ABSTRACT

This study examined the historical development of Nigeria mass media. There is no doubt that the press has been transformed tremendously in structure, number of outlets, contents and out-reach since its narrow and localised appearance in Abeokuta and Lagos during the second half of the 19th century. Until the broadcast or electronic media was deregulated by the Ibrahim Babangida military regime, the print media was dominated by the private sector, especially in its impact upon civil society. Government however monopolised and controlled the broadcast media until 1992. For the privately owned media, the economic reforms of about the middle of the 1990s in which the role of the state in the political economy of the country was rolled back with the intention to encourage market forces and economic freedoms along with democratisation of the political process, it blossomed as an industry, service providers, employers and as a profession. Thus, there have been complexity and pluralism of a kind in the Nigerian media industry.

Keywords: Mass Media, Development, Press Freedom.

INTRODUCTION

A central theme in the history of the Nigeria mass media is its political orientation. This is understandable, although it has led to the neglect of other aspects of the history and contemporary structure of the Nigerian press. Most, if not all historical accounts of the Nigerian press are premised on its overt political nature. This is probably largely due to the fact that the Nigerian press has its root in the anti-colonial agitation of the frustrated Lagos elite whom a Nigerian historian, Ayandele (1974) described as the “deluded hybrids”. Golding and Elliot remarked that “Nigerian journalism was ... created by anti-colonial protest, baptised in the waters of politics, and matured in party politics” (1979).

This legacy has continued to influence both academic and popular assessment of the Nigerian mass media. The tradition is so embedded in popular consciousness that it has more or less obscured other aspects of Nigerian press history. However, a multiplicity of media voices can be found in Nigeria largely because of the diversity of the population of the country and the history preceding its independence. This study therefore examined the historical development of Nigeria mass media.

THE GENESIS OF NIGERIAN MEDIA

The Nigerian media, particularly the print media and to a great extent the electronic media, was nursed by the British colonizers and some foreign educated Africans. However, Akinfeleye (1985) argues that, despite the early British influence in Nigerian journalism, its exact origin is somehow unclear. For him, it is difficult to determine if Europeans brought journalism to Nigeria or that Nigerians had some journalism before the arrival of the Europeans although he provides evidence of irregular newspaper publishing ventures before
1859. However, the consensus among scholars and experts of varied backgrounds is that the first printing press was found in Calabar Nigeria, in 1846 and was owned by the Presbyterian Mission. Another consensus also is that the history of Nigerian mass media can be traced to Rev. Henry Townsend of the Presbyterian Mission, who in 1859 established a newspaper called “Iwe iroyin “which has been acknowledged as the first newspaper in Nigeria and Africa’s first and oldest vernacular newspaper in Abeokuta, (Omu, 1978; Nigeria yearbook, 1973-76; Dimkpa, 1997). Reverend Townsend according to Akinfeleye (1985) is today still remembered as the father of Nigerian Journalism. The Iwe Irohin newspaper which was a fortnightly was from inception published in Yoruba language but started an English edition in the form of a supplement six years later. The purpose of establishing a newspaper was because he wanted to inculcate reading habit among the Yoruba people and also to create avenues or a platform where by business men would publish their advert on the papers.

Also, during the colonial era, the newspapers were established for the purpose of fighting the colonial masters. Nigerians were enlightened on their right for freedom and the need to vehemently reject colonial laws and policies. In other words, the independent that Nigeria got in 1960 can be traced to the press. This is because the press used their weapon which was the newspaper to fight their colonial masters. No wonder it is said that the pen is stronger than sword. After the demise of Iwe Irohin, Robert Campbell set up the Anglo-African in 1868. However, Omu (1978) notes that, “the first of these foreign dominated newspapers was the Anglo-African founded by Robert Campbell” (p.20).

Dimkpa (1997) confirms that:

The second key owners of the media were foreigners who immigrated to Nigeria during the colonial days. These foreigners were mostly Sierra Leoneans and Liberians who were earlier exposed to western education before Nigerians (pp.19-20).

But two years after its establishment, the Anglo-African collapsed. By 1880, Omu (2000) notes that, many people in Lagos began to feel the need for a newspaper to fill the gap created by the collapse of Iwe Irohin in 1867 and the Anglo-African in 1880. In addition, Omu (2000) explains that educated Africans showed frustration about the absence of a voice they required to sooth the temperament of the times. It was therefore not a surprise that a wealthy businessman, Richard Beale Blaize brought out the first truly Nigerian newspaper in November 1880. He called it the Lagos Times and Gold Coast Colony Advertiser. The paper however was unable to survive financially and was extinct by 1883.

