

# **Traditional Male Circumcision and Initiation into Manhood. Legal, health and environmental perspectives**

*By Xola GM Kanta. Pp. 226. R150. (Self-published) by Impilo ya Bantu Health and Development Projects. 2004.ISBN 0-620-31829-5-5.*

Horrendous reports of genital mutilation, sepsis and death among youths undergoing traditional circumcision in the Eastern Cape have become an annually recurring nightmare. These deaths and injuries are a result of a combination of factors, among them the ignorance and incompetence of those performing the ritual using medieval techniques and equipment, and the physical abuse and deprivation meted out to these youngsters to 'harden them up for manhood'. The *SAMJ* has been among the voices that have called for urgent intervention in this tragedy.

Dr Xola Kanta, the author of this manual-cum-encyclopaedia on ritual circumcision in the Eastern Cape, is founder of the community outreach organisation known as *Impilo ya Bantu* (health of the people) *Health and Development Projects* and, in this context, has been an ardent campaigner for measures to improve the safety of ritual circumcision in the Eastern Cape. Dr Xola holds impressive credentials: medical doctor with diplomas in forensic medicine and in medicine and the law, and a Master's degree in clinical pharmacology. By way of intervention, Dr Kanta has trained more than 300 traditional operators and traditional nurses, is involved in public health education and awareness, performs pre-circumcision health assessment on intending candidates, treats circumcision complications, and performs postmortems on victims of ritual circumcision.

Dr Kanta has written this training manual, which is a comprehensive source of information for those intending to be involved in ritual circumcision, or have an interest in the context of the ritual. It consists of 8 sections and 22 chapters on topics ranging from historical and cultural perspectives to the health and medical aspects of traditional circumcision. It contains chapters on male genital anatomy and physiology, relevant microbiology (including HIV), and the current legal framework for traditional circumcision in the Eastern Cape. The book is printed in comfortable font, and contains graphs, maps and illustrative line drawings.

The book may be obtained by contacting Impilo ya Bantu, fax (086) 672-6727 or [kantax@iafrica.com](mailto:kantax@iafrica.com).

**Daniel J Ncayiyana**