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## Early Newspapers in the History of Journalism in Nigeria: *Iwe Irohin* (1859-1867)

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### Introduction

Although, printing started as early as 1846 in Nigeria with the setting up of a printing press in Calabar by the Presbyterian mission, the first newspaper did not emerge until 1859 when an Anglican Missionary, Reverend Henry Townsend of the Christian Missionary Society (CMS) established what is now generally agreed to be the first newspaper known as *Iwe Iroyin Fun Awon Ara Egba Ati Yoruba* which literally translated means information newspaper for the Egba-speaking people and the Yorubas.

Reverend Townsend had earlier established a printing press/school at Abeokuta in 1854. This was exactly five years before the inauguration of *Iwe Iroyin*. The printing press and school eventually served as an avenue for the training of qualified printers and subsequently journalists. The paper being the first newspaper has come to be referred to as the *Pace Setter*, *Pioneer*, *Light*, *Pathfinder*, *Harbinger* and so on. Before the arrival of the newspaper and others after it, there was a wide scale of illiteracy among the natives which was a great handicap to the missionaries in their bid to spread the gospel of christianity. One of the ways this problem was tackled was by the establishment of newspapers, and *Iwe Iroyin* was one of them.



Townsend himself said that the newspaper was for the Egba people in particular, and the Yoruba people in general. Although, it packed in 1867 due to the cultural and political crisis between the Egba people and the European settlers, it was able to make tremendous impact and achieve some of the objectives it was set up to achieve. The Publisher and Editor-in-Chief, Rev. Townsend stated clearly that the paper was set up as 'a paper of information for the Egba people of Yoruba, among the collateral means of exciting the intelligence of these people. He went further to explain that; 'I have set on foot a Yoruba newspaper, my objective is to get the people to read, that is, to beget the habit of seeking information by reading, it has been very difficult.'

According to Azikiwe (1964), Nwuneli (1985), Uche (1989), Umechukwu (1997) cited by Alozie (2005: 4-5) *Iwe Irohin* established by Rev. Townsend to:

- i. provide an easy medium of communication between the white missionaries and the Egba-speaking Yorubas;
- ii. provide an easy platform through which the white missionaries, traders and colonial officers can learn and master the Yoruba language for easy communication with the native people;
- iii. further the crusade for evangelism by using it to spread the gospel to the remotest area of Egba land;
- iv. make the people to form the habit of seeking information by reading newspapers;
- v. propagate religion and moral behaviour to the native population with the aim of making the people to behave in line with the teaching of the church;
- vi. demonstrate his love for journalism;
- vii. inform, educate and entertain the people and by so doing bring civilisation to their doorsteps;
- viii. stop inter-ethnic wars, racial discrimination and clandestine slave business; and
- ix. publicise the activities of the church to the masses.



During the relatively short period of its existence, *Iwe Irohin* blossomed and served its purpose of establishment which was to educate the people. As Daramola (2006:12) puts it: *Iwe Irohin* thrived well and is a force to be reckoned with during the time. Records have it that at the advent of the newspaper, there were at least 3,000 people who in CMS schools had learnt to read and the missionaries felt it a duty to provide them with more literature. The newspaper was one of those literatures. The paper was also said to have educated the growing public about the history of politics of the time.

Although, *Iwe Irohin* initially started as a Yoruba language vernacular newspaper, due to growing support and the need for English readership, an English version of the paper was inaugurated in March 1860, thus becoming the first bi-lingual newspaper in Africa. The paper, like other early missionary newspapers in Nigeria contributed immensely to the promotion of literacy and awareness about the importance of newspapers which were later used as a political tool for their struggle and agitation for independence.

The paper which was a 6.5" x 8" size of eight pages, each divided into two columns, was basically concerned with reporting news about the opening of new parishes, arrival and departure of missionaries, ordination of new pastors/preachers, the death of religious leaders and such related news stories. It also carried announcements from the local chiefs, news about the arrival and departure of colonial governors and other top government officials, news about towns and environs as well as commercial news on produce and their prices. Initially, it did not publish any advertisement and also avoided all kinds of advertisements related to immorality and alcohol. The paper, according to Coker (1968) also published news items on ordinations, baptisms, confirmation and other related religious matters.

According to Daramola (ibid.:12-13):

The paper's news contents, however, broadened after sometime to include subjects other than church matters such as stories about Abeokuta and its environs, commercial news about produce prices, announcement from local chiefs and the arrival and departure of



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colonial governors. The newspaper served as a forerunner for the first Yoruba Bible which was published in 1862. News from surrounding towns as well as Lagos colony began to feature later. Announcements from local chiefs, firms and government of Lagos colony were also carried.

