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L'Afrique et les défis du XXIème siècle
Africa and the Challenges of the Twenty First Century
A África e os desafios do Século XXI

إفريقيا وتحديات القرن الواحد والعشرين

**Culture, Identity, Nationalism & the African Cinema:
The Dream and Current Challenges**

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Abstract

The paper will seek to explore the ways in which African films and videos have, at different times, composed images of the continent, the aim being to explore how representations of class, gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, regional and national identity are manifested in African motion picture and to examine how these images have served to represent the continent to itself and to the world at large.

The fight for independence in Africa was based on the conviction that “the African is capable of managing his own affairs”. The call came for Africans to be proud and confident that they can rub shoulders with other peoples elsewhere in the world. President Nkrumah and other African leaders strongly aware of the powers of the cinema nationalized the film industries in their respective countries with the aim of using it as an effective tool in the conscientisation of their peoples in line with the visions of independent Africa. Productions were made primarily to educate and inform the people on several issues. Fifty years down the lane, the situation has changed. Current productions have mainly departed from imparting knowledge to the African to be able to compete strongly in the global sphere. The paper will argue that cinema in Africa now has contributed to the low self-esteem of the African in terms of the kind images that dominate the screens. The paper will examine the relationship between cinema, culture and identity in African societies and discuss the ways in which different African productions have projected different images of “Africaness” and its attendant problems.

The paper will look at ideological values and how they dictated the nature of productions churned out by African filmmakers of different generations. It will explore some of the theoretical frameworks within which the filmmakers have produced their works and the techniques used to demonstrate creativity and share their concerns with viewers. The analysis will examine both narrative and stylistic elements of selected productions and their impact on viewers.