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INTRODUCTION

A RITUAL LENS ON SOCIAL CAPITAL

CAS WEPENER, IGNATIUS SWART, GERRIE TER HAAR
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GENERAL ORIENTATION

In Sub-Saharan Africa many people participate on a regular basis in Christian worship. There is indeed worship in abundance in Africa. This observation is backed by the statistics quoted in this book, but also and especially by the descriptions of worship based on qualitative research with an ethnographically-informed approach carried out in South Africa. This situation is different to, for example, parts of Europe and it is very important to bear this fact in mind. The book however not only explores the quantity of worship, but also and especially the quality of worship, seeing that the worship and rituals studied in this book are rituals and worship that serve Africa.

With this particular context in mind the most basic question that an international team of researchers set out to explore some years ago, and of which the findings are described in this book, is: 'How and to what extent does religious ritual contribute to the formation of the kinds of social capital that assist or could assist in the alleviation of poverty in South African communities?' The research was carried out in a very specific post-apartheid South African context in which the on-going need for poverty alleviation and national reconciliation is still prevalent. This book is thus about the abundance of worship that is performed in Africa and for Africa and explicitly aims to better understand the connection between ritual and social capital formation within the South African context. The relevance of our research lies in its contribution to the study of religion on the continent of Africa, but – in light of worldwide migration patterns, specifically also the African diaspora, and ongoing attempts at development cooperation – also in its contribution to a wider field of related studies.

The research described in this book can be located in multiple contexts. Apart from the geographical contexts and those of the religious

communities that were involved, it can also be located within a very specific South African context with its own unique challenges and opportunities. These contexts will, firstly and provisionally, be explored in this introduction to provide a general orientation for readers; especially regarding the case studies in part II and the contexts in which the ritual data were collected. We commence with an introductory orientation regarding the geographical and ecclesial contexts and introduce some of the key figures that will be encountered in the course of the book. This is necessary, because it is through observing, describing and analysing the ritual performances of these people and the congregations in which they worship, that we were able to explore our research question.

PLACES AND PERSONS

In 1948, Alan Paton published his novel *Cry, the Beloved Country* with the famous opening sentence with the ironic undertone setting the stage for a tragic story, namely “There is a beautiful road that runs from Ixopo into the hills”¹. Seven decades later, we would like to recall that opening line here at the beginning of our book, which is set in roughly the same geographical area: there is a beautiful road that runs all along the eastern and southern coastlines of South Africa. It is one of the major national roads of the country, called the N2. Driving from the city of Durban in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in a southerly direction, to one’s right you pass a large township called Mlazi. Mlazi is home to the headquarters of the Corinthian Church of South Africa (CCSA). The church in Mlazi, its leadership and the denomination of the CCSA as such is an integral part of the research conducted for this book. In Mlazi the late founder of the CCSA, Johannes Richmond, was the leader of the first congregation to be established in the CCSA. The CCSA subsequently grew to become a large African Independent or Initiated Church (AIC), with congregations in various parts of South Africa. Johannes Richmond was later succeeded as archbishop of the CCSA by his son Moses, and after his death Moses was succeeded by his mother, the widow of Johannes Richmond, Mrs Bestina Richmond, who was the archbishop and leader of the CCSA at the time we were conducting this research. The liturgical leadership and worship at the headquarters in Mlazi form part of the

¹ A. PATON: *Cry, the beloved country* (New York 1984) 1.

ritual data covered in the research documented in this book. Mlazi, however, was not the geographical point of entry for the research team into the CCSA and the congregation where most of the data were collected. For this we needed to head further south along the beautiful N2.

Two-hundred and fifty kilometres further south, just before the border with the Eastern Cape province, is the town of Kokstad. Kokstad is a town with a total population of 11,568² and is the largest town in the region that is known as Griqualand-East. This town is the commercial capital of the area and home to some of the fieldworkers and co-researchers who participated in this research project, whom readers will later meet in the individual case studies. Kokstad is also the place where some of the meetings for the research project were held and where some interviews were conducted. We made our first contact with leaders of one congregation of the CCSA in a village called Phepheni near Kokstad (figure 1 displays the province of KwaZulu-Natal and the city of Durban, where Mlazi is situated and on the coastline, further south and a bit more inland the town of Kokstad).

Most of the rituals described and reflected upon in this book were not documented and performed in Kokstad. For the site where these rituals were documented, we still need to travel another 30 kilometres south-east, which will bring us to the main location for the rituals described and analysed in many chapters in this book. As you leave the town of Kokstad, you cross the provincial border to enter the Eastern Cape province of South Africa and specifically a part of the country which was formerly under the apartheid government a so-called 'homeland' for Xhosa people known as the Transkei. On the map below it is the road indicated as 'To Umtata' that also takes one to Phepheni. This winding road takes you into the mountains through a pass in the direction of the towns of Bizana and Flagstaff. About ten kilometres after the turn-off from the N2 is the rural village of Phepheni, a village with no electricity or running water and with a population of fewer than 300 people, but with a lot of worship. As already mentioned, Phepheni is home to one congregation of the CCSA.

² Of this total population 4,651 are Black Africans, 4,756 Coloured People, 1,780 White and 381 Indian or Asian (Statistics South Africa Census Report, 2004). This is a fairly unique population composition within the larger South African context and significant as such, but it is also different from the village of Phepheni, where all the inhabitants are Black Africans.



Figure 1: The province of KwaZulu-Natal

Statistics obtained from Statistics SA: Population Census 2001, Religion Report, shows that the total population of the village is only 232 people – all of whom are Black Africans.³ However, after multiple visits to this village we know that there are certainly more people, albeit not more than a few hundred in total. The language spoken in this area is mostly

³ Statistics SA: *Population Census 2001, Religion Report* (Pretoria 2004).

isiXhosa, with a few isiZulu speakers.⁴ Regarding the issue of employment, the data are unfortunately not complete. Forty-six persons indicated that they cannot find work, with a further twelve being unemployed or choosing not to work, and quite a number were in school or homemakers/housewives, but the general situation regarding employment appears to be bleak.⁵ The census data on the occupations of the inhabitants of Phepheni confirms this picture of employment in the village, showing that a total of 118 people indicated ‘occupation’ on the census forms as not applicable to them as they were not economically active.