Although, *Iwe Irohin* played the pioneer role in the history of newspapers in Nigeria, it also faced the teething problems usually associated with such an important role. These problems notwithstanding, the paper managed to survive from 1859 when it was established to 1867 when it folded up.

Some of the reasons adduced for its survival by Alozie (ibid.) include the inspiration the people received from the abolitionist movement which was on during the period. This movement which existed at that time encouraged natives and whites to be educated and come together to challenge the colonial masters and assert their own rights as citizens. The role played by the newspaper on the Reparation Scheme that was also known as the American-Negro Immigrants Scheme was another factor. The paper was strongly against the scheme which was supposed to be a platform for repatriating the negroes back to Africa their homeland. It is strongly believed that the activities of the paper led to its cancellation. The fact that Rev. Townsend put in his best into the paper also helped a lot because of his love and interest for journalism combined his pastoral work and journalism also helped. He actually derived joy in nursing the paper and thus contributed a lot to the success recorded by the paper.

Some of the modest achievements that can be credited to the paper include contributing immensely towards the abolition of the American-Negro Immigrants Scheme mentioned earlier on. The criticism of the scheme by the newspaper raised the awareness of the people about its disadvantage and it eventually led to its being done away with. The newspaper proprietor could also be said to be the first to establish formal journalism school in Nigeria. A lot of the graduates from Henry Townsend's journalism school established in 1854 were used as the initial staff of the newspaper. They learnt the rules of



journalism on the job and later served as a base to recruit journalists and other professionals for the newspapers that were established later.

The paper can also be credited with the achievement of being the first newspaper in Nigeria and being the first bi-lingual newspaper in Africa. It therefore showed the way, and acted as an impetus for the establishment of other newspapers. *Iwe-Irohin* was no doubt the first radical newspaper in Nigeria because it continuously criticised the colonial government. According to Omu (1978), the publisher's chief weapon in his ambitious political propaganda and shrewd manoeuvring for power in Egbaland was *Iwe Irohin*. He was reported by the then colonial governor, H. S. Freeman for encouraging and exacerbating the Egba hostility towards the Lagos government in the post-cession period. The CMS authorities were then forced to caution Reverend Henry Townsend for this and other criticisms against the colonial government. He was subsequently forced to change his style and became less critical of the colonial government. The fact, however, remains that the paper started radicalism in the history of Nigeria's journalism.

The paper was noted for its condemnation of slave trade and other social vices and it advocated for morality and continuous humanism. It was strongly against human trafficking and was very vehement in its criticism of this social malaise. It is therefore on record that *Iwe Irohin* was in the forefront of attacking slave trade which clandestinely thrived in Nigeria until 1861 when Lagos was ceded to the British crown.

Infact, one of the objectives of the paper which it achieved and can be regarded as a major achievement was the spread of the gospel. Apart from the fact that it served as a fore runner for the first Yoruba Bible which was published in 1862, it was also an instrument of spreading the gospel. It initially published mainly religious news and was used for announcing the arrival and departure of priests/pastors and other religious activities. The printing press also assisted in printing religious tracks, bulletins and other religious publications for the purpose of spreading the gospel. *Iwe Irohin* can be credited with spreading the gospel of Christ in Abeokuta, Ibadan, Lagos, Badagry and other parts of the country.

It could also be argued that it contributed a lot in spreading western education and in the process achieved one of the functions of press which is education. Many people were said to have learnt how to read and write so that they would be able to read the news paper and others that followed it. Although, some people have stated that its readership was about 3,000, this is debatable. The fact is that if at least 3,000 people in CMS schools had learnt to read and write at the time *Iwe Irohin* started publication, according to Azikiwe (1964), then the readership of the paper must have been far more than that number before it folded up. We can not, therefore, be able to say that the exact readership of the paper was 3,000, as there was no readership survey at that time.

The paper which was published fortnightly, sold for 120 cowries or three strings or 'Ogofa' the equivalent of a penny, it carried no pictures and generally lacked typographical pluralism, it thus folded up five years later in 1867. A lot of reasons can be advanced for its failure. The major reason said Daramola (ibid. 14-15) was that:

The paper had problems with the Egbas for its inconsistency during Egba-Ibadan war. They lost confidence in the paper and the printing press. The paper no longer enjoyed advertisement patronage, hence the paper's revenue dwindled. It was only making money from sales and book binding. Some time in 1867 there was an uprising in Abeokuta, which led to the expulsion of Europeans, looting of missionary buildings and properties among others. The Egba soldiers protested against British policy on the annexation of Lagos. Its effect on Abeokuta claims over boundary adjustment between her and Lagos was another case in point. In the ensuing battle the mob pounced on Henry Townsend's printing press and got it burnt.

