

# CLASS AND GENDER IN PRE-CAPITALIST SOCIETIES: A CONSIDERATION OF THE 1848 CENSUS OF THE XHOSA

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## 1. Understanding the Dynamics of the Pre-Capitalist Societies of Southern Africa\*

This paper interprets data derived from the 1848 census of the Xhosa. [1] The census provides an opportunity for analysing the pre-capitalist mode of production in southern Africa at a level of detail not usually possible.

Analysis of this data will, hopefully, shed light on the constitution of the ruling class and its form of domination and exploitation of the subordinate class, not only in the Xhosa social formation but generally in similar pre-capitalist societies. In order to make sense of the analysis which follows it is necessary to clarify the questions to be answered.

In a stimulating article Jeff Guy has argued:

it seems..valid ... that the dominant class consisted of married men/homestead heads. The subordinate class consisted of women and children, the product of their labour being appropriated by their husbands and fathers. It was a relation of exploitation based on male rights to the means of production in the form of cattle and land, in which surplus was accumulated in labour power, and realised in the accumulation by fathers and husbands of cattle, wives and daughters. [2]

Guy's work contains many theoretical observations that require extended discussion. Here, however, we are concerned with the central question of understanding social classes in the pre-capitalist societies of southern Africa.

For Guy, the differences between chiefs and other heads of homesteads were differences of degree and not of kind. "... The conflicts among them were conflicts amongst members of the same class." [3] If the logic of these ideas is followed, they lead to the conclusion that the clash of contending classes was principally *within* the homesteads in the battles for and over control of wives, children and unmarried men and women. Although these conflicts were pervasive and deserve greater study, they are *not* the conflicts which loom large in the historical record. The eve of the pre-colonial era was marked by the clash between Rarabe and Gcaleka, the rise and fall of Shaka and Dingane. In the colonial era all the significant resistance leaders were also involved simultaneously in a series of internal conflicts, such as those between Ndlambe and Ngqika, or between Cetshwayo and Mbwazi before and after the civil war .

If control and appropriation of labour power defined the main contradiction then it must also have been the motive force of class struggle. The larger conflicts and struggles that periodically enveloped these societies must necessarily be explained in terms of this. Only in

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this way can the scale and tempo of resistance to colonialism and origins of the working class in migration and commodity production be consistently explained.

The conflicts which make up the real historical record of these societies must be explained in terms of the central contradiction between male homestead heads and their wives, children and unmarried adults and the forces which this brought to bear within the politics of the society as a whole. If this cannot be shown, then an understanding of the "dynamics" of pre-capitalist societies is "academic" in the worst sense of the word.

Drawing this connection is necessary for any materialist analysis that tries to move beyond a grasp of economic processes only and attempts to explain also the social and political developments in society. In analysing pre-capitalist society this is all the more necessary as economic processes do not have an existence independent from the political forms of regulation, control and conflict in society.

Having started from correct premises, these conclusions are overlooked in Guy's article. While he mentions the need to comprehend the "dynamics" of pre-capitalist societies, he provides no outline of how the central contradiction which he suggests in fact determines the actual course of historical development works.

The reason for this gap appears to be the way Guy understands the relationships between homesteads and their male heads. He argues that established homestead heads "vied for control" over "propertyless" young males. However, these propertyless males suddenly become independent and assimilated to the "dominant class" on marriage. Yet **fundamental** differences are in reality not abolished by the rituals of initiation. While initiation separates men from women and places all men ideologically on a footing of equality, it does not obliterate by any means the real differences in wealth. Domination over women, which men have in common cannot be held *a priori* to override that which divides them.

The argument which will be developed out of an examination of the census data is that there were in fact fundamental differences **between** homesteads. The large discrepancies in the size, concentration of labour power, cattle, etc, in the older, longer established homestead compared to the newer, younger units are fundamental to establishing the link between the contradictions of domestic production and the struggles and conflicts which marked the history of these societies. The contradictions **within** the homesteads were not merely **expressed** by conflict **between** heads of homesteads but the latter provide the fundamental basis for the actual history of these societies.

To understand class divisions in the lineage mode of production, it is correct to start, as Guy insists we must, from the "creation and control of labour power". [4] This, and not the pursuit of products or commodities, was the objective basis on which the domination of the males in general and, it should be added, the largest homesteads in particular were based. Guy's observation, however, which is the core of his position, says nothing about how this control was distributed amongst the males - what determined the ability of one homestead to accumulate more than another, and what consequences flowed from this.

In emphasising the centrality of the struggle for control over labour power in the dynamics of these societies, Guy fails to take account of the effects of age along with the gender divisions in society. He introduces age only with reference to the passage of men from unmarried to married status when they enter the ruling class, "through the appropriation of labour power made possible by marriage". [5]

There is no recognition that the cycle of development, growth and ultimate decline of homesteads could unite younger homestead heads and unmarried men against the prevailing domination of older, larger and wealthier units. It is argued here that such generational differentiation was inherent in the development of the economy, and the accumulation of labour power and cattle, and could set the interests of different homesteads fundamentally at

odds with one another.

“Age” does not cease to be a factor in the equation when a young man marries for the first time. Assimilation to the real centres of power is far slower than this. It was contingent on the accumulation of labour power in the form of wives, children and unmarried men and cattle, sustained over years. It is this that allowed homestead heads to exercise power and patronage principally over the “propertyless” young men, but also, once they were married, over indebted homestead heads who were now obliged to serve the cause, interests and ambitions of their benefactor.