In 1890, persuaded by John Payne Jackson who was dismissed as a bookkeeper at the Lagos Times because of drinking problems, Blaize revived the Lagos Times under a new title, The Lagos Weekly Times. Again, financial problems arose between Blaize and Jackson, who was managing the paper, and Jackson’s response was the launching of his own newspaper, The Lagos Weekly Record in 1891. John Payne Jackson later had an extra-ordinary career with the Lagos Weekly Record and was for twenty-five years, the most outstanding journalist in West Africa. Jackson was a major influence in Nigeria journalism. He created the vibrant tradition of fearless journalism, fostering seriousness of purpose and a spirit of enterprise in the newspaper industry. However, The Lagos Weekly Record continued its tradition of erudite and combative style under John Payne’s son, Thomas Horatio Jackson. Its readership was mainly the steadily increasing Lagos and Gold Coast Colony elite and its contents were political, ranging from the activities of the movement towards African nationalism.

Like most newspapers of the period (1880 – 1930s), circulation was small as individual newspaper sales ranged from 200 – 9000 annually, readership of a leading newspaper such as the Record would at best represent an increase of about 4000 to 9000 during the period. But Jackson’s Lagos Weekly Record seems to have surpassed that estimate. Omu (1978) confirms that: “the greatest circulation during the period under review was 700 a week and that was attained by The Record and The Standard around 1919” (p.81). The collapse of the Lagos Weekly Record in 1930 and the death of Thomas Horatio Jackson in 1936 drew the curtain on an era in the history of the Nigeria press. Though John Payne Jackson’s Lagos Weekly Record was described as an “arsenal of ideas from which opponents and the government took their weapons”, Omu (1978) and Dare (2000) regarded Blackall’s Observer as the most successful 19th century newspaper both financially and in terms of readership.
Pre-Independence Newspapers

The first newspaper era in Nigeria came to an end when another generation of newspaper publishers emerged on the scene. This new generation had new approaches to journalism and was anxious to create opportunities for greater democratic participation. This new era was epitomized in Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and his West African Pilot. The Pilot launched in November 1937 announced its mission as the Sentinel of popular liberty and guardian of civilization with the “supreme task” of making assertions in unequivocal terms (Omu, 1978).

The Pilot indeed heralded the revival and revolution in Nigerian journalism. Nnamdi Azikiwe brought with him essential components of the new journalism, and his paper immediately became the major forum for the now ever-increasing nationalist consciousness which was in desperate need of an outlet for expressing the mode of the times. The Pilot sold about 9000 copies daily and ended the circulation supremacy of The Daily Times, which then had a circulation figure of about 6000.

In the words of Omu (2000):

Azikiwe’s impact on the Nigerian press was significant. Among other things, he widened the social basis for the profession of journalism, which lost its traditional elitist and aristocratic definition (p.61).

Evidently, the period, 1880 to 1937 marked the birth of a radical press (newspapers having no affiliation with the church) in Nigeria. Omu (2000) in his chronicle of the Nigerian press highlighted “five milestones in journalistic service”. These are – the early newspaper – Iwe Irohin (1859), Lagos Times (1880), The Lagos weekly Record (1891), pre independence newspapers such as The West African pilot (1937) and the more recent Guardian/Newswatch (1983/85). Dare (2000) also notes that “between the period, 1859 and 1937 (Irohin to the Pilot) there emerged newspapers that became the spearhead of a nationalism that was at once cultural and political” (p.12). He also adds that by 1937 no fewer than 51 newspapers had been established in Nigeria signifying the emergence of the first indigenous industrial enterprise. Most of these newspapers Dare (2000) observed:

Were founded by men in all sorts and conditions of distress, people who according to Obafemi Awolowo … himself a member of the second generation of pioneers of the press were regarded as the “flotsam and jetsam” of the growing community of Nigeria’s intelligentsia (p.13).

Worthy of note though is the emergence of the Daily Times (later, Daily Times of Nigeria) in 1926. The Daily Times was a different kind of newspaper in the sense that it was found (by a Nigerian and four Britons) as a commercial paper, with most of the trappings of a typical “London Daily” and as such was not considered that much part of “the struggle” but served as a training ground for what could be described as some of the best hands in Nigerian journalism. The paper, which had a circulation figure of 3000 in 1930, and rose to 5,900 by 1937 is believed by many to have been Nigeria’s first daily newspaper; but this is technically not the case.

