

**An Examination of The Belief in 'Ikhtilaj (Palpitation) Among  
Yoruba Muslims Within the Context of Wahy (Divine Revelation)  
And Tatayyur (Pessimism)**

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**Abstract**

The Yoruba people are majorly found in the South-Western part of Nigeria. While they were traditionally idol worshippers, Islam and Christianity have with time gained firm root among them. As traditional people, they believe in omen, premonition and intuition. In addition to these beliefs, the Muslims among them equally express belief in 'ikhtilaj which technically is palpitation of any part of the body because of which one feels pulses in that part. The pulse is experienced repeatedly in the affected part which may be the neck, eyes, lips, thighs etc. The belief among some Yoruba Muslims is that 'ikhtilaj is a form of wahy while it is considered by some others as a form of tatayyur. This study therefore examined the belief in 'ikhtilaj among Yoruba Muslims with the view to determining whether it has interpretative meaning and whether it is to be considered as belonging to the class of tatayyur or wahy. To achieve the objectives of the study, the doctrinal exegetical analytical methods were adopted to analyze textual authorities from Islamic texts scholarly works and historical documents, also qualitative approach was employed through semi structural interviews. Findings, however, revealed that there are two opposing views among Yoruba Muslims on whether 'ikhtilaj has interpretative meaning and whether it is to be considered as belonging to the class of tatayyur or wahy. The study concluded that in the light of Islamic law principles, 'ikhtilaj has no interpretative meaning and it is to be considered as tatayyur and not wahy.

**Keywords:** Ikhtilaj (Palpitation), Tatayyur (Pessimism), Wahy (Divine Revelation), Islamic Law.

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**Introduction:**

The Yoruba people majorly populate the South-Western part of Nigeria. From time immemorial before their contact with Islam, they were mainly idol-worshippers who believed fervently in consulting *ifa* oracle for divination since it was a common thing among them to seek to know future occurrences.<sup>1</sup> In addition, they equally held tenaciously to some certain traditional beliefs such as belief in omen, premonition and intuition. With the advent of Islam, those who eventually became Muslims among them still carry this belief into Islam as they found it difficult to completely break away from their traditional past. While they consult with Muslim spiritualists popularly referred to as *Aafas* for divination using sand, rosary and similar other items,<sup>2</sup> they also express belief in '*ikhtilaj*'-a concept considered, in certain quarters, to be similar in certain respects to omen.

*'Ikhtilāj* is a derived noun from the verb '*ikhtalaja* which literally means "to bulge out."<sup>3</sup> *'Ikhtilāj* technically is palpitation of any part of the body as a result of which one feels pulses in that part. The pulse is experienced repeatedly in the affected part which may be the neck, eyes, lips, thighs etc. While '*Ikhtilāj* is a universally common experience not limited to any individual, not many people pay any serious attention to it or attach any significant importance to it. Few people believe it has interpretative significance and implication in their affairs and endeavors. Medical practitioners, in their case, do not at all believe it has any meaning. To them, it is just a voluntary palpitation of muscles which medically cannot be adduced to any malfunction of the body system.<sup>4</sup>

It should be noted that the traditional Yoruba people believe and attach significant importance to premonitions, instincts and omen; and are also ardent lovers of probing into the future, especially by consulting the *ifa* oracle to determine the future outcome of events. Surprisingly, however, there are among them those who do not attach any interpretative meanings to '*ikhtilaj* experiences while there are others who attach interpretative meanings to it. To interpret '*ikhtilaj*, the traditional Yoruba people rely on *Ifa* priest who is consulted and told the part of the body where the '*ikhtilaj* occurs. The *Ifa* priest then consults the oracle to be able to interpret the '*ikhtilaj*. Thus, the Yoruba *Ifa* priest considers '*ikhtilaj* as a kind of premonition through which the gods send messages to people<sup>5</sup>.