**It was the revolt principally of a younger generation, both unmarried men and indebted homestead heads, against the bottleneck of resources accumulated in the hands of a group of dominant homesteads that led to conflict. Under these conditions, with only limited development of the productive forces, the only type of progress possible was the extension of territory either with or without the concentration of power and control of surplus labour by the state.**

Meillassoux has correctly emphasised the overriding importance of generational differences based on control over production:

... Continuously renewed compulsory bonds are created between generations on the bases of the constraints of agricultural production. These relations are the essence of kinship; they are life-lasting, they create a hierarchy of anteriority and a leadership of the elders; they are eventually constructed into an ideology (kinship; ancestors cult) whose moral strength persists beyond the existence of its material support. [6]

## 2. Social Conditions at the Time of the Census

One of the earliest measures decided by the Commissioners who were put in charge of the Ndlambe and Ngqika districts of British Kaffraria after the hostilities of the War of Axe had inconclusively ended, in 1848, was the taking of a census. The idea originated with the governor of the Cape and High Commissioner for British Kaffraria, Sir Harry Smith [7], and the census was placed under the supervision of the Lieutenant-Governor in British Kaffraria, Col G Mackinnon. In assessing the credibility of the census data two aspects are of importance: the accuracy of the figures for population and the numbers of cattle. It is on these that any judgment of the significance of social and political differences between homesteads based on the extent of accumulation must be based.

The war had resulted in the dispersal of the population, which posed a problem for Mackinnon and his enumerators. The Xhosa also had lost large numbers of cattle in the war. Herds were already diminished as a result of the devastating drought of 1842-44, itself a contributory factor to the outbreak of hostilities. Many of the surviving cattle had been sent to Sarhili in Gcalekaland to find grazing where the drought was less severe, prior to the outbreak of the war. A feature of the war had been the systematic destruction of corn in the fields and pits. This produced intense food scarcity in 1848 as the entire growing season had been missed and most food reserves destroyed. [8] In the closing months of 1847 Smith had forced most of the Ngqika under the chiefs Sandille and Maqoma over the Kei. From here they were allowed to return on condition that they agreed to obey the colonial state in all matters.

The food scarcity west of the Kei, and the presence of remaining Ngqika cattle in Gcalekaland, caused thousands of Ngqika to remain with Sarhili when Sandille returned to his remaining territory between the Keiskamma and Kei rivers. The large concentration of cattle across the Kei was plundered in Smith's raid against the Gcaleka. Altogether the Ngqika and Gcaleka lost over 60, 000 head of cattle during the war. [9] These losses were

certainly a great inducement to the migration and dispersal of families, and Mackinnon had reason to be perturbed about their effects on the proposed census.

When finally completed in December 1848, the census revealed a population of 35,179 Ndlambe and 27,179 Ngika. [10] In the first report of the collated results of the census, the Ngqika commissioner, Charles Brownlee, estimated 20,000 to 25,000 people were absent, the main reason being the scarcity of food. Many homesteads disintegrated as a result of impoverishment and disruption caused by war and drought, surviving members being absorbed into other better established homesteads.

The war of 1848 had been exceptionally costly in lives. This was partly because it featured the only set battle to occur on the frontier between Xhosa and colonist forces, the battle of Gwanga in which 500 men under the Ndlambe chief, Mhalla, and his close ally, the Mdushane chief, Siyolo, were killed. Jeff Peires has estimated the death rate amongst the Xhosa overall at 5 per cent of the pre-war population - about four thousand people. The number was swelled by the amount of women and children who died of starvation. [11]

### 3. Methods of the Census.

The colonial administration was very keen for the census to be carried out as completely as possible. Detailed instructions were issued to Commissioners John Maclean and Charles Brownlee:

I would wish you to commence with the locations where the crops are most advanced. You should notify to each Chief when you propose taking the census of his location, and call on him to assist you. You should select consistent points in each location to which you can proceed and then you must cause each male adult to appear personally before you, or ascertain the cause of his absence from the headman of his kraal. [12]

Mackinnon submitted a model census form which was to be used by the Commissioners. The form made provision for the name of every adult male to be listed in full. The number of wives, unmarried women, male and female children and orphans, and widows had also to appear, "opposite the name of the man who has charge of them". [13]

Most importantly, all cattle and horses in the possession of each household had to be listed. Mackinnon thought there would be a desire to underestimate the number of cattle:

It is probable that you will meet with an unwillingness on the part of the Kaffirs to give the true estimation of the cattle and horses they possess. It must be explained to them that our object in taking the census is to protect each man in the possession of what he has, and that no one will hereafter have a claim to recover cattle or horses which he may lose by thefts or otherwise unless he furnishes you with a statement of the real number he possesses. [14]

In December 1849, when confronted with the statistic that the Ngqika district possessed only 22,190 cattle or 0.8 per capita and the Ndlambe district 35,979, 1 per capita, Mackinnon wrote to Smith: "the returns of cattle Your Excellency will observe do not average one head for every soul but the numbers have doubtlessly been much underestimated." [15]

These figures are in fact not so surprising if one remembers that 60,000 head of cattle had been confiscated during the war and thousands more died in the drought. A figure of

100,000 cattle would have been a reasonable estimate of Ngqika and Ndlambe stock prior to the war. Mackinnon's remarks indicate something of his own shock at realising how the once vast herds of the Xhosa had been decimated.

As important, the overall per capita figure is highly misleading. As will be seen below, there were wide variations in per capita cattle figures between homesteads. These variations correlate strongly with movement in other variables such as the number of people in the homesteads, with a tendency for the per capita figure to rise with the size of the homestead group.

The census clearly indicates the head of each homestead along with the married men and their households falling under him. It is therefore possible to analyse the census data not as individual households but, more correctly, as homestead production units by deriving totals for each variable in each homestead.

