenditure) as three aspects of religion within local and global contexts, David Chidester has used the social theories of Durkheim, Bataille, WEB Du Bois, Weber, Marx-Adorno-Horkheimer, Benjamin and others. The purpose of this paper will be to assess what we have gained from Chidester's use of social categories such as 'sociality' and 'exchange' to analyse unconventional or 'wild' forms of religion in post-apartheid South Africa within a global context. On the basis of his sociological analysis of Freedom Park and the 2010 FIFA World Cup as forms of 'wild religion', I will in conclusion argue for the legitimacy and relevance of using etic vis-à-vis emic categories to afford a critical understanding of African religious realities within a global context.

**Keywords:** Social theories of religion, David Chidester, wild religion, post-apartheid South Africa, Freedom Park, World Cup

## Introduction

In *Authentic Fakes: Religion and American Popular Culture* David Chidester (2005:9, 49-50) challenges producers of critical knowledge about religion and

religions to expand *the analytical category of 'religion'* by including popular culture and its objects within local and global contexts as part of the field of comparative Religious Studies. He argues that the broadening of scope to include new religious movements and popular culture may be seen as an extension of the intellectual labour that it took in the history of Religious Studies to acknowledge the status of African indigenous religions as on a par with world religions. All of these, he persuasively argues, are considered 'religion' by participants (i.e. emic or insider perspectives) or *do* the work of 'religion' as defined by social theorists (i.e. etic or analytical, outsider perspectives), according to whom religion creates communal solidarity around desired objects and facilitates the exchange of gifts.

Chidester's contribution is not only firmly located within current debates on the genealogy of 'religion' as an analytical concept constructed and used within colonial and post-colonial contexts<sup>1</sup>, but has also undoubtedly opened new avenues for research in Religious Studies by arguing that popular culture, new religious movements and African indigenous religions may be comparatively studied as serving *the same functions* as the conventional world religions.

Drawing on social theorists such as Durkheim, Bataille, WEB Du Bois, Weber, Marx-Adorno-Horkheimer and Benjamin, Chidester (2005) foregrounded in *Authentic Fakes* three crucial aspects or functions of religion: sociality, materiality and exchange. In her review of *Authentic Fakes* Kathryn Lofton (2007:466) considers these three terms as descriptors of the generic category of 'religion' to be 'the most likely exports from *Authentic Fakes*' and praises Chidester's application of the terms to 'messy material' as exemplary of 'the sort of transnational, interdisciplinary work that is required for any future political economy of religion.'

I understand Chidester to mean the following by each of these critical terms<sup>2</sup>:

- *sociality* refers to religion's function of forming group boundaries, i.e. of inclusive or exclusionary collective identities;

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<sup>1</sup> Crucial analyses to which Chidester's contribution should here be related, include Asad (1993), Smith (1998), Masuzawa (2000), Fitzgerald (2000), Kwok Pui-Lan (2012) and Riesebrodt (2011).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Strijdom (2014) for a more extensive discussion of these terms.

- *materiality* refers to the desire for material objects, sensory experiences and gendered bodily performances of rituals; and
- *exchange* focuses on communist or capitalist economic exchanges in rituals of gift-giving and expenditure.

Although Chidester does not always explicitly and consistently apply these analytical concepts from *Authentic Fakes* (2005) in *Wild Religion: Tracking the Sacred in South Africa* (2012), these do arguably constitute crucial categories that informed Chidester's production of critical knowledge about forms of non-conventional religion in South Africa since the advent of its first democratic elections in 1994 until the FIFA World Cup in 2010.

Under 'wild' or 'unconventional' religion Chidester (2012) includes for social analysis not only forms of indigenous religion within the post-apartheid South African context (e.g. neoshamans with their extraordinary dreams and visions, indigenous gendered rituals of reed dances, virginity testing, illegitimacy and marriage, or theosophical renderings of indigenous religion), but also colonial statues and monuments in Cape Town, prison gangs, Pentecostal Christian churches and Islamic fundamentalist groups, national museums and heritage sites (e.g. Freedom Park), and finally the religion of football<sup>3</sup>.

Of these examples of 'wild' or 'unconventional' religion I will engage with Chidester's (2012) sociological analysis of the last two, ie of Freedom Park and the 2010 FIFA World Cup, not only in their interaction with indigenous religion, but also as doing the work of religion as such within local and global contexts.