Socio-economic indicators, however, do not tell the whole story or paint a complete picture of the village of Phepheni. In spite of the material poverty and the fact that, along with the Limpopo province, the Eastern Cape is one of the poorest provinces in South Africa, this part of the Eastern Cape is a culturally rich part of South Africa where religion in general and Christianity in particular play a vital part.

One of the churches in the village of Phepheni is the congregation of the CCSA, and the regional bishop under whose authority this congregation falls is Bishop Walter Zamindlela Njangule. Three priests share the leadership in the congregation of Phepheni, two men and one woman, and the leader among them, who also serves as the full-time priest, is Reverend Pungula Wellington Dingani (see figure 4; Reverend Dingani passed away in 2018). This congregation in Phepheni and denomination of the CCSA may seem like a peripheral phenomenon within the global religious landscape. Broadly speaking, however, this congregation and denomination are part of the so-called African Independent Churches (AIC⁶) in South Africa, which according to the 2001 Census statistics amount to 32.6% of the total of 79.8% Christians in South Africa.⁷

⁴ The language spoken in Phepheni is indeed isiXhosa, but it is isiXhosa mixed with isiXesibe, which is an isiXhosa dialect.

⁵ Statistics SA: *Population Census 2001, Religion Report* (Pretoria 2004).

⁶ The ‘I’ in the acronym AIC can stand for ‘Independent’, ‘Indigenous’ and more recently also ‘Instituted’ or ‘Initiated’. Sometimes the acronym AIC is used in contrast to MIC, which stands for ‘mission-initiated churches’ and refers to many traditional mainline churches in Africa such as the Anglican or Presbyterian churches. See also: T. ODURO, H. PRETORIUS, S. NUSSBAUM, B. BORN: *Mission in an African way. A practical introduction to African Instituted Churches and their sense of mission* (Wellington 2008) 6. In his most recent work and in chapter 14 of this book, Ghanaian scholar Abamfo Atiemo aptly refers to MICs (which are also known as mainline churches) as ‘traditional’ churches seeing that in the African context they are definitely no longer mainline.

⁷ Statistics SA: *Population Census 2001, Religion Report* (Pretoria 2004).

Johnson and Ross also indicate that in 1910 there were a total of roughly 19,700 adherents to AICs in Southern Africa compared to about 20,814,000 by the year 2010, which marks an increase of 7.2% over one century. Amongst the six major Christian traditions listed by Johnson and Ross, the AICs showed the fastest growth rate over the past century in Southern Africa. The congregation and denomination of the CCSA and their religious rituals as presented in this book are thus part of a rapidly growing tradition within global Christianity.⁸



Figure 2 and 3: The mountains of Phepheni to the left and a typical village scene to the right with a grave, a maize field and some houses

Figure 5 shows the church building in which most of the worship activities take place on a Sunday. The weekly Sunday worship as well as several other rituals will be described and reflected upon, along with some rituals of the CCSA conducted elsewhere such as the nearby river, mountain and headquarters in Mlazi.

In some parts of the world church-going and church membership have declined over recent decades. Those statistics will be valid for some regions of South Africa too, especially in certain westernised urban areas, but the South African landscape pertaining to attending worship services differs substantially from that of many other countries across

⁸ T. JOHNSON & K. ROSS: *Atlas of global Christianity 1910-2010*, (Edinburgh: University Press, 2009) 112. See in this regard also P. JENKINS: *The next Christendom. The coming of global Christianity* (Oxford 2011³). For observations and projections regarding global Christianity and specifically also the numbers of the nascent AIC tradition in Africa, see also C.J. WEPENER: 'Die Liturgiereform in Afrika südlich der Sahara Einige Beobachtungen zu Gottesdienst, Sprache und Kultur', in G. LATHROP & M. STUFLESSER (eds.): *Liturgiereformen in den Kirchen. 50 Jahre nach Sacrosanctum Concilium* (= Theologie der Liturgie 5) (Regensburg 2013) 161-176.



Figure 4: Reverend P.W. Dingani in 2008



Figure 5: The church building with worshippers in Phepheni after a Sunday service

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the globe.⁹ So, for example, 90% of persons in South Africa between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five attend a worship service at least once a month.¹⁰ Also, according to Dreyer, South Africa is on the top 10 list of countries worldwide with regards to attendance of worship services and, with an average of 56%, fourth overall.¹¹ The researchers in the project can bear witness to this fact: there are Christian rituals in abundance and worship is attended regularly in this congregation and denomination. Phepheni and its surrounding area is the location for much that will be described and discussed in this book, with Mlazi and the church there filling some of the remaining gaps.

The main objects under investigation in this book are the worship and rituals of the CCSA in these locations. The ritual data were, however, approached in a very specific way and with a particular aim in mind. For this, we now turn to a consideration of the broader research project, which was the context in which this research was conducted.

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The research presented in this book is the result of a four-year research project executed by a team of African and European researchers in South Africa. Funded by the South African National Research Foundation (NRF), the aim of this project was to explore the role of religious ritual in the kinds of social capital formation relevant to the objective of alleviating poverty at the grassroots level. With this aim in mind, the project attempted to understand the role of religion in social capital formation

⁹ See in this regard in general, C.J. WEPENER: 'The department of faith practices at the University of Pretoria: A spacious house accommodating a postcolonial African pneumatopraxis where an academic spirituality of liminality is fostered' (Inaugural lecture University of Pretoria 2015).

¹⁰ The statistics were obtained from Statistics SA: *Population Census 2001, Religion Report*, and also from Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) research quoted by N. KOOPMAN: 'Publieke teologie in Suid-Afrika vandag: Die verhaal van die Beyers Naudé Sentrum vir Publieke Teologie' (Unpublished presentation: Stellenbosch University 2005) 1-10, p. 3. See also C.J. WEPENER: 'Liturgical research in a changing South African socio-cultural (liturgical) landscape: challenges and opportunities for method and theory', in I. SWART [et al.] (eds.): *Religion and social development in post-apartheid South Africa: Perspectives for critical engagement* (Stellenbosch 2010) 403-416, p. 405.