One other reason which has been advanced for the demise of the paper was the introduction of Islamic religion in Abeokuta and the whole of Egbaland. This affected readership as some new Muslim converts saw the paper as a Christian organ used to propagate the tenets of Christianity.



One thing, however, that the paper will be remembered for, is the fact that it shunned and rejected negative stories, such as reports on pornography, immoral behaviour, crime and promotion of alcohol. Rather, it published up-to-date news on schedules of arrival and departure of cargoes and vessels (ships) to and from European countries (Alozie, 2005).

### **The Anglo African Press (1863-1865)**

Before *Iwe Irohin* folded up in 1867, another newspaper *Anglo African* had been established. The owner of the newspaper Robert Campbell had earlier set up a printing press in 1862 in Lagos to train potential printers and pressmen. The paper eventually started publication on June 6, 1863 at the Oil Mill Street in Lagos. Robert Campbell, the publisher and editor, was a teacher and printer. Unlike *Iwe Irohin*, the paper was not bi-lingual; it was published in English language only.

Robert Campbell was a British Jamaican trader and was born in Kingston, Jamaica of a Mulatto mother and a Scottish father. Campbell had earlier worked as an apprentice printer for five years before being admitted into a teacher training college where he trained as a teacher for two years. The publisher, who had earlier suffered racial discrimination in the United States, worked as a compositor for two years and later joined the institute of coloured youth at Philadelphia, USA as a teacher. He joined the Freed Aid Society between 1859 and 1860 and was brought to Nigeria as part of the group to resettle the slaves coming from England (Daramola, *ibid.*).

This newspaper is generally regarded as the first non missionary newspaper in the country and was also considered as the first paper that attempted at real news papering in the country. Its size was 2"x 8½" and was published weekly for a cover price of three pence. Its content was mainly stories culled from books, magazines, foreign newspapers, novels, and other sources. The initial circulation was between 30 and 50 copies weekly principally because of lack of funds.

The first futile attempt at censorship must have started with the attempt to scuttle the establishment of the paper. Mr. Freeman, who was the colonial governor of the colony at the time, was not happy with the emergence of the paper. He tried to stop it by requesting that the colonial office in London approve a tax to be imposed on any new newspaper that is to be established. The request was somehow not approved. It must, however, be noted that *Anglo African* became a pro government newspaper and enjoyed abundant government patronage.

In terms of coverage, the newspaper was significantly different from *Iwe Irohin*. While *Iwe Irohin* concentrated on Abeokuta and its environs, the *Anglo African* focused on both national and international issues and stands conspicuously as the first Nigerian newspaper to give consistent coverage to foreign news on its pages. The paper published a lot of commercial or business interest stories, such as activities in the ports, the arrival and departure of ships to and from Lagos to Europe, business activities among the white merchants and local commercial activities in the hinterland (Alozie, *ibid.*).

According to Obazee and Ogbiti (2004: 55), Campbell's aim of publishing the *Anglo African* was essentially to exploit to the fullest the growing interest in Western education and enlightenment in Lagos and its environs in the 1850s by providing cheap and accessible materials, which would educate, inform and entertain its potential readers. The newspaper was, therefore, a source of inspiration to the movement which began in the 1880s.

One of the factors that inspired Campbell into starting the *Anglo African* was no doubt the fact that *Iwe Irohin* which had earlier been established in Abeokuta in 1859 was doing very well and was attracting more and more readership. Campbell would have reasoned that a newspaper would do better in Lagos which had a larger population, more metropolitan, more commercial and with more educated people than Abeokuta. The establishment of the *Anglo African*, therefore, brought competition and some kind of rivalry into the Nigerian newspaper industry. The disagreement between the two early newspapers could be largely attributed to the disagreement between



the two proprietors on certain fundamental issues. While the *Anglo African* was openly pro government, *Iwe Irohin* consistently challenged and criticised some policies of the colonial government. In the long run this became responsible for the short period the *Anglo African* existed because the people then saw it as supporting the government and not championing their cause and withdrew their patronage. They favoured *Iwe Irohin* which they saw as championing their cause.