I will argue that the application of 'sociality' and 'exchange' as critical terms to these cases demonstrates the contribution that sociological concepts and theories may make to understand African realities<sup>4</sup>. The specific critical question that I will thus consider is this: In precisely which ways has

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<sup>3</sup> Chidester (2012:ix; cf. 1, 2) thus explicitly states that his 'focus in this book is not on religious communities as conventionally defined, anchored in churches, mosques, temples, and synagogues'.

<sup>4</sup> For my engagement with Chidester's use of the notion of 'materiality' in dialogue with amongst others Du Bois, Adorno-Horkheimer and Benjamin, see Strijdom (2014).

Chidester's use of general sociological concepts and theories contributed to our understanding of unconventional forms of religion in post-apartheid South Africa within a global context, as illustrated in his analysis of these case studies?

In the first case study, Freedom Park, with 'sociality' as critical term, Emile Durkheim will be the main theorist to help us think about the role of religion in the formation of groups, more precisely, the formation of inclusive or exclusionary collective identities. In the second case study, the 2010 FIFA World Cup, with 'exchange' as critical term, Georges Bataille (characterized by Chidester [2012:9] as 'perverse Durkheimian') will offer the primary theoretical lens enabling us to offer a social analysis of another religious event in post-apartheid South Africa within a global context. In conclusion, I will, in light of Chidester's sociological analysis of these two case studies, summarize my argument on the legitimacy and relevance of using etic vis-à-vis emic categories to produce critical knowledge about religion and religions in general and in South Africa within a global context in particular.

### **'Sociality' as Critical Term: Freedom Park as Case Study**

For Durkheim, Chidester (2005:16) emphasizes in *Authentic Fakes*, religion's main function is *to unify its adherents into a single community*. This view of religion, Chidester (2005:16) claims, is shared by 'most scholars of religion'. He thus paraphrases Durkheim's classic definition of religion as:

beliefs and practices in relation to the sacred, with the 'sacred' defined simply as that which is set apart from the ordinary, but in such a way that *it serves to unify people who adhere to those beliefs and practices into a single moral community* (Chidester 2005:16; my emphasis).

The view of religion as 'a way of being human in relation to other human beings in a community' is then tested by Chidester (2005:15, 17) in *Authentic Fakes* 'against the evidence of the beliefs and practices ... in popular culture', particularly the possibility of analyzing baseball as doing the work of religion in so far as it unifies a group of adherents around something sacred (or 'set apart') just as in the case of a church. 'Baseball', Chidester (2005:11) argues, 'is a religion because it defines a community of allegiance,

the ‘church of baseball’. In both the past and present, this sport has operated like a religious tradition in preserving the symbols, myths and rituals of a sacred collectivity.’ Later he elaborates:

It [i.e. baseball] is a religious institution that maintains the continuity, uniformity, sacred space, and sacred time of American life. As the ‘faith of fifty million people’, baseball does everything that we conventionally understand to be done by the institution of the church (Chidester 2005:36).

A sense of continuity is constructed through ‘tradition, heritage, and collective memory’, a sense of uniformity or ‘belonging to a vast, extended American family’ is created, as is a sense of ‘home’ as sacred space and of sacred ritualized time through ‘extraordinary moments of ecstasy and enthusiasm’ (Chidester 2005:36-37). ‘In these terms’, Chidester (2005:37) therefore concludes, ‘baseball is a church, a “community of believers”’, although it is certainly confronted by unbelievers who do not form part of this community.

As we move from *Authentic Fakes* (2005) to *Wild Religion* (2012) we might expect Chidester to again use Durkheim’s notion of ‘social solidarity’ as critical term to shed light on the 2010 World Cup, but as we will shortly see, he will use ‘exchange’ as critical term to understand that case. In *Wild Religion* the concept of ‘sociality’ seems to be the primary term behind his analysis of Freedom Park as part of the legacy of Thabo Mbeki (president 1999-2008).

