

**PORTRAYAL OF YORUBA TRADITIONAL RELIGION IN AWARI OMO
ODUDUWA PROGRAMME OF MITV**

¹ Oladimeji Simon Pinheiro, ² Sanyaolu Oluwaseyi, ³ Sunday Ufot Imoh

¹ Department of Mass Communication
Interlink Polytechnic, Ijebu-Jesa, Osun State, Nigeria

otunbasop1980@gmail.com

+2348160910409

² Department of General Studies,
Grace Polytechnic, Omu-Ijebu, Ogun State

utifot11@gmail.com

+2349060594924

³ RSA Institute, Ibadan, Oyo State

samechconcept@gmail.com

+23436849648

ABSTRACT

African culture intertwined with religion which makes religion permeates into all aspects of life, which made impossible to isolate. This study therefore examined how the television programmes has portrayed the Yoruba traditional belief system, and as well analyzed the controversies in the representation of Yoruba Traditional Religion on television and in tandem to the actual practice of Yoruba Traditional Religion. The study was anchored on Media-Society Theory of Functionalism. It explains that, mass communication can be considered as both a 'societal' and a 'cultural' phenomenon and also as part of the structure of society, and its technological infrastructure is part of the economic and power base, while the ideas, images and information disseminated by the media are evidently an important aspect of our culture. The Study also anchored on Culturalist Theory. The study adopted the ethnographic research design with the use of key-informants interview and content analysis to elicit in-depth information needed. A collection of some recorded episodes of the programme and interviews were analyzed to ascertain the extent it has portrayed the belief system of Yoruba traditional religion. The finding revealed that media owners have not seen relevance of promoting such programmes on their stations, the rites and ritual practices of the Yoruba traditional religion on which the belief system is anchored on are not permitted to be broadcast due to NBC law. The findings further revealed that presenters and producers of the Yoruba traditional religion programmes on Television are not core worshipers or traditionalist of the religion which pave way for misrepresentation. The researchers therefore recommend that National Broadcasting Cooperation (NBC) is to make better policies and laws that will make the african religion practices to be aired by media stations, which would have given opportunity to the audience to understand the belief system of Yoruba traditional religion. And also the core practitioners should be core producers and presenters of Yoruba traditional religion programmes.

Keywords: Yoruba; Traditional Religion; Media; Rites and Rituals

1. INTRODUCTION

Religion can be described in various ways due to its diversity. Religion is people's beliefs and practices about existence, nature, and worship of a God or gods. It also provides a theistic code of morals for use in binding order in society and culture. William Padden (2012) opined that religion is an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, practice and worship that centre on one supreme God, or the deity. In the views of McNamara (2005), in some religion, no particular God or gods are worshipped. According to Paul Tillich (2003), "Religion is the collection of cultural systems, belief systems, and worldviews that relate humanity to spirituality and, sometimes, to moral values." Whatever diversity it entails, the centrality of most forms of religion is predicated on a divine power that has absolute influence on the lives of adherents. To these submissions, certain universal themes cut across most religion; they include belief in God or deity, a code of conduct or ethics, the engagement of sacred stories and rituals or religious acts and ceremonies.

African Traditional Religion, (ATR) has long been in existence prior to colonial times. Idowu (1973), contends that African Traditional Religion is totally grounded in the culture and religious beliefs and practices of Africa. Therefore, with the submission of Idowu, it can be boldly affirmed that African Traditional religion is a lived tradition, rather than a faith tradition. Additionally, it can be deduced that in African Traditional Religion the customs and traditions of the people are sacrosanct. One of the genres of African Traditional Religion is Yoruba Traditional Religion. But their belief system and practices remains controversial as the earlier researchers submitted that, it could not be connected to the belief in the Supreme Being and its practices could not be connected to the same practices.

Against the backdrop of some western scholar's negative perception of African Traditional Religion, Omotoye (2011) argues, Africa Traditional Religion is perhaps the most important influence in the life of most Africans. Yet, according to him, its essential principles are often unknown to foreigners. In recent times, there has been a renewed vigour to give visibility and audibility to Yoruba Traditional Religion. It is noteworthy to mention that, with the liberalization of the electronic media in Nigeria, the drive to create more awareness of Indigenous Traditional religion has received a boost. To this end, television has been seen as one of the media genre as a principal medium for obtaining visual entertainment and information which are presented through various programme genres such as: News, Sports, Documentary, Interviews, Drama, Music, etc. It establishes a direct relationship which presents particular sets, values and attitudes to its mass audience.

Fiske (1987:37), defines television as a popular cultural medium, with programmes that are disseminated to a mass audience from numerous subcultures; who have a wide variety of social relations, socio-cultural experience, and discourse. Its

content represents real life and fictional worlds to its viewers. Its visual and aural nature affords its viewer the opportunity to participate through call in programmes as they watch and afterwards, as they are able to perceive, interpret, and accept or reject images as real or imaginary. However, beyond this, television content as likened by O'Donnell (2007:145), are strategies through which a society's cultural values, norms, practices, interest, and trends are developed.

Considering the functionality of television programmes, having considered various submission by scholars in African traditional religion study which has brought about divergence and convergence in the true nature of Yoruba traditional religion practices in respect to the existence of Yoruba Traditional Religion practice and their belief system, it is pertinent to note that, series of programmes have been aired on Nigerian Television Stations such as Odu Ifa, Irinkerido, Asa ati Ise, Ayelaba, etc trying to give a clearer picture of the various Yoruba traditional Religion practices and structure of belief system in connection to believe in Supreme Being. This remains a controversial issue as the way some of the television programmes portray the Yoruba Traditional Religion in mystifying every happening surrounding the Yoruba society as an act of God without any empirical evidence as proof to validate their claim.

