



# Indigenous African Language Media

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## Practices and Processes

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*Edited by*

Phillip Mpofu · Israel Ayinla Fadipe ·  
Thulani Tshabangu

palgrave  
macmillan

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## FOREWORD BY UFUOMA AKPOJIVI

### INDIGENOUS AFRICAN MEDIA: A BASE FOR DECOLONISATION FOREWORD

The last five to ten years have witnessed a renewed call for decolonisation within the African continent. These calls have sparked conversations around decolonisation across the continent in universities, spaces, curricula, museums, etc., and escalated research in the field. (see Mbembe, 2015; Tuitt & Stewart, 2021). The importance of decolonisation within the African continent cannot be overemphasised, as inherent colonial legacies have continued in postcolonial African states. Quijano (2000) argued that the colonial structures of power, knowledge and being have continued to exist in postcolonial states, and this Fanon (1961) attributed to the unwillingness of African leaders to transform their nations as these leaders saw their roles as ‘vocation is not to transform the nation but prosaically serve as a conveyor belt for capitalism’.

Given the salient functions of the mass media in society, i.e. in preserving cultural values and information, educating and entertaining the public, the media is a crucial aspect of this colonality having a broader impact on society, knowledge production and identity creation. Hall (1977) argues that the media are cultural products and, based on their inherent role in society, have continued to promote this colonality. Historically, the so-called modern-day mass media were colonial creations as the colonialists established them to disseminate colonial messages.

Thus, years after independence, these media houses continued to broadcast in colonial languages of English, French and Portuguese and imbibe western canons and practices. Consequently, it necessitates the questions of whether there are truly African media (newspaper, radio, television and new media platforms) in the continent, serving and meeting the needs of the public, and if the media operational in Africa are African by practices and nature. While there is no homogeneous African culture which the media should reflect and promote as part of being decolonised, the media should reflect what Asante (2003) called ‘Njia’, the collection and reflection of people’s experiences. Such a call is pivotal as it makes a case for indigenous African language media as a base for furthering decolonisation and the media.

Every language has its own culture (Ngugi, 1981), and the medium of communication. The use of colonial language in the media of most post-colonial states inherently translates the colonial culture, promoting and amplifying its values to society. As Asante (2003: 1) argues, ‘culture is the base for all values’, and the broader implication of this is that African epistemology, culture and values are threatened and neglected. This poses a severe implication for society, its civilisation and cultural sustainability. For example, Akpojivi and Mgbheadichie (2022), while buttressing the above, argued that the cultural values of the Igbo, which are hard work, spirituality and contentment, are in decline. As the ‘colonial’ mainstream media promotes western cultures and values which is not rooted in humanity which is the crux of African values and philosophy. Therefore, Moyo (2020) argues that a decolonial turn will facilitate the affirmation of African culture, values and practices, and indigenous African media is crucial to attaining this. As African indigenous language media are rooted and grounded in African cultural values. And since media are carriers of culture (Hall, 1977), these African values and philosophies will be amplified and impact the everyday lives of the public. Therefore, there is a need to interrogate the extent to which indigenous African media have lived up to their responsibility of affirmation of African cultural values through their practices and cultural structures. Such interrogation is germane due to the unique cultural, political and economic contexts in which indigenous media exist, which largely impact their responsibility of acting as a base for decolonisation and affirming African culture and values.