One thing that could be said favoured the establishment of the *Anglo African* at that time was the fact that Campbell was friendly with Henry Townsend. He had earlier assisted Townsend to organise the printing and publishing of his paper. In the process, he became familiar with the workers and was able to attract some of them to start his own, having ordered a printing machine from England.

It is, however, surprising that *Anglo African* with all the support it had from the government did not last for up to three years. It folded up in 1865, about two and a half years after it started publication. One of the main reasons that has been advanced for this is the fact that the people at the time favoured a radical newspaper that was not on the side of the government which they considered exploitative and oppressive. *Anglo African*, therefore, lost readership and the generous official advertisements from the government alone could not sustain it.

### **Lagos Times and Gold Coast Advertiser (1880 – 1883)**

Despite the fact that Duyile (1979) has argued that it took another twenty years after the demise of *Iwe Irohin* before another newspaper was published in Nigeria, the argument has been faulted by available facts. His point that no other newspaper appeared in Nigeria till 1880, when the *Lagos Times* started does not hold water. Azikiwe (1964) specifically stated that the second newspaper emerged just few years after *Iwe Irohin* and that was the *Anglo African*. Actually, Richard Olamilege Beale Blaize, the publisher of the *Lagos Times* was an associate and contemporary of Robert Campbell the publisher of the second newspaper *Anglo African*. This lends more credence to the fact that the *Anglo African* was the second newspaper after the publication of *Iwe Irohin* in 1859.

According to Daramola (ibid.), Blaize was a printer by profession and a Yoruba by birth. He was of a rich parentage and his father was a rich and successful merchant in Freetown at that time. Richard Beale Blaize came to Nigeria in 1862 at the age of 17 and was a printer with Robert Campbell, the publisher of *Anglo African*. This he did until 1875 when he established his own printing press called Caxton Printing Press. The fact that Blaize worked with Campbell at the time *Anglo African* was published also supports the point that *Anglo African* existed during the period. Richard Blaize later worked with the government press in Lagos and served as a head printer.

Blaize, who was born on November 22, 1845 in Freetown, served as an apprentice printer and later worked in the public service in Sierra Leone before coming to Nigeria. He invested his savings in a printing press and the business grew and prospered. Ten years into the business, he became so rich that the colonial government estimated his wealth at about £150,000, which was quite some substantial amount of money at that time. He was certainly one of the richest men at the time. When he was about to establish the newspaper, he was quoted to have said that 'the newspaper was not inspired by returns but rather a philanthropic effort'. However, the death of the newspaper was traced to lack of profit (Daramola, ibid). Before they disappeared from the newsstand on October 24, 1883, *Lagos Times* and *Gold Coast Advertiser* made some remarkable contributions to the history of newspaper development in Nigeria. The papers could be said to have flagged off the beginning of revolutionary press in Nigeria. They contributed significantly to the nationalist movement during the period and were able to highlight the grievances of Nigerians against the colonial government. Apart from carrying out the traditional functions of the press which involves informing, educating and entertaining the populace, they were able to point out the lapses and weaknesses of the colonial administration.

The newspapers were in the forefront of the agitation to include natives in the House of Representatives then dominated entirely by whites. As Alczis (ibid) put it:



It is on record that the newspaper as far back as the time agitated for the inclusion of natives in the House of Representatives dominated entirely by whites. It is widely believed in media and historical circles that the inclusion of some Lagos indigenes later in the House of Representatives was as a result of the strong campaigns started by the newspaper.

They also used the editorials and features columns to agitate against the governor's extravagant spendings, in some cases money was spent without due approval by the House of Representatives. They also criticised the heavy taxation system and the very poor quality of education provided for the local people. Apart from these, the papers used their pages to publish views on other burning issues at that time. They were published fortnightly and sold for six pence. Since Blaize parents were Nigerians, father, John Blaize from Oyo State and mother, Maria Blaize from Abeokuta, the papers could be said to be the first Nigerian-owned newspapers. The areas which the papers viewed vigorously, according to Obazee and Ogbiti (2004:57) are:

- i. agitation for representation in government. At this time, the colony of Lagos had no representation in Accra where the governor lived. Power was held by the executive and legislative councils in Accra. By 1836, Lagos had her own legislative council consisting of the governor and some officials, all Europeans. The situation was not satisfactory to the natives and to the *Lagos Times* and *Gold Coast Advertiser*. The papers criticised the situation, contending that the government did not represent the people in any form or shape;
- ii. advocating certain amount of internal self-government. In the issue of March 9, 1881, one of the papers expressed disappointment that sixteen years after the House of Commons- select committee's recommendation in respect of self-government, no step was taken to implement the decision. In the words of the newspaper, 'we are not clamouring for immediate independence but it should always be borne in mind that the present order of things will not last forever. A time will come when British colony on the West coast would be left to regulate their internal affairs'; and

- iii. on the issues of government expenditure, the paper argued that it would not be in the interest of the people for the government to spend the people's money without their consent. It also criticised government expenditure without the approval of the representatives of those who raised the money by direct taxation.