There appeared on the newsstands on November 9th, 1925, a tiny daily news sheet proclaiming itself “West Africa’s first daily newspaper”. It was the Lagos Daily News, founded by a bookseller, Babamuboni who hurriedly came out with the publication obviously to checkmate the plan of the Daily Times coming out as the first daily newspaper. Herbert Macaulay, who was credited with being critical, took over the Lagos Daily News in 1927. Macaulay developed the Lagos Daily News into a “ferociously anti-government” newspaper and a political springboard as well as an organ of his political party (The National Democratic Party) but it died like many others before it. In 1939, the colonial authorities under the auspices of the Northern Literature Bureau, set up the first newspaper north of the Niger. The paper was the Hausa-language Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo. The Northern Literature Bureau in 1945 became the Gaskiya Corporation and added to the Gaskiya Ta fi Kwabo an English-language fortnightly – The Nigerian Citizen in 1948.

In 1949, the late Obafemi Awolowo established the Nigerian Tribune as a voice and vehicle for his political party – The Action Group (AG). Within this period and 1959 when there was the crucial election that was to lead Nigeria into self determination from Britain, many newspapers were launched while others went into partnership all in preparation for “independence” (Dare, 2000).
Post-Independence Newspapers

The early years of independence were not a story of glory for the Nigerian press. Omu (2000) said political partisanship and overzealous parochialism served to reinforce primordial prejudices and to heighten inter-group tensions and animosities (p.60).

Dare (2008) also notes that:

With the attainment of independence and the exit of the “common enemy” in 1960, cleavages that had been hidden by the struggle for nationalism came into the open. The organized political parties, ethnic groups, and regions turned inwards and played “black-on-black”. So intense was the bitterness and rivalry among contending groups that the Nigerian press became an “instrumental press” (p.17).

In the words of Omu (1978) as cited in Dare (2000), “editors and staffers working on newspaper of different political persuasions, were hardly on speaking terms” (p.18) and veteran journalist, Anthony Enahoro insists that whoever and whatever ruined Nigeria’s first Republic, did so with the active collaboration of the greater section of the Nigerian press.

However, Omu (2000) observes that:

The advent of military rule in the mid 60s aroused a mood of self-criticism and regret as new loyalties were affirmed as was the tradition and legacy of the pioneer press. Thus the seventies witnessed some recovery of moral authority as the press played an active role in the projected reform of society. It was in this new climate of stimulated enthusiasm and quest for new values and directions that the Guardian and the Newswatch came into being (p.58).

The Guardian, Omu (2000) says calls itself the “flagship of the Nigerian press” and so it really is. It has been indisputably the best newspaper ever produced in Nigeria and its brand of journalism has had a profound and provocative impact on Nigerian journalism (p.60). The Guardian brought with it new standards, penetrating and persuasive analysis, poise and polish of language and above all stands out as the best of the Nation’s media Institutions. Newswatch on the other hand, broke new grounds in investigative journalism, encouraged debate, lucid and simple like the style synonymous with American quality magazines. For its style of investigative journalism, the magazine’s founding Editor-in-Chief, Mr. Dele Giwa lost his life in 1986, courtesy of a letter bomb, the first of its kind in the country.

Today, the Nigerian press industry is bustling with other quality newspapers and magazines like the Concord, This Day, the Comet, Champion, Daily Independent, Punch, Vanguard, National Interest, Examiner, The Post-Express, Trust and Anchor and so on. In the magazine category are Tell, the News, Tempo, the Source and numerous others.

North–South Variations

A point of clarification however, is the observable fact that the history of the Nigerian press, its personalities and activities all seem to centre around the then Southern Protectorate, especially around the metropolitan city of Lagos and environs (Abeokuta for example where it all seem to have started) where the newspapers are produced and largely consumed.

As Ngoa (2006) indicates:

This was the case and had remained so due to the fact that newspapers had their origin in the south, plus that the gap in western education between the south and north of Nigeria was very wide and still seems to be so. Gap in western education is largely wide between the two regions because most of the schools in the country were established by Christian missions who also pioneered newspaper publications in Nigeria (p.135).

Ngoa (2006) identified that comparatively in terms of the availability of newspapers between the north and the south, the north had its first newspaper in 1939 with the introduction of the Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo, by which time there were more than 16 newspapers in the south. The implication of the above statistics as it relates to readership and circulation of newspapers in the two areas of the country is that, by 1950, the north had only one University graduate compared to the scores of hundreds of professionals and University graduates in the south.
He further points out that the activities and personalities of the pre-independence, independent and military era’s media had been punctuated by struggles. It was the struggle for independence (anti-establishment journalism), and then with the military the struggle to be free from dictatorship, and today the struggle for survival in the “dog eat dog” politically suffocating environment.

**RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE NIGERIAN MEDIA**

Today, the government controls and regulates most of Nigeria’s broadcast media through the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC). Radio is said to be the most important mass medium for reaching general audiences because it is inexpensive and does not require literacy. The federal government owns stations affiliated with the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, individual states control other stations, and still others are privately owned. The Voice of Nigeria broadcasts in Arabic, English, French, and five indigenous languages. Some Voice of Nigeria broadcasts are aimed at domestic audiences; others, primarily shortwave, are transmitted around the globe. (Library of Congress – Federal Research Division Country Profile: Nigeria, June, 2006). Similar to the market for radio broadcasts, the federal government owns two stations affiliated with the National Television Authority, various states have their own stations, and private operators broadcast by satellite. Nigerians also obtain news via Voice of America, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and Deutsche Welle. However, today there are many privately owned television stations across the country.

In contrast to the broadcast media, the print media are dominated by private publications, a situation that is more amenable to criticism of the government. Nigeria has 14 major daily newspapers, but only one ‘The New Nigerian’ is government-owned. The country also has six news weeklies and various tabloids. The government does not restrict access to the Internet, which is most widely available at cyber cafés. Television and radio broadcast stations currently operational in Nigeria are: 83 AM, 36 FM, and 11 short-wave radio stations and 116 television broadcast stations (40 cable stations) (Telecommunications in Nigeria, 2011). Recent information on the number of radios and televisions is not available. In 2005 Nigeria had only about 1.8 million Internet users, many of whom relied on equipment at cybercafés. Internet hosts totaled 1,535. In 2004 more than 9.1 million mobile cellular telephones and 1 million mainline telephones were in use (Library of Congress – Federal Research Division Country Profile: Nigeria, June, 2006). The current estimate lies at about 88 million mobile phones as at October 2011, with most people having more than one cellphone.

For the purpose of this study, the concept of mass media will be limited to Radio, Newspapers, Magazines, Television and the new media. In Nigeria the print media and television face the challenge of illiteracy, poverty and epileptic power supply respectively. However, radio is the most accessible medium for reaching general audiences because of its inexpensive nature. On the other hand, television is commonly available but the epileptic nature of electricity supply seriously hampers usage across the country. Radio is the key source of information for many Nigerians. Private radio and TV stations have been licensed, and there is substantial take-up of pay TV. Today, there are about 83 AM, 70 FM and 11 Shortwave Radio stations as well as 116 television stations of which there are 40 cable stations (World Radio and Television Handbook, 2007). On the other hand, there are more than 100 national and local newspapers and publications, some of them state-owned. They include well-respected dailies, tabloids and publications which champion the interests of ethnic groups.

Furthermore, Nigeria's media scene is acclaimed as one of the most vibrant in Africa and the Library of Congress (2006) indicates that:

- State-run radio and TV services reach virtually all parts of the country and operate at federal, regional and state levels. All 36 state governments run radio stations and most operate TV stations as well. There are also many independent producers and community Radio/TV services ran mainly by universities (p.9).

**THE NIGERIAN PRESS AND ITS STRUGGLES**

Traditionally, according to Sobowale (2002) “the role of the mass media is to inform, educate, and entertain members of the society” (p.23). The role of the mass media in creating political awareness, engendering empathy and mobilizing people for social change has also been recognized. The press according to Akinfeleye (2003):
“Is the watch-dog, check-on-to uncover and never to cover up corruption and/or wrong doings by the other three estates. They are also to monitor governance and make the other three estates accountable to the people at all times” (p.19).

These functions, the Nigerian press has been performing since 1859 when the first newspaper, Iwe Irohin was published. The press has done creditably well especially in the area of surveillance and correlation.

However, according to Uche (1989) it should be pointed out that:

The press has its own shortcomings too. It has been accused of “fuelling” the crises of the 1960s. The press that was nationalistic during the independence struggle, that provided nationalists arsenal from which they drew their lethal arms and ammunition, and served as launch pad from which they launched vitriolic attacks on colonialists, suddenly became a parochial, primordial, and tribalistic press at independence. The firebrand press suddenly became ‘tribal-brand’ press. The press of the First Republic aligned with the three major political parties which themselves are ethnic (or tribal) based (p.47).

This trend was to repeat itself again especially during the months preceding the 1967-1970 civil war which polarized Nigeria into two; those supporting the Biafra cause and those against it. During the Second Republic (1979 – 83) the press witnessed a “phenomenal growth”. Many newspapers, radio and television stations were established.

Sobowale (2002) explains that:

“This sharp increase in the number of mass media establishment was, as in the past, motivated by political considerations, it cannot be disputed that these media performed the traditional functions of informing, educating, and entertaining their audiences…and contributed in no small measure to the economic, political and social development of the country” (p.27).

Popoola (2003) pointed out that:

"During the Second military interregnum (December 31, 1983 – May 29, 1999) and the runoff to the Fourth Republic (or is it Third Republic?), the Nigerian press had a “running battle” with the various Military Juntas. The regime of Generals Muhammadu Buhari and Tunde Idiagbon (December 31, 1983 – August 27, 1993) set the tone for subsequent regimes on how to relate with the press. The regime remained one of the harshest military regimes in the country, for it had no respect for human rights including that of the press” (p.15).

Other military regimes followed the footsteps of Buhari/Idiagbon and even surpassed them, in their maltreatment of the press.

Ngoa (2006) reveals that:

"Under the Babangida and Abacha regimes, newspapers/magazines were proscribed and media houses were shut at will for daring to inform the public of their dubious activities” (p.198).

He further explains that:

"As if closing down would not do, arsonists, hired killers and hit squads (Strike Force) were let loose on the press, to burn media houses (arsonists were caught setting Guardian Newspapers office on fire in 1996 or thereabout), kill journalists (Mr. Dele Giwa received a ‘parcel bomb’ in 1986, while Baguda Kaltho of the News magazine is still missing till date many years after he was declared wanted by the police) and to maim (Mr. Alex Ibru, the publisher of Guardian newspaper may not have fully recovered from the gun shots he received from agents of General Abacha). To crown it all, journalists, both males and females, were arraigned before Military Tribunals on ‘trump up charges’ and many of them were jailed" (p.198).
It is important to note that the “war” of attrition against the press was not limited to the press men; their families (including wives, children and relations) were not spared. Many at times, families of news men were held hostage in their stead. Guns were pointed at their wives and little children, their offence being that they are related to journalists.

In all these, according to Kalejaiye (1999):

- The Nigerian press though harassed, pursued, bombarded...yet...remained undaunted in the pursuit of its watchdog role. The press was beaten but not intimidated. It was humiliated but not cowed (p.3).

It was this same press that led the struggle for the enthronement of democracy in Nigeria. Akinfeleye (2003) points out that:

- The Nigerian press literally led the ‘peoples’ army’ that fought the military to a standstill leaving them with no choice but to hand over to elected “civilians” on May 29, 1999. The press in this regard deserves a ‘locomotive’ pat on the back (p.21).

He adds that:

- Since the advent of the 4th Republic on 29 May 1999, the Nigerian press have been up and doing. They have to their credit great exposes such as the one that swept Salisu Buhari, the First Speaker of the House of Representatives in this civil regime out of office and the Toronto certificate saga involving Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the governor of Lagos State, Nigeria (p.21).

Ngoa (2006) agrees that:

- Since the return to civil rule on May 29, 1999, the Nigerian press has not witnessed too much official harassments. But there are few reported cases of isolated official high-handedness against the press but the one that readily comes to mind is the brutalization of the Vanguard newspaper’s photojournalist by security operatives attached to the Vice President, Atiku Abubakar, early 2005. The journalist was beaten to a state of coma and almost lost his life”.

Again, in June 2006 two journalists, Gbenga Aruleba and Rotimi Durojaiye of African Independent Television (AIT) and Daily Independent newspaper respectively, were arrested and arraigned for calling the recently purchased Presidential Jet “fairly used” or “Tokunbo” that is a second-hand jet while the Federal government claimed the jet was brand-new. The irony is that the journalists were charged under a moribund law, the Sedition Act, a law that has been declared null and void by a competent court of law, the Court of Appeal, since 1983.

Also recently, the government seems once again to have stepped-up its harassment tactics against the press. This can be attributed to the fact that many high ranking public and private officers continue to engage in the looting of Nigeria's national resources. In February 2010, Mr. Ikedi Ohakim, the incumbent governor of Imo state ordered the abduction of a journalist whom he personally flogged and brutalized in his office for exposing the looting of the Imo state treasury by the governor through award of dubious contracts.

**Independent Nigeria: The Liberation Struggle**

This period marked the birth of democracy in Nigeria. It marked a period of post-colonial milestone that experienced a bewildering transition from repressive colonial government to an environment of new found freedom of expression. However, it was not a glorious period in history for the Nigerian press because the press had become an instrument of political rivalry, ethnicity and sectionalism.

However, the military era in Nigeria was a period of 13 long years of bondage for Nigerians. A period when the military’s imposition of self on the people was rather repugnant and the people themselves became so polarized between those for and against the military to the extent that, the media too became polarized along the same lines.

Like the period before this, the media still did not have a glorious story to tell. It was a press divided amongst itself and so was weakened to fall. Discussing the first military era in Nigeria veteran journalist M. C. K. Ajuluchukwu argues that the media was unarguably in no position to fight for the restoration of democracy without which the media and the people were left under the tyranny of the military.
Second Republic (1979-1983)
Nigerians enjoyed a second taste of democracy on October 1, but the media again seem unable to adapt to the new environment of ‘freedom’ as they became very partisan. It was a period of democracy under siege punctuated by foreign exchange jugglers, import licenses without imports, rice importation experts and the government of the second Republic became afflicted with treasury looters and certified pen robbers; and some media practitioners found themselves in a consuming dilemma - i.e. they were either in the employ of military apologists or they worked for a government owned newspaper. The result of all these was that again, Nigeria witnessed a short–lived second Republic (four years and two months) and the military struck once more on ‘New Year’s Eve’.

However, in February of 1983, the flagship of the Nigerian press - The Guardian arrived with an open ‘wound’ as its “conscience” which “only truth can heal”. The entry of the guardian into the Nigerian newspaper industry accelerated the recovery of moral authority by the press and encouraged the search for new values and directions. The Newswatch magazine and its team of professionals led by the ebullient journalist – the late (courtesy of a parcel bomb) Dele Giwa entered next. Newswatch reflected careful judgment and great courage; and together with the journalistic achievements of the Guardian, the struggle for democracy began in earnest.

THE MEDIA IN THE NEW DEMOCRATIC REGIME
One is tempted to suggest that many years of military dictatorship in Nigeria made the mass media alert to their function of watchdog of society. This is because within one year into the third republic, the young speaker of the Federal House of Representatives was exposed by The News magazine (an independent magazine) of certificate forgery and perjury. In the biography he submitted when he stood for election, Alhaji Salisu Buhari claimed 36 years of age and to have attended University of Toronto, Canada but he was younger and had never attended university (Ojo, 2006). In an exclusive report entitled ‘The Face of a Liar’ – the magazine disclosed that the speaker was a cheat (The News, 2 August, 1999). At the end of the day, the former speaker admitted that he forged his birth and academic certificates. He was removed as Speaker, tried and convicted of forgery and perjury and sentenced to jail, (Tell, 9 June, 2000).

Immediately after the removal of Speaker Salisu Buhari, another news magazine ‘Tell’ ran a story about the Senate President, Evans Enwerem. He was accused of having a questionable past, which should have prevented him from becoming the third most important man in the country. As the vanguard of the nascent democracy, the mass media discovered financial recklessness on the part of the new Senate President Okadigbo (Tell, 9 August, 16 August and 23 August, 1999). As a result of persistent media focus on him, the Senate set up a probe to investigate the allegations against him. He was removed like his predecessor, having being found guilty of corrupt practices too. Thus, in less than two years of the democratic experiment, Nigerian had three Senate Presidents and two Speakers of the House of Representatives for no other reason than corrupt practices exposed by the mass media. According to Tell magazine:

… from, Evan(s) Enwerem to Chuba Okadigbo and now to Anyim Pius Anyim, the upper legislative house has become a laughing stock over allegations of impropriety (Tell, 7 May 2001).

Allegations of corrupt practices by the media were not limited to the legislature. In November 2000, a member of the House of Representatives, Adams Jangada, Chairman of the House Anticorruption Committee, tendered about 4 million naira (N4m) packed in eight “Ghana-must-go bags”, claiming it was a bribe offered to some members of the house by the trio of the President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the Vice-President, Atiku Abubakar and Governor Peter Odili of Rivers State. The allegation caused some commotion and, for over an hour the law-makers engaged in a free-for-all fight (Tell, 20 November 2000).

Continuing, Ojo (2001) adds that:

In the fight against corrupt practices, the mass media extended its investigations to the local governments and discovered that the performance of local government functionaries seems the opposite of what they were elected to do (p.11).

This led to a restructuring of the local government funding pattern which now tied local government funds from the federation allocation committee to their state governments in the form of joint accounts between states and local governments.