The only official report ever published of the census was a simple summary table that appeared nine years later, in 1857. [16] This version of the summary table can be found in the Maclean's *Compendium of Kaffir Law and Custom*, published in 1859. [17] Table 1 is a corrected version of the summary table for the Ngqika district upon which is drawn in this analysis. Despite the distortions that it probably contains, it is argued that the census reveals a picture of the Xhosa in 1848 as they had adapted to the effects of loss of population, cattle and territory, consequent upon war. It is a representation of the social conditions of the Xhosa at the time of colonial conquest. It is valuable precisely because it reveals how conquest affected the internal balance of forces within the society and the consequences of this for the old mode of production which had begun to adapt itself to the new circumstances that were subsuming it.

#### 4. The Ngqika in 1848

Table 1 shows that the Ngqika consisted of 5,764 households classified by geographic area under seven chiefs. Each adult male was classified as a "household", the census making no separate category for unmarried men. They are included with the married men as "households" - reflecting the ideology of the equality of all initiated men. Homesteads comprised groups of households under the authority of the senior male household head, whose position is clearly indicated in the census returns. This is discussed in more detail in section 6 below.

Nominally the most important chief was Sandille, heir of his father, Ngqika, and the most senior of the Ciskeian chiefs. Maqoma was Sandille's brother and had acted as regent for him. Tebe was regent for Oba, son of Sandille's deceased brother, Tyali. Together these constituted the core of the Ngqika chiefdom. Although there were internal conflicts, especially between Sandille and Maqoma, the forces that held them together were at this time stronger than those that divided them. Together they accounted for 80 per cent of the Ngqika households.

Botmane and Tola, although in Ngqika district for the purposes of the census, were not directly under Sandille. They were Mdange chiefs who had suffered extensively in the early commando raids. Their position had been much reduced by these conflicts. They were in alliance with the Ngqika chiefs and the aged Botmane had a close relationship with Maqoma.

Sonto was a Mbalu chief, a brother of the chief Stokwe. The Mbalu had a more ambivalent relationship with the Ngqika. Historically they had rejected Ngqika's paramountcy west of the Kei and had also occupied a forward position with respect to the Colony. The Mbalu were classed with the Ngqika because they owed their origin to their founder, Langa, a brother of Ngqika's father, Rarabe. As such, they were a slightly older formation than the

Ngqika themselves.

War and the spread of the market affected these small chiefdoms severely. Finally, Tshatshu was a Ntinde chief who was generally well disposed to Sandille. His biography is characterised by a mission education and the extremely precarious position of his following, which disposed him to vacillation in support of the Ngqika cause. Some of the strongest, or, in the terms that will be defined below, richest homesteads were, however, in his domain.

To some extent the "Ngqika" in the census are a colonial concoction originating in the particular pattern of settlement at the end of the war and the division of the magisterial districts decided between the two "Native Commissioners" appointed to reside with the Ciskeian chiefdoms.

## 5. Presentation of the Essential Features of the Data

Table 2 gives a statistical summary of the main features of the data derived from the analysis of the 1,090 Ngqika homesteads. Similar information is represented graphically in fig. 1. The mean, mode and median are indicated.

The position of the smallest 25 per cent of the homesteads for any variable is indicated by the all values under the point H1. The position of the largest 25 per cent of the homesteads for any variable is indicated by all values above H2 to the maximum value. The values between H1 and H2 represent the position of those 50 per cent of homesteads in the inter-quartile range.

A notable characteristic for all variables is the large gap between H2 and the maximum values. This shows that there were a number of homesteads - the top 25 per cent - that were markedly different from the rest. Conversely, there is generally a small gap between the minimum values, the H1 and the median. This means that for many of these variables 25 per cent, and in some cases 50 per cent, of the homesteads were near the minimum value. However, the overall distribution of each variable is very spread out, with a distinct grouping of larger values at the other end of the scale.

A better picture of the spread associated with each variable is gained from the schematic plots in fig. 1. Fig. 1 represents the position of the bottom 25 per cent of the homesteads, from the minimum value to H1, the middle 50 per cent between H1 and H2, with the mode and median positions indicated. The size of the gap between H2 and the maximum value is indicated with a sample of the number of cases occurring at selected values. For example, fig 1.1 shows that there were 72 cases of homesteads having 7 married women, 26 with 10 married women and one each of homesteads with 20 and 24 married women.

## 6. Homesteads, Households and People

The dynamic of Xhosa society expressed itself, in the first instance, through structure of the umzi or homestead. The appropriate unit of analysis is the homestead and from this level we will eventually derive salient characteristics of the individual households as well. The distinction between household and homesteads is an important one. *Households* refer to individual units comprising a man and his wife or wives. *Homesteads* refer to larger groupings consisting of several households living together including married sons, widows and other adherents.

There have been several debates in the literature about the constitution of households and homesteads. In fact, homesteads were in a continuous state of dynamic change - their composition was defined by economic, social and political circumstances - most importantly by the balance of labour, land and cattle resources within the unit and within the tribe as a

whole. When this balance was unfavourable to the younger households and the unmarried it formed the main source of political tensions shaping the overall conjuncture within the chiefdom. [18] The class struggle in the lineage mode of production thus revolved around the attempt by younger males to marry, gain access to labour, cattle and land, and the opposing ability of the elders and chiefs to inhibit this, or in certain circumstances for one or other grouping amongst this ruling class to foster its own ambitions by encouraging this process.

The distribution of the population into homesteads of different sizes appears to determine the pattern for the distribution of the other variables.

The category All People, was derived by adding all categories of people plus 1 for the household head. All the households were then added together to derive a total for each homestead. It therefore represents the total concentration of people in each homestead. As can be seen from Table 2 and fig. 1.2, the minimum number of people in a homestead was 3. However, there were only 3 such cases.