¹¹ W. DREYER: *Praktiese ekklesiologie en bedieningspraktyk: Met verwysing na die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika* (PhD Dissertation: University of Pretoria 2011) 95-96.

through the lens of ritual, as well as to better understand the potential role of ritual in generating social capital.

Research projects in South Africa are often closely linked to social issues – in this case the focal point was poverty.¹² The aim of this book is to present an academic study that gives an overview of the research project and its findings for an international readership. Ritual and religion in newer traditions in Africa are receiving a lot of attention currently; however, this is mostly done in a pejorative way focusing, for example, on what is termed by (mainly) outsiders as ‘prosperity’. Without for a moment forgetting that ritual and religion also have a potentially dangerous side, our intention is to shed at least some light on the potential positive impact of certain practices on poor communities.

During the past decade some remarkable shifts have taken place in South African public life with significant effects for policy. One important result of this changed policy environment is the way in which an actor such as the broad religious sector lost the central position that it enjoyed in the political struggle against apartheid and, by many accounts, has been relegated to the margins of what has become a preoccupation with market forces and other ‘developmental’ concerns in the new South Africa. Yet, such a perspective does not do justice to the continuing importance of religion in South African communities. Ample research has been done on the role of faith-based organisations (FBOs) in social service delivery in South African society.¹³ Nevertheless, to our knowledge there is little academic research exploring the specific potential of a dimension so inherent to religious communities as ritual in the generation of social capital.¹⁴

¹² See, for example, the publication in this same book series in which liturgy was linked to national reconciliation in South Africa: C.J. WEPENER: *From fast to feast. A ritual-liturgical exploration of reconciliation in South African cultural contexts* (= Liturgia Condenda 19) (Leuven 2009).

¹³ Such a research focus, for instance, characterised the NRF-funded project on ‘Faith-Based Organisations, social capital and development’ (2004-2006) that preceded the current project and led to the book publication: SWART [et al.]: *Religion and social development in post-apartheid South Africa*. For a more detailed overview of the project results, see I. SWART: ‘Meeting the challenge of poverty and exclusion: The emerging field of development research in South African Practical Theology,’ in *International Journal of Practical Theology* 12/1 (2008) 104-149.

¹⁴ One exception is Afe Adogame and his focus on the African diaspora. See A. ADOGAME: *The African diaspora. New currents and emerging trends in world Christianity* (Bloomsbury 2013) 101-123.

With this scope for innovative research in mind, we formulated our research question. In the sections that follow we explain how we attempted to find out in what manner and to what extent religious ritual contributes to the formation of the kinds of social capital that assist or could assist in the alleviation of poverty in South African communities. The contextual background against which the question was formulated will be discussed along with a motivation for the choice of the specific religious communities.

SOCIAL CAPITAL AND RELIGIOUS RITUAL IN IMPOVERISHED SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNITIES

Poverty is one of the social problems plaguing South Africa and has in a recent scholarly contribution also been linked to the structural condition of social exclusion in the country.¹⁵ Yet, as a public debate on the domination of market economic values in post-apartheid South African society has shown, a narrow-minded economic and materialistic approach to the issue of poverty may be just as much regarded as part of the general mind-set in this society.¹⁶ On the international stage, scholars and even an institution no less than the World Bank are today likewise highlighting the fact that such a narrow-minded emphasis should be seen as not only a South African problem. In particular, in their attempt to adopt a broader approach, these scholars and the Bank are pointing to the fact that a general neglect of the role that ‘social capital’ and ‘social capital formation’ has to play may well lie at the core of the failure to address the problem of poverty sufficiently.¹⁷

¹⁵ See I. SWART: ‘Meeting the challenge of poverty and social exclusion’; see also the supplement of the South African theological journal, *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif* 45/2 (2004), which was entirely devoted to the issue of poverty and to which a number of participants in the current project contributed.

¹⁶ See I. SWART: ‘Market economic development, local economic experience and the Christian movement towards alternatives in a South African city region’, in S. DE GRUCHY, N. KOOPMAN and S. STRIJBOS (eds.): *From our side: Emerging perspectives on development and ethics* (Rozenberg 2008) 259-279.

¹⁷ Part I of this book refers to much of the latest literature on these topics. See also P. FRANCIS: ‘Social capital, civil society and social exclusion’, in U. KOTHARI & M. MINOGUE (eds.): *Development theory and practice: Critical perspectives* (Palgrave 2002) 71, who refer to social capital as the ‘missing dimension’ in social development; see also the World Bank on the topic at <http://go.worldbank.org/C0QTRW4QF0> [last

In response, Wepener and Cilliers have argued from a South African perspective that poverty could be described or defined as the inverse of the presence of social capital. Their definition of poverty as the absence of social capital is thus that it entails “a state of affairs where the absence of material resources, the denied space for trust and identity forming, as well as the loss of civil skills impact negatively on one another, in a seemingly unstoppable and negatively escalating spiral.”¹⁸ Such a definition of poverty implies, conversely, that the generation of social capital could potentially have positive impacts on poverty alleviation.¹⁹

Some have pointed to a new interest amongst public policy makers in South Africa to promote a strategy of social capital formation in order to address issues of poverty and social exclusion in South African communities. Focusing in particular on the *Social Capital Formation Document* of the Western Cape Provincial Government’s Department of Social Development (2005), Swart concluded that, according to this document, a strategy of social capital formation had shifted to the forefront of “public sector intervention to meet the challenge of social exclusion and provide disadvantaged communities with access to networks and socio-economic opportunities.”²⁰ However, there is also a limited perspective on agency in the document. The document attaches important value to the role of traditional values in the formation of social capital without adopting a more comprehensive view of the social actors that would be responsible for the revival of such traditional values. Swart argues that attention should be paid to the foundational role of religious

accessed 15 October 2018], which states that “Social capital, when enhanced in a positive manner, can improve project effectiveness and sustainability by building the community’s capacity to work together to address their common needs, fostering greater inclusion and cohesion, and increasing transparency and accountability.”