The News Magazine reported exclusively on 4th June (2001) that:
Three governors could soon face serious problems over sharp practices. One of them according to the magazine, from the south-west had been spending money like confetti, buying houses in Florida, United States. The magazine also alleged that over $100 million was found in the personal account of one of the governors from south eastern Nigeria” (p.17).

Indeed, corruption under the new democracy has been “pervasive, open and shameless”, as the Lagos-based Comet newspaper of February 15, 2000 editorialized that:

"In February 2000, the speaker of the Oyo State legislature was declared wanted by the police, having been exposed for defrauding the Oyo State government of 6.5 million naira (about $60,000)” (p.7)

Only recently, the Nigerian media was filled with stories of bank chief executives who were relieved of their positions by the central bank governor and arrested by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) because they corruptly siphoned billions from their various banks. The incidents above support the view of Curran and Gurevitch (2000) who says that:

The media protect the public by preventing those with power from overstepping the mark; the media serve as an agency of information and debate that facilitate the functioning of democracy (p.73).

MSI Africa (2008) believes that:
Nigerian citizens are generally able to access news and information when needed. However, news is now being eclipsed by a preponderance of entertainment reports and programs, especially in the broadcast sector (p.3).

It is common knowledge that the Nigerian state which was founded through colonization and colonialism is highly and deeply complex and pluralistic. Many developments in the Nigerian state during the postcolonial period have added new dimensions to the complexity and pluralism. We can categorize Nigerian corporate society along several lines. There is the dimension of the multiple ethnic nationalities and especially of the rate of transformation of each nationality into the mainstream of the political economy of capitalist development.

Oyovbaire (2001) points out that:
In 1963, the former mid-western region was created, while 1967 saw the beginning of state creation and today "Nigeria has 36 internally complex and pluralistic states, 774 local government areas and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Recently, the country’s pluralism has acquired the additional vocabulary of a six zone structure of south-south, south-east, south-west, north-central, north-west and north-east (p.23).

There are also the complexities and pluralism of religion, religious sensibilities and religious denominationalism. The two major religions of Christianity and Islam, together with their denominational and intra-denominational divisions dominate the religious terrain in Nigeria. They actually compete with a variety of traditional or indigenous religions, so that certain individuals and families can and do transcend this religious terrain.

According to Dare (2000):
The responsibility of the press in exposing systematic abuses has been eroded by ethnic and religious considerations. The newspaper that sets out to expose a corrupt public official may find other newspapers vigorously defending the official for no reason other than [that] the embattled official is from the same ethnic group (or religious landscape) as the proprietor or editor of the sympathetic newspaper. Of course, it could well be that the crusading newspaper [has] picked on its target official in the first instance because the official happens not to be from the same ethnic group (or religious terrain) as the editor or proprietor (p.30)

Oyovbaire (2001) reveals that:
"In 2001, a former Minister of Mines and Power "the late Chief Bola Ige" was accused of illegally depositing the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA)’s monies in a commercial bank at an interest rate lower than the official rate at the time. A public outcry followed, to discover which pocket had benefited from the deal. The mass media
did not consider it worthwhile to go further. Reason, the personality involved was from the south-west, which is the dominant ethnic group in the Nigerian media industry” (p.21).

At the time of the allegation, the affected minister was the Attorney General and Minister of the Federation as he had been moved from the Power and Steel Ministry before his assassination in late December 2001. As Oyovbaire (2001) would summarize, “the Nigerian media is not complex nor is it pluralistic. It is a locational and institutional monopoly of the south-west” (p.3). The media in Nigeria is rooted in the south-western part of the country along the famous Lagos–Ibadan axis. Consequently, the media is generally regarded as the mouthpiece of south-western Nigerians (the Yorubas). In a plural polity like Nigeria such public perception of the media because of their ethnic coloration and chauvinism is not good enough both for democratic sustenance and national integration.

On the efficacy of the mass media generally in Africa and Nigeria in particular, Ekpu (1996) notes that:

The prevailing patterns of media ownership in the Third World represent another dimension of the problems: ‘all too often, the government pulls all the strings, and the functionaries who run the state-owned newspapers, magazines and broadcasting outlets must either behave like pliant, puppets or lose their places to others (p.27).

On the ability of the private media to make any meaningful impact, Ekpu (1996) again notes that the:

Media juggernaut is the privately owned press lack the necessary skill, size and prestige or is too eager to play ball in order to survive in the harsh economic environment of third world publishing (p.27-28).