The bottom 25 per cent of homesteads contained between 3 and 13 people, the middle 50 per cent between 14 and 31 people, while the top 25 per cent contained between 32 and 120 people. This largest 25 per cent accounted for 12,310 people or 46 per cent of the total population. The bottom 25 per cent of the homesteads accounted for only 2,571 people, or 9.5 per cent of the population. The middle 50 per cent of the homesteads accounted for 11,903 or 44 per cent of the people. The largest percentage of the population were therefore living in that 25 per cent of the homesteads containing 32 people and over. The largest homestead contained 120 people.

The distribution of the *households* in the *homesteads* reveals more clearly how control not only over women but also over married men was concentrated in the dominant homesteads. Approximately, the top 25 per cent of the homesteads comprised 2,890 households or 50.14 per cent of the total number of 5,764 households. The middle 50 per cent of homesteads comprised 2,520 households or 43.72 per cent of the total, and the smallest homesteads in the bottom 25 per cent contained 354 households or 6.14 per cent of the total. While 50 per cent of the homesteads comprised 4 or fewer households, the top 25 per cent had from 7 to a maximum of 25 households.

**In sum therefore, the heads of the largest 25 per cent of the homesteads effectively commanded the labour of nearly half the population and exercised social and political control over half the married men. This clearly indicates the presence of a distinct stratum which held a dominant economic and political position.**

## 7. Wives

In Table 2, in the row for wives, the mean number per homestead is 5.01, the mode 3 and the median 4, indicating that 50 per cent of homesteads had either more or less than this number. H1 indicates that 25 per cent of homesteads had 2 or fewer wives, 50 per cent had between 3 and 6, while H2 shows that 25 per cent had 7 or more wives up to a maximum of 24. Of a total of 5,462 wives, 2,675 or 49 per cent were concentrated in the largest 25 per cent of the homesteads. The middle 50 per cent of the homesteads accounted for 2,346 of the total, 43 per cent. The smallest 25 per cent of homesteads accounted for only 441 of the wives, 8 per cent of the total.

Table 2 shows the mean number of *households per homestead* is 5.28 and the mean number of wives is 5.01 - creating a picture of a balanced number of married women and households concentrated in each homestead. The averages hide the real story. In terms of reproduction, the 25 per cent of homesteads that controlled nearly half the married women were clearly in a better position to create fresh labour power, and to maintain a balance between productive

and unproductive members and between male and female children. This gave them long-term advantages in terms of production (including commodity production) which marked them out as fundamentally different from the other homesteads.

The distribution of women should also be considered on the basis of the individual households, and it is therefore necessary to depart from looking only at the homesteads. The distribution of married women amongst the *households* shows that of the 5,764 households 2,726 or 47.3 per cent had only one married women. This leaves an intriguing figure of 1,868 men, 32.4 per cent of the total households who apparently had no married women. The main reason for this as explained above is that young unmarried men under the authority of a homestead head were regarded as "households" in the census. They represented a rising generation who, with the dearth of cattle, could not easily marry and establish their independence.

The examples of different statuses of homesteads given in tables 4, 5 and 6 illustrate this. In table 4 (A), "households" 2 and 3 have no wives or property, and similar examples can be seen in table 5 (A) households 2, 3, 5, and 6. These were certainly younger sons and adherents of the homestead head who were in the process of accumulating cattle towards marriage.

A total of 79.7 per cent of the men were either monogamous or had not married. 20.3 per cent, 1,170 households, were polygamous. Polygamy was clearly a mark of exception. As Alberti observed forty-one years before the census was taken:

Those with the least resources must be satisfied with one woman, others have two and rarely more. Only chiefs are enabled, by their greater wealth, to have a greater number, and one finds those with seven or eight. [19]

A markedly higher concentration of married women than the average held important advantages for these homesteads. They were in a position to increase labour supply, expand agricultural production and accumulate a greater share of the cattle. They could retain their sons by providing cattle for marriage without the need to look outside the homestead for assistance, which brought with it the siphoning off of labour. This had implications for the response to the labour and commodity markets into which the Xhosa were being drawn.

## 8. People and Cattle

The advantages of control over the bulk of the people by heads of the largest homesteads was complemented by control over cattle. There was a positive correlation between homestead size and the number of cattle *per capita* in the homestead. [20]

With cattle more than any other variable, the top 25 per cent of the homesteads predominated. These homesteads had 27 or more head each, accounting for 13,470 or 60.2 per cent of the 22,956 cattle. The middle 50 per cent with 8-26 head, accounted for 7,737 or 34.5 per cent of the total. The poorest 25 per cent with 0-7 head accounted for a mere 1, 198 or 5.3 per cent of the cattle.

A better indication of the effect of the grouping of the population into large homesteads can be seen by comparing the cattle per capita figures for different sizes of homesteads. The overall mean number of cattle per capita was 0.83, median .68 and mode 1. The bottom 25 per cent of homesteads had 0.4 or less per capita. In contrast, the top 25 per cent had between 1.09 and the maximum of 12.5 cattle per capita. The middle 50 per cent had between .04 and 1.09 cattle per capita. Far from any sort of equality prevailing in terms of access to cattle, the distribution shows extreme inequality. But, this does not yet prove that it was the largest homesteads in terms of numbers that also predominated in possessing most

cattle.

To show the interdependence of cattle and people, a two-way cross-classification of the population is produced in table 3, where the homesteads have been classified according to their total number of people and cattle. People and cattle are divided into 4 groups approximately at their quartiles.

The table shows clearly the extreme variation in the position of different homesteads. At one extreme there are the 15 homesteads (1.38 per cent) with over 27 head of cattle and 12 or fewer people. These 15 homesteads with over 2.25 cattle per capita formed part of a select group with 10 other homesteads who, despite larger populations, still achieved this ratio or better. At the other extreme the 6 homesteads with up to 99 people and no more than 7 cattle were at the very bottom of the pile with under .22 per capita.