¹⁸ C.J. WEPENER and J. CILLIERS: ‘Ritual and the generation of social capital in contexts of poverty’, in: I. SWART [et al.] (eds.): *Religion and social development in post-apartheid South Africa: Perspectives for critical engagement* (Stellenbosch 2010) 417-430; compare also J. CILLIERS & C.J. WEPENER, ‘Ritual and the generation of social capital in contexts of poverty: A South African exploration’, in *International Journal of Practical Theology* 11/1 (2007) 39-55, p. 44.

¹⁹ Wepener and Cilliers’s (2010) view of social capital should be augmented with the discussion of this concept in part I as well as in other chapters in this book.

²⁰ I. SWART: ‘Churches as a stock of social capital for promoting social capital in Western Cape communities’, in *Journal of Religion in Africa* 36/3-4 (2006) 347.

actors in reviving the values that were called for. To quote here at some length from the argument put forward:

Whilst one can fully concur with the document that there is a fundamental enabling role for government to play in the social capital formation process, one in which social workers and social development workers also have a very important facilitating role to play, it at the same time also seems very doubtful that these actors could be primarily responsible for mediating the deeper processes of relational and value formation that are asked for.

This article [proceeds] from the thesis that a process of social capital formation can only be successfully realised through the collective participation of all institutions and actors in society. (...) we are here also interested in developing a perspective on the nature and extent of local churches' own service delivery and development activities, the kind of connections that are fostered through such activities, and the levels of trust towards which they (local churches) might be contributing as a basis for meaningful social capital formation and development activity.²¹ (*sic*)

It is at this point that a more pertinent statement can be made about the aim and scope of the research project underlying this book. Whilst drawing directly upon the above-mentioned conceptual and strategic linkages between 'poverty'/'social exclusion', 'social capital' and 'religious agency', we sought to explore specifically the role of religion and religious ritual in social capital formation and ultimately the eradication of poverty. The study is thus an exploration of how religious communities are making a contribution towards social capital formation by means of their core religious activities such as rituals.²²

The role of religion in development was in the past underestimated and not well understood.²³ There are some exceptions, such as the *Global Civil Society Report* of 2004/5, which states: "there is no way we can

²¹ SWART: 'Churches as a stock of social capital' 353-354.

²² With regard to the importance of religion in development and especially also the non-material contribution of religion in development, compare the booklet L. VAN WENSVEEN: *Transforming development: Exploring approaches to development from religious perspectives* (Utrecht 2007). This document is also available at <https://jlfic.com/organizations/knowledge-centre-religion-development/> [last accessed 17 October 2018]. Also G. TER HAAR and S. ELLIS: 'The role of religion in development: Towards a new relationship between the European Union and Africa', in *The European Journal of Development Research* 18/3 (2006) 351-67 as well as G. TER HAAR (ed.): *Religion and development. Ways of transforming the world* (London 2011).

²³ Compare TER HAAR and ELLIS: 'The role of religion in development' 351-367.

understand the logic, strategies and dynamics of civil society anywhere in the Third World, unless we bring the transcendental dimension back into our analysis.”²⁴ Today, however, there is much activity in this domain. Centres such as the Knowledge Centre Religion and Development in the Netherlands have been established.²⁵ Recently, many publications have covered this field, for example, the volume edited by Gerrie ter Haar in 2011 named *Religion and Development. Ways of Transforming the World* as well as Ignatius Swart et al. *Welfare, Religion and Gender* (2012). From an overall perspective, the role of religious communities in social capital formation is well researched with ample literature on the topic, most of which emphasizes the important role of religious communities in this regard.²⁶

However, with regard to the unique religious contributions of religious communities in social capital formation much research is still needed. With this lacuna regarding a proper understanding of the role of religion and religious ritual in development in mind, this book hopes to make a contribution towards greater understanding. The South African religious landscape as pertaining to people’s participation in religious rituals and worship emphasizes the need for, as well as the appropriateness of, a research project focusing on religious ritual in a country like South Africa.

At this point the unique South African religious landscape that was sketched earlier should be recalled. According to the World Values Survey (1999-2002), the most conservative figure for persons attending religious services in South Africa at least once a month is 71.8%. Along with these statistics on religion and religious worship services, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) surveys have indicated that the Christian churches command the most trust in South Africa.²⁷

²⁴ S. ALKIRE: “Religion and Development.” <http://www.ophi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Alkire-Religion-Devt.pdf> [last accessed 15 October 2018].

²⁵ The Kenniscentrum Religie en Ontwikkeling (KCRO) is situated in Utrecht, the Netherlands. <https://jlflic.com/organizations/knowledge-centre-religion-development/> [last accessed 17 October 2018].

²⁶ Compare among others ADOGAME: *The African Diaspora*; N.T. AMMERMAN: *Congregation & community* (New Brunswick 1997); R. PUTNAM: ‘Bowling alone: America’s declining social capital’, in *Journal of Democracy* 6/1 (1995) 65-78; TER HAAR (ed.): *Religion and development*.

²⁷ See I. SWART: ‘Mobilising faith-based organisations for social development through a participatory action research (PAR) process’, in *Social Work* 41/4 (2005) 323-336.

The statistics of Christianity and church attendance mentioned above suggest a potential impact of religious communities and their rituals on South African society that in our view needed further exploration. We especially focused on the influence of rituals on the formation of social capital. The link between ritual and (the sustenance and reproduction of) the social order is well known.²⁸ Some research has been conducted showing the links between ritual and value formation, between ritual and identity formation, ritual and social capital formation, and religious ritual and spiritual capital formation.²⁹ At the same time, however, there was still a very real need for a larger-scale focused research project investigating the link between ritual and the social order, especially as pertaining to social capital.

