



EKHAYA: The Politics of Home in KwaZulu-Natal

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ON THE POLITICS OF HOME (EXCERPT)

Ranging from the rural to the urban and the pre-colonial era to the presidency

of Jacob Zuma, this volume emphasises the affective and ideological dimensions of *ikhaya*. It offers insight into how the home, which embodies both modernist

aspirations and nostalgic longings for the past, has become the touchstone for popular discontent and political activism in recent decades.

If it can be said that colonialism in South Africa was a colonialism of the home, then it can equally be said that politics in South Africa are a politics of the home. Perhaps no region illustrates the dynamism of South Africa's domestic transformations more dramatically than present-day KwaZulu-Natal, a place that has been an extreme instantiation of the political, economic and social transformations that have shaped colonial Africa and much of the global south.

Experiments with colonial governance through traditional authorities, pioneered in Natal in the mid-nineteenth century, manipulated kinship and patriarchy in rural homesteads in order to facilitate minority control. The region's massive migrant labour system worked by articulating domestic reproduction in the rural homestead with capitalist production in industrial areas – epitomising the violence of colonial exploitation.

Some of the world's most extensive exercises in urban social engineering through forced relocations sought to remake African homes in the mould of European domesticity – drawing upon missionary precedents as well as new global models of “slum clearance”, and shaping new expectations of modernity. And post-industrial decline and an entrenched housing crisis have radically transformed family forms, leading to dramatically reduced marriage rates and new modalities of kinship – creating a crisis of social reproduction emblematic of the limited promises of global development. The chapters reveal that, throughout the modern history of this region, the constitution of the domestic domain – be it the rural homestead, the Christian home, the township house or the urban shack – has been crucial to organising activities in the political realm. [NA](#)