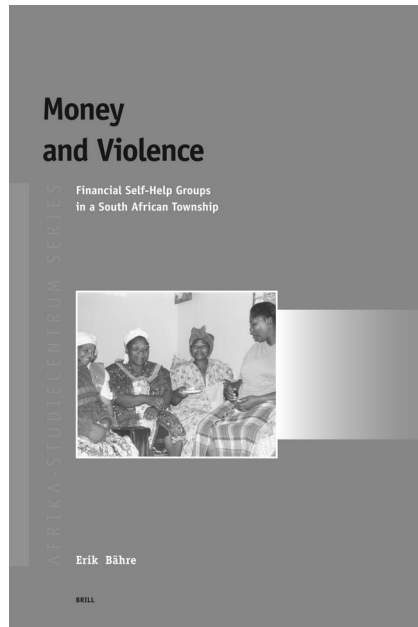


Money and Violence

Financial Self-Help Groups in a South African Township

Erik Bähre



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This ethnographic study reveals how financial self-help groups (burial societies and credit groups) are islands of hope for Xhosa migrants living in the townships and squatter camps of Cape Town, South Africa. Many are caught up in a sea of insecurity, unemployment, murder, rape, AIDS, and social conflict, entangled with apartheid politics as well as post-apartheid development. Particularly women create these de-politicized social spaces to feel secure and trusted, and know that money is subject to their control. This intimate account challenges romanticized views on urban poverty and solidarity

groups. It explores the anxiety among members, the fragility of trust and solidarity, as well as the emergence of conflicts with kin, household members, and neighbours, over desperately needed money.

Readership: Scholars interested in post-apartheid South Africa, urban poverty, violence, migration, and financial self-help groups, particularly regarding trust, solidarity, and consumption, as well as the intricacies of fieldwork under dangerous circumstances

Erik Bähre, Ph.D. (2003) Amsterdam School for Social Science Research, University of Amsterdam is an Economic Anthropologist. His current research at AMIDSt, University of Amsterdam is on insurances in South Africa.