That only 21 homesteads fell into these categories indicates that they were exceptions. The main tendency was for cattle and population numbers to move in tandem. However, as the size of the homesteads increased the number of cattle per capita tended to increase. Larger homesteads were not only relatively but absolutely better off.

We can call homesteads with 1-12 people small, 13-30 medium, and 31 and over large. Leaving aside the two extremes of plenty and deprivation isolated above (for which special circumstances may have existed), table 3 shows the largest group of homesteads falling in the category with 1-12 people and 1-7 cattle. They accounted for 202 homesteads, 18.5 per cent of the total.

Table 4 gives two examples drawn randomly from this category. These were likely to be young, mostly monogamous, homesteads beginning to accumulate independently. Many were in a precarious position. Their agriculture was constrained by limited labour resources suggesting a struggle for survival. Often confined to less productive soils, for them failure in even one season could mean loss of labour and partial absorption into the following of more established homesteads.

In Mauychenga's homestead, the provision of cattle for the young unmarried men probably comprising households 2 and 3 would be a difficult task. There would be every reason for them to offer services to other homesteads if they could thereby get access to cattle. The low cattle per capita figures of 0.66 and 0.2 are typical of most of the small homesteads. Illness, pregnancy, mortality or any other cause that reduced the work of the women and productive children, or increased the number of unproductive members, could pose a serious threat to survival.

The next biggest categories in Table 3 were homesteads with between 8 and 27 head of cattle and not more than 30 people. These two groups accounted for 317 or 29.08 per cent of the homesteads and formed the middle layers, as shown in the examples in Table 5.

Javu and Matutu were in an intermediate position, either developing towards a qualitatively better situation or heading towards a downward shift in their position. The cattle per capita figures show both homesteads above average, but with relatively limited labour resources. Matutu's homestead, in the top 11 per cent on the cattle per capita scale was in the middle 50 per cent for total homestead size. Their fortunes lay in securing labour power, obtaining bridewealth from the marriage of daughters, and retaining the labour of productive sons as long as possible. With 4 and 5 wives, respectively, these homesteads had capacity for sharing tasks, risks and yields, providing some protection from uncertainty. They were clearly better off demographically and in economic terms than the 26.7 per cent of the homesteads with 7 or fewer cattle.

The real centres of economic and political power stand out clearly as those 250 homesteads, 22.94 per cent of the total, who had over 13 people and over 27 cattle. In these homesteads

enough labour resources invariably existed to allow for making good losses caused by sickness, infertility, or failure to produce by any individual. The position of these homesteads is illustrated in table 6. With 2.6 and 5.4 cattle per capita and 49 and 53 people respectively, Kota's and Umuxuma's homesteads are typical of the largest 25 per cent. They possessed sufficient cattle for sustenance, making loans and attracting of adherents. Sons could marry more easily on the strength of cattle received from daughters leaving the homestead, without upsetting the labour-consumer balance within the unit. Weight of numbers lent credibility to the opinions of these homestead heads in public affairs and created an affinity with the chief. In short, these homesteads were most likely to have formed the ruling class within the chiefdom.

Apart from the greater availability of cattle for bringing in labour power through marriage, greater access to milk and meat could have produced higher fertility and lower child mortality amongst these homesteads because of their greater ability to ensure the food supply. In comparison with even the middle homesteads, theirs is a qualitatively larger labour resource, with Kota and Umuxuma having 14 and 13 wives, respectively. Their correlation of size and cattle per capita in fact placed them in the largest 10 per cent. This confirms the conclusion that cattle per capita increased with the increase in homestead size. It is interesting to note that 21 per cent of the whole population lived in the 10 per cent of homesteads with more than 45 people. These large homesteads were enabled to maintain their size, withstand external shocks, balance on the marriages of sons and daughters, absorb indigent adherents and withstand the departure of married sons or brothers to establish their own homesteads - in short to conduct the politics of controlling reproduction.

Overall this distribution suggests that the domination of the heads of larger homesteads flowed from their control of labour power and the possession of cattle accumulated over years. An interesting confirmation of this is found in the significance of possession of horses. Only 40 per cent of homesteads had horses, while 10 per cent of the homesteads controlled 63 per cent of the 1,376 horses. Horse-owning homesteads predominated in the top 10 per cent by size and cattle per capita. The importance of horses in the war is suggestive of the political influence of these largest homesteads.

Especially in times like 1848, cattle were distributed to homestead heads in accordance with their standing and closeness with the chiefs. These then attached to their own interests those households which could not subsist on their own. [20]

## 9. Class and Conquest

In the light of the data presented above, it is possible to return to the discussion of the form of domination exercised by the indigenous ruling class over women and young men.

A class cannot be economically dominant without being protected by the state against the class forces it exploits and oppresses. To provide this protection is the reason for the institution of the state with the emergence of class society. Engels explained that where there was only a limited economic surplus there will be no well defined classes - and especially no class of exploiters with an interest separate from the rest of society. There can then be no state and therefore no imperative for the oppression of women.

Thus, according to Enghels, it was the position of males as the first owners of new forms of wealth, especially livestock, that forced society beyond the constitution of the beginnings of barbarism and allowed the overthrow of the primitive commune and its characteristic features of democracy and equality, including gender equality.

The rise of private property on the foundation laid by agriculture, stock raising, metallurgy and new social divisions of labour, generated [these] new social forces. Throughout the

period of barbarism, the tightening up of the family institution evolved side by side with the development of private property in the hands of men. [21]

Engels described the transition from matrilineal, matrilocal to patrilineal, patrilocal society as "a revolution - one of the most decisive ever experienced by mankind". [22] The societies of southern Africa generally reflected the contradictions, strains and conflicts associated with dependence on the subordinated status of women in production and the regulation of reproduction.