It is on this note that, this work will try to x-ray the issues surrounding the matter through the programme "Awari Omo Oduduwa" of Muri International Television (MITV), in understanding Yoruba Traditional Religion practice and belief system This research tries to examine how Awari Omodudwa television programme has portrayed what Yoruba Traditional Religion belief system involves.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study shall seek to proffer answers to the following research questions:

1. How far has the Awari Omo Oduduwa television programme portrayed the belief system of Yoruba Traditional Religion?
2. To what extent has it influenced the understanding of Yoruba Traditional Religion?
3. What are the controversies in the representation of Yoruba Traditional Religion on television and in the actual practice of Yoruba Traditional Religion?
4. What are the challenges facing the Awari Omo Oduduwa Television?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definitions of Religion

Immanuel Kant (1980) opined that Religion is the recognition of all our duties as divine commands. Also, Ludwig Feuerbach (1977) defined religion as a dream, in which our own conceptions and emotions appears to us as separate existence, being out of ourselves. Emile Durkeim (1976) sees it as a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden- beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church all those who

adhere to them. while James Frazer submitted that Religion is a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and human life. To this end, the submission of the scholars still centered on the supreme being, at the center of their belief system, but some other religion practices like Buddhism, Hinduism, does not even believe in any supreme being but rather nature, most Hindus worship one being of ultimate oneness (Brahama) through infinite representations of gods and goddess. These various manifestation of gods and goddesses become incarnate within idols, temples, gurus, rivers, animals. Hindus believe their position in this present life was determined by their actions in a previous life. Religion enters into every aspect of the life of the Africans and it cannot be studied in isolation. Its study has to go hand-in-hand with the study of the people who practice the religion.

2.2 Concepts of African Traditional Religion

Therefore, African traditional religion expresses the religious beliefs, customs, norms, behaviour, ethics and pattern of administration of people in their various communities and societies at large. It is inclusive in its worldview because it incorporates other religious elements. African Traditional Religion means the indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the Africans. It is the religion which resulted from the sustaining faith held by the forebears of the present Africans, and which is being practiced today in various forms and various shades and intensities by a very large number of Africans, including individuals who claim to be Muslims or Christians.

Omotoye explains that African Traditional Religion has for a long time been misrepresented by the early European explorers, investigators and Christian missionaries. Many of them used obnoxious and unacceptable terminologies to describe the religion, such as “the high god of the primitive people”, “withdrawn god”, “polytheism”, “fetishism”, “idolatry”, “heathenism”, “paganism”, “animism”, and “ancestor worship”.

Therefore, African Traditional Religion is a fundamental, perhaps the most important, influence in the life of most Africans yet its essential principles are too often unknown to foreigners who thus make themselves constantly liable to misunderstand the African worldview and beliefs. To them they never see religion as integral part of culture of the Africans, and their lack of understanding of the African culture made them to conclude that Africans have no religion.

A French scholar, Banding in 1884 had this to say: “They think that God, after beginning the organization of the world charged Obatala to finish it and govern it, even withdrew and went into an eternal rest to look after his own happiness”. Bandings position on Yoruba Traditional Religion Belief system in the gods as emissaries of the Almighty God cannot be a true representation of Yoruba traditional religious

worldview. Yoruba believed that the world was created by God. Obatala in Yoruba creation mythology was an arch-divinity. He could not function on his own.

Bouche (1999) also said that "A Yoruba man thinks that God is too great to deal with and that He has delegated the care of the blacks to the Orisa". This scholar goofed in his submission because he did not understand the concept of God in Yoruba story of creation. It is true that God is omnipotent, transcendent, and at the same time He is immanent. He is worshipped everyday through sacrifices and prayers. Bouche went further to say that "God enjoys abundance and gentle rest, keeping his favour for the white man". This statement could be seen as racially discriminatory between the whites and the blacks. God is universal as the creator of the universe.

Leo Frobenius, said: Before the introduction of a genuine faith and a higher standard of culture by the Arabs, the natives had no political organization, nor, strictly speaking, any religion... Therefore, it is necessary in examining the pre-Muhammedan conditions of the Negro races, to confine ourselves to the description of their crude fetishism, their vulgar and repulsive idols. None but the most primitive instinct determines the lives and conduct of the Negroes, who lack every kind of ethical inspiration. The above statement made use of some obnoxious and wrong terminologies like native, fetishism and idols. These terms have been consistently rejected by African scholars. Some of these scholars are Samuel Johnson, Olumide Lucas, E.G.Parrinder, Bolaji Idowu, John Mbiti, H.Sawyerr, E.G.Ilogu, Christian Gaba, Afolabi Ojo, P.C Lloyd, E.W Smith and Wande Abimbola, Dopamu, Awolalu and host of others. They try to re-write what the African Traditional Religion stands for against the account of the European scholars; Mbiti (1980), posited that African culture is intertwining with religion. Religion permeates into all the department of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it. A study of these religious systems is therefore ultimately a study of the people themselves in all complexities of both traditional and modern life... Religion is the strongest element in traditional background, and exerts probably the greatest influence upon the thinking and living of the people concerned. In corroboration with Mbiti, Ezeanya(2003) agrees that in Africa life is religion, and religion is life. This means that religion could not be explained away in Africa. Whoever tries it will be seen as a stranger to Africa

Africans see the universe as created by the Supreme Being. This Being is the same as the Christian God and is known by various names in Africa. Omosade Awolalu, in his work "Sin and its Removal in African Traditional Religion" writes, when we speak of African Traditional Religion we mean the indigenous religion of the Africans. It is the religion that has been handed down from generation to generation by the forbears of the present generation of Africans. It is not a fossil religion (a thing of the past) but a religion that Africans today have made theirs by living it and practicing it. This is a religion that has no written literature, yet it is "written" everywhere for those who care to see and read. It is largely written in the peoples' myths and folktales, in

their songs and dances, in their liturgies and shrines and in their proverbs and pithy sayings. It is a religion whose historical founder is neither known nor worshipped; it is a religion that has no zeal for membership drive, yet it offers persistent fascination for Africans, young and old.

The above passage serves as a clear picture of the nature of African Traditional Religion.

Bolaji Idowu (1973:84), in African Traditional Religion submitted that in understanding the African Religion, one must understand the myths of the people for there-in lies their philosophy of origin of the universe. This is because a myth is a vehicle for conveying a certain fact or a certain basic truth about man's experiences in his encounter with the created order and with regard to man's relation to the supersensible world. It endeavors to probe and answer questions about origins and meanings and purposes. These answers are naturally clothed in stories which serve as means of keeping them in the memory as well as handing them down from generation to generation.