This led to the question on how do Yoruba Muslims understand the concept of *ikhtilaj* (palpitation) and how does this understanding relate to their beliefs about *wahy* (divine revelation) and *tatayyur* (pessimism). Since it is the belief in some quarters that '*ikhtilaj* is a form of *wahy* while it is

considered in other quarters as a form of *tatayyur*, this work therefore examines the belief in *'ikhtilaj* among Yoruba Muslims in relation to *tatayyur* and the Islamic concept of *wahy*; and with particular reference to a pamphlet compiled by Shaykh Adam which he attributed to Ibn Sirrin, a *tabi*<sup>c</sup> blessed exceedingly with esoteric knowledge. To achieve the objectives of the study, the researchers applied both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

### 1. Islamic Concept of *Wahy*

The Qur'an in verse 51 of *Suratu 'sh-Shura* specifically mentions three ways by which Allah discloses information to people, with *wahy* coming first. Allah declares: "It is not fitting for a man that Allah should speak to him except by inspiration, or from behind a veil, or by the sending of a Messenger to reveal with Allah's permission what Allah wills: For He is Most High, Most Wise". Qur'anic exegetes have explained in detail the three modes of revelation. They have submitted that *wahy*, as a mode of revelation mentioned in the verse, extends to *ru'ya*, *'ilham* and similar other means. It is this elasticity that propels the thought of whether or not *'ikhtilaj* should also be considered as falling under the realms of *wahy*; and that through it Allah can disclose information to man.

*Wahy* literally means inspiration. Inspiration could be defined as any hasty suggestion thrown into the mind of man, not because of any rigorous thinking. Theologically, *wahy* is used specifically to refer to the revelation given by Allah to His messengers and generally to denote communication between Allah and His beings. In the words of Denffer "the word *'awha*, from which "*wahy*" (revelation) is derived, occur in several shades of meaning in the Qur'an, each of them indicating the main underlying idea of inspiration directing or guiding someone.<sup>6</sup> Scholars of *'Usul* have categorized *wahy* into two. To them, there is *wahy matluww* meaning "recited *wahy*" and *wahy ghayr matluww* meaning "unrecited *wahy*".<sup>7</sup> *Wahy matluww*, according to them, refers to the scriptures given to Allah's Messengers, such as the *'Injil*, *Tawrah*, *Zaburah* and Qur'an. That is because each of these scriptures contains information which was, hitherto, before the revelations not known to the messenger to whom it was revealed. That is why Allah, in the Qur'an, in making reference to the revelation given to Prophet Muhammad (S.A/W) and other Prophets (A.S) often uses the phrase "*Inna 'awhayna*" meaning "We inspired". A typical example is verse 163 of *Suratu 'n-Nisa'* where Allah says:

We have sent you inspiration, as We sent it to Nuh and the Messengers after him: We sent inspiration to Ibrahim, 'Isma<sup>c</sup>il, 'IshaqYa<sup>c</sup>qub and the Tribes, to <sup>c</sup>Isa, Yunus, Qarun, and Sulayman, and to Dawud We gave the *Zabur*.

Apart from scriptures, 'Usul scholars also consider the *hadith* of Prophet Muhammad as falling in the purview of *wahy matluww* since the Prophet is believed not to speak of his own volition but based on divine inspiration (Q.53:3-4).

*Wahy ghayr matluww* to them refers to other forms of inspiration which are not scriptural through which Allah discloses information to man and any of His creatures. This includes *ru'ya*, (vision or dream), *'ilham* (intuition) etc. This form of *wahy*, unlike the first one, is not limited to only Prophets and Messengers of Allah. Any other human being as well as other creatures of Allah could receive *wahy ghayr matluww*. The king in *Suratu Yusuf*, Prophet Musa's mother and the Bees are clear examples of Allah's creatures who are not Prophets and Messengers that received *wahy ghayr matluww*.

