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Representation of African circumcision rituals in post-colonial films: an analysis of Inxeba: The Wound (2017), Umthunzi Wentaba (2007) and The Cutting Tradition (2009)

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Abstract

The reliance of media on stereotypes has proven problematic since its inception, and one of the major concerns is its representation of minority groups. Throughout the history of media, and specifically cinema, Africa has always been portrayed as the 'Other' that needs saving from its savagery and backwardness. With regards to the politics of representation, the purpose of this paper is to offer a critical investigation of the representations of circumcision rituals in the films *Inxeba: The Wound* (2017), *Umthunzi Wentaba* (2007) and *The Cutting Tradition* (2009). Using post-colonial reading of the above texts, this paper aims to deconstruct simplistic representations of black African gendered identities in these texts, by foregrounding the historical complexity and the socio-cultural specificity of the rituals of circumcision and initiation. With the application of a thematic analysis, this paper discovers that the representation of black identities has not changed, but are disguised under current politically correct issues such as human rights and gender politics. The films were oblivious to the complex, nuanced and rich cultural practice of circumcision.