Awolalu and Dopamu explained further that, aside from myths, there are liturgies which prescribe forms of ritual for public worship. This serves as the vehicle of communication between man and the Divine Being. They stressed further that, studying this religion is through songs. As songs are so much in Africa which enrich African heritage; these songs are employed in worship, in naming ceremonies, in wedding, in funeral, in wrestling, during cultivation of farm, in working, in going to war, in praising the ruler, in rocking babies to sleep and so many other activities. They express joy, sorrow, assurances, hopes and fears of the future and life after death. Thus, in songs according to the peoples' doctrinal and philosophical outlook are expressed.

Awolalu and Dopamu (1979) further explain that these recitals "proffer material of immense value on the peoples' philosophy, theology and history. Other sources include pithy sayings, proverbs, adages, epigrams and riddles which are formulated from human experiences and reflections from time immemorial. These oral traditions can be found or preserved in "arts and crafts, symbols, shrines and sacred places. From the foregoing, it is clear that a study of African Traditional Religion is a study in the totality of the peoples' way of life. This therefore means that the philosophy of African Traditional Religion does not exist in well-articulated body of knowledge as it is in the Western Philosophy, but is interwoven in the religion and culture of Africans.

2.3 Elements of African Traditional Religion.

In understanding the philosophical foundations of African traditional religion, Bolaji Idowu (in Olojumare, 1962: 137-202) has enunciated five component elements of African Traditional Religion. These five elements he called the structures of African Traditional Religion, while Awolalu and Dopamu see them as the features of West African Traditional Religion (1979) These are, *belief in God, belief in divinities, belief in spirits, belief in the ancestors and belief in the practice of magic and medicine.* These

are the philosophical pillars on which the study of African Traditional Religion rest on. Apart from the study of the nature of the religion of Africans, these five elements form the central tenets of African religion and philosophy, the understanding goes thus;

- (a) **Belief in God:** The concept of belief in God in Africa forms the bedrock of every religious worship and ceremony. It is an idea that is fundamental to African religion. Africans believe in the existence of a supreme primordial being, the Lord of the universe. He is the Supreme Primordial Being, the author and father of other gods. He is known in Africa by the names given to Him. Ekeopara(2005) explains that “the names by which God is called in Africa are descriptive of his character and the reality of his existence... to Africans and convey in clear terms the religious and philosophical thinking and experience of the Africans” The myths in Africa show his creative power, his ability to sustain, protect and guide his creation. His attributes are seen in the names given to their children such as Chidinma in Igbo meaning “God is good”, Olorunfemi in Yoruba means “God loves me”, Onyemachi meaning “Who knows God?” depicting God’s unknow ability. God cannot be fully known or explained.
- (b) **Belief in divinities:** These are divine beings that derive their being from the Supreme Being. They are created to serve God’s will and sometimes manifest his attributes. They are messengers of God and so serve him in the monarchic theocratic control and maintenance of the universe. They also serve as intermediaries between God and man.
- (c) **Belief in spirits:** Spirits usually make natural phenomena their place of habitation, though these things may be destroyed without destroying the spirits. This is because they have the power to incarnate into anything at will. They are separate and separable entities and the material objects they inhabit are but channels through which the spirits are approached. These spirits are ubiquitous and so are feared by people. So many channels can be used to appease them such as sacrifices, offerings, and others.
- (d) **Belief in the ancestors:** Ancestors are spirits of dead Africans especially those who died at ripe good old age and who lived a worthy life while on earth and left a legacy before their death. Mbiti calls them the “*living dead*” while others see them as our “dead fathers”, “dead forefathers”. Dopamu in Ekeopara explains that “belief in ancestor-ship depicts the African life as that of an unending fellowship in the community of one’s kit and kin who had gone before into the world beyond”.
- (e) **Belief in the practice of Magic and Medicine:** In African environment, there are certain forces that fight against man’s progress in life. This is why the use of magic and medicine became very expedient in order to help man conquer and subdue his environment. They are either used for good or for bad. The practice of magic and medicine enables an African to procure what cannot be obtained in the ordinary way. Among those who use their magical powers for harm include

such people as the sorcerers and witchcrafts, while those who use their power for good include medicine people who treat people for various ailments and those who exorcise spirits out from those who were possessed.

According to Olowola (1985) principles of African traditional religion has been created by a Supreme Being; the Supreme Being has created several divinities and spirits that will act as his functionaries to maintain the order of the world; life continues after death; although divinities and spirits live in the supernatural world, they are interested in human beings' life; the existence of mysterious forces brings fear to human life; for human beings it is possible to live peacefully only by following the directions of the Supreme Being and his functionaries

2.3 Worship System in African Traditional Religion

Emeka (2000) submitted that the concepts of worship of God in African Traditional Religion is a way of understanding the true practice of African Traditional Religion and its practices, saying, the days when some scholars and early Christian Missionaries assumed that God is not worshiped in African Traditional Religion has gone. For Dierich Westerman (1996) stated that God to the Africans is not "the object of a religious cult and is of small or almost no significance in practical religion" (qtd in Offiong, 2001). Quoting Idowu, this impression is borne out of the fact that God is not worshipped directly by the Africans and there is no place of worship set aside for God.

African people respond in many and various ways to their spiritual world of which they are sharply aware. This response generally takes on the form of worship which is eternalized in different acts and sayings. These acts may be formal or informal, regular or extempore, communal or individual, ritual or unceremonial, through word or deed (Mbiti, *African Religions...*, 1969: 58). He also adds that African worship is being regulated by both immediate needs and inherited practice. Worship is offered rather than meditational, in the sense that it is expressed in external forms, the body speaking both for itself and the spirit. It is in this assertion that Quarcoopome in Offiong, has defined "Worship" as the spontaneous expression of man's experience of the divine being who is considered to be the ultimate reality (qtd Offiong, 2001: 14). Though in some African languages there is no word for worship as such, rather we find other words like „to 'pray', to 'sacrifice', 'to perform rituals', 'to make an offering, and so on. These words describe things and actions which are directed towards God and spiritual being.