What interests Chidester (2012:95) in the formation of collective identities is the relationship between national, cultural (including indigenous), and cosmopolitan identifications. His primary interest in politics, he states, has included an analysis of ‘new forms of citizenship, not only *national* citizenship, which dramatically broadened in postapartheid South Africa, but also *cultural* citizenship and *global* citizenship’ (Chidester 2012:95; my emphasis)<sup>5</sup>. In adopting and adapting Durkheim’s definition Chidester

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<sup>5</sup> Chidester’s view on the relationship between these collective identities might be fruitfully compared with Calhoun’s (2007) argument that ethnic / indigenous / cultural and cosmopolitan identities constitute two forces that challenge national identifications.

(2012:101) underlines that it is crucial to recognize the ambiguous role of ‘the sacred’ in nation building, since it allows for ‘both social cohesion and social conflict.’

In what sense may Freedom Park then be considered ‘sacred’? It is ‘sacred’, Chidester (2012:103) maintains, in the sense that the post-apartheid state under the leadership of President Thabo Mbeki, by drawing mainly on African indigenous religious resources, constructed a mythical time and ritual space to memorialize those ‘who had sacrificed their lives in the struggle for humanity and freedom.’ Not only was South Africa’s precolonial history ‘recast as a myth of origin’ by tracing it back to ‘the beginning of humanity’ with South Africa as ‘the cradle of humankind’, but its sacred space was structured to lead one from ‘a ceremonial center, S’khumbuto (a Swazi term for a sacred site to remember, invoke, and mobilize the assistance of ancestors), with a Wall of Names, an eternal flame, and a sanctuary’ to the most sacred part of the complex, Isivivane, a pile of stones collected from all the provinces of South Africa plus additional ones to represent ‘the nation, the region, and the international African diaspora’ (Chidester 2012:103-104). As a government project the construction of this sacred site was clearly intended to unify the post-apartheid nation of South Africa.

But, as Chidester observes, the sacred site of Freedom Park was contested by both conservative Christians and secular critics. For these Christians ‘instead of looking back to the past, ... the people of South Africa should look forward to Jesus who “alone can provide us with identity and hope, restoring a people and bringing true unity and liberty”’ (Chidester 2012:110). For secular critics Freedom Park created ‘an artificial uniformity in which difference, disagreement, and debate are buried under scripted narratives and framed imagery for creating consensus’ (Chidester 2012:108).

Although Chidester (2012:105, 106, 108) admits that the latter critique should be taken seriously in public pedagogy such as Freedom Park as well as religion education in public schools, and that the heritage project of the *Sunday Times* was more successful in ‘finding national unity, not in uniformity’, but in diversity by commissioning memorial sites throughout the country to commemorate ‘multiple narratives, embedded in local histories’, - although he admits all of this, he nevertheless assumes an unproblematic continuity between the public pedagogy of Freedom Park as ‘expanded classroom’ and the undertaking of the South African *National Policy on Religion and Education* (2003).

Against the apartheid regime's promotion of Christian national education at the expense of diversity, the new post-apartheid state policy based on the new Constitution and human rights was designed to promote amongst learners in public schools respect for diverse religious traditions and explicitly instructed public schools not to promote any one religion at the expense of another. The sense of a national collective identity was to be built on the basis of educating learners to respect diverse cultural and religious collective identities (cf. Chidester 2012:96-97). It is, therefore, surprising to learn that Chidester is not more critical of the foregrounding of indigenous symbols and rituals in Freedom Park<sup>6</sup> and Mbeki's vision of an African Renaissance, which carry the potential of marginalizing other traditions and of creating new hierarchies, fragmentation and exclusion of citizens who do not share indigenous beliefs and practices – an argument that I developed in some detail elsewhere (cf. Strijdom 2012).

It should, however be clear, that using 'sociality' as critical term is quite helpful to analyse the role of Freedom Park as 'wild religion' in the formation of inclusive and exclusionary national, cultural and even global identities – an ethical task that is, I maintain, imperative to continue in the production of knowledge about religion and religions in comparative Religious Studies.