Notwithstanding, despite the rapid decline of indigenous language media across the continent due to apathy (Salawu, 2021) there is very limited research and scholarship on indigenous African media in

post-independent African states. This trajectory has however, significantly changed in the last two decades, through Prof. Abiodun Salawu's scholarship, which has brought attention to this neglected field. He is undoubtedly, one of the critical thinkers at the forefront of the decolonisation debate in Africa. He has broached a conversation of indigenous African media in the socio-political, economic and cultural development of the continent. Through numerous books (edited and monographs) and journal articles, Prof. Salawu has interrogated the political-economic structures in which indigenous language media operate in Africa (see Salawu, 2015), their role in democratic sustenance (see Salawu & Chibita, 2016), the impact of new media technologies in shaping the development and sustainability of indigenous African media (see Salawu, 2021). He has also revisited the historiography of early African language press. Additionally, Prof. Salawu established the research entity 'Indigenous Language Media in Africa Research (ILMA)' at the North-West University, South Africa, the only of its kind on the continent of Africa. Under his strategic leadership, the ILMA has been at the forefront of indigenous African language media research in Africa, while also building capacity through training future scholars in the research field. Therefore, this edited volume is a testament of the calibre of excellent scholars affiliated with ILMA.

This edited volume titled *Indigenous African Language Media* by Philip Mpofu, Israel Fadipe and Thulani Tshabangu therefore is another step change as it presents an excellent platform for scholarship addressing these issues around indigenous language media representation, socio-economic, political and cultural impact of indigenous language media, global crisis and pandemic management and conflict resolution. The importance of this collection cannot be underestimated as there is a need to go beyond the normative approach of studying the media and its culture and 'interrogate its epistemologies and ontologies' so as to identify lessons and apply these within other contexts (Mutsvairo et al., 2021). One such lesson is that the culture and practices of indigenous African media are different from those of mainstream media (Akpojivi & Fosu, 2020), and political and economic imbalances in postcolonial African states affect indigenous African language media and their sustainability. Consequently, this excellently put-together edited collection is a fitting way to celebrate Prof Salawu and his scholarship.

All 23 chapters and their arguments intersect with the different strands of Salawu's research, that is, media culture, practices and values and socio-economic, political and technological impact on indigenous African media. Identity formation and audience perception in indigenous language media is covered in the first section. Culture is central to identity formation and preservation, and colonialism has influenced and shaped the identity and cultural values in postcolonial African starts (see Achebe, 1958). The chapters in this section interrogated identity formation and audience perception from the perspectives of Tanzania, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Eswatini and South Africa. The chapters in section two examine how indigenous language media texts are represented within the contexts of Nigeria, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Media representation is pivotal in ideological construction and reconstruction, and the findings from the different case studies highlight how indigenous language media users use it to create and challenge dominant ideologies. The chapters in section three interrogate the place and role of indigenous African media in health and environmental crisis. The African continent has experienced global health and environmental crisis, and the media have a pivotal role in mitigating the effects of these crises and limiting the broader impact on society (Chari & Akpojivi, 2021). The chapters explore ways in which indigenous language media could be deployed effectively to communicate and create effective awareness/campaigns to address global health and environmental pandemics. Section Four examines peace journalism and conflict resolution using indigenous African media.

In particular, Philip Mpofu, Israel Fadipe and Thulani Tshabangu's contribution offers new theoretical and conceptual vistas in examining indigenous African language media in Africa. This opens a new line of thinking that other scholars can engage for the attainment of affirmation of African culture, values and practices. Therefore, I strongly recommend this edited volume to scholars, policymakers, governments and



students (undergraduate and postgraduate) that are interested in indigenous African language media and their role in the affirmation of African cultures, values and epistemology.

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## FOREWORD BY MUYIWA POPOOLA

It is my great pleasure to write this Foreword to a festschrift written in honour of Professor Abiodun Salawu, a leading scholar in indigenous African language media. I have been in close professional contact with Professor Salawu since 2006, when I served with him to build the new Department of Communication and Media Studies, Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, Nigeria. As the pioneer Head of the Department, Professor Salawu gave astute leadership and thorough mentorship to his colleagues both in the department and in the university in general. I am a grateful beneficiary of his generous academic guide which has served as an impetus for me to venture into academic exploration of the role of various aspects of the media communication in mitigating and solving different forms of conflicting issues that modulate the society, either at the micro, individual level, or at the macro, political plane. Now, as one reason why Professor Salawu is aptly called a ‘Professor of Professors’, I am indeed excited to write this Foreword in appreciation of Professor Salawu’s invaluable scholarly contributions and in recognition of his community engagements.