While to this extent all men were ideologically equal and of a superior status to women, it is important not to confuse ideology for the reality it represents. For, in reality, all men cannot be classed as part of the ruling class. The ruling class was constituted not only by its control over women but also over cattle, access to which was a precondition for control over women. In this light, it may be possible to revise Guy's formulation of the ruling class to take into account the differing determinants of control over women and the accumulation of cattle - the two interrelated elements of the productive forces which determined the real power and position of homesteads.

In the pre-capitalist societies of southern Africa restrictions on women's access to and control over cattle established a relation of production which allowed all married men to have a dominant position over women - to form part of a dominant caste. However, this was not sufficient for establishing an identity of interests amongst the males. To exercise control over women and accumulate labour power, ownership of cattle was also necessary. The factors determining the ability of a homestead to acquire cattle cut across the apparent identity of interests of the men in relation to women and children. **The ruling class of these societies could more accurately be defined as the controllers of above average amounts of labour power and large herds of cattle. Male gender functioned as a caste requirement for inclusion in this class.**

Politically the ruling class of larger homesteads secured the caste interests of men in general. This did not stop the main lines of conflict being between broadly generationally defined groupings that represented the aspirations of women, young unmarried men, and indebted homestead heads, coming into conflict with power relations instituted by a past period of accumulation.

The separation of women from cattle, by establishing the unavoidable necessity of access to cattle for marriage, subordinated also the propertyless men to those who had cattle. This was not a subordination that evaporated the moment a man married and exercised domination over a women. The ability to control the social and economic reproduction of the homesteads was a function of the degree of accumulation and the political dominance that flowed from this.

In an article that is helpful in clarifying the interaction between production in the homesteads and the real history of these societies Meillassoux has argued:

A certain ratio must be kept between individuals at two levels: at the level of production, between the productive and the unproductive; at the level of reproduction, by the number of pubescent women compared to the whole group. [23]

It has been argued here that it was the dominant homesteads who were able to do this. Through their domination of the majority of the cattle and thereby of women, young men and the less powerful homesteads, they were able to subject the randomness of fertility and mortality to social control. The conflicts produced by this were the real motor of history in these societies.

It is rare to find evidence for the pre-colonial epoch that allows any connection to be made between developments in the history of chiefdoms and the social and economic conditions determining production and reproduction in the homesteads. For the colonial epoch it is only slightly easier, but with the added complication of accounting for the effects of commodity production and the market.

That the balance of power in the society depicted in the census was not a unique, unprecedented development but something that had occurred at periodic intervals before, is suggested by some evidence which supports the conception of a ruling class based on the dominant homesteads organised by the chief.

The reign of Tshiwo (1670-1700 or 01) appears to have marked a period of chronic instability, which may be evidence of the conjunctural result of increasing population and deteriorating ecological conditions and drought. [24] John Bennie recorded a tradition in 1838 that:

**There was great drought and hunger ... They stole the property of others: cattle and corn they destroyed one another ... their cattle were gone on account of their plundering one another. He that stole was not fined, all his cattle were taken from him. Part of the people left their homes, and became wanderers, those that had cattle fought with one another, some served these. Tshiwo alone had cattle and cow.**

Tshiwo gave the following order to his people; he said 'seek the wanderers, take them home with you, bring them to my kraal that I may give them food'. This was duly done ... **he chose great men to distribute food to the destitute.** He threw away his cattle in slaughtering for his people. The niggardly rich man would be reported to the chief. Tshiwo would call him, blame him, caution him ...

**At length it rained. The land became rich and had plenty. Tshiwo collected his cattle and distributed them amongst his destitute.** Peace came, corn was sown. Tshiwo said, cut the horns of your calves, do justice, let there not be a person who takes the property of another ... the cattle increased and bred and outnumbered the people ... [25]

The tradition conjures up a vivid picture of the manner in which the concentration of cattle in the hands of a minority of homestead heads could combine with a particular ecological conjuncture to create conditions where the majority of the nation are left without access to cattle. The impression is created that strife, bordering on civil war, may be engendered by this. Significantly, the solution to such strife was intervention to restore the internal balance of people and cattle on the land by the chief with the help of his class allies, counsellors or "great men", who were brought more firmly under his hegemony by this means.

Conditions favouring the extension of control by a limited group of homesteads existed at the time of conquest and were exacerbated by it. The social and political conditions of conquest reinforced in a distorted way both kinship ideology and the role of the chiefs. By 1848, with food production increasingly dependent on labour intensive agriculture and with herding less important, the larger homesteads were in an advantageous position. Many households found themselves without adequate labour resources owing to the war and drought. A partial solution was the reconstitution of homesteads to provide labour and access to land and cattle in accordance with the dominant social relations of production.

The bottleneck thus created by the accumulated resources in the hands of a few homestead heads and the control which flowed from this bred resentment. In all parts of southern Africa this was manifest in resistance as the old forces of production came up against the limits of

the patriarchal relations which were unable to resolve the contradictions of imbalances between groups in the old way under the new conditions created by colonialism. The divisions of age were accentuated and conditions created for the partial dissolution of the old system. At the same time the inability to resolve the imbalances between homesteads favoured a revolt of the young and the female. In Xhosa society this revolt finally took the form of the Cattle Killing episode of 1855-58. [26]

The importance of this analysis for the historiography of the subsequent period rests on three things. Firstly, the conditions shown provided the basis on which commodities were produced and labour extruded for the benefit of capitalism over the next fifty years. Who produced commodities and how much, who migrated and to what use money was put, were all determined in large measure by the type of economic and social structure that developed in the reserves.

Secondly, on this basis elements of the old ruling class eventually propped up by the state were able to survive in attenuated and often venal form. It is no coincidence that the name Sebe crops up as a prominent figure in the Ndlambe section of the census. The obvious consequence was that on this narrow layer of society, allied to a section of the modern black petty bourgeoisie and intelligentsia who often have close links with it, Verwoerd was able to erect the homeland structures. The most poisonous product of this process has been Gatsha Buthelezi and the Inkatha movement.

Thirdly, the heritage of resistance to white rule and the ideological outlook of a large part of the black working class still owe a lot to the persistence of ideas and attitudes which have their roots in a previous epoch. These, now adapted by the working class to the struggle for national liberation in South Africa, provide a powerful source of unity. However, on the debit side, they also underpin male chauvinism and sexism and the survival of archaic institutions such as *lobola* whose social justification has long since passed.

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#### Notes

- 1 The census roll is contained in CO, 6155, Census of the Gaika and Tslambie District 1848.
- 2 J Guy, "Analysing Pre-Capitalist Societies in Southern Africa", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 14, 1, (1988), p 24.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p 29.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p 32
- 5 *Ibid.*, p 34.
- 6 C Meillassoux, "The Economic Bases of Demographic Reproduction: from the domestic mode of production to wage-earning", *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 11, 1, October 1983, p 54 (original emphasis). Similarly, Engels remarks about the passing of the ancient gens: "... the moral influence of the old gentile period and its traditional conceptions and ways of thought survived for a long time to come and died only gradually." *The Origins of the Family. Private Property and the State* (1978), p 140.

- 7 Cape Archives, Government House (GH) 1419, Chief Commissioner British Kaffraria (BK), G Mackinnon to H Smith, March 1848.
- 9 Cape Archives BK, 371, Mackinnon to Smith, June 25 1848.
- 9 Appleyard records 40,250 cattle captured from the Xhosa. J W Appleyard, *The War of the Axe* (Cape Town, 1971), pp 42-111.
- 10 BK 371, Mackinnon to H Smith, December 20 1848. This is the first report of the collated census returns. There were many arithmetical errors in the collation of the returns.
- 11 J Peires, *House of Phalo* (Johannesburg, 1981), p 349.
- 12 BK 415, Mackinnon to J Maclean, 15 April 1848.
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 BK 471, Mackinnon to Smith, 20 December 1848
- 16 British Parliamentary Papers, *Cape of Good Hope, Further Papers relating to the state of the Kaffir Tribes* (London, 1857), 1857, 2nd session (97), Vol XXVIII, pp 42-43.
- 17 Maclean's estimated total population in the published table is 70,000 for the Ndlambe and Ngqika instead of the 62,358 shown in the census. The Ngqika population alone amounted to 27,179 people in the published figure. We found slightly less - 26,784. These reports were derived from hundreds of pages of returns laboriously compiled by hand. Many errors occurred in carrying forward sub-totals from one page to the next.
- 18 See M Wilson and L Thompson (eds), *Oxford History of Southern Africa*, Vol I (Oxford, 1969), p 34. Peires, *op.cit.*, p 76. The best contemporary observations include J L Dohne, "Das Kafferland", *Berliner Missionen Berichte*, 1837. CO 2692, Dundas to Bourke, 3 April 1927.
- 19 *Alberti's Account of the Xhosa in 1807* (Cape Town and Amsterdam, 1968), p 18 .
- 20 Sir A Smith, "Kaffir Notes", unpublished ms SA Museum, para 161, provides striking evidence of the way cattle were given to key homestead heads to distribute and thereby extend their control over the people who received cattle.
- 21 F Engels, *Origins of the Family*, p 20.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p 67.
- 23 C Meillassoux, *op. cit.*, p 51.
- 24 G Harinck, "Interaction between Xhosa and Khoi" in L M Thompson (ed), *Africa Societies in Southern Africa* (London, Ibadan, and Nairobi, 1969), p 154.
- 25 Rev J Bennie, "Iziqwenge Zimbali YamaXhosa", Ms 157 Grey Collections, South African Library. Emphasis added.

- 26 As Richard Dowden pointed out in a sympathetic review of Jeffrey Peires's book on the cattle killing, *The Dead Will Arise* (Cape Town, 1989), reference to conquest, lung-sickness and religion "explains the context and perhaps the cause, but it does not make the cattle-killing logical" (*Independent*, 9.8.89.). In fact, to explain satisfactorily the causes of this and other rebellions, the question has to be approached from the point of view of the internal class tensions within society in the given context.

Table 1. Corrected Census of the Ngqika District - 1848

Chiefdom	Area	No. of Homesteads	Men : Wives	Unmarried Females	Children Boys : Girls	Widows	Orphans Boys : Girls	Total People	Horses	Cattle
1. Sandille	Burnshill	643	3264 : 3052	566	2986 : 2564	1060	586 : 580	14658	643	10769
2. Tebe	Tyumie	182	919 : 945	367	999 : 883	283	259 : 190	4845	302	4582
3. Maqoma	Tyumie	65	430 : 411	106	420 : 338	149	102 : 94	2050	159	2044
4. Botomane	Tyumie	49	320 : 299	79	299 : 237	108	56 : 60	1458	59	1194
5. Tola	Peuleni	40	306 : 311	54	276 : 226	114	51 : 45	1383	57	1298
6. Sonto	Xalewa	31	170 : 123	22	122 : 101	60	34 : 41	673	46	584
7. Tshatshu	Buffalo Riv.	80	355 : 321	82	361 : 266	141	89 : 102	1718	110	1934
TOTAL		1090	5764 : 5462	1276	5463 : 4615	1915	1177 : 1112	26784	1376	22405

Table 2: Summary statistics of essential variables - 1090 homesteads - Ngqika District - 1848

Variable	Mean	Mode	H1	Median	H2	Minimum	Maximum
1. Households	5.28	4	2	4	6	1	25
2. Wives	5.01	3	2	4	6	0	24
3. Unmarried women	1.17	0	0	1	2	0	15
4. Boys	5.01	3	2	4	6	0	28
5. Girls	4.23	3	1	4	6	0	36
6. Widows	1.75	0	0	1	2	0	10
7. Orphan boys	1.07	0	0	0	1	0	9
8. Orphan girls	1.02	0	0	0	1	0	16
9. All People	24.47	17	13	20	31	3	120
10. Horses	1.26	0	0	0	1	0	33
11. Cattle	20.55	5	7	14	27	0	288

H1-H2 indicates the lower and upper quartiles. 25% of homesteads had H1 or less, 25% had H2 or more.

Table 3: 2-way Classification of People and Cattle - 1090 homesteads

PEOPLE	CATTLE				Total : Percent
	1-7 : Per cent	8-14 : Per cent	15-27 : Per cent	27 + : Per cent	
1 - 12	202 : 18.53	108 : 9.91	57 : 5.23	15 : 1.38	382 : 35.05
13 - 30	83 : 7.61	155 : 14.22	162 : 14.86	127 : 11.65	527 : 48.35
31 - 99	6 : .55	11 : 1.01	41 : 3.76	122 : 11.20	180 : 16.51
Over 100	0 : .00	0 : .00	0 : .00	1 : .09	1 : .09
<b>Total</b>	<b>291 : 26.69</b>	<b>274 : 25.14</b>	<b>260 : 23.85</b>	<b>265 : 24.32</b>	<b>1090 : 100.</b>

Table 4: Small Homesteads 1-12 people 1-7 cattle.

Homestead (A)	Chief	Wives	Unmarried wmn.	Boys : Girls	OrphB. : Orph G.	Widows	Horses	Cattle
Mauychenga 1	Sandille	1	1	1 : --	-- : --	--	--	4
household 2		--	--	-- : --	-- : --	--	--	--
household 3		--	--	-- : --	-- : --	--	--	--
Total people 6		1	1	1 : --	-- : --	--	--	4

(A) Cattle per capita: 0.66. (B) Cattle per capita: 0.2

Homestead (B)	Chief	Wives	Unmarried wmn.	Boys : Girls	OrphB. : Orph G.	Widows	Horses	Cattle
Noucungu	Tebe	1	--	2 : 1	1 : 1	--	--	2
household 2		--	--	-- : --	1 : 1	--	--	--
Total People 10		1	--	2 : 1	2 : 2	--	--	2

Table 5: Middle Homesteads 13-30 people 8-27 cattle

Homestead (A)	Chief	Wives	Unmarried wmn.	Boys : Girls	OrphB : Orph G.	Widows	Horses	Cattle
Javu	Sandille	2	--	1 : 3	1 : --	--	4	12
household 2		--	--	-- : --	-- : --	--	--	1
household 3		--	--	-- : --	-- : --	--	--	--
household 4		2	--	1 : 1	-- : --	--	--	3
household 5		--	--	1 : 1	-- : --	--	1	2
household 6		--	--	-- : --	-- : --	--	--	1
Total	19	4		3 : 5	1 : --	--	5	19

(A) Cattle per capita: 1.00 (B) Cattle per capita: 1.5

Homestead (A)	Chief	Wives	Unmarried wmn.	Boys : Girls	OrphB : Orph G.	Widows	Horses	Cattle
Matutu	Maqoma	3	1	3 : 3	1	--	3	24
household 2		1	--	1 : --	--	--	--	2
household 3		1	--	-- : 1	--	--	--	1
Total	18	5	1	4 : 4	1	--	3	27

Table 6: Large Homesteads Over 13 People Over 27 cattle.

Homestead (A)	Chief	Wives	Unmarried wmn.	Boys : Girls	Orph B : Orph G	Widows	Horses	Cattle
Kota	Sandille	6	2	2 : 3	-- : 1	--	4	62
household 2		1	--	-- : 2	-- : --	--	2	20
household 3		1	--	-- : --	-- : --	--	1	4
household 4		1	--	-- : 1	-- : --	--	1	2
household 5		3	1	2 : 3	-- : --	--	--	10
household 6		--	--	-- : --	-- : --	--	1	4
household 7		2	1	2 : 1	1 : --	--	--	2
household 8		--	--	-- : --	1 : --	2	1	--
household 9		--	--	-- : --	-- : --	--	--	--
Total:	48	14	4	6 : 10	2 : 1	2	10	104

(A) Cattle per capita: 2.66 (B) Cattle per capita: 5.4

Homestead (B)	Chief	Wives	Unmarried Wmn.	Boys : Girls	Orph B. : Orph G.	Widows	Horses	Cattle
Umuxuma	Maqoma	2	1	3 : --	-- : --	--	1	48
household 2		1	--	-- : --	-- : --	--	3	30
household 3		1	--	-- : 1	-- : --	--	3	24
household 4		1	--	-- : 1	1 : --	--	--	10
household 5		1	--	-- : 2	2 : 2	1	4	38
household 6		1	--	1 : --	-- : --	--	--	5
household 7		2	2	4 : 1	-- : --	1	5	46
household 8		--	--	-- : --	-- : --	--	--	8
household 9		1	--	-- : --	-- : --	--	--	6
household 10		1	--	-- : --	-- : --	--	--	15
household 11		2	2	2 : 2	-- : --	--	5	58
<b>Total:</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10 : 7</b>	<b>3 : 2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>288</b>

**Fig. 1. Schematic Plots of key variables**