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W), before receiving the revelation through Jibril (i.e. Qur'an) first received *wahy* in the form of vision. In a long *hadith*, <sup>c</sup>A'ishah (Mother of the faithful) narrated: The commencement of the Divine inspiration to Allah's Apostle was in the form of good dreams which came true like bright day light.<sup>8</sup>

### 1.1.1. *Ru'ya* as a Form *Wahy*

*Ru'ya* means vision or divine dream. It is unlike an ordinary dream, which is *manam* or *hulm*, the plural of which is *'Ahlam*. When *'Ahlam* are mixed up and suspected to be false, they are referred to as *'Adghath 'Ahlam*. The distinction between *Ru'ya* and *hulm* is vividly given in the *hadith* of the Prophet when he said: *Ru'ya* is from Allah and *hulm* is from the devil.<sup>9</sup> The Prophet (S.A.W) in another *hadith*, however, added what he referred to as *hadithu 'n-Nafs* to the forms of dream. <sup>10</sup>*Hadithu 'n-Nafs* refers to a dream that is reflective of what is on one's mind.

The Qur'an also talks about the two kinds of dream earlier referred to namely: *Ru'ya* and *hulm*. The Qur'an refers to the dream that Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) had about his victory and triumphant entry into Makkah as *ru'ya* (vision or divine dream). The Qur'an also refers to the dream of Prophet Ibrahim (A.S) that he slaughtered his son, Ismail for

sacrifice as *ru'ya*, though he, Ibrahim, first taught it was an ordinary dream (*manam*). Analysis of Qur'anic discourse on dream, however, reveals that with regards to interpretation, there are three kinds of dream. Firstly, some dreams require no interpretation. Such dreams will come to pass exactly the way the dreamer had it. A good example is the dream the Prophet had about his triumphant entry into Makkah about which Allah says: "Truly did Allah fulfill the vision for His Apostle: you shall enter the Sacred Mosque, if Allah wills, with minds secure...." (Q.48:27). The second is *Ru'ya* which came to pass *albeit* in the opposite. An apt example was the dream of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) about the Muslims' encounter with the unbelievers of Makkah at Badr. Allah showed the Prophet that the Makkan soldiers were few whereas, they were many. After the encounter, Allah disclosed to him the reason he showed him in his dream that they were few. Allah says: Remember in your dream, Allah showed them to you as few: If He had shown them to you as many, you would surely have been discouraged, and you would surely have disputed in (your) decision: But Allah saved (you) for He knows well the (secrets) of (all) hearts (Q.8:43). The third kind of dream, according to the Qur'an, is dreams that are to be interpreted. Example of this is the dream of the king in *Surat Yusuf*. Concerning the dream, Allah says: "The king of Egypt said:" I do see (in a vision) seven fat kine, whom seven lean ones devour, and seven green ears of corn, and seven (others) withered. O you chiefs! Expound to me my vision if it is that you can interpret vision. (Q. 12:43). When the chiefs could not interpret the dream and regarded it as a confused medley of dreams (*'Adghathu 'Ahlam*), Yusuf was eventually contacted. He had to interpret the dream and advised the king on what to do (Q.12: 47-49).

It should be noted that the interpretation of dreams by experts is not limited to *ru'ya*. To them, there is no dream without an interpretation. And that explains the reason why the Prophet used to ask the *Sahabah* about the dreams they had and interpreted them for them.<sup>11</sup> Also, many works have been written on dream interpretation. Such works include: *Authentic Interpretation of the Dream* by Ahmed Fareed<sup>12</sup>, *The Dreamer's Handbook* by Muhammad Mustafa Al- Jibaly,<sup>13</sup> *Interpretation of Dreams* by Ian Raashid al-Qafsi<sup>14</sup> In all, dreams especially *ru'ya* is considered a form of *wahy*. It is a means by which certain information especially of future occurrences are disclosed to man.

## 1.2. *'Ilham* as a Form of *Wahy*

Literally, *'Ilham* means to make to know. It is making someone know something without going through the conventional way of acquiring knowledge which involves learning and studying. In the case of *'ilham*, knowledge is acquired without any efforts on the part of the person being bestowed. *'Ilham* is not limited to any set of beings or individuals. Anybody can experience it. It is knowledge that is not learnt from anybody, and it is not a product of any rigorous thinking.