Professor Abiodun Salawu started his illustrious academic career from two universities in Nigeria: first, the University of Lagos, and later, Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, where he garnered abundant experiences needed to propel him to the global space. He was later engaged

by the North-West University, South Africa, where he is now a Professor of Journalism, Communication and Media Studies, and Director of the research entity, the Indigenous Language Media in Africa. His research interests have led to the production of classic books, and highly referenced articles published in reputable journals, such as *Journal of Multicultural Studies*, *Rhodes Journalism Review*, *Nordic Journal of African Studies* and *Journal of International Women's Studies*, among others. His research has lent a fluent affirmation to the crucial independent and complementary role played by the African language communicative tools socialisation and development. Further, Professor Salawu is a member of academic and professional bodies, such as the Nigerian Academy of Letters. With these virtues and more I am happy to confirm that Professor Salawu is indeed well-deserving of the honour of having accorded to his name, this Festschrift, which will help to further discuss the nature, scope and value of indigenous language media in the African Societies.

Another fascinating factor about this festschrift concerns its editors. These scholars have been Professor Salawu's close associates who have had the first-hand awareness of the nature and contributions of his scholarship. The three editors who have been drawn from Nigeria and South Africa, in order to correctly deal with the diverse ethnic factors in the contributed papers, are established experts in their own rights. They have served as gate keepers to ensure fine and objective assessments of the festschrift's contributions which came from across the Continent of Africa.

The 23 papers edited in the festschrift were anchored on different appropriate research methods. They are segmented into four major aspects of media communication and social practices, namely: audience participation and identity formation, representations of indigenous language media, the role of indigenous language media in the face of health and environmental crises and peace journalism through the indigenous African language media. These sub-themes are among the foremost social concerns in Africa currently, and I believe that the reader will derive maximum benefits from studying them from the festschrift.

The rich features of this festschrift are enormous, making it an invaluable treasure for both students and scholars who have interests in its

themes. Also, the book will serve as a good companion to policy makers, law makers, educators and the general readers who have concerns about how the use of indigenous language media can help the society to achieve peace and progress. I, therefore, strongly recommend it as the right tool and an appropriate handbook for its readers.

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When it comes to making a book of this quality, its actualisation is due not only to birthing an idea but also to processes that involve people to whom it is impossible to pay back the debt for the significant roles they played in realising this dream. This feat cannot be even possible without Professor Abiodun Salawu who is being honoured with this collection. His contributions to indigenous African language media scholarship are footholds upon which new scholarly engagements have been anchored by new and many thinkers and theorists like us in the field. We are grateful to him for giving us the opportunity for this achievement. Thereafter, we thank Hua Bai, commissioning editor, who first developed an interest in our proposal that was sent for review. Reviewers usually bring up unique angles from which proposals can be perfected, and so we appreciate the work done by our proposal's reviewers for making us deliver a better outcome through our book.

When the contract was given to us, Ananda Kumar Mariappan, in charge of book production coordinated the contract signing. Supraja Yegnaraman and Coral Zhou in charge of book production prepared the manuscripts for copyediting. You have done an excellent work with us. We appreciate you. We thank the educational and professional platforms like South Africa Communication Association and the Nigerian chapter of African Council for Communication Research, and others that helped us disseminate the call for paper. Last, but not the least, are our chapter contributors, some of whom I have worked with on other projects. You

are amazing. Your painstaking endurance, marathon-like disposition to and understanding of these processes are unquantifiable. This has been a journey we would not mind taking again as long as you are all part of the process.

Thank you.

Mahikeng, South Africa  
2023

Phillip Mpofu  
Israel Ayinla Fadipe  
Thulani Tshabangu

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