The paper's motto was 'Be just and fear not.'

### **The Lagos Weekly Record (1891 – 1930)**

Before the emergence of *The Lagos Weekly Record* in 1891, there was the *Lagos Observer* which was established by Mr. J. B. Benjamin, an African, who was at one time convicted for libel by the colonial government. This paper, *Lagos Observer*, is the fourth Nigerian newspaper. *Iwe Irohin*, *Anglo African*, *The Lagos Times* and *Gold Coast Advertiser* followed in that order. However, if the *Lagos Times* and *Gold Coast Advertiser* are regarded as separate papers although published by the same person, Richard Blaize, then the *Lagos Observer* would be the fifth. Although not very successful, records have it that the first edition of the *Lagos Observer* was published on February 15 of 1882, while the last edition came out on December 29, 1888.

There were also *The Eagle* and *Lagos Critic* published by Owen Macaulay, an African which were in circulation from March 31, 1888. The monthly papers which had their office at Odunlami Street in Lagos were sold for seven pence per copy. The two publications were combined probably like the *Lagos Times* and *Gold Coast Advertiser*. These papers were closely followed by *The Mirror* published also by an African, Adolphus Marke. The paper lasted from December 17, 1887 to November 17, 1888 and was sold for three pence per copy. Although it was short lived, yet its place in the history of the Nigerian press cannot be ignored.

*The Lagos Weekly Record* which commenced publication in 1891 was owned by a prominent and well known writer, John Payne Jackson. It is important to note that the paper initially started publication as *Weekly Times* in 1886 and was then owned by Richard Beale Blaize, but was edited by John Payne Jackson. Jackson, who was Blaize's



bookkeeper at *The Lagos Times* and *Gold Coast Advertiser* lost the job because of his poor accounting knowledge and the love for alcohol. He managed the paper for about three months, but could not prepare a statement of account so that his publisher's share fixed at £5 a month could be determined. This infuriated Blaize his boss who had to fire him (Omu, 1978:32).

Although a good editor, Jackson was a very poor manager. The fact that he could not manage the paper well led to its temporary closure. Richard Blaize however resumed publication of the paper on December 6, 1890 with the same name *Lagos Times*. To challenge him, Jackson himself started a paper with the name *The Weekly Times*. This led to Blaize heading to court to contest the ownership of the newspaper's title. Not prepared for a legal battle, Jackson had to drop the title and start another paper known as the *Lagos Weekly Record*.

With the assistance of friends and the subsidy of £150 a year paid him by the colonial government, he was able to run the newspaper from 1892 to 1900. According to Daramola (ibid: 25) the popularity of the paper earned it advertisements of about £350 in 1895 and £400 five years later. When Governor Macgregor took over from J. T. Carter who had earlier left, he abolished the subsidy of £150 a year. It was at this point that Jackson changed gear from a pro-government newspaper and became anti-government. He became a very strong critic of the government and practised what was regarded as opposition journalism. *The Lagos Weekly Record* occupies a prominent place in the history of journalism in Nigeria for mainly two reasons. One is that it came to be one of the most radical papers in Nigeria at that time and the other was that it lasted longer than all other newspapers that existed during the period.

Born to a Liberian family in Cape Palmas, in Liberia, John Payne Jackson was an emigrant from Maryland in the United States of America to Liberia. He attended The Training Institute in the Cavalia River in Cape Palmas where he showed interest in the liberal arts and printing. Jackson was a widely travelled man who visited Gold Coast and Lagos in the 1860s. He was more of a business man but had to abandon business to join the *Lagos Times* owned by Richard Blaize as a book keeper in 1882.