Mbiti (1975:54) in introduction to African religion, defines worship as "a means of renewing contact between people and God, or between people and the invisible world". They (African people) perform acts of worship to keep alive the contact between the visible and invisible worlds, between men and God. He explains further that some of the many ways Africans worship the Supreme Being is through sacrifices and offerings. Sacrifices and offerings are important elements of worship and are the essence of every religion. Mbiti stressed further that, the practice of making sacrifices

and offerings is found all over Africa. By this practice material or physical things are given to God and other spiritual beings. This act marks the point where the visible and invisible worlds meet, and shows man's intention to project himself into the invisible world. People make sacrifices and offerings of almost any animal or object. Also, Mbiti (1962: 58). in his book *African Religions and Philosophy* explain further that, sacrifices and offerings constitute one of the commonest acts of worship among African people.

Similarly, Idowu (in *Olodumare*, 1962: 120) explains that sacrifices and offerings are means of contact or communion between man and the deity. Sacrifice and offering are the means by which man maintains established relationship with his object of worship making distinction between sacrifices and offerings, Mbiti writes further: "Sacrifices involve the shedding of the blood of human beings, animals or birds; offerings do not involve blood but concern the giving of all other things, such as foodstuffs, water, milk, honey or money. The kind of situation that calls for a sacrifice may include drought, epidemics, war, raids, calamity, insect pests, and destructive floods. For examples, the Akamba, and Gikuyu people of Kenya make sacrifices on great occasions, such as at the rites of passage, planting time, before crops ripen, at the harvest of the first fruits, at the ceremony of purifying a village after an epidemic, and most of all when the rains fail or delay. The Gikuyu use sheep of a particular colour; but the Akamba use oxen, sheep or goat of one colour. The Akan and Ashanti people of Ghana have altars in their homesteads at which they make offerings of food, especially eggs and wine. These are made to God, with prayers for the wellbeing of the people (Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* 1969:59). Stressed more, Sacrifices and offerings are made by people in order to draw the attention of God to their needs. The major purpose of sacrifices and offerings is to maintain right relationship with God.

Nweke (2000) explained further that prayers, invocations, blessings and salutations are forms or means of worship in appreciating the beauty of African traditional religion practice, he pointed out that;

- a) **Prayer** is the most common act of worship among African people and most African prayers are short, extempore, and to the point, though there are also examples of long and formal prayers. It is also worth noting that majority of prayers and invocations are addressed to God, and it is also important to note that African prayers are not formally recorded. Few examples to illustrate the concepts and content of African prayers are as follows: the Bachwa Pygmies of the Republic of Congo prayer when there is sickness, and before undertaking a journey or going to hunt, asking God to heal the sick, prosper the traveler and give game to the hunter. The Bambuti Pygmies also of Republic of Congo also pray in difficulties, especially when there is a thunderstorm of which they are terrified. Prayer in the event of a thunderstorm goes like this:

"Grandfather, Great father, let matters go-well with me, for I am going into the forest; Or, if they are already in the forest when it arises:

Father, Thy children are afraid; and behold, we shall die!"

- b) **Invocations:** These are common versions of prayer used by Africans. Invocations are short and spontaneous form of prayer asking God to intervene for a particular purpose. They may be in the form of: God, give us rain, God give you fruit! Help me o God (Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 1969: 65).
- c) **Blessing:** Pronouncing and requesting of formal blessings play an important role in the social and religious life of African peoples. Hence, formal blessing is another form of prayer. The person who gives the blessing is always older or higher in status than the one who receives the blessing. The blessings take such form as *“May God go with you”, “God preserve you and keep you until you see your childrens’ children”, “May God help you”, “May God bless you”*.
- d) **Salutations:** Greetings and farewells take on the form of prayer in a number of societies. For instance, among the Banyarwanda people of Rwanda and Barundi people of Burundi when two people are parting, one says, *“Go with God!”*, to which the other responds *“Stay with God”* (Mbiti, 1969: 66). All these are also peculiar to Yoruba believe of worship in God.

2.4 Yoruba Belief System

Yorùbá religion, simply mean the indigenous faith of the Yorùbá passed down from the genesis of their generation through oral traditions, art, crafts, liturgies, pithy sayings, proverbs, folklores, stories, songs and wise sayings to this contemporary age, (Ogunade, 2010). Yorùbá practiced this traditional religion, before the introduction of Christianity and each community worshipped individual deity (or deities) in accordance to its devotional needs, for instance: in Ile-Ife -Olójó; Ibàdàn- Òkè; Òyó- Sàngó; Ijèbú- Agemo; Èjìgbò- Ògìyán;Ìwó- Pópó.

The Yoruba traditional society is a corporate and religious society. Ogunbile (1998: 125) identifies two major forms of identity in Nigeria-religious identity and ethnic identity. To be human therefore, is to belong to the whole community and to do so involves participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of that community (Mbiti 1970:80). Religion is the focal point of Yoruba culture as pointed out by Idowu (1970), *“the keynote of their life is their religion. In all things they are religious, religion forms the foundation and the all governing principle of life for them”*. Religious festivals usually serve as a package containing many aspects of the Yoruba culture, such as their beliefs, family life, dress, language, music and dance.

The religious ethics, myths and ideas are clearly expressed through the songs the adherents sing during the festivals. Oyetade (2003) asserts that Yoruba religious festivals have welfare objectives, during a festival the divinity is appeased to in order that the adherents and the entire community may enjoy another year of safety, plenty and happiness. Every member of the society is therefore expected to show support for the occasion by joining the crowd or by partaking in the rituals. The annual Yoruba religion festivals, such as Ifa festival in Abeokuta, Sango festival in Oyo, Ogun festival in Ondo and Ijesa land, Agemo festival in Ijebu land, Gelede festival in Yewa land, Oro

festival, Egungun festival and so on among various groups in Yoruba land, are very important events. They are occasions for re-union of the people with their gods and for renewal of religious and social values.

2.5 Rites and Rituals in Yoruba Traditional Religion

Diedrich Westermann, wrote on African belief system when he probably had little access to the proper sources of African beliefs and practices or when he had little more than 'a chance opportunity of a cursory glimpse of a gargantuan continent. Thus, in connection with the African concept of God, he declares: the high-god is, as a rule, not the object of a religious cult and is of small or almost no significance in practical religion. People acknowledge him but neither fear nor love nor serve him. It is to be noted that a good number of such scholars had over the years taken appearance for reality, symbol for the symbolised, means for the end with regard to the religious situation in Africa. Reasons for this step are not far-fetched. A lot of them were staying behind the garden and at the same time trying to pontificate on the items in the garden. Some had not even touched the African soil. Rather, they relied on the reports of traders and missionaries in dishing out information on the religious situation in Africa. Whatever their motives, they came, observed and wrote their memoirs, which testified to the glamour of the ancient Yoruba kingdom.