Commenting on the attitude of some journalists in Nigeria today, Ladepo (2007) calls them a ‘different breed’ altogether; he states that not only have many of their stories been tainted by ‘brown envelopes’ most of the journalists themselves have become hired “political assassins”, helping politicians to annihilate their opponents by publishing rumors, half-truths and outright fabrications. He went further to add that the:

“‘Brown envelope’ stories you read do far less damage than the good stories suppressed because ‘brown envelope’ is in play. Other problems of the mass media world in Nigeria include proprietary and ownership influence plus poor remuneration. All these constitute serious setbacks in the bids of the mass media to serve as the vanguard of the people” (p.17).

It does appear that no proprietor in Nigeria establishes a media house for purely economic reasons. For instance, late Chief M.K.O. Abiola established the Concord group of newspapers to achieve two purposes: first, to boost his political image and, second, to counter the Nigerian Tribune of Chief Awolowo in the south-west. One can easily understand why some of these papers are regarded as the megaphones of their proprietors with very narrow and parochial focus.

Addressing the poor remuneration of media practitioners in Nigeria, Eselebor (2008) declares that:

Poor remuneration of journalists has critically affected the level of application of ethical standards. The search for additional income to make ends meet has made many journalists to compromise their ethical convictions (p.32).

He further adds that:

Some journalists have commercialized news gathering and event coverage, as they are seen hovering around venues of an event even after the event is over, hoping that the public relations person of the organization or the organizer of such event would show some form of gratitude [give them a bribe] (p.34).

Earlier studies confirmed that lack of credibility and the unprofessional conduct of some media organisations could undermine the power of the press (Tettey, 2006; Sakr, 2003). Some journalists in Africa have been accused of unprofessional conduct such as corruption, chasing spectacular headlines and doctoring reports to attract monetary inducements (Tettey, 2008). This phenomenon is popularly known as brown envelope syndrome in Nigeria where some members of press organisations have colluded with government officials principally due to pecuniary motives and the institutionalisation of corruption. The repression of press
freedom has remained widespread even in democratic dispensations and may adversely affect the investment climate in Nigeria.

There is also problem with the equipment available to media practitioners in Nigeria. MSI Africa (2008) confirms that:

The facilities available to the media for gathering, producing, and distributing news are neither modern nor efficient. There is a deficiency in all aspects of the process, and these technological deficiencies affect the quality of production, particularly audio output (p.5).

They insist that:

News reporting suffers from obsolete equipment; inadequate training; trying to satisfy the inclinations and interests of owners; the economic conditions of media organizations; the political environment; and cultural, ethnic, and social considerations (p.5).

The adequacy of training for media practitioners in Nigeria is also a challenge. Eselebor (2008) argues that:

Although there are numerous schools that offer journalism or mass communication degrees, they are antiquated with regard to curricula, staffing, equipment, and technological developments. Consequently, journalism training programmes are obsolete. However, opportunities for training abroad are available, but most journalists who have the opportunity to study in foreign countries do not return to Nigeria with their new expertise and knowledge. Local and international opportunities exist for short-term training, and are accessible to enterprising journalists. The types of courses available include writing business news, covering climate change, health, environment, investigative reporting, and ethics (p.29).

CONCLUSION

The origins of the media however predated the nationalist struggle for independence. Without recourse to a repeat of long history here, we acknowledge the fact that the Nigerian press is a product of evolution from the early Christian missionary establishment in the South of the country. The desire to inculcate reading habit among the Yoruba people caused the Rev. Henry Townsend to start what is generally acknowledged as the first newspaper (Iwe Irohin) in Abeokuta. After this publication, there arose some form of complexity and pluralism in the Nigerian media industry. The press performs the basic roles of informing, educating and entertaining the society at large. However, the Nigerian socio-political environment influences press freedom with adverse implications for education, information, entertainment and surveillance. A theoretical recognition of the press as the “fourth estate” connotes the capacity of the press to monitor the tiers of government (the legislature, the executive and the judiciary). However, the state monitors the press in Nigeria in a manner that negates the principle of the fourth estate. All three types of government (colonial, civilian and military) that have functioned in Nigeria have implemented policies that have actually restrained freedom of the press. Journalists have been harassed, detained, jailed, and repressive laws and decrees enacted. These led to lack of credibility and unprofessional conduct of some media practitioners and organisations. Therefore, it was recommended that press organisations should pursue their professionalism and the ethics of journalism rather than succumb to socio-political forces influencing the quantity and quality of information made available to the public.
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