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Opuamie-Ngoa, Stanley Naribo

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AGENDA – SETTING: THE NEGLECTED ROLE OF SOME AGENTS OF POWER – PROPAGANDA (RUMOUR, GOSSIP, RELIGION …)

Stanley Naribo Opuamie-Ngoa [Stanley Naribo Ngoa]

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Johannesburg, 2006

Front Piece

Where the People Thirst:

The ocean. The great river. The lagoon.
The creeks. The swamps. The blue and black waters.
Still they thirst. Water wetting them all, knee-
High at doorsteps, waist-high in flooded streets.
Still they thirst. On the bank of the river.
On the beach where the sea, angry beyond words,
coils its tongue and spits at their burnt faces.
They thirst. In the deluge that stitches nights and days
End to end with giant needles of rain.
They stick out their tongues crying for water.
As they thirst. Congregating round leaking
pipes for a cupful. Like Tuaregs shaking
dewdrops into a craked mug. They thirst.
By the ocean! By the river! By the Lagoon!

Another hymn of hope rings a bell in street
corners, its score written on khaki and banknotes.
Today, another hymn makes melody
with a people's thirst for water and light.
An old song that despaired before the singers
had cleared their throats finds a new tune

and draws dancing troupes to playgrounds,
hoping to remember the lost habit
of communal feasts and laughter treading
the dust. Big drums silenced by the rattle
of guns will out from the mourning room into
the sun to answer the drummer's aching call.
Today, another hymn will boast the death
of yesterday. Even as the river thirsts.

A night so long the day was a candle
in the storm. A nightmare of a million demons!
So let us open our trembling palms
under the brightening sky to cup this flicker
of dawn from the wind of nation-wreckers .
Let us widen the arc of vision beyond
the farthest reaches of the earth to stop
the hand that creeps towards our treasure chest.
At every barrack, let's mount watch night and day
for the green beast of power and bar him
from the city's gate. With a stone in one hand
and a placard in the other, let us
take oath to fortify the wounded city,
to deny its glory to barbarians.

And remember, O dancers, the thirst

that burnt your tongue and withered your farmstead!

As drums drunk with joy of the sun

promise music for an eternal bacchanal,

remember, O dancers, the funerals

power brought to your town and your homestead!

Now that laughter forgetful of the terror

that nailed yesterday to the cross of faith

beheads trees with a thunderous echo,

remember , O dancers, the commands

that blocked your doors with tanks and burnt your drums!

And as they mouth oaths of bondage to the Good

demand this: that they be wiser in power!

and remember: to be quicker to anger!

(Source: Ogaga Ifowodo: in IDEA (2000) Capacity-Building Series 10)

Abstract

This study responds to the generalization by traditional agenda setting or media effects studies, especially media agenda-setting hypothesis that people accept as important whatever the media considers to be so; and being so, have the capability to structure issues for its audience. Also, the thesis is uncomfortable with the media's blanket use of the term 'mass' to refer to its audience particularly when considered against the background of Africa's rurality.

This study therefore is an attempt to stake out a new conceptual approach to the media's agenda-setting capabilities with an emphasis on the 'other neglected agents of power', that is, this study's proposition as 'the established structures of community' in Africa, especially rural Africa, in setting be it the media or 'territorial' agenda.

Using the multifaceted and predominantly qualitative methodology of histories and the triangular orientation of personal interviews, survey questionnaires and content scanning of relevant media, the thesis amongst other issues of conceptual relevance re-awakens the theoretical issue of 'whose agenda is the media agenda?" and whether the media and its agenda setting capabilities are not an urban phenomenon?

The universality and applicability of the theory especially in Africa's rural setting where language, illiteracy, poverty and the lack of access to modern media constitute obvious barriers is also a major concern of this study.

With the above as a background, the three part (I – conceptual framing of the problem and relevant issues, ii – a proposition and iii – data presentation and research findings) study then agues, proposes and concludes that:

[a] Media agenda is 'source' oriented as its sources quite often are identifiable and that, the media serves better (as against the overwhelming claim of agenda-setting) as a conduit or arena for contending issues, views, opinions, even sentiments; there is therefore no significant category of intellectual analysis called media agenda, at least, in Nigeria.

[b] Media is urban based and centred, urban driven and even urban cultured …it is simply an urban phenomenon.

[c] Indeed there are significant indicators that the 'established structures of community' functions and play major roles both in setting the media-agenda (where there is one) and in political power dynamics.

[d] Media agenda is plausible but an ‘uncertain’ agenda; in Africa, especially rural Africa.

Declaration

I declare that this Thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. This Thesis has never been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

_____

Stanley Naribo Opuamie-Ngoa

_____ day of _____ 2006

Dedication

To the memory of my mother

‘Country woman’ **Selina ‘Soanya**

Who taught me that there is **victory**

In **dignified silence** but was herself **silenced**

Undignified! And had thus been refused

Her legitimate right of witnessing: “Dr Ngoa”.

Acknowledgements

First, to God the Alpha and Omega who turns all things difficult into absolute possibilities. My very sincere and heartfelt appreciation to my supervisors – Professors Tom Lodge and Anton Harber – both of who at the end not only become my 'friends' I could learn from but equally, and willingly, shared with me their expertise; just like Professors Kupe and Kariithi did.

To the 'Wits' University Council Scholarship and the Post-graduate Merit Award Committees, I say: **thank you** for considering me worthy two years in a row.

Many I considered to be authorities in the study of the Humanities and its associate disciplines were written to, in the hope of creating a channel for intellectual advise and discourse, but **only,** Noam Chomsky – about the most quoted and cited intellectual alive – remained ever so constant in replying my mails; immediately too. To him I say: 'Gratias Seniore'.

I salute Stanley Macebuh for the illuminating conversations (with me) as well as not just watching me 'grow' but also for 'believing' in me too. Ray Ekpu for being my 'brother', Nigerian Journalism's "Sad Sam" (the revered Sam Amuka) for his words of wisdom, Sam Oyevbaire for being my 'friend', Emeka 'citizen' Izeze and I. S. Martyns-Yellowe for letting me share in their wealth of knowledge.

My sincere appreciations also go to Anthony Okpere (rtd. Air vice Marshall), for his straight answers to straight questions, Tim Yingifa, Simon Ambakederemo (Beks Royal) and Inemo Daniel (recently late) who assisted in different ways during my field studies along the volatile creeks of the Niger Delta.

To Tam ‘Opiribo’ Lawson, Monima ‘Kenwa’ Alabraba, Monima ‘Brickay’ Briggs, Evans ‘Luigi’ Amaso, Marc ‘Iyanabo’ Wabara and ‘good old’ Dan Amachree, it is **thanks** for being your brother’s keeper.

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Acronyms

SA	–	South Africa
NPN	–	National Party of Nigeria
UPN	-	Unity Party of Nigeria
NIIA	-	Nigerian Institute of International Affairs
WW1	-	Second World War
PDP	-	Peoples Democratic Party
ANPP	-	All Nigeria Peoples Party
‘V”	-	Victory sign.
AG	-	Action Group
RDS	-	Radio Distribution Service
NBS	-	Nigeria Broadcasting Service
NBC	-	Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation
NBC-TV	-	Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation Television
WNTV/BS	-	Western Nigeria Television/Broadcasting Service
NPC	-	Northern Peoples Congress
NCNC	-	National Council of Nigerian Citizens
ENBC	-	Eastern Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation
RKTV	-	Radio Kaduna Television
ECBS	-	East Central State Broadcasting Service
NTV	-	Nigerian Television

NTA	-	Nigerian Television Authority
AIT	-	Africa Independent Television
NPAN	-	Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria
NADECO	-	National Democratic Coalition
IMF	-	International Monetary Fund
SDP	-	Social Democratic Party
NRC	-	National Republican Convention
DFRI	-	Directorate of Food Roads and Rural Infrastructure
SAP	-	Structural Adjustment Programme
G18	-	Group of 18
G34	-	Group of 34
NGO	-	Non-governmental Organisation
ING	-	Interim National Government
PSO	-	Principal Staff Officer
PDM	-	Peoples Democratic Movement
CD	-	Campaign for Democracy
CLO	-	Civil Liberties Organisation
MOSOP	-	Movement for the Survival of Ogonis
OPC	-	Odua Peoples Congress
FOS	-	Federal Office of Statistics
CNN	-	Cable Network News

HRVIC	-	Human Rights Violation Investigation Commission
SE	-	South East
NAU	-	Nnamdi Azikiwe University
UN	-	United Nations
PPM	-	Policy Process Model
UEFA	-	European Union Football Association
ID	-	Identity
IGP	-	Inspector General of Police
PMAN	-	Performing Musicians Association of Nigeria
STV	-	Silverbird Television
DBN	-	Dangue Broadcast Network
EFCC	-	Economic and Financial Crimes Commission
U&G	-	Uses & Gratification