Adelowo (2011) expressed further that, rituals and rites are a means of bringing into the limelight the religious experience of a group of people, rituals and rites thus constitute some kind of religious expression. They are a means of concretizing one's belief system. They are a means of expressing one's experience of the supersensible world and the supernatural beings. In short and simple terms, they are acts of forms of worship or communion and communication between one and one's objects of worship.

Pointing out the roles of ritual leaders in practice of Yoruba traditional religion he asserted; rituals in Yoruba traditional religion are not usually administered by the uninitiated or the untrained (Yoruba: *ogberi*), rituals are usually administered by the priests known as *aworo* or *iworo*. They are specialists in leading the others in worship. They are devotees of *orisa*; that is, there is something of the divinity in them and it belongs to their position not only that they should offer worship to the *orisa*, but also that they should absorb the *orisa* into their being and manifest it. Traditionally, specialists in ritual administration followed the craft from father to son; through several or even many generations, handing down their techniques and forms of training, their quintessential experience and habitual shrines where application could be made to the gods and spirit. It is to be noted that it was an attempt to resolve the need for an adequate *link* between the object of worship and man that the idea of ritual leaders emerged in Yoruba religious thought and since man felt that he had to deal not with a vague abstraction but a reality with the attributes of *person*, he naturally thought of a *means* which would be a person - a person sufficiently "human" to make intimate

contact with man and not harm him. In short, the need for a personal mediator, a priest, a ritual leader, a specialist in ritual administration, arose.

In the cultic activities of a town the Oba is usually the head of the ritual leaders. He is the priest-king. In Ile-Ife, for example, the Ooni of Ife, *Alase Ekeji Orisa* is usually the *Pointifex Maximus*, he is the head of all the priests "*olori Awon aworo*". He assumes this office in consequence of his sceptre (*are*) which is derived from the divinity to whom he is vicegerent. The office still stands even though the Ooni does not now officiate directly at any particular shrine and only performs certain customary rituals as tradition decrees.

Talking of Rituals and rites abound in Yoruba traditional religion. In understanding the ritual in connection with the worship of God - Olodumare and gods - *Orisa*. There is a specific cult of Olodumare in Yorubaland. This may baffle those foreign arm-chair investigators who hold the thesis that Olodumare is not an object of worship in Yoruba religion. The point here is because Olodumare cannot be confined into space (the Yoruba described Him as *A-te-rere-K'aye*) One who occupies the whole extent of the world); the ritualistic worship offered to Him takes place in the open and not in building like temples and mosques. The worshipper makes a circle of ashes (Yoruba: *eeru*) or white chalk (Yoruba: *efun*); within the circle, which is a symbol of eternity, he pours a libation of cold water, and in the centre he places his kolanut (Yoruba: *obi* on cotton wool- Yoruba: *owu etutu*). He then takes the kolanut, splits it and holding the valves within the circle. Often, a white fowl (Yoruba: *adie funfun*) is offered in the same way. In Ile-Ife, the ancestral home of the Yoruba, there is a priest-chief whose duty is to offer this ritual every morning in the name of the Ooni and of all the people. However, it is unfortunate to note that the direct ritualistic worship of Olodumare, as a regular aspect of cultic activities in Yorubaland, is dying out. In some places, according to Bolaji Idowu, it is no longer known; in some, it has become the cult of women.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a qualitative, designed in a way to understand the people from their own perspective. the study would rely on the content analysis and in-depth interviews for its execution. The rationale for this is to allow for much richer information as the methods complement each other. The content analysis will provide basic background information on the subject at large and the in-depth interview will provide information on specific areas of the study. The sampling procedure used for the study was non-probability techniques of purposive method in selecting the study location, respondents for in-depth interview and snowballing in selecting key informants for interviews. The primary methods of data collection used for the study were in-depth interview guide and non-participants observation method while the method of data analysis was descriptive analysis of the information given by the respondents. The technique was adopted, because the selected media stations possess the data that was needed for this

study. Also, random sampling was considered for the analysis from responses through phone calls discussion from the viewers of the programme to avoid bias.

3.1 Data Presentation

This section presents the results and analysis of the data elicited from respondents from the field work through In-Depth, Key Informant interview, Non Participan and content analysis. Discussions were also presented based on the research questions. Again, the primary aim of the research is to examine how Awari Omo Oduduwa Television Programme has portrayed Yoruba traditional belief system.

Table 4.1 Distribution of Participants Interviewed for The Study

Category of Participants/ Respondents	Number of Respondents	Types of Instrument of Data Collection	Maximum Minute of Interview Session	Location
Ifa Traditionalists	Ten respondents	In-depth Interview	25 Minutes for each respondent	Ire-Akari, Inalende, Agala,Oja-Oba,Moniya,Beer e.
Ogun Traditionalists	Five respondents	In-depth Interview	15 Minutes for each respondent	Elelede,
Osun Traditionalists	Six respondents	In-depth Interview	15 Minutes for each respondent	Agala,Opo
Egungun Traditionalists	Ten respondents	In-depth Interview	15 Minutes for each respondent	Beere, Oje, Mapo, Opo,Oke padi,Sapaati
Sango Traditionalist	Three respondents	In-depth Interview	15 Minutes for each respondent	Oja Oba
Obataala Traditionalist	Two respondents	In-depth Interview	15 Minutes for each respondent	Moniya
Producer/Presenter	Two respondents	Key Informants Interview	25 Minutes for each respondent	

Table 4.1: Distribution of Participants Interviewed for The Study

Category of Participants/ Respondents	Number of Respondents	Types of Instrument of Data Collection	Maximum Minute of Interview Session	Location
---------------------------------------	-----------------------	--	-------------------------------------	----------