The radicalism of *The Lagos Weekly Record* stems from the fact that its owner and editor, John Payne Jackson was himself an unrepentant radical and critic of the colonial government. He was a prominent and recognised leader in newspaper and nationalist activities from 1890 to 1915. He was also regarded as the most outstanding journalist in the whole of West Africa then. In the words of Omu (1978) cited by Obazee and Ogbiti (ibid: 59-60):

There is no doubt that his career most exemplified the important role played by the newspaper in the history of Nigeria and West Africa ... in protest politics, he was an acknowledged force, inspiring and directing movement of agitation. He was the author of most of the petitions which the people of Lagos forwarded to the local and imperial authorities during his life time. His newspaper, *The Lagos Weekly Record* was not only the most successful among its contemporaries but also an arsenal of ideas from which opponents of the government took their weapons.

After the death of John Payne Jackson, his son, Thomas Haratio Jackson took over the editorship and management of the *Lagos Weekly Record*. Born in 1879, the young Jackson was educated in Sierra Leone with special interest in classics and reading. He was initially employed by Elder Dempster Agencies and later by Railway Department after he left school in 1898. He, however, decided to go into private business in 1904. His exit from the public service, Railway department, specifically, was connected with the strike he led in the protest against a new form of agreement for staff contracts that discriminated against African employees. While working in the public service, he took time off to assist his father in the *Lagos Weekly Record* and was a contributor to the *Liberian Recorder* of Monrovia, Liberia.

The period of tutelage with his father prepared him for the great task ahead. The exposure also gave him some knowledge of newspaper management and crusading journalism that characterised the era. Keeping up the family tradition of writing public petitions and organisation of protests, Haratio Jackson joined force with Herbert



Macaulay to form the Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP). He was in fact, the secretary of the party for a long period.

Haratio Jackson, who built up a reputation as a well known prolific writer made use of complex words and quotation in his write-ups. He used the newspaper, *Lagos Weekly Record* to criticise imperialism and even physically resisted it by organising and leading protests. The newspaper was also used to challenge the validity of British educational system of just memorising scripts and providing literary education and opted for industrial or technical education. It advocated training skills and called for the establishment of a West African University. It was also against the adoption of European culture by Africans and is credited to have first used the words 'cultural imperialism' (Obazee and Ogbiti, *ibid.*).

The Jacksons (father and son) played very important roles in the history of journalism in Nigeria. Their roles were severally acknowledged by the late Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe. They were actually mentors to Nnamdi Azikiwe, generally referred to as 'Zik of Africa'. In appreciation of their roles in influencing him in journalism practice and the development of journalism in Africa, Zik named the first school of journalism in Nigeria established at the University of Nigeria Nsukka in 1960 after them. The school of journalism which is presently the department of Mass Communication, University of Nigeria, Nsukka is still referred to as 'Jackson School of Journalism'.

Apart from the *Lagos Weekly Record*, some other papers that were established during the period are *Nigerian Times*, established by J. B. Davis and Sapara Williams, the first Nigerian lawyer in 1910. The *Lagos Standard* established by George A. Willraus and S. H. Pearce in 1894 closed down in 1920, and *The Nigerian Chronicle* established by Christopher Johnson in 1900 which lasted till 1915. Others are the *Lagos Echo*, established in Lagos, printed and published by P. P. Chris Mason in 1891 and became defunct in 1899, *The Wasp*, established by Sydney George in 1900 and lasted from March to August that year, and *The Nigerian Pioneer*; established by Sir Akintoye

Ajasa in 1914 and lasted till 1936 (Obazee and Ogbiti, *ibid.*). Daramola (*ibid.*) is, however, of the view that *The Nigerian Pioneer* existed from 1914 to 1937 and is believed to have been edited by an English lawyer called Irving.

### **The African Messenger (1921 – 1925) and The Nigerian Daily Times (1926 –2004)**

*The African Messenger* commenced publishing on March 10, 1921 with its editorial office located at 24 Odunlami Street Lagos; but it was printed at the Awoboh press located at Pearse Square, Olowogbowo, Lagos. The paper was established by a well respected personality Ernest Sisei Ikoli and was a weekly newspaper with the cover price of six pence, published by the Nigerian Printing and Publishing Company owned by the paper's proprietor. Publication was interrupted for some time in 1925 and it later transformed in 1926 into *The Nigerian Daily Times*. The new owner who bought the paper for five hundred pounds, The Lagos Chamber of Commerce renamed it *The Nigerian Daily Times*.

The management of the paper appointed Ikoli as editor and director on a salary of three hundred pounds per annum. Born in Brass (presently Bayelsa State) in 1893, he attended the Bonny Primary School and Kings College, Lagos. Although, an outstanding student, who later became a prefect and assistant master in science and mathematics at Kings College, he resigned from his teaching job and joined the *Lagos Weekly Record* as an assistant editor because of a disagreement with the school authorities in 1919. He worked with Haratio Jackson for three years.