In order to focus the research, the religious communities involved were Christian churches, whilst the statistics already mentioned on the rapid growth of AICs in Southern Africa made the choice to include an AIC a fairly obvious one. After a pre-proposal workshop with participants from all the provinces involved, a preliminary review of statistics, some meetings with academics who were working in the field of AIC research and/or teaching AIC leaders, further negotiations with participating students and fieldworkers as well as a visit of the project leader (Wepener) to the local communities, the town of Kokstad (KwaZulu-Natal) was identified as one of the communities in which the research would take place.³⁰

²⁸ Compare the work of scholars such as Durkheim, Geertz, Radcliffe-Brown and Turner in this regard. See also chapter 2.

²⁹ On value formation, compare G. LUKKEN: *Rituals in abundance. Critical reflections on the place, form and identity of Christian ritual in our culture* (= *Liturgia Condenda* 17) (Leuven 2005) 54-73; K. PECKLERS: *Worship* (= *New Century Theology*) (New York 2003) 163-192 and D.J. SMIT: 'Lex orandi, lex credendi, lex (con)vivendi. Oriënterende inleiding tot liturgie en etiek', in *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal* 45/3-4 (2004) 887-907. On identity formation, compare H.J.C. PIETERSE: 'Die rol van rituele en simbole in die identiteitsvorming van 'n geloofsgemeenskap – 'n Gereformeerde perspektief', in *Skrif en Kerk* 19/2 (1998) 342-347; C.J. WEPENER and J.C. PAUW: 'Terug na die toekoms – oor die samehang tussen rituele tyd en identiteit', in *Scriptura* 85/1 (2004) 110-122 as well as C.J. WEPENER: 'Liturgy on the edge of tradition', in *Practical Theology in South Africa* 23/2 (2008) 313-335. On social capital formation, compare WEPENER and CILLIERS: 'Ritual and the generation of social capital'. On spiritual capital formation, compare C.J. WEPENER and G. TER HAAR: 'Sacred sites and spiritual capital. One angel, two sites, many spirits', in P. POST, P. NEL, W. VAN BEEK (eds.): *Sacred sites, contested grounds: Space and ritual dynamics in Europe and Africa* (Trenton 2014) 89-104.

³⁰ With regards to this initial phase of the research project, see chapter 3 of this book.

POLITICAL STRATEGIC AIM

The background and motivation for the research can be located within recent debates on the relation between religion and development, and the on-going discourse concerning religion and government. Both Koegelenberg and Swart showed how the South African government has been valuing the positive role that religious communities can play with regard to social development, thus arguing for formal cooperation between the state and religious communities.³¹ However, in order to enhance the quality of such cooperation, it was recognized that thorough research (such as described in this book) was needed so that policy makers could receive well-researched information on the role of religious communities in social capital formation for social development. Hence the emphasis in this book on the importance of social capital and value formation by the government, on the one hand, and the role of rituals with regard to value formation and social capital formation, on the other. The strategic aim of the project was to bring our understanding of the role of religious ritual in social capital formation to the attention of policy makers in South Africa and abroad.

At present “social capital formation is shifting to the centre of social development policy discourse.”³² The research presented in this book will enhance reflection on the nature of partnerships between the state and religious communities. In his strategic vision titled *Mobilising for a caring society*, Dr Skweyiya, a former minister for Social Development in South Africa, stated that “we can only succeed to eradicate poverty in our country if we can build effective partnerships between the state, the religious sector and other institutions of civil society.”³³ He further stated:

Apart from the large networks available to churches (and other religious networks), the resources they have at their disposal, we also know they can play a crucial role in the formation of values and the moral fiber of our society. As Department of Social Development we have launched a national campaign to create “a caring society” in South Africa. How can we succeed with this effort without the support of our religious communities – which

³¹ Compare R.A. KOEGELEBERG: ‘Social development partnerships between religious communities and the state. Perspectives from the National Religious Association for Social Development,’ in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 110 (2001) 97–109; SWART: ‘Churches as a stock of social capital.’

³² SWART: ‘Churches as a stock of social capital’ 1.

³³ Quoted by R.A. KOEGELEBERG: ‘Social development partnerships’ 108.

are known for their networks reaching into even rural parts of South Africa.³⁴

There is an existing bulk of research and hypotheses on the role of religious communities in social development, along with some preliminary research articles on the function of rituals within this whole.³⁵ However, what was still needed in the South African context was focused research that deliberately explores the role of religion in development from a grassroots level. This is confirmed by the *Social Capital Formation Document* of the Department of Social Services and Poverty Alleviation, which states that “there is a need for a scientific base of the stock of social capital in the Province of the Western Cape in order to guide the types of interventions required to facilitate the formation of further social capital.”³⁶

This book strives to contribute to this aim, because it focuses on a specific church and some of its congregations, analysing the functioning of their ritual systems and comparing them with certain social development concepts. More and more researchers have concluded that religious communities’ biggest contribution regarding social development lies on the level of value formation. As an important carrier and communicator of these values, religious rituals have very rarely in South Africa been the explicit focus of a research project where the connection between these phenomena and social development has been researched. There is a great need in this area for research on religious communities and their possible

³⁴ *Ibidem.*

³⁵ For example R.K. BROWN and R.E. BROWN: ‘Faith and works: Church-based social capital resources and African American political activism’, in *Social Forces* 82/2 (2003) 617-641; L. LOUW and R.A. KOEGELENBERG: ‘Building a new South Africa: The building of a caring, democratic and equitable society through partnerships between the state and the National Religious Leader’s Forum (NRLF),’ 1-14, position paper prepared for the NRLF meeting with former President Thabo Mbeki, 29-30 April 2003. ‘A Perspective from the National Religious Association for Social Development (NRASD)’ http://www.sarpn.org.za/documents/d0000557/P506_Social_Development.pdf [last accessed 15 October 2018]; R.A. KOEGELENBERG: ‘Social development partnerships’ 2001; SWART: ‘Churches as a stock of social capital’; SWART: ‘Mobilising faith-based organizations’ 323-336. See, for example, C.J. WEPENER and J.H. CILLIERS: ‘Research on liturgy and the generation of social capital in contexts of poverty. A South African exploration,’ in I. SWART, J. ERASMUS and S. GREEN (eds.): *Religion and social development in post-apartheid South Africa: Perspectives for critical engagement* (SUN Press 2009) 417-430.