### **'Exchange' as Critical Term: The World Cup as Case Study**

Although one might expect Chidester to use 'sociality' as the primary term of analysis for the 2010 FIFA World Cup in *Wild Religion*, as he did in

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<sup>6</sup> In his historical survey of the conceptualisation and design of Freedom Park, Noble (2011:213-217, 224) argues that it was Mbeki's fashioning of Afrocentric ideals around the turn of the millennium that inspired the emphasis on indigeneity at Freedom Park. He observes that the international jurors on the 2003 panel preferred designs that expressed universality, whereas the South African jurors supported submissions that were considered to be authentically African indigenous. Since the jurors did not agree at this first round, no winner was announced. Eventually the essentialist indigenous discourses won, with the intention 'to promote the authenticity of indigenous forms to document and thereby to fix – through commissioned research – the significance of indigenous myths and practices' (Noble 2011:252).

*Authentic Fakes* for the ‘church of baseball’, he instead foregrounds the critical term of ‘exchange’ here. The role of football in forming indigenous, national and global collective identities is surely not denied by Chidester, but it is the aspect of economic exchange – particularly of ‘expenditure’ - in this ‘wild religion’ that Chidester chooses to single out for focused analysis.

In *Authentic Fakes* the notion of ‘exchange’ was initially employed to understand rock ‘n’ roll as doing the same economic work as the potlatch amongst northwestern Native Americans. Both centre on extraordinary gift-giving: in the case of the ritual of potlatch ‘valued objects’ are not only displayed and distributed, but also sometimes destroyed; in the case of rock the prelude to the ‘archetypal rock song’ *Louie, Louie* with its “magical incantation” of “Let’s give it to ‘em, right now””, captures the performance of rock as an extraordinary, special or sacred gift (Chidester 2005:44-45)<sup>7</sup>.

In both cases, furthermore, competition plays a role: in the potlatch indigenous Americans of the Pacific Northwest contest ‘the ownership of sacred symbols’; in the case of rock it is not simply musical groups from the same Pacific Northwest area that compete amongst themselves, but importantly it is ‘a contest over something as basic as what it means to be a human being in a human society’ (Chidester 2005:46-47)<sup>8</sup>. This moral style of human *communitas*, solidarity and mutuality stands in sharp contrast to the dominant American value system of bureaucratic capitalism with its commitment to production and accumulation – an opposition, Chidester (2005:47) holds, that ‘is evident not only in America’, but might well be behind the cultural history of the twentieth century as such.

Although this insight, he further argues, draws on Durkheim’s foundational sociology of religion and its extension in Marcel Mauss’ work on the gift, it is Georges Bataille’s ‘left-hand sociology of religion’ with its focus on the difference between production and expenditure that is most helpful to understand the potlatch and rock ‘n’ roll (Chidester 2005:48). If on the one hand production aims at ‘subsistence, gain, and accumulation’, expenditure on the other hand represents an ‘alternative economic activity’ of

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<sup>7</sup> Chidester (2005:44-46) here finds particularly insightful Dave Marsh’s (1993) analysis of ‘the religious character of rock ‘n’ roll’ in terms of this song.

<sup>8</sup> Chidester (2005:47) here draws on Marcel Mauss’s analysis of the potlatch, as well as Victor Turner’s analysis of rock ‘n’ roll.



‘unproductivity’ in which ‘dramatic, spectacular loss’, waste or destruction of resources and energy “‘must be as great as possible in order for the activity to take on its true meaning’” (Chidester [2005:48], quoting from Bataille’s 1933 essay ‘The notion of expenditure’). It is this aspect of expenditure, of gift-giving when it ‘escalates to the destruction of property’, that constitutes the crux of Bataille’s theory of religion (Chidester 2005:48).

If we are persuaded by Chidester’s (2012:176-177) argument that the World Cup morphologically and functionally resembles a conventional religion<sup>9</sup>, in what way does Bataille’s notion of expenditure as the crux of religion then help us to better understand the World Cup? It helps us precisely, Chidester (2012:177) maintains, to focus our attention on the *economics* of ‘football religion’, specifically to grasp the enormous *loss* of resources within the South African context. According to Bataille, to repeat, for something to be truly ‘sacred’, the ritual expenditure, loss or destruction of resources must be as great as possible - as is evidenced by ritual sacrifice and the potlatch, the construction of sumptuous cathedrals and grand monuments, and the celebration of spectacular festivals and games - a crucial aspect of religion that Durkheim’s functional analysis does not address. When Bataille started his own Collège de Sociologie in the 1930s his intention was not only to analyze this energizing principle of society, but also to promote and revivify it (cf. Chidester 2012:178).

