

Exploring the African home in KwaZulu-Natal

Meghan Healy-Clancy and Jason Hickel (eds), *Ekhaya: The Politics of Home in KwaZulu-Natal*

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This book includes contributions by some of the finest academics in the field. The expertise of each author is reflected in the individual essays, each of which tells a

story of paramount importance within the context of KwaZulu Natal. The use of photographic evidence and narratives increases the value of this work for both academics and students alike. Aptly entitled *Ekhaya*, the book's highly rated contributors make an important and empirically sound contribution to furthering our understanding of the African home as a key site of struggle and its role in the making of contemporary KwaZulu Natal. The authors systematically unpack the unique nature and composition of the province and the remnants of colonialism that exist therein.

The work presents an important aspect of South African history with a specific focus on the province of KwaZulu Natal. The reader is taken on a historical journey from rural to urban KwaZulu Natal; from the pre colonial era to the current presidency of Jacob Zuma; with the recurrent emphasis on the affective and ideological dimensions of *ekhaya*. The familial home in South Africa has been socialised into becoming a site of struggle and activism for generations. South Africans have had decades of practice in this regard; change is born in *ekhaya*. It is the embodiment of both the old and the new; a melting pot of change which makes it difficult to let go of the sentimental past and reconcile it with the contemporary aspirations of individuals, communities and society at large. The home has always been and remains the site of political activism. However, such activism has become more widespread as a result of popular discontent and the re politicisation of the country's youth.

This work is a compilation of eight essays. Each essay draws on the complex historical journey and fractured political structures that contribute to current scholarship on forms of family life in KwaZulu Natal. The introductory chapter, "On Politics of the Home" does an excellent job of discussing domestic space as normative and formative, and is the foundation for the essays that follow. The interrelatedness between the home, state, politics, resources and a series of other factors is synthesised for easy reading in the introduction. The essays that follow continue to build on the theoretical foundation presented at the outset.

The notion of patriarchy is interrogated in detail in relation to *ekhaya*. The chapter titled: "The Colonial Transformation and the Home" also interrogates the destruction of the African home in pursuit of capital and the intensity of nostalgia for the lost home. "The Authority and the Life of a Female Chief" is clearly delivered in chapter two. The reference to governments' attempts to manipulate racial and gender categories, traced back to the 1820s, is central to understanding and contextualising the politics of home in KwaZulu Natal.

"Bounding Chiefly Authority in Colonial Natal" focuses on important discussions and decisions regarding the division of wards and chiefs exercising power over people other than their own. This was one of the contributing factors to the prevailing economic conditions in the colony. The depletion of resources and the increasing population propelled the movement of people. "Gender, Violence and Home in the Nazareth Baptist Church" explores the tensions that emerged after the death of Isaiah Shembe which and became rife among the church's male members. Women capitalised on this opportunity to re establish their position of strength and influence in the church community and they also encouraged developing a home in the township as opposed to leaving.

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In “Engineering the Township Home” the role of draconian apartheid rule and the isolation of people according to race in separate communities are discussed in relation to political mobilisation. The engineering of the township in itself is critical to understanding the changing shape and form of the home and the family in post apartheid society. “House and Home” analyses the evolving economy in South Africa and the impact that it has on housing for the youth, with reference to young women living in Mpophomeni. “Parting Homes in KwaZulu Natal” focuses on the Zulu home and is narrated from the lived perspectives of those who have left the home and those who have experienced the loss. The essay entitled “Beneath the Zunami: Jacob Zuma and the Gendered Politics of Social Reproduction” offers fresh insights into the victory of Jacob Zuma, as president of the ANC, in the general election in 2009, among other critical and urgent items that require attention within South Africa. The author of the chapter argues that the rise of Zuma is an example of how political processes in South Africa unfold in relation to recent seismic changes to the home, in particular as a result of the decline in rates of marriage.

Ekhaya makes an invaluable contribution to important areas of research in the broader social sciences. Scholars would do well to develop and further capitalise on the foundation that the contributors to this volume have established in a very methodical and comprehensive manner. The important areas of the home, family, discontent and political activism in KwaZulu Natal must be given further attention in the years to come. The use of narratives and case studies in this book make it a valuable source of information for scholars. The authors provide information on important lived experiences that embody the experiences of people in KwaZulu Natal. It is a must read for all academics in the social sciences.

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