Ifa Traditionalists	Five respondents	In-depth Interview	25 Minutes for each respondent	Ire-Akari, Inalende, Agala, Oja-Oba, Moniya, Beere.
Ogun Traditionalists	Two respondents	In-depth Interview	15 Minutes for each respondent	Elelede,
Osun Traditionalists	Two respondents	In-depth Interview	15 Minutes for each respondent	Agala, Opo
Egungun Traditionalists	Four respondents	In-depth Interview	15 Minutes for each respondent	Beere, Oje, Mapo, Opo, Okepadi, Sapaati
Sango Traditionalist	Three respondents	In-depth Interview	15 Minutes for each respondent	Oja Oba
Obataala Traditionalist	One respondent	In-depth Interview	15 Minutes for each respondent	Moniya

Fieldwork 2015

Table 4.3: Socio- Demographic Characteristics of Respondents for In-depth Interview

Gender	Ifa Traditionalists	Ogun Traditionalists	Osun Traditionalists	Sango Traditionalist	Egungun Traditionalists	Obataala Traditionalist
Male	Eight(8)	Four(4)	Four(4)	(Two)2	Seven(7)	Two (2)
Female	Two(2)	One(1)	Two(2)	(One)1	Three (3)	One(1)

Table 4.4: Socio- Demographic Characteristics of Respondents for In-depth Interview

Gender	Ifa Worshipers	Ogun Worshipers	Osun Worshipers	Sango Worshipers	Egungun Worshipers	Obataala Worshipers	Producer/Presenter
Male	Three(3)	One(1)	One(1)	Two(1)	Two(2)	One (1)	Two(2)
Female	Two(2)	One(1)	One(1)	One(1)	Two(2)		

4.1. Research Question 1 (RQ 1): How far has the Awari Omo Oduduwa television programme portrayed the belief system of Yoruba Traditional Religion.

Findings from the in-depth interview revealed the belief system in Yoruba traditional religion is entrenched in the dressing, deities, religious festivals, songs, chants symbols, shrines, rituals, worship system and rites. Asking this question revealed how all these characteristics are hold to the esteem values of the traditionalists and worshippers of Yoruba traditional religion. In the view of respondent 1 on this, he expressed that:

*“ our belief system are the deities, Ifa divination, because, is the source of the wisdom and what ever we did not understand, of having a sort of problems, we make consultation to ifa, and you will be guided, he never misled us, and the deities, we believe in them because, they are in communion with olodumare, in which they serve as intermediaries. That is why you will never see any traditionalist that will never make consultation every day he wakes up
(Awofisayo, Ibadan, 2015)*

In the view of Respondent 2, he put forward that the belief system of the Yoruba system is being guided by our relationship with the gods, which we have faith in and make necessary sacrifices for all our intentions. We traditionalist believe in Olomumare, and all the deities are just messenger of God, we believe in them because we always felt their impacts in whatever we asked for ,they guided us from dangers, they are more in spirit world and have constant relationship with Olodumare since it's not possible for us to see Olodumare. (God) that is our belief system

4.2 Research Question II (RQ 1): To what extent has it influenced the understanding of Yoruba Traditional Religion?

Responses sampled from respondents through analysis of the phone calls from the audience, the advantage of the portrayal of Yoruba traditional religion was a clear reflection of the understanding of some Yoruba people in respect to belief system of African traditional religion. This was really affirmed in some of the callers that called in during the programme.

According to caller 1 and 2

Hello..... my position on today programme has never changed, it has been said in the though shall not create or worship any idol, but I know is every understanding of Yoruba religion belief system is surrounded on idol worship but not of God. (Olusola Babajide, Idi-Ose, Moniya 2015)

I greet you presenter, for the work you are doing, but my position on the Yoruba religion belief system is that, it is very occult and idol worshiping, I have been to

many places, I tried many place but all are nothing but deceit and exploration by the custodian, you only encounter God within yourself. (Agboluaje Sade,2015)

It was a clear indication that, through the programme, viewers are getting better understanding of what the Yoruba traditional religion stands for. Notwithstanding some callers still owns the views of the religion is still subjected to idol worshipping which might have resulted to the civilization and westernization of African religion. Caller 3 has this to say:

*As much as I appreciate the effort of the presenter to promote this Yoruba religion through your programme, there are salient issues you have to unravel to convince me that , the so call religion is not idolatory, talk of the shrines, or the egungun festival, and the rest, are they not idols. it is better we begin to celebrate the other culture of Yoruba race that the religion, nothing to prove it that they are serving one God
(Babatope, Bodija, 2015).*

The position of the caller 3 could be supported by the position of Gbenda (2010) posited that Westernism and colonialism has been the factor mitigating the declination of African Religion, expressed through art, science, technology, learning and social contact. Christianity was part of the European's civilizing mission cloth in European culture and philosophy. The studies by foreign scholars and Africans especially those influenced by the colonial mentality, were never from within approach but suffered from presuppositions, ignorance, biases, and linguistic difficulties as well as social misgivings.

With the above responses from the audiences who participated in the programme through call-in session, they have really in tandem with the position of Gbenga (2010) that the civilization and introduction of western religion both Christianity and Islam were a factor to the declination of acceptance of Yoruba traditional religion among its people.

It is noteworthy to know that there has been a renewed vigor to give visibility and audibility to Yoruba Traditional Religion. The liberalization of the electronic media in Nigeria, the drive to create more awareness of Indigenous Traditional religion has received a boost. To this end, television has been seen as one of the media genre as a principal medium for obtaining visual entertainment and information which are presented through various programme genres.

It establishes a direct relationship which presents particular sets, values and attitudes to its mass audience.

Caller 4 has this to say:

I am pleased to have access to this kind of programme, that promote Yoruba cultural values and religion, this has collaborate what I used to read, hear, because the scene you shown us establish the reality of Yoruba religion practices, hope this programme will stay to continue to promote more values of Yoruba religion (Agbabiake Toyosi 2015)

Good programme presenter, this is a kind of programme , we love to be seeing in the media so as to delete the notion of the Yoruba people about the Yoruba religion being fetish and idolatry, as long as you continue to show this program, our people will understand the beauty of the Yoruba culture and religion, may God continue to protect you and guide you, it is a difficult one, travelling across West African in showcasing the reality of Yoruba religion and its promotion. (Akinriade Sanda 2015)

It is a great work you are doing, what am seeing, is absolutely different from what I have been told about Yoruba traditional religion, I hope that this will stay longer on air and the hours should be extended so that it will continue to propagate the Yoruba religion, I pray that more will have access to this kind of program especially those that are having bad impression about the religion, well done presenter. (Princess Atinuke 2015)

The above submission of the audience, supports Fiske (1987:37) findings on what attracts most viewers and give better understanding of Yoruba traditional religion programme on television. The overall analysis of responses through phone calls that lasted for 30 minutes and people calling in from different location across the state reveals that airing of the Awari Omoduduwa on television has shaped the understanding of the people about the religion because it proffers them opportunity to see what is practice within the Yoruba religion system.

4.4 Research Question III (RQ 3): What are the controversies in the representation of Yoruba Traditional Religion on television and in the actual practice of Yoruba Traditional Religion.

Africans traditionally believe that “man is a product of a universe in which all energy and everything is interconnected, born out of a “primal force” which has spread a little of itself into all it has generated” (Barlet, 1996: 84-85). By this it is meant that Africans believe in a world that is unified between all beings, whether material, spiritual or metaphysical. Thus, “the world of Africans is one of inanimate, animate, and spiritual beings and there is the influence of each category of these beings in the universe in which they inhabit” (Onwubiko, 1991: 3). This inhabited universe according to Nwoga is a ‘space’ which is a field of action and not just a location made up of discrete physical distances and separate physical spaces. *Ala mmuo*

(spirit world) and *ala mmadu* (human world) according to him, are the plains of spirit action and of human action, and these need not be physically separated. It is “the non-separation of these entities in physical terms that makes interaction between the various worlds possible so that spirits and their activities impinge on realities that are seen in the human and the physical” (Nwoga, 1984: 36).

It is this view of the above scholars’ that has affirmed the Yoruba traditional religion actual practice which is almost the same practice shown or aired in Awari Omo Oduduwa, at every gathering of the traditionalist of Yoruba religion to make consultation through the divinities, This findings support the position of Onwubiko, 1991: 31) on reality of practices of Yoruba traditional religion, that says The ritual of faith and religion in African traditional worship is seen among Africans in almost every religion-social rituals. It enhances their identity as a people and offer clues to understanding their cosmological framework and thought patterns. Since people believe that God is a higher spiritual force that is involved in their affairs as a community and individuals, they reach out to him through a pantheon of other gods and minor deities like *Ala* or *Ani*, the earth goddess, *Amadioha*, the god of thunder; *Ajoku* the yam god and other clan deities.

The overall content analysis of the programmes reveals that most, there was no difference in the communication through ifa consultation, chants of making of Odun proverbs known as Odu Ifa, and the course of my observation, there are ritual rites that were performed that really established the reality of the Yoruba religion, but due to the policy of the media owners and the government, such evidence of reality about the belief system could allow the on air which has brought some controversy. But in real practice most of what that was showcase on the programme are reality of the true practice of Yoruba traditional religion.

Research Question IV (RQ 4): What are the challenges facing the Awari Omo Oduduwa Television Programme and how are they being tackled?

Sponsorship is part of communication mix that constantly attracts increasing focus among organisations and marketing communication professionals. It involves investment in events or causes for purpose of achieving various objectives such as increasing sales volume, enhancing a company’s reputation or brand image and increase awareness (Tripod 2001). Above scholar’s view was an evidence of the relevance of the sponsorship of a television programme for constant airing of a problem, and this has been identified as one the major factors affecting the propagating of African traditional religion activities on television especially the Yoruba traditional religion, both the presenter and producer are on the same page while responding to interviews on the challenges among which are;

❖ **Lack of sponsorship**

Airing of television programme of this nature , is a capital intensive one , most especially in a private station, and the presenter of the awari omo Oduduwa has been working tirelessly to get corporate sponsorship for the continuity of the programme, before there is a limit that media station can partner with such programme, because the station is going to meet up with their own overhead expenses, payment of staff, fueling for 24hours, running cost and maintenance of equipment and office are there, and more so the programme does not has wider audience as well that can pull crowd for potential organisation like other sporting, or reality tv show programmes (Dr Oladejo , MITV 2015).

The major challenge of this programme is funding, this programme cut across Nigeria and western neighboring countries that we have Yourba settlers and the Yoruba traditional religion is being promoted, I have been using my personal money that I got through personal donations from friends, associates of mine to travel to Abidjan, Togo, Benin Republic, Badagry and all Yoruba states, it is has not been easy to get corporate sponsorship for this kind of programme.(Akuko, MITV 2015)

❖ **Unavailability of needed materials**

Sometimes you know needed materials are not easy to get, for a particular episode, due to the nature of the programme, it might not be ready on time or even get, most times producers travel far and wide to get information on particular African belief system and he might have to travel if the town or people that are in practice of it are in Ekiti let us take for instant..... Issues like this always come up. (Dr Oladejo, MITV, 2015).

Talking of challenges, getting material for a particular episode might be difficult that sponsorship at times you know for this traditional religion we are talking about, to get real information on their belief system, it might take me to other state, which I might have the idea of the season the protocols of the custodians, most times to get the custodians of the deities take days, even at time for them to release information to you is another problem, getting materials on for the programme is a big challenge on its own but we thank God that, we are having a way out, (Akuko, MITV 2015).

❖ **NBC Policies/ Government Lack of Support**

When it comes to airing of religious programme, National Broadcasting Commission, has laid down many policies that will guide stations in airing religious programmes, and with one must be watchful and careful of what is been aired to the public, come to think of it, there are many rituals and rites that are sacred in Yoruba traditional religion that must be aired to the public, in Ogun celebration, Sango, and many others, if it were to show the whole reality of the belief system practices, definitely MITV we have been sanctioned with fines in many times. Presenters always want to show the reality of the Yoruba traditional

religion practices, my presenter will go to the extent of recording the ritual or rite exercise but, when it brings them the clips, I always tell him, for NBC policies and management reason, some of the salient aspect will be edited, and the most painful is that, most time it is where the reality of Yoruba religion practices are anchored on, but it cannot be on air because when we flout the rules, the NBC will not petition the presenter, but the media house, the consequence will not be funny. (Dr Oladejo 2015).

Acceptance and better understanding of Yoruba traditional religion would have be well appreciated, propagated and promoted if our government has given a strong backing as its being accorded to Christianity and Islam, but the case is other way round through its agency, NBC that gatekeeps so many finding on the religion which would have more been appreciated and accepted with the help of the visual aids. As for us that make research on the reality of Yoruba traditional religion, we keep on getting the facts, but one day, a government will come that will make the policies that will give room for the showcasing of the practices on television. It was not as if the media owners are willingly to edit better part of our findings but they are also afraid of the sanction that will be imposed on them, sincerely, government has not been given necessary support to promote the religion than what we are managing to show. (Akuko, MITV, 2015)

In the above responses, the presenter and producer revealed that promoting of the Yoruba traditional religion has not been prominent due to the above listed factors which has given the propagation of the religion a slim chance of expansion and more visible for better understanding of Yoruba people through television.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

- The findings showed that, few programmes were being aired through Television programmes to promote Yoruba traditional religion due to the lack of sponsorship from corporate bodies.
- Media owners have not seen the relevance of promoting such programmes on their stations and to society at large due to the strict policy of the regulatory body
- The rites and ritual practices of the Yoruba traditional religion on which the belief system is anchored on, are not permitted to be broadcasted due to NBC laws.
- Most times presenters and producers of the Yoruba traditional religion are not core worshipers or traditionalist of the religion but left for the professionals of media to promote the religion.
- The clips of the episodes of various activities of Yoruba traditional religion affirmed linkage of the belief system to almighty God.
- The findings showed also that, the mode of worship through songs and prayers is embedded in religion and cultural festival.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

1. The government should endeavour to formulate accommodating policies that will enable the presenters and producers of Yoruba traditional religion, to project the practices of the activities of the religion on television
2. The Yoruba traditional religion practitioners should also involve more in the presentation and production of the Yoruba traditional religion on television
3. The producers and presenters of Yoruba should encourage corporate bodies for more sponsorship, while the traditionalist and worshippers also should promote the religion through individual sponsorship on television

7. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that as far as portrayal of Yoruba traditional religion is concerned through television programmes, the television station has been able to project the belief system of Yoruba traditional religion in a right perspective through its mode of worship, against the backdrop of earlier reports. The audio-visual impact and participatory of the audience have really increase the understanding of the people on the believe system. The portrayal of the religion could be better understood if only the government revisit her policies on such programme that would have qualified as local content that will promote the element of indigenous religion and culture. Sponsorship of such programmes and involvement of the real traditionalist in the production of Yoruba traditional religion program is a major hindering factor in portraying the Yoruba traditional religion on television and as such must be immediately tackled.

REFERENCES

- Jacob K. Olupona, "The Study of Yoruba Religious Tradition in Historical Perspective" Vol. 40, No. 3. (Sep., 1993), pp. 240-273.
- Ogunade Raymond. "Environmental Issues in Yoruba Religion: Implications for Leadership and Society in Nigeria" This paper presentation 2005, in Philadelphia, PA, USA,
- J. O.Kayode on "Symbology of Yoruba religion" (1973) and P. Ade Dopamu, "The Practice of Magic and Medicine in Yoruba Traditional Religion" (1977) Ibadan.
- J. Omosade Awolalu, *Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites* (London: Longman; 1979).
- Samuel A. Adewale, *The Religion of the Yoruba: a phenomenological Analysis*, (Ibadan: Religious Studies. University of Ibadan, 1988).
- Awolalu, P. A. and Dopamu P. *West African Traditional Religion*. Ibadan: Onibonjo Press, 1979.

- Onunwa, U. R. *A Critical Review of Methodologies of African Religion and Culture*. Pittsburgh: Red Lead Press, 2006.
- R.W. Omotoye "The Study of African Traditional Religion and Its Challenges in Contemporary Times" Vol.1 No.2, 2011, Pp.21-4
- Balogun, I. A. B. (1976). "*Religious Understanding and Co-operation in Nigeria*", Ilorin, (Proceedings of a Seminar organised by the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, 7th- 11th August, 1976.
- Ushe M.N (2013). *Fundamental of African Religion*, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishers.
- P. O. Abioje "Divine Revelation in Yoruba Traditional Religion and in Christianity" *Volume 6, Issue 4 (Jan. - Feb. 2013), PP 42-49*
- Ahamad Faosiy Ogunbado, "Impacts of Colonialism on Religions: An Experience of South-western Nigeria." *Volume 5, Issue 6 (Nov. - Dec. 2012), PP 51-57*
- Ajayi, S. A. (2008). "Bower tower: A historical monument in Ibadan, Southwestern Nigeria." *The Social Science* 3 (1) 2008: 45-50.
- Johnson, S. (1921, reprinted ed. 2001). "*The History of the Yorubas*". Lagos: CSS Press.
- Awolalu, J. O. (1996). "What is African Traditional Religion?" *Studies in Comparative Religion, Vol. 10, No. 2:1*.
- Gbenda, J. S. "The Impact of Colonialism on African Indigenous Religion" Department of Religion and Philosophy, Benue State University Makurdi, Nigeria.
- Alokan, P. O. "The Impact of Religion on The Promotion of Peace and Economic Integration in Yoruba Land" Vol. 2, Nos. 1-3, 2010
- A. Kasongo, "Impact of Globalization on Traditional African Religion and Cultural Conflict" (2010) *Vol 2, No 1, 309-322*
- Chioma, P. E. "Television Local Contents; Conduit for Cultural Learning in Nigeria?". *Vol. 2, No.12; July 2013*
- Fiske, J. (1987). *Television Culture*. London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Lasode, O. (1994). *Television Broadcasting: The Nigerian Experience (1959 -1992)*. Ibadan: Caltop Publications (Nigeria Ltd.)
- J.S. Mbiti, "African Religions and Philosophy", New York: Double Day and Co. Inc., 1970, especially pp. 19-36.
- Ahamad Faosiy Ogunbado, "Impacts of Colonialism on Religions: An Experience of South-western Nigeria." *Volume 5, Issue 6 (Nov. - Dec. 2012), PP 51-57*

Villanova Journal of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities

Vol. 2. No. 1. 2020. ISSN: 2672-5037 (Online) 2672-5029 (Print)

J.O. Kayode and E. Dada Ade10wo, "Religions in Nigeria" in R. Olaniyan ed., *Nigerian History and Culture*". Longman, London, 1985, p. 240.

Rev. E. C. Ekeke "African Traditional Religion: A Conceptual and Philosophical Analysis" LUMINA, Vol. 22, No.2