*Mufassirun* have identified this method of knowledge acquisition as a form of (*wayh*) because it comes in the form of inspiration. The Qur'an talks about the mother of Prophet Musa (AS) being inspired to put baby Musa in a box and throw the box in a stream as a strategy to save Musa from being killed by Fir'awn who ordered that all male infants should be killed:

Behold! We sent to your mother, by inspiration, the message: "throw (the child) into the chest and throw the chest into the river: the river will cast him up on the bank, and he will be taken up by the one who is an enemy to Me and an enemy to him..." (Q. 20:38-39).

*Mufassirun* (Qur'anic commentators) have interpreted inspiration used in this connection to mean *'ilham*.<sup>15</sup> The mother of Musa was taught what to do by way of inspiration. The knowledge just occurred to her. The suggestion was thrown into her mind. She did not make any efforts to figure out what to do to save baby Musa.

Also, the Qur'an talks about the inspiration of the bee thus: "And your Lord inspired the Bee to build its cells in hills, on trees, and in (men's) habitations; then to eat of all the produce (of the earth), and find with skill the spacious paths of its Lord..." (Q. 16:68-69). *Mufassirun* have interpreted inspiration here to mean *'ilham*. They take the phrase: "We inspired the bee" to mean "We taught the bee". Invariably, the bee's knowledge of how to build its house on mountains and trees and other knowledge mentioned in this verse were all taught to the bee through *'ilham*.

Based on the above, it can be safely concluded that *'ilham*, as vividly described above, is a form of *wahy*. Anybody can be inspired on any matter. Allah can disclose information to any of His creature through

the means of *'ilham*. It is, however, pertinent to draw a line of demarcation between *'ilham* as described above and what is considered *'ilham* among some Yoruba Muslim *Aafas* who believe that there are some forms of *hantu*<sup>16</sup> or *nakali*<sup>17</sup> for *'ilham* in which case, someone will appear to the one who uses the *naqali*<sup>18</sup> in his sleep or in a wakeful state and teach him what he does not know. Why the efficacy or otherwise of such *nakali* is not the interest of this study, some major differences between the *nakali* form of *'ilham* and the earlier one are that the latter involves some efforts on the part of the one who uses the *nakali* while he is also being taught by a mysterious teacher whereas in the case of the former, knowledge is acquired effortlessly and without a teacher. Also, while the *'ilham* experience in the case of *nakali* form is constant, it is occasional in the case of the former. Thus, *wahy* (revelation) is different from *ikhtilaj*. It is evident that only the prophets received divine revelation, and this may cause physical signs such as trembling, pounding of heart. In case of *ikhtilaj*, it can happen to any human beings. Divine revelation provides the foundational teachings and guidance for believers where the palpitation serves as a subjective experimental dimension through which individuals may encounter and connect with the divine.

## 2. Concept of *Tatayyur*

*Tatayyur* could be translated as omen. It is a situation in which certain occurrences are interpreted as being either good or bad sign. The Qur'an gives a clear picture of *Tatayyur* while narrating how the Israelites related with Prophet Musa (A.S) who was sent to deliver them from Fir'awn thus:

But when good (times) came: They said, "This is due to us "when gripped by calamity, they ascribed it to evil omens connected with Musa and those with him! Behold! in truth the omens of evils are theirs in Allah's sight but most of them do not understand (Q.7:131).

*Tatayyur* was a common phenomenon among the pagan Arabs who always resulted to it before embarking on any action such as marriage or travel. It was, among them, like divination. A very common example of *tatayyur* among them, which is the root for the term, was to release a bird to fly. If the bird flies to the right direction, the affair is considered

worthwhile and embarked upon, but if it flies to the left direction, the affair is considered unworthy and abandoned.<sup>19</sup>

Apart from the deliberate attempt to determine course of action through *tatayyur* as described above, *tatayyur* could also be due to some involuntary actions. This form is common among the Yoruba people too. For instance, when a Yoruba man, on his way to visit someone, mistakenly knocks his right foot, he will interpret it to mean that he will meet the person he is going to visit; whereas, if it were to be the left foot, it would be interpreted that he will not meet the person and may thus, go back. Another one is when the first person to approach a trader to buy some items is a female, it is interpreted that the trader will sell abundantly that day. The trader will therefore collect the money directly from the female buyer. But, if the first buyer is a male, it is interpreted that sales will be dull that day. In fact, in some cases where the first customer to approach a trader happens to be a male, the trader will not want to attend to the male customer first. Instead, the trader will seek the indulgence of the male customer to allow him/herself to a female customer first before attending to him. And, where there is no female customer(s), the trader will sell to the male customer but will not collect money from him directly. Instead, he will call any female around to help collect the money and hand over to him/her. The belief in *tatayyur* is so much entrenched in the minds of traditional Yoruba people that when they go out in the morning, they prefer that the first person they will see or meet should be a female which to them is a sign of good omen. Some of them will even go back home if the first person they see or meet is a male as they consider that a bad omen.

The *Jahiliyyah* Arabs had very deep belief in *tatayyur* such that it was part and parcel of their life. They always interpreted any occurrence either as a bad or good omen to the extent that when some of them embraced Islam, they found it extremely difficult to discard. They had to complain to the Prophet (S.A.W) who reasoned with them and taught them the following prayers whenever the belief in *tatayyur* crossed their minds and that the prayer would serve as *kaffarah* (expiation) for them: *Allahumma la tayra 'illatayruka, walakhayra 'illakhayrukawa la 'ilahaghayruka* (O Allah! There is no omen save Your omen, and there no good save Your good, and there is no god besides You).<sup>20</sup>

*Tatayyur* pessimism and *Ikhtilaj* (palpitation) can sometimes be in conflict within an individual's spiritual journey. Pessimism may arise from worldly concerns, doubts, or difficulties, leading to a sense of spiritual desolation or distance from Allah. However, palpitation, with its emphasis on spiritual connection and awareness of the divine presence, can serve as



a counterbalance to pessimism. Through intense spiritual experiences, individuals may find solace, hope, and renewed faith, transcending their pessimistic outlook.

### 3. 'Ikhtilāj between Wahy and Tatayyur

If the belief that '*ikhtilāj*' is a way of disclosing information by Allah to man as opined by Shaykh Adam in his work is anything to go by, then, '*ikhtilaj*' will be considered a form of *wahy* since *wahy* literally means "revelation" or disclosure of information which was hitherto unknown to the one who receives it. Commenting on verses 51 of *Suratu 'shShura, mufassirun* such as Al-Qurtubi,<sup>26</sup> Hasan<sup>27</sup> and As-Sa<sup>c</sup>diy<sup>28</sup> limited the interpretation of *wahy* in the verse as *ru'ya* (divine dream) and '*ilham*'. Going by this interpretation, '*ikhtilāj*' does not enter the purview of *wahy*. However As-Sabuni<sup>29</sup> and At-Tabari<sup>30</sup>, in their interpretation of the *wahy* in the verse, after mentioning *wahy* and '*ilham*' added "*waghayrihima*" meaning "and others". If this interpretation is considered, it will mean that *wahy* is not limited to only *ru'ya* and '*ilham*'. Any other means of disclosure of information such as '*ikhtilāj*' will then be considered as falling within the purview of *wahy*.

A critical look at '*ikhtilaj*' and *tatayyur* reveals that the two concepts share some features. The movement in the body in the case of '*ikhtilaj*' is voluntary and not within the control of the one who experiences it. In the same token, some cases of *tatayyur* such as the ones described above also happen voluntarily. The involuntary occurrences are, in the two concepts, interpreted as either good or bad omen. The verdict of the Prophet on *tatayyur* is that it amounts to *kufr*<sup>31</sup> because it negates the Islamic belief in *Qadar* (destiny) and gives preference to belief in *sadaf* (coincidence) and *zