

AFRICAN INDIGENOUS MASS MEDIA: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Bartholomew Nnaemedo

Department of Religious Studies/Philosophy

Abia State University, Uturu.

nnaemedobartholomew@gmail.com

Abstract

Communication is as essential to human beings as air and water. Human beings cannot but communicate. Even when one decides not to communicate the person is implicitly communicating for such is itself a kind of communication. Beside communication at intrapersonal level, human beings are capable of interpersonal, group and mass communication. Each species of communication has certain means of disseminating it. For intrapersonal, interpersonal and group communication the means can be through body language of all kinds. Likewise, mass communication can take the form of traditional and modern/digital means of communication. Nonetheless, the focus of this research is on African indigenous mass media. It investigates the various media systems used in the traditional African society. It does this study against the backdrop of the digital system in vogue now. So this research attempts to unravel the fate of the African indigenous mass media in the face of technological changes in the world today. It raises questions concerning the possible effects of this African indigenous mass media today vis-à-vis the contemporary urge to abandon the past. The work, thus, argues that though digitalized mass media system is a welcome development, yet, African indigenous mass media still hold sway. Beside informative and archival roles, they also perform entertainment, religio-cultural, socio-political and philosophical functions.

Key Words: Africa, Indigenous, Media, Change, Communication.

Introduction

In the contemporary society there is a craving for what is new and fashionable. Anything to the contrary is often treated with contempt. Then, the basic question is: what is the fate of African indigenous mass media vis-à-vis modern mass media? Does it still have value in this world of change? In other words, the inquiry is on whether African indigenous media still possess any perennial value. Nonetheless, these questions are not without difficulty in relation to proffering reliable answers to them. Rapid growth in modern media technology and stagnancy/retrogression of African indigenous media system go a long way to heighten this difficulty. Whereas modern media keep improving on daily basis African indigenous media assume an opposite direction. Today modern media have transited from analog to digital. On the contrary even what remains of some African indigenous media is left in deplorable condition. When one visits the village squares of some African traditional societies, unarguably one of the ugly sights that confront one are the dilapidated rubbles of some of these indigenous media apparatus. In the face of such gradually dying culture, this work considers it vital to plunge into the fate of African indigenous media vis-à-vis modern media. It attempts to expose what is enduring and fluidic about it. This work likewise investigates the possibility of improving the indigenous media system thereby rescuing it from the gradual extinction. It undertakes this step conscious of the fact that annihilation of such legacy goes deeper than mere loss of African indigenous means of mass communication. Besides, it implies loss of all that the media system represents and propagates. However, the research adopts two approaches: analytical and metaphysical. The methodological option is necessary to give the investigation an appropriate treatment. As an African reality, analytical method cannot adequately unveil the nature of African indigenous media. African worldview is fundamentally metaphysical. Thus, African reality is largely conceived from the pedestal of metaphysics. Further, to ensure clarity of thought, this research is divided into three parts: the introduction, x-ray of perennial values of African indigenous media, evaluation and conclusion. Suffice it then to begin with the clarification of terms which is an essential component of the first segment.

Conceptual clarification

In this perspective three terms are in the fore, namely: communication, mass communication and mass media.

Communication

Any meaningful discussion of mass communication cannot bypass an inquiry into the nature of communication. For that reason, it is good to begin with a brief explanation of the concept communication. Simply put, the term communication is from the Latin word *communicatio*, meaning "an imparting, communicating" (Smith, 128). *Communicatio* is a nominative and a noun of action. It comes from the word *communicatus*: meaning "communicate, discuss, impart, join with" (<http://latin-dictionary.net/search/latin/communicatus>). *Communicatus* is the past participle of *communicare*: which is a Latin verb meaning to share, divide out, communicate, impart, inform, join, unite participate in. Literally, *communicare* means to make common. Likewise, *communicatus* is linked to the Latin noun *communis*, which means "common, public, general" (<https://www.etymonline.com/word/communication>). Smith conceives *communis* as "shared together, common to several or to all, common, general, universal" (128). When communication is taken in its etymological dimension it stands for commonness that is obvious in communal/shared understanding. This of course, correlates with Schramm's (1965) concept of communication as a purposeful effort to establish *commonness* between a source and receiver.

Communication is also defined from academic pedestal. Here, this work considers the functional aspect of this academic approach to communication. It is good to recall equally that this functional approach consists of three species, namely: definitions that accentuate sharing, those that border on intentional influence, and the ones that are inclusive in nature. From the angle of the definitions that stress sharing, communication is defined as "a process of sharing or exchange of ideas, information, knowledge, attitude or feeling among two or more persons through certain signs and symbols" (Hasan, Seema, 3). Admittedly, this view of communication is identical to etymological perspective to communication. In this viewpoint the emphasis is simply on sharing irrespective of the intentions of the communicators. "Therefore, communication can be defined in this perspective as the process of exchanging or sharing information, ideas and feeling between the sender

and the receiver" (Ukaegbu, 1). Judging communication from direction of sharing, the sender and the receiver are on the same horizontal position. What this definition underpins is sender-receiver communication relationship. It does not include feedback. For that reason, defining communication from the point of view of sharing is defective. This is why communication is also defined from intentional perspective. In this respect, the goal of communication is to influence behaviour. What plays out in this realm is persuasion. Horne et al (1965) and Keegan (1980) typify this understanding of communication. For instance, Horne conceives communication as the process through which a person motivates and influences others in order to control and modify their behaviours. Similarly, Keegan sees it as encapsulating all forms of information transfer and persuasion concerning a product (Horne et al and Keegan quoted in MAC III: <http://nouedu.net/courses/introduction-mass-communication>). Nevertheless, intentional perspective to communication is faulty as it is restrictive in nature. It limits communication to conscious level of existence. On the contrary, it is obvious that communication occurs at conscious and unconscious level. Reasoning in this direction Heidegger notes:

Man speaks. We speak when we are awake and we speak in our dreams. We are always speaking, even when we do not utter a single word aloud, but merely listen or read, and even when we are not particularly listening or speaking but are attending to some work or taking a rest. We are continually speaking in one way or another. We speak because speaking is natural to us. It does not first arise out of some special volition. Man is said to have language by nature (27, <http://teachlearn.pagesperso-orange.fr/Heidlang.pdf>).

In this context, speech is understood as communication. So, human beings communicate even when they are not conscious of it. When one communicates unconsciously it is unarguable that such does not entail any intention to influence. What this means is that communication requires a broader definitional approach. This informs the holistic approach to defining communication. This approach involves communication as sharing and communication as intentional influence. Proponents of this concept of communication are Lederman (1977) and Luthans (1985). For instance, Lederman sees communication as a word used to refer to the multitude of activities that people can engage in. Correspondingly, Luthans considers communication as the flow of material information, perception and understanding between various

parts and members of an organization (Lederman and Luthans quoted in MAC III). All said and done, this research adopts inclusive or holistic perspectives to communication. With respect to this dimension therefore, this work defines communication as a conscious or unconscious process of sharing of information between a sender and a receiver in order to simply share information, influence behaviour, or just as a manifestation of the intrinsic nature of human beings as an animal that communicates.

Mass Communication

There are three perspectives to mass communication: as a discipline, mass media and as a process. From the realm of a discipline," mass communication is the term used to describe the academic study of various means by which individuals and entities relay information to large segments of the population all at once through mass media" (Hasan, Seema, 92). This point of view considers mass communication as part of the academic course of study done in tertiary institutions. Further, mass communication can stand for mass media. Sambe (29) and Hasan (92) subscribe to this view. It is in this sense that Sambe views mass communication as a device which enables a group of people working together to transmit information to a large heterogeneous and anonymous audience simultaneously (29). Equally, Hasan defines it as "any mechanical device that multiplies messages and takes it to a large number of people simultaneously" (92). Nonetheless, the flaw of this understanding of mass communication is that it fails to demarcate between mass communication and its medium, which is the mass media. It confuses action (mass communication) with the instrument (mass media) of the action.

Mass communication is also conceived "as a process." In this light, mass communication is an aspect of human communication that aims at distribution of message to a large audience. Thus, it is a "...process whereby mass produced messages are transmitted to large, anonymous and heterogeneous masses of receivers" (Hasan, Seema, 92). Likewise, mass communication is "a means of disseminating information or message to large, anonymous, and scattered heterogeneous masses of receivers who may be far removed from the message sources through the use of sophisticated equipment" (MAC III). It is a process by which information passes from the source (sender) to the receiver, through a thorough gatekeeper and transmitting action of given a channel (Sambe, 29). At this juncture suffice it to indicate that the heterogeneity of the

audience does not negate the homogeneity of the message received. The implication is that in mass communication the same media system sends out the same message to unstipulated recipients. The message can get across to anybody who is using the media system at the particular time and under the same consideration. What this purports is that mass communication audience enjoys anonymity, unlike other forms human communication where the audience is glaringly distinct. In this research, therefore, mass communication is taken as a process and as distinct from mass media. As an alternative, mass communication employ mass media as communication paraphernalia. Hence, Paxson writes: "mass communications are messages: the means of communicating these messages is through the mass media" (3). Application of mass media differentiates mass communication from other forms of human communications. The mass media comprise television, radio, newspaper, news magazine and so on. Apart from the use of media system, other distinguishing features of mass communication are: gatekeeper mechanism, belated feedback, restricted sensory channels and impersonality.

Media/Mass Media

Media are devices used for dissemination of information from one place to another. When the device is capable of disseminating information to a large, heterogeneous audience simultaneously, it is called mass media. Besides, mass media can be divided into three groups comprising traditional, multimedia and digital mass media. Traditional/old mass media refers to medium of communication predating the internet age. They include: books, newspapers, magazines, radio, television and so on. These traditional mass media are still relevant today. On the other hand, "a multimedia production combines various forms of media into a single, cohesive product" (<https://www.lee.k12.nc.us/cms/lib/>). Text, audio, photos or graphics, animation, video, and interactivity are common elements of multimedia. Today the areas where this species of media are used include: presentations, computer-based training courses, computer games, virtual reality applications (<https://www.lee.k12.nc.us/cms/lib/>). Finally, unlike multimedia, digital media is an umbrella name for all electronic media that employs services of digital codes. "Digital Media indicates the use of computer technology to combine various forms of media" (<https://www.lee.k12.nc.us/cms/lib/>). It comes in variety of ways such as tablets, laptops, desktops, cell phones, mp3 players, DVDs, game systems, radios, and television, magnetic media (magnetic stripe).

Besides, it can be used to make presentations, tutorials, simulations, games, web pages and so on.

African indigenous mass media

Africa has various means of communication. Some are at the level of one-to-one communication. Through this medium one can disseminate information from one place to another. Of course, this mode of communication is at the level of interpersonal, intrapersonal and group communication. Instances of one-to-one means of communication are: songs, folk stories, myths, dance, play, hair style, other body languages and so on. However, what is at issue in this work is African indigenous media. And by way of clarification, 'African indigenous media' is a phrase that denotes various means of mass communication in the traditional African setting. It comprises such Igbo indigenous means of mass communication like *mkponala* (cannon shot) *ogene* (metal gong), *ikoro* (large traditional wooden gong), *okomu* (drum), *oja* (flute), *opi* (trumpet) and so on. When one applies any of these media, the information goes beyond target area to heterogeneous audiences who receive the same message simultaneously.

It is necessary to remark that African indigenous media and modern mass media converge and diverge at some points. On area of convergence, both are means of communication. Also, both have the capacity to reach large audiences within a short period of time. Then as pertains to their area of divergence, modern mass media unlike African indigenous media enjoy wider media coverage. Also unlike African indigenous media, modern mass media audiences receive the same message, at the same time without any kind of alteration in terms of quantity and quality of the message. In the case of African indigenous media, the volume thins down as one goes away from their locations. For instance, the loudness of *mkponala* (cannon shot) and *ikoro* (large traditional wooden gong) depreciate the more one moves farther from their locations.

Perennial values of African indigenous mass media

African indigenous mass media possess certain perennial values amidst contemporary thrust for change that often challenges and threatens their continual relevance. In this context, these enduring values are discussed under: informative/archival, entertainment, religio-cultural, socio-political, and philosophical value respectively.

Informative and archival values

In spite of the technological break-through in modern mass media, African indigenous mass media still hold sway among local communities in Africa. The African indigenous media subsist as means of disseminating information in traditional African societies. The indigenous media system continues to enjoy wide patronage among Africans as sources of cultural, political, health and other educational and enlightenment programs for the masses, leading them towards self-actualization and national development. A clearer picture of their roles comes to bare against the backdrop of their significance in the African traditional setting. For instance, with the *ekwe* (small wooden gong) the town crier in the traditional African society announces an upcoming cultural event and alerts the people simultaneously of their involvements. Likewise, with *mkponala* (cannon shot) traditional African society announces the presence of a great personality, the presence of a corpse that deserves full burial rites and so on. Similarly, *ogene* (small metal gong) doubles as a musical instrument, and also has just as "*mkponaala*" a great significance in the conveying of particular information. Through *ogene* one can express feelings of joy or sadness as well as signal a state of danger or safety. The same applies to *okomu* (wooden drum) and *oja* (flute). In the same way traditional African society uses *ikoro* (big wooden gong) to call the attention of large audiences. As a musical instrument it conveys information to the indigenous audiences in a manner that may not be the case using any of the modern media.

Part of the reason African indigenous mass media remains persistently invaluable is the fact that modern media may not be able to reach certain local communities owing to network problems. Some localities are so removed from network areas that communicating with people of such communities is difficult unless with indigenous means of communication. Such communities cannot but rely on the services of village town crier and other local sources for information. Again the enduring value of

African mass media is also thanks to the ability of the media system to speak the language the people can hear and understand. The success of any communication system depends on its ability to reach the target audience. When a communication system fails in this regard it is ineffective; and vice versa. So, because indigenous African mass media use rhythms and symbols that people are conversant with their usage as sources of information are perennial. Human beings are symbolic animals. Humans are so drawn to use of signs and symbols that they find it difficult communication without them. A typical instance here is the often irresistible combination of verbal communication with certain body languages, which even take the audience beyond the domain of verbal discourse. Audience most often rely more for validity and veracity what the sender of the message communicates via gestures and other body languages. Of course, such orientation is in tandem with the assertion that action speaks louder than voice. Action in this case represents the body language of the communicator. *Ipsa facto*, as a society whose worldview is mostly symbolic in nature, African traditional society would naturally respond to any mass media that is symbolic in character. Such command greater appeal as a being's action proceeds from its being: *agere sequitor esse* (as a being is so it acts). Thus, it is *per se nota* (self-evident) that African indigenous mass media are relevant at informational realm; the intimidating presence and achievements of modern mass media notwithstanding.

Besides, African indigenous mass media serve historical and archival purposes. They do not only disseminate information, as well, they serve as repository of information. Then as repertoires of African cultural heritage, they are sources of research in the field of culture and related studies about African society. To this effect, to understand the culture of a traditional African society, an inquirer should also refer to African indigenous media for a better insight. A study of a media system among other things would reveal the history, objectives, significance, scope and limitations of the culture it displays. Another perspective to archival dimension of the indigenous media is that they boost tourism-aperture of African countries. Centres where ancient remains of various countries are preserved are known sources of tourist attractions worldwide. The impact of such centres on the economy of the nations involved is quite evident. An obvious example is Jerusalem. Every year thousands of pilgrims from all over the world flock to Israel to see the birthplace of Jesus and all the relics associated with him. Today it is incontrovertible that tourism

constitutes to a large extent Israel's major source of income. Similar impact of tourism is seen in the case of pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia.

Thus, it is congruous to argue that destruction of African indigenous mass media implies to a certain extent the destruction of a part of African cultural heritage. Consequently, just as every nation likes to preserve and improve on her cultural legacies, even so should African indigenous mass media be preserved as they constitute invaluable African cultural legacy.

Entertainment value

Entertainment is an essential requirement for pulsation to one's stressful daily engagements. Such momentary stoppage is necessary as it avails human beings the opportunity of relaxation and renewal of strength. Just like a machine which requires to be stopped at certain points during its operation, for cooling off and greasing to ensure better and harmonious functioning of its various parts, human beings requires the same maintenance culture. After some stressful work, one needs to rest awhile so as to be better disposed to function more efficiently. Succinctly put, "we all need entertainment to break the monotony of our hectic stressful life and divert our attentions from the troubles and tensions. Such diversions will have a positive impact on our lives" (Hasan, 99). Interestingly, one of the functions of communication is provision of entertainment to audience. It achieves this whether at intrapersonal, interpersonal, group or mass communication level. At each level it employs the specific means proper to that level. At mass communication level it uses mass media. Through these media systems it succeeds in meeting with the requirements of mass communication, which aims at disseminating the same information to large, heterogeneous audiences simultaneously. African indigenous mass media is not a case apart here. They also fulfil entertainment roles of mass communication.

African indigenous mass media are dominant means of entertainment. In traditional African society today they constitute a major source of entertainment at various occasions. They are major sources of amusement in arts, cultural festivals, musical show, dramatic performances by choral and masquerade groups and other musical and theatrical groups. All these activities require the use of African indigenous mass media. They do not only entertain the audiences of their immediate environment. Their effect like that of every other mass media, are felt beyond their locus of operation. Of course, that informs the reason people from distant

neighbourhood can tell the specific events taking place in nearby communities. This is so because, like modern mass media, African indigenous media use limited sensory organs. They use sense of hearing and feeling. Those within the information wavelength of each African mass media get access to them through their sense of feeling and that of hearing. This is quite unlike modern mass media which employ sense of sight, feeling and hearing. But the basic thing this work wants to underscore is that both are limited in their application of sensory perception.

Another perspective to African indigenous mass media entertainment role is their ability to entertain all classes of African society. There is provision for all categories of people in the African traditional society. There is one for men, women youth and children. Those conversant with the culture of each place can decipher when each of this indigenous media system is in operation. For instance, when such a person hears the sound of *ogene* (metal gong), he/she can easily tell whether it is for children displaying masquerade or that of women or men summoning for a meeting or dancing somewhere. The same applies to the sound of *okumu* (small wooden drum). The beating for children's dance differs from that of men and women. Likewise, in the case of *mkponala* (canon shot) the rhythm and number of the shots signals different meanings. There are specific rhythms and number of shots for an important dignitary vis-à-vis ordinary people. A case in point is Nneato community in Umunneochi Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria where important dignitaries are either received or buried with a *twenty-one-gun salute* - that is "twenty-one canon shot." That implies that one can tell the entrance of an important personality into such a nearby village through the nature of canon shot involved. What all these mean is that the message disseminated through African indigenous mass media goes beyond the confines of their immediate environment. *Ipsa facto*, their entertainment content goes beyond their immediate environment. Those who are conversant with them, and are within their wavelength, perceive and appreciate their entertainment content. In this regard it is not uncommon to see people nodding their head in response to the beating of a distant local music. Similarly, it is not unusual to see people jubilate at the sound of *mkponala* (canon shot) depicting the arrival of an august visitor at a distant location. These body languages are indicative of the fact that the entertainment role of African indigenous media is a phenomenon that

transcends their locus of operation. Like modern mass media, the audiences are diverse.

Religio-cultural values

Religion and culture are among the important aspects of human life. A people's culture embodies their religion. At the same time every religion has its culture. This means that both religion and culture com-pen-entrate and re-enforce each other. The implication is that whatever promotes the religion of a place may eventually do the same to their culture; even unconsciously. This is obvious in the case of African indigenous mass media. These media systems among other things are medium of expressing the basic religious and cultural orientations of traditional African society. African traditional society articulates her basic cultural and religious tenets through media notations. This indicates that the meaning expressed by African indigenous mass media go beyond rhythmic representation of the sounds of the media system. Proper understanding of such depends on an understanding of the background of the religion and culture of the society. Such information is a key to the nature of the religion and culture of the place with respect to their various modes of expression of which African indigenous mass media are chief. Through the media religious and cultural lives of African traditional society is celebrated and re-enacted. Ordinarily, the various sound produced by the media system depict and communicate much more than the sound they produce. What this implies in concrete term is that African indigenous media are not mere sound production system. They communicate more information than are captured by the sound they produce. For an uninformed this may sound ridiculous. But for an initiate of the religio-cultural setting, it is an obvious fact. For instance, certain mass media systems are used to announce various religious and cultural events. Their use in the above circumstances is not only indicative of upcoming religio-cultural events. Further, it subsists as part of the identity marks of such religious and cultural practices.

To that extent, they not only announce the said religio-cultural events but as well go further to buttress the culture and religion they express. At this, one can vividly understand the implication of the extinction of these religio-cultural indicators in African society. Of course, their abandonment invariably signals to some degree a negative shift in the religious and cultural practices they display. Correspondingly, such

paradigm shift if not properly and positive adjusted to, may result is the eventual death of the religio-cultural species at issue.

Further, the foregoing argument is underscored by the nature of African worldview which is largely metaphysical (Nnaemedo, 2013, 175). In this worldview there is no sharp dichotomized relationship between the spiritual and the metaphysical realm of existence. Both are so interconnected that in African worldview there is no clear distinction between religion and life. Hence, in African worldview religion is life and vice versa. This implies that every aspect of empirical reality is ontologically scented with religious aroma. To interpret such reality one requires an understanding of certain religious background to it. Similarly, to understand and appositely interpret the religious phenomena of any given African society, analogous interpretation and understanding of the various African indigenous mass media are crucial. What this suggests is that should these media systems be abandoned as happens in the contemporary society, the religio-cultural practices they represent, express and propagate would suffer the same fate. Thus, African indigenous mass media are relevant today even more than they were in the past; and so should be preserved and improved upon.

Socio-political values

African indigenous mass media are means of social and political integration. In Africa, the media have supported and enhanced intra-cultural, inter-cultural and other communication patterns over the years leading to group and national unity. At social level they bring people together through appeal to their psychology. In the world threatened by globalization, there remains an unchangeable and irreducible cultural mark of identity characterizing each human society. African society is not exempt from this. Each section of African traditional society still possesses definite irreducible cultural deposit that sustains them as a people in spite of the phenomenon of globalization with its attendant change-thrust. Part of this is deeply engraved in the African indigenous mass media. It is then, no wonder that amidst civilization and breakthroughs of modern media some Africans in the civilized world are still deeply drawn to musical thrilling of African indigenous media system. Some do so via nodding their head at the sound of such media rendition; the location of the system notwithstanding.

In many African traditional societies indigenous mass media remain a veritable means of social and political integration. This is because the media systems have the ability to reach the people in a language, at a time, place and circumstance quite appropriate to them. Of late many people have laid various complaints against modern mass media. These complaints range from poor network to cyber-crime. Unlike modern media, African indigenous mass media system is trusted because their sources are easily verifiable. They still command followership because they speak the language appropriate to the people using local content. They inspire political affiliation because they employ suitable political sentiments of their audiences in a manner that profoundly touches on their psychology. African indigenous media systems give the people a sense of belonging. To a reasonable extent, they manifest in obvious way the socio-political character of African traditional society as communalistic or what the Igbo people call *umunna*. This informs the reason why in African traditional societies information coming from indigenous media system such town crier receives better attention than the modern media. Such society readily listens to messages from their town crier than the one from radio or television. The radio and television information for some of them are unreliable and unverifiable unlike the indigenous media whose source is known and so can easily and comfortably survive verifiability criterion.

Philosophical values

African indigenous mass media play philosophical role especially in the realm of African ethics and metaphysics. Ethics deals with human acts as against act of man. It concerns itself with how human beings should live and relate with their kinds. Ethics bothers itself with what constitutes the right action for human beings. It encapsulates the do's and the don'ts of every human community. "Therefore, ethics is an aspect of practical philosophy that studies human acts with the intention of determining what constitutes the good life for man" (Nnaemedo 2018, 427). In African ethics, African mass media are means of inculcating the basic societal norms. Most African traditional societies have various indigenous mass media system that helps to inform them about various issues in the society. This basic ethical information is coded in the rhythms of the African indigenous media system. For example, there is a sound that indicates good omen, and there is one that announces impending doom. Some media sounds are meant to warn while others are for

encouragement. Some sounds have double meanings. A clear example is the Igbo song: *nzogbu, nzogbu, enyinmba enyi*...which can be a war song, or a song announcing imminent danger and so an invitation to take precaution. Similarly, in the various public displays of some Igbo prominent masquerades like *Ijere* (biggest Igbo masquerade), the *oja* man (flutter) controls most of the ethical behaviours of the display. He warns the participants about any impending danger and communicates to them the next line of action through the *oja*. *By means of the oja* (flute) he dictates for the *Ijere* and the followers what they ought to do and what they ought not to do. Invariably, this mode of ethical behavioral control goes further to influence the lives of members of the masquerade cult and indeed all who are familiar with the rhythms of the media system.

African indigenous media also play metaphysical role. In this perspective they constitute aperture towards a better understanding of African metaphysics. By African metaphysics this research implies a critical and systematic inquiry into the ultimate nature of African reality. "In metaphysics, physics yearns for its "metal"... Metal here understood as "the bed rock" or "the ultimate substratum". Therefore, metaphysics is the search for the ultimate metal of physics. It is the "metal-of-physics" or aptly put "meta-(L)-physics" (Nnaemedo 2016, 17). Hence, African metaphysics is a rational inquiry into what constitutes the irreducible ontological furniture of Africa's reality. As means of communication, African indigenous mass media help to disseminate information about issues concerning African society. As well, they embody what they express; are associated and interpreted alongside with. For instance, the sound of *mkponala* (canon shot) encapsulates the event it sets to announce, and is understood and interpreted with such event. One can from the rhythms and the number of canon shot displayed tells if the issue at stake is burial ceremony or some other events. Then if it is burial ceremony, one can tell further whether if it is that of a man or woman. Besides, the nature and number of the sound can reveal the influence of the man or woman in question. This is because, as noted earlier, there are different rhythms for diverse occasions and individuals. In the same vein when an *oja* is blown, the act, according to African worldview, is seen to transcend the physical ambience, conveys a message to the members of the African traditional society, and more still to their gods and ancestors. This indicates that there exists no clear divide between the physical world and the spiritual world in African pantheon as the non-human spirits are conceived to be

affected by the impulse of traditional mass media as the living beings themselves who form the physical community

So, one can argue that African realities in way impress on African indigenous mass media certain images similar to that made on a candle wax. The impressions are not readily perceptible to an uninitiated who may read in the African indigenous media a mere symphony of sounds. But for adherent of African cultures these realities are so perceptible that their absences do not necessarily impinge on their understanding of the same. By implication it simply means that neglect of African traditional mass media equals to a certain degree, neglect of certain knowledge derivable thereof.

Evaluation and conclusion

African indigenous mass media have their strengths and weaknesses. The weaknesses are more eloquent when they are placed side by side with modern media. With advancement in modern media technology and transition from analog to digital, one may be tempted to suggest outright abandonment of African indigenous media system. The situation is even more worrisome when one realizes that instead of improving on the indigenous mass media, what the media system receives among some elites is negligence or at most little or no attention. There is at the same time the tendency to disparage the system on the ground of religious fanaticism. Some associate the use of some of the media system as fetish. To that effect in place of working for the improvement of the media they resort to condemnation, outright rejection and possible destruction of the system. To people of the above frame of mind, African indigenous media is but one of those things that still tethers Africans to their *heathenistic* nature.

Nonetheless, this research argues that African indigenous mass media are still relevant to African society. The work sustains that expecting definite parity between African mass media and modern media is wrong. Of course, it regards it as a kind of "category mistake" (Ryle, Gilbert, 16). Granted modern media is of higher wavelength with a host of other advantages, yet, that is not enough to posit that African indigenous media have lost all relevance. The advantages of modern media cannot downplay the cultural values of African indigenous media. After all, modern media is modern because of indigenous media. And again the efficiency of the modern media is only understood and appreciated in

relation to the indigenous. Of course, it amounts to intellectual irresponsibility to try to establish the truth of modern media ignorant of their "historical antecedent..." (Nnaemedo, 2014, 41). This implies that indigenous media are explanatory of the modern media. They offer to modern media, a platform for assessing their performance.

Thus, instead of abandonment, what the African indigenous media require is improvement. For that reason, this work sues for hybridization of African indigenous media with the modern media. Hybridization places the media system on a better pedestal. Here, both the traditional and contemporary African society are accommodated. It makes the old to see in the media system change and continuity. Conversely, it enables the young to see in it change that is unexplainable outside the domain of continuity. For certain, the approach would go further to challenge and encourage both segments of the African society. On the part of the old, it gives them an air of achievement and fulfilment. And for the young, it arouses in them curiosity for innovation; conscious of the fact that no meaningful human achievement goes into extinction at long run - for the labours of the past hero are never in vein.

Conclusion

African indigenous mass media is still relevant today. Their ethical, metaphysical, religio-cultural, socio-political, entertainments, informative and archival roles, are perennial values that cannot be easily swept under the carpet of abandonment. At the same time one cannot also underemphasize their ability to aid rural development and a host of other reasons. This work therefore calls for perfection of these African indigenous mass media via hybridization; not its destruction or abandonment. For it embodies African identity and pride. Opting for its betterment situates and unveils possible area of future technological breakthrough of Africa and shows the way for possible advancement.

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