³⁶ ‘Social Capital Formation Document’ of the Department of Social Services and Poverty Alleviation (2005).

role in social development; the project gave shape to this demand by its focus on one of the core activities of religious communities, in this case worship, rather than their material resources and infrastructure. There was thus a demand for understanding, because it becomes more and more clear that there is a link between religion and social capital, but there is uncertainty with regards to what exactly that link is.

In what follows, a number of concepts will be discussed, as well as the methodology that was necessary in exploring the nature of the link between religion and social capital. Thereafter we will outline the various parts and chapters of this book.

RITUAL AND RESEARCHING RITUAL ACTION

Concepts

Ritual is a much discussed concept.³⁷ In the project the concept of ritual was used in a broad sense. Mainly, ritual is seen as language (speech and body language, as well as language in material symbols).³⁸ Taking our cue from Ronald Grimes, the concept is often made operational by discerning its various qualities.³⁹ In the project the qualities of ritual will be used as they are notably developed by African scholars and as they can be applied in an African context of poverty. In African interpretations of the concept, the quality ‘transcendent/mystical religious/cosmic’⁴⁰ seems

³⁷ Compare C. BELL: ‘Ritual change and changing rituals,’ in *Worship* 63/1 (1989) 31-41; C. BELL: *Ritual theory, ritual practice* (Oxford 1992); C. BELL: *Ritual. Perspectives and dimensions* (Oxford 1997); R.L. GRIMES: *Ritual criticism. Case studies in its practice. Essays on its theory* (Columbia 1990); R.L. GRIMES: *Deeply into the bone. Re-inventing rites of passage* (Oakland 2000); G. LUKKEN: *Rituals in abundance* (= Liturgia Condenda 17) (Leuven 2005); J. LUKWATA: *Integrated African liturgy* (Eldoret 2003) 164-166; F.K. LUMBALA: *Celebrating Jesus Christ in Africa. Liturgy & inculturation* (Maryknoll 1998); P.G.J. POST and S. VAN DER BEEK (eds): *Doing ritual criticism in a network society. Online and offline explorations into pilgrimage and sacred place* (= Liturgia Condenda 29) (Leuven 2016); R.A. RAPPAPORT: *Ritual and religion in the making of humanity* (= Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology 110) (Cambridge 1999); E.E. UZUKWU: *Worship as body language. Introduction to Christian worship: An African orientation* (Collegeville 1997).

³⁸ Compare UZUKWU: *Worship as body language. Introduction to Christian worship: An African orientation* (Collegeville 1997); R.A. RAPPAPORT: *Ritual and religion in the making of humanity* (= Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology 110) (Cambridge 1999).

³⁹ Compare GRIMES: *Ritual criticism* 14.

⁴⁰ Compare *Ibidem*, 14.

to be a dominant one: “the transcendental is actual and ... the sacred is ordinary in the African world.”⁴¹ Pecklers points to “values (that) are embodied in our rituals.”⁴² Value formation and value reflection are important qualities of ritual with regard to our research on ritual and social capital formation. As people express themselves in rituals and at the same time are shaped by rituals, the people performing rituals will be the most important dimension in the project.⁴³ Ritual shapes a social reality performatively and is an expression of reality. It is performed according to a certain tradition and is at the same time being ‘reinvented’ in accordance with the context.⁴⁴ In short, ritual is the product and the producer of a particular social reality. Concomitantly, ritual is closely related to the context within which it is performed.

It has been generally accepted among scholars that there is a critical reciprocal interaction between ritual and culture, through which a new entity comes into being, namely a reinvented and recontextualized ritual and a – to a certain extent – transformed culture.⁴⁵ In all the case studies presented in this book there is as such a deliberate attempt to better understand this dynamic, and the concepts presented here informed the way in which the research was conducted. Thus, in this book the notion of the ‘dynamics of ritual and culture’ entails understanding that ritual activity interacts with the surrounding culture of poverty, and conversely that the culture of poverty interacts with the ritual activity.

With regard to our research question concerning the relation between ritual and social capital, it will become clear how the dynamics of ritual and culture were at the core of the research. This inevitably raises many

⁴¹ UZUKWU: *Worship as body language* 52.

⁴² PECKLERS: *Worship* 163.

⁴³ Compare RAPPAPORT: *Ritual and religion in the making of humanity* 52.

⁴⁴ Compare GRIMES: *Deeply into the bone* 214. Also see BELL: ‘Ritual change and changing rituals’ 31–41 as well as RAPPAPORT: *Ritual and religion in the making of humanity*.

⁴⁵ See among others D.S. AMALORPAVADASS: ‘Theological reflections on inculturation,’ in *Studia Liturgica* 20 (1990) 36–54; M. BARNARD: ‘Dynamiek van cultus en cultuur’, in M. BARNARD and P. POST (eds.): *Ritueel bestek. Antropologische kernwoorden van de liturgie* (Zoetermeer 2001) 47–62; A.J. CHUPUNGO: *Cultural adaptation of the liturgy* (Mahwah 1982); B.J. DE KLERK: ‘Wisselwerking tussen liturgie en kultuur in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks – Enkele vertrekpunte,’ in *Praktiese Teologie in Suid-Afrika* 16-2 (2001) 57–75; L. VAN TONGEREN: ‘De inculturatie van de liturgie tot (stil)stand gebracht?’ in *Jaarboek voor liturgie-onderzoek* 12 (1996) 164–186; C.J. WEPENER: *From fast to feast. A ritual-liturgical exploration of reconciliation in South African cultural contexts* (= Liturgia Condenda 19) (Leuven 2009) 36–42.

questions, not least concerning the supposed meaninglessness and usefulness of ritual, but also concerning the trap of functionalism and how this could be avoided.