Chidester (2012:178-179) argues that Bataille’s theory is pertinent to analyze both the indigenous African sacrifice of a cow at the main stadium on the eve of the 2010 World Cup, and the World Cup itself. He conceives of the former as signaling a ‘dedication to expenditure’ which characterizes the World Cup as such.

The ritual sacrifice at the World Cup, according to Chidester’s (2012:182) reading of Bataille, seems to illustrate the subject’s achievement of ‘a lost intimacy’ at the very moment when the sacrificial destruction is performed. It is at this moment of rupture, when the subject is redeemed from ‘the world of useful things’ or rational calculations, that the formation of communal solidarity is being realized. The World Cup itself, as festival, ‘provided an occasion for individuals to find their ecstatic sovereignty by

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<sup>9</sup> Morphologically the World Cup has its myths and rituals, its sacred spaces and times; functionally it binds together adherents into a unified collective identity (cf. Chidester 2012:176-177).

abandoning the world of things, utility, projects, and economic calculations.’

As in the case of giving at the potlatch, with its intention ‘to defy rivals through the spectacular destruction of wealth’ (Bataille, quoted by Chidester 2012:186), the World Cup too ‘seemed to inspire rivalry among politicians in the destruction of wealth’ (Chidester 2012:186).

This ‘spectacular letting loose’ can, however, only temporarily disrupt the regular order of the profane world (Chidester 2012:184). The latter tolerates, but necessarily limits, the transgressive and ecstatic experience of sacred immediacy, to the extent that it actually demands the restoration of ‘profane law and order’ - ‘the sacred excess of festival will inevitably be held to account by that world’s standards’ (Chidester 2012:184). In a capitalist market economy that focuses on profit, the question then arises, after the moment of ecstatic disruption, what to do with the stadiums as economic losses to the South African people. Bataille’s proposal, Chidester (2012:190) concludes, would be to have them destroyed as ‘new occasions’ to both revitalize the sacred as ecstatic destruction of resources and to assert ‘competing claims of sovereignty in South Africa.’

Although it would be necessary not only to critique Chidester for his lack of critical engagement with Bataille’s theory<sup>10</sup>, but also to relate his analysis here to his examination of capitalist and communist economics elsewhere in his work<sup>11</sup>, the gain in critical insight by using the concept of ‘exchange’ - particularly of ‘expenditure’ - should be clear.

## **Conclusion: The Validity of Using Etic vis-à-vis Emic Categories**

On the basis of these two case studies of unconventional religion in post-apartheid South Africa, analysed by Chidester with the help of critical terms developed by French sociologists, how may we rethink the insider-outsider, or emic-etic, problematic in comparative religious studies?

In *Relating religion*, a representative collection of essays with an extensive introductory autobiographical essay on his career as historical-critical and comparative scholar of religion and religions, Jonathan Z Smith (2004:201) underlines the centrality of the issue of insider-outsider categories

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<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Asger Sørensen’s critique of Bataille’s economic theory.

<sup>11</sup> An argument that is elaborated in Strijdom (forthcoming).

in the comparative study of religions and uses at least two images to argue for the necessity of general concepts for the sake of critical thinking, viz mapping and translation. ‘Nativists’<sup>12</sup> who insist on the reproduction of emic or insider categories on the basis of the uniqueness or incommensurability of their cultures, Smith holds, not only reject the legitimacy of translation from one culture to another, but also the possibility of comparative research within the humanities as such. Their conservative model remains at the level of paraphrase, and condemns us ‘to live in the world of Borges’s Pierre Menard, in which a tale must always be identically ‘twice-told’, where a word can only be translated by itself’ (Smith 2004:372). Smith (2004:209) further illustrates its uselessness for critical thinking from Borges’ parable ‘Exactitude in science’, which I quote in full for its aptness:

In that Empire, the Act of Cartography attained such Perfection that the map of a single Province occupied the entirety of the City, and the map of the Empire, the entirety of a Province. In time, these Unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartographer’s Guild struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point by point with it. The following generations, who were not so fond of the Study of Cartography, as their Forebears had been, saw that that vast Map was useless, and not without some Pitilessness was it, that they delivered it up to the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters. In the Deserts of the West, still

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<sup>12</sup> Smith uses the terms ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ seldom, but did write the entry in the *HarperCollins Dictionary of Religion*: ‘a distinction between an act of cultural understanding by the actors themselves (emic) and an understanding of that culture by trained outsiders (etic)’ (Smith 1995; cf Smith 2004:398). He prefers ‘first-order’ and ‘second-order’ respectively, and in the case of emic categories often refers to them as ‘native’ (cf Smith 2004:134, 204, 208, 221) or as exemplifying ‘nativism’ (Smith 2004:175).

