

[PDF] Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa (Studies in Religion and Culture)

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David Chidester

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David Chidester : Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa (Studies in Religion and Culture) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa (Studies in Religion and Culture)*:

6 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Supporting Edward Said By alijatirokeh This book, the Savage system by David Chidester highlighting colonialism and comparative religion in Southern Africa has proven the validity of Edward Said's thesis on Orientalism. In his Foucauldian work *Orientalism*, Said affirms that orientalism is an attempt to understand society group along with its culture in a way they look themselves. In another word, it is looking at society with your own perspectives. (Said, 1979) Unfortunately, as the orientalists were the references of the colonial power, it was one of the tools to hegemonize the power. The colonialists interpret the colonized people in a way they want to prolong their colonialization. It was the power of knowledge. Once Said says in PBS TV: They (the Western sources) look the Arab, in a way I never understand it was my culture" David Chidister approaches similarly in his determination of comparative religions in Southern Africa in three periods; frontier, imperial, and Apartheid. The frontier period, is the oldest period of comparative religion on southern Africa. In that, the earliest frontiers described African as people with no religion. no gods no worship, no temple. They similiarized African people with animal uncivilized The Imperial period is after the frontier era that is within the earlier days of colonial era.

Not so much different from the previous period, the description of African people in this period is negative. African is just above the animal they have only the savage religion. They worship natural stuffs like trees, animals, idols, stones, etc. The apartheid comparative religion, although has been in a modern period, describes the African as just its previous period in which Africans were uncivilized, no religions and hold primitive religions in which Africans are described as worshipping the moon and the sun. The three periods as Chidester highlights is in accordance with his main thesis that comparative religions (religious study?) were very European centric. What was perceived as religion should fit with the European thought of religions. There should be one God, sanctuary, and prophet. Agreed with Foucault's approach Chidester reveals this does not successfully reveal what actually the reality belonged to African. I think Chidester deserves appraisal as he has successfully elaborated the European centric even in the comparative religions. Just as the same phenomena described for the colonized people in Malay and Indonesia or some Middle Eastern countries that Edward Said reveals. No other orientation in that creation except an attempt to marginalize the colonized people and to keep them colonized. It is undeniably true.

Savage Systems examines the emergence of the concepts of "religion" and "religions" on colonial frontiers. The book offers a detailed analysis of the ways in which European travelers, missionaries, settlers, and government agents, as well as indigenous Africans, engaged in the comparison of alternative religious ways of life as one dimension of intercultural contact. Focusing primarily on nineteenth-century frontier relations, David Chidester demonstrates that the terms and conditions for comparison--including a discourse about "otherness" that were established during this period still remain. A volume in the series *Studies in Religion and Culture*

This work is the most thorough study of the meaning, construction, and definition of religion in any specific area of the world. It is a model that could be adopted with profit by scholars working in other areas of the world. (Charles Long, University of California, Santa Barbara) A highly original critical history of comparative religion in southern Africa that opens up the field well beyond South Africa and puts Euro-American work on notice about the bearing of its political context. The book is on the cutting edge of comparative religion internationally and could serve well as a text in the methodological courses increasingly required in departments of religion. (Eugene M. Klaaren, Wesleyan University) From the Back Cover *Savage Systems* examines the emergence of the concepts of "religion" and "religions" on colonial frontiers. The book offers a detailed analysis of the ways in which European travelers, missionaries, settlers, and government agents, as well as indigenous Africans, engaged in the comparison of alternative religious ways of life as one dimension of intercultural contact. Focusing primarily on nineteenth-century frontier relations, David Chidester demonstrates that the terms and conditions for comparison - including a discourse about "otherness" - that were established during this period still remain. About the Author David Chidester is Professor of Comparative Religion and Director of the Institute for Comparative Religion in Southern Africa at the University of Cape Town. Among his previous publications are *American Sacred Space*, *Religions of South Africa*, *Shots in the Streets: Violence and Religion in South Africa*, and *Religion and Public Education: Options for a New South Africa*.