In brief, in the research project we gave special attention to the performative quality of ritual ‘in the making of humanity’, without seeing rituals as instrumental in this process.⁴⁶ The logic behind this is based on the assumption that a significant contribution of religious communities is based on the potential of these communities to contribute towards social capital formation and value formation through their rituals. Religious communities are thus not only regarded as valuable with regard to social development because of the infrastructure they can provide, but also and especially because of the (potential) impact of their rituals on social development through the formation of values that contribute to and sustain social capital. The combination of these concepts enabled us to move beyond a reductionist view of poverty, development, ritual and the role of religion in social development.

Methodology

In order to make the link between ritual, development and the related concept of social capital more intelligible by means of a systematic research process, the ethnographic process of participatory observation was employed to study ritual activities.⁴⁷

As an overarching methodology we made use of participatory action research (PAR).⁴⁸ De Vos describes “participatory action research as an

⁴⁶ Compare RAPPAPORT: *Ritual and religion in the making of humanity* 1999.

⁴⁷ See in this regard N.T. AMMERMAN [et al.]: *Studying congregations. A new handbook* (Nashville 1998); R.L. GRIMES: *Beginnings in Ritual Studies. Revised edition* (Columbia 1995); C.V. JOHNSON: ‘Researching ritual practice’, in *Studia Liturgica* 35/2 (2005) 204-220; M.D. STRINGER: ‘Liturgy and anthropology: the history of a relationship’, in *Worship* 63/6 (1989) 503-521; M.D. STRINGER: *On the perception of worship* (Birmingham 1999); C.J. WEPENER: ‘Researching rituals. On the use of participatory action research in liturgical studies’, in *Praktiese Teologie in Suid-Afrika* 20/1 (2005) 109-127; C.J. WEPENER: ‘Burning incense for a focus group discussion. A spirituality of liminality for doing liturgical research in an African context from an emic perspective’, in *International Journal of Practical Theology* 19/2 (2015) 271-291.

⁴⁸ E. BABBIE & J. MOUTON: *The practice of social research* (Oxford 2001) 58-68 (with contributions by Payze, Vorster, Boshoff, Prozesky); H.J. HENDRIKS: *Studying congregations in Africa* (Cape Town 2004) 215-221; H. STRYDOM: ‘Participatory action research’, in A.S. DE VOS [et al.] (eds.): *Research at Grass Roots. For the social sciences and human*

alternative system of knowledge production, based on the subjects' involvement in decisions regarding the questions asked," and also as "a research process where people involved in the situation being studied, are enabled (in partnership with researchers and other role-players) to become actively involved in collective efforts to address and solve their social problems."⁴⁹ This methodological choice rests especially on PAR's political implications and empowering possibilities, by bringing subject and object to cooperate within the process of knowledge production.⁵⁰ This entailed for the research described in this book, among other things, that the people from the communities involved in the research were part of the research process from start to finish. This was done right from the outset – at the pre-proposal workshop representatives from the local communities actively participated in the formulation of the proposal and preliminary choices regarding the location of the research/fieldwork (see chapter 3).⁵¹

Data-collection methods applicable to the collection of rituals were employed. This entailed that rituals were observed, participated in and documented as enacted phenomena within their multiple contexts and studied in an integrated manner, making use of thick descriptions and visual media – to name some of the data-collection techniques employed.⁵² Secondly, and simultaneously, the ways in which participants appropriate rituals were established by means of interviews and focus group activities. The ritual data were collected in the two areas already mentioned: firstly, in the urban area of Mlazi (Durban) in KwaZulu-Natal and the nearby

services professions (Pretoria 2002) 419-434; WEPENER: 'Participation and power: Opportunities for method and theory in liturgical research from a changing (Dutch Reformed) South African liturgical landscape', in *Jaarboek voor liturgie-onderzoek* 22 (2006) 49-66.

⁴⁹ HENDRIKS: *Studying congregations in Africa* 217, 219.

⁵⁰ Compare WEPENER: 'Researching rituals' 115.

⁵¹ People present and helping with the formulation of the research question and other aspects of the original proposal included: academics from the Netherlands and South African Universities, local parish priests and parishioners coming from KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape who are actively involved in attempts at poverty alleviation in local communities as well as church facilitators who help congregations to participate in efforts to alleviate poverty.

⁵² Compare P.G.J. POST: 'Introduction and application. Feast as a key concept in a liturgical studies research design', in P.G.J. POST [et al.]: *Christian feast and festival: The dynamics of Western liturgy and culture* (Leuven 2001), as well as P.G.J. POST [et al.]: *Disaster ritual. Explorations of an emerging ritual repertoire* (= Liturgia Condenda 15) (Leuven 2003) 46. Also see JOHNSON: 'Researching ritual practice' and WEPENER: 'Researching rituals.'

Wyebank (Pinetown); and secondly in a settled rural community in KwaZulu-Natal (Kokstad) and from there just across the border in the Eastern Cape in the village of Phepheni – thus, in the greater Durban area as well as the greater Kokstad area.

The empirical research constituted the heart of this study and in terms of methodology we made use of both the ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ approach, representing the ‘insiders’ and the ‘outsiders’ perspective respectively. In conformity with this approach we firstly aimed at providing a good description of the ritual data, followed by an analysis of the data in terms of the key concepts as discussed earlier in this introduction. Some of the data collected in this fashion are described and analysed in the case studies in part II.

Besides making use of PAR, the research also strove to be interdisciplinary, and in fact regarded this interdisciplinary character as one of its core features. More specifically, the research project brought (at least) three disciplines together in order to scrutinize the research topics from three different angles. The fields are Religion Studies and Theology, Ritual and Liturgical Studies, and Development Studies. From a religious point of view, we were researching faith communities as cultural and social orders that are formed by and at the same time express themselves in their rituals, specifically within a context of poverty. The disciplines of Religion Studies and Practical Theology were deemed indispensable for understanding the culture of religious communities. Along with this, the field of Ritual and Liturgical Studies was deemed equally indispensable given its history of studying rituals, specifically in an ethnographic fashion within their natural context. Lastly, the field of Development Studies was drawn upon to explore the conceptual framework of social capital and, from this vantage point, to place and understand the religious and anthropological data from a developmental perspective.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The book is structured into three parts that reflect its theoretical, empirical and evaluative dimensions.