Elsewhere he considers Hobbes’ prioritization of ‘the giving of names to names’ as a scientific ‘second-order activity’ over ‘the naming of things’ as a utilitarian ‘first-order activity’, which he finds similar to the ‘fabled report of the Bakiri of Brazil, often cited by advocates of ‘primitive prelogical thinking’; while the Bakiri have names for each sort of parrot or palm, they have no word for the genus parrot or palm’ (Smith 2000a:35).

today, there are Tattered Ruins of that Map, inhabited by Animals and Beggars; in all of the Land there is no other Relic of the Discipline of Geography.

Among ‘nativists’ such as these Smith (2004:7, 206, 368) includes not only biblicists who apply structuralist methods to merely paraphrase their textual data, but also philologists and phenomenologists in religious studies, who adopt ‘a sort of common-sense descriptive discourse’ and summarize texts ‘as if their citation is, by itself, sufficient to guarantee significance.’ At one point he admits, however, that Africanists who insist on the importance of indigenous categories have, in the case of the study of magic (both a first-order / emic and second-order / etic category), ‘generated a number of important interpretative strategies’, but emphasizes that these in the end carry ‘little explanatory power’ for which second-order / etic categories are of vital importance (Smith 2004:219, 221-222).

Smith’s argument is that it is precisely the incongruity between map and territory, the gap between model and data, the difference between conceptual category and phenomena, that creates puzzlement, defamiliarization, surprise and thought. The way surprise is then reduced, but never fully overcome, Smith (2004:30, 208) proposes, is by means of translation – whether intercultural or intracultural, whether in the natural or human sciences, ‘by bringing the unknown into relations to the known, relations of similarity and difference, relations of analogy and homology, relations of metonymy and metaphor’ - a procedure according to him well illustrated by Durkheim’s ‘translation’ of the language of religion (the unknown) into the language of society (the known), or better in Lévi-Strauss’ formulation, of substituting a less intelligible complexity with a more intelligible one. The result might not meet with the approval of the insiders, but that is according to Smith (2004:207) ‘perfectly justifiable and is, in fact, normal procedure.’ Translation as generalization is ‘necessarily incomplete’ and ‘highly selective’, and must therefore be continuously subjected to comparison, critique and rectification (Smith 2004:31).

In his most recent book, *Empire of Religion*, dedicated to Jonathan Z Smith, Chidester (2014:xvii-xviii) traces his intellectual genealogy in the production of critical knowledge about religion and religions, from his initial education about British imperial comparative religion within the context of ‘the neo-imperial United States’ to his rethinking of ‘the forces of

imperialism, colonialism, and apartheid in the study of religion' after his relocation to South Africa three decades ago.

Towards the end of the book, Chidester (2014:281-282) makes a succinct statement on 'the insider-outsider problem in the study of religion'. He distances himself from the epistemologically problematic assumption that only insiders may produce authentic knowledge of their own traditions, which 'cannot be supported by any theory of mind or language' (Chidester [2014:282], in agreement with Jeppe-Sinding Jensen [2011]). What is clear to Chidester (2014:282), however, is that such a claim 'can serve a politics of knowledge' by 'authenticating the insider.'

Does that mean that Chidester does not take insider perspectives seriously, and only applies etic categories in his analysis? Not at all! A close reading of the above and other case studies would reveal an attempt to relate emic and etic perspectives, although this effort is not altogether persuasively and consciously done - an argument that deserves separate elaboration and that I will therefore not pursue here.

What I have attempted to show here is the gain in critical knowledge production that the application of critical terms such as 'sociality' and 'exchange' to two case studies of non-conventional religion in post-apartheid South Africa may afford us - even if the genealogy of these terms still need to be historically contextualized and critically engaged, just as Chidester in exemplary fashion has done for the analytical term of 'religion' itself.

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