After working as editor of the *Daily Times* for two years, Ikoli resigned to set up another newspaper known as the *Nigerian Daily Mail*, which was a sort of a rival. The paper lasted for barely one year and this led to Ikoli joining the *Nigeria Daily Telegram* owned by H. Antus Williams. He later worked as editor of the *Daily Service* which was run by the Nigerian Youth Movement before his death in 1960.



Other early newspapers include *The Spectator*; published by Dr Akinwande Savage as a weekly paper in 1923. It started precisely on May 19, 1923. Dr Savage had earlier in association with his friend J. E. Casely Hayford contributed articles to the *Gold Coast Leader* in Ghana. When he came to Nigeria, he contributed articles to *The Standard* before establishing *The Spectator* in 1923. It only lasted until December 26, 1930. Another newspaper that was established by S.H. Braithwaite during the period was the *Nigerian Advocate*. It was started in August 1, 1923 and was a direct opposite to *The Spectator* in terms of radicalism.

*Lagos Daily News* is widely believed to be the first daily newspaper in Nigeria. Published by Mr Victor Bababoni, it started as a tiny daily newsheet and the proprietor ostensibly called it the first 'West African Daily' but it only survived for 67 days. The paper, including the Tanimola Printing Plant were sold to Herbert Macaulay and Dr J. Akinlade Caulcrick. This did not, however, terminate Bababoni's interest in journalism as he continued to contribute articles to other papers.

One of the new owners, Herbert Macauley turned the newspaper into one of the most radical newspapers in Nigeria. He published any article he considered of public interest whether others see it as libelous or not. Apart from his medium, he contributed articles to virtually all the newspapers that were circulating in Lagos at that time. He got easily angry with any editor who considered his article too radical and libelous. He even went the extra length to circulate such articles in form of pamphlets. His radical articles earned him the title 'father of Nigeria nationalism'. He successfully used the paper to promote the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), a party he formed.

Richard Barrow on June 1, 1926 established *The Daily Times* to fill the gap of a daily newspaper which Mr. Victor Bababoni unsuccessfully tried to fill with the *Lagos Daily News*. One of the main reasons for the setting up of the paper was the fact that the colonial government raised the price of the bulletin containing cabled messages from Reuters Agency and wireless news broadcast from £2 to £4 or £5, which were distributed to the European commercial

community and other subscribers. Some people now decided to counter the domination by setting up the paper. Other reasons include the confrontational posture of the *Weekly Record* published by Thomas Haratio Jackson and the belligerent, propagandist and opposition of the Herbert Marcauley's published *Lagos News*. The advent of the *Daily Times* brought about one of the most successful publishing companies in Nigeria, the Nigerian Printing and Publishing Company Limited. The first editor was the well known journalist, Ernest Sessie Ikoli. The paper had to take over the assets of Ikoli's *Messenger*. The original name of the newspaper was *Nigerian Daily Times*.

According to Daramola (ibid:54):

Later, the paper became a tabloid and all the attractive features of this format sent the circulation soaring higher than that of any other newspaper before the take over by *The Mirror*; *The Daily Times* sold 7,000 copies in 1948, circulation was 10,000 copies daily. Three years later in 1957, 80,000; 1959, 96,000, 1969, 120,000 and in 1971, 120,000. By 1985, *The Daily Times* had almost hit the million mark.

In 1935, the publishers of the *West African Review* in Liverpool bought over the *Nigerian Daily Times*, and in 1947, the *London Daily Mirror* group took over the *Daily Times* and dropped 'Nigerian' from the flag and it was known just as *Daily Times*.

The publishing company had the largest collection of trained journalists and embarked on serious staff development programmes for its staff. To realise this, the paper established a training institute which was known as Times Journalism Institute in Lagos. The paper became the largest and most popular newspaper in the country and probably in Africa until about 2004 when it was closed mainly due to government interference since it was taken over by the government. The paper had many titles before its demise.

Other early newspapers in Nigeria include *The Daily Service* established in 1933 as a weekly paper. It was first edited by Ernest Ikoli, a one time editor of *The Telegraph* after he left the *Daily Times*. *The Nigerian Tribune* was established in 1949 by Chief Obafemi



Awolowo, and in 1953 *The Daily Service* combined with the *Nigerian Tribune* to form the Amalgamated Press which started to publish some provincial newspapers in 1958. These include the *Midwest Echo* (Benin), the *Middle Belt Herald* (Jos) *The Northern Star* (Kano) and *The Eastern Observer* (Onitsha).