I – Theoretical and conceptual exploration

In this part, theoretical perspectives are offered on the main conceptual apparatus of the book and the authors’ understanding of the nexus between

the different concepts. To begin with, in chapter 1 Barnard, Wepener and Cilliers explore the issue of functionalism which used to be a discussion in Liturgical Studies and still is in some parts of the world, like for example South Africa. With regard to worship and liturgy, the well-known argument used to be (and still is in some places) that liturgy and ritual are non-functional, but when is the starting point of gratuity or a non-functional approach so strained that there is no question of gratuitous worship any longer? This is a basic, but critical perspective in the context where the research was done that is addressed in this chapter, especially in the light of the central research question on the role of religious rituals in social capital formation, which indeed has functional undertones.

Next, in chapter 2, Swart and Ter Haar propose a suitable conceptual framework for the book's overarching focus on the role of religious ritual in social capital formation. This first involves an exploration of the concept of social capital along the threefold distinction between 'bonding', 'bridging' and 'linking' forms or types of social capital. After this, they show how the more recently coined concept of 'religious social capital' could be valued in a more pertinent discussion about religion as a source of social capital. Finally, from the view point of an on-going interest in religion, Swart and Ter Haar then present the case of religious ritual as a very important 'missing element' in the contemporary international research focus on religion and social capital formation.

II – Case studies

In this part, the theoretical arguments of the book are further explored and contextualised in eight chapters. In all of these the object of research was some aspect of the worship and ritual life of the CCSA in one of the above-mentioned locations. In chapter 3, Wepener and Barnard describe the ten steps that were taken to get the research underway and gain access to a research field which traditionally has been very difficult to access. In chapter 4, Wepener then presents the first case study based on the life history of the founder bishop of the CCSA. In this study Wepener shows how the bishop's life is an example of what can be termed 'the invention of tradition' and how this invention process serves social cohesion within the CCSA. Chapter 5 explores the life of a leader, in this case Reverend Dingani. Here Barnard, Nell and Mbaya explicitly investigate the angle of leadership and its role in the formation of social capital.

Chapter 6, the first of five chapters dealing more pertinently with different elements of ritual practice in the CCSA, undertakes a descriptive exploration of a typical Sunday worship in Phepheni that enables Wepener, Mbaya and Barnard to draw some meaningful conclusions regarding key features of worship in Sub-Saharan Africa. In chapter 7, Wepener explores the role of eating and drinking in the CCSA with regard to social capital formation as well as with regard to the measurement of social capital. A central symbol in many AIC rituals is water and in chapter 8 Wepener and Müller (who died in 2017) describe and analyse seven groups of water rituals in the CCSA. Just as the ritual life of the CCSA cannot be understood well without some discussion of the founder leader Johannes Richmond, an annual ritual sacrifice performed in Mlazi can also be regarded as essential for understanding the broad range of rituals in the CCSA. This ritual sacrifice known as *Isitshisa* is the focus of chapter 9 by Mbaya. Finally, in chapter 10, Müller and Wepener compare some of the data and findings of this research to data and findings from a research project on AIC worship and preaching conducted some two decades earlier. They conclude by arguing that such a comparison sheds important light on the influence of changes in the socio-political landscape of South Africa and their impact on AIC rituals.

III – Wider reflections

In this part, a final set of four chapters provides wider appreciations and applications of the ritual lens that the book offers. Firstly, and very importantly, the role that specifically the Old Testament plays with regard to rituals in, amongst others, AICs should not be overlooked. The importance of the book of Leviticus, for example, comes to the fore in many of the case studies, and in chapter 11 Old Testament scholar Meyer provides a text-critical study of rituals and social capital formation in the book of Leviticus. This is followed in the next chapter by Kgatla reflecting on funeral rituals in a different geographical area and cultural setting in South Africa and their impact on belief and belonging. The challenges that a ritual lens offers to policy makers in South African society, but also to a wider (global) world seeking answers to the problem of development, are explored by Momberg in chapter 13. Finally, a perspective from a wider world is introduced in the last chapter, which is an African religious critique by Atiemo from Accra, Ghana.

The beautiful roads that led us to Mlazi, Kokstad and Phepheni in the research project took us to the heart of AIC worship and ritual in present-day South Africa. The worship and rituals that we observed, participated in, documented and analysed led us to the conclusion that this worship is not only abundant, but also serves the people who are performing the worship and therefore is worship for Africa.

At this stage it is appropriate to thank some people and institutions who supported the researchers in the course of the project. Firstly, the National Research Foundation of South Africa (Grant number 73974) for the funding provided by them. Secondly, the people who assisted the editors with language editing as well as other aspects regarding the technical care of the manuscript. In particular, we wish to thank Prof. Edwin Hees for the language editing, Dr. Mirella Klomp for both substantive and copy editing, as well as Esther van Bijsterveld, Anandie Greyling, and Nicolas Matthee for their work on the manuscript. In the course of the project there were also specific institutions and people that assisted the research team and created spaces in which we could do much of our work. In this regard we wish to thank Dr. Coenie Burger and Communitas at Stellenbosch University where we drafted the first proposal and who also hosted our pre-proposal workshop and the first workshops and seminars of the project. Then also the Faculties of Theology of the Universities of Pretoria and Stellenbosch who supported the project and made their facilities available to us. Lastly also the Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Kokstad who hosted the whole research team for weekend, and the CCSA for their warm hospitality that they extended to us throughout the project.

Before we proceed to the eight case study chapters reflecting on the ritual data as well as the four chapters opening up a wider appreciation, we move to part I and some basic theoretical reflections on ritual and worship as well as religion and social capital.