The Allied News Limited which is a merger of the Amalgamated Press comprising *The Service*, the *Nigerian Tribune* and the provincial papers was later formed. The result was that in 1959, the *Sunday Express* which is a weekly was launched. In 1962, a new management took over and changed the *Daily Service* to the *Daily Express* but the *Sunday* and *Daily Express* eventually went out of circulation in 1965.

*The Comet*, established by Duse Mohammed Ali in 1933 as an independent weekly paper is another early newspaper. Mr Ali had earlier edited *African Times* and *Orient Review* magazine in London. He tried to revive them in Nigeria without much success. The Zik press later bought over *The Comet* and turned it into a daily newspaper.

Another paper, *The Nigerian Eastern Mail* was established by James Vivian Clinton in the Eastern part of Nigeria, specifically, Calabar in 1935. *The Nigerian Eastern Mail* tried to thrive until 1937 when the *West African Pilot* was launched by Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, Zik of Africa. Zik's paper was clearly anti-British and there was no pretence about this. It was vibrant and became one of the most radical papers in the history of news papering in Nigeria. In 1951, Clinton changed the *Nigerian Eastern Mail* to a daily known as *Nigerian Daily Record* and he also published a vernacular newspaper know as *Obodom Edem Utin* (Voice of the East). The newspapers died in 1952 due to the ill health of Clinton, the proprietor. He eventually died at the age of 71 on Friday 18, May 1973.

As earlier stated, the *West African Pilot* was launched in November 12, 1937 by Dr Nnamdi Azikewe through the Zik Press Limited. Zik had earlier worked as editor of the *African Morning Post* in Ghana from 1935 to 1937 after graduating in political science and anthropology in the United States. He was at a time jailed with a colleague, Isaac W. Johnson for publishing radical articles in the paper. On appeal, it was

squashed and he returned to Nigeria to start the *West African Pilot*. The same year he started the paper, his second book, *Renascent African* was published. *Liberia in World Politics*, his first book had earlier been published in 1934.

Chief Obafemi Awolowo's comment about the paper, according to Coker (1968:39) is as follows:

Things were happening which aroused the resentment and indignation of Nigerians...as there was no effective vehicle for vigorous ventilation of suppressed grievances, a journalistic vacuum which Dr. Azikiwe very clearly filled when he returned to the country in 1937 was to establish the *West African Pilot* which whatever its literary defects was; a fire-heating paper of the highest ever.

The *West African Pilot* and *The Comet* were banned on July 7, 1947 for attacks on the colonial government. Ofor (2004) said that the paper also acted as a bridge between the colonial and post-independence press and that it politicised Nigerians, making them conscious of their rights. It triggered off nationalists consciousness, which later culminated in the struggle for independence. The *West African Pilot* was distinct and marked out Azikiwe as the greatest success story of the Nigerian press before independence. The arrival of the paper marked the beginning of newspaper chain in Nigeria. It comprises the *Eastern Nigerian Guardian* (1943) and the *Southern Nigerian Defender* in Warri. *The Comet* was brought over and transferred to Kano which was later followed by *Northern Advocate* in Jos (Ibrahim, 2003: 168).

This is how Umechukwu (1997) puts it:

Zik's newspaper industries spread across Port Harcourt, Onitsha, Owerri, and Enugu. Notable among the papers were the *Eastern Sentinel* and the *Eastern Guardian*. These newspapers were used to create awareness among the people of Nigeria. Hence, his *West African Pilot* had specifically this as its motto: 'show the light and the people will find the way'.



Apart from the *West African Pilot* and the other newspapers in the chain of Zik's newspapers, the *Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo* newspaper was published by the colonial administration in the north and it started on January 1, 1939. There was also the *Nigerian Tribune* earlier mentioned published by Chief Obafemi Awolowo from 16, November 1949 till date. This was preceded by *Iroyin Yoruba* in 1945. It was edited by Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola.

Some of the characteristics of the early newspapers include the fact that they were mainly periodicals and their proprietors were in most cases their editors. Most of the proprietors were Sierra Leoneans and descendants of Sierra Leoneans. Papers like *Iwe Irohin*, the *Nigerian Pioneer*, the *African Messengers* were, however, exceptions. However, proprietorship changed later with the emergence of Nigerian proprietors. A major characteristic however is that most of the papers did not survive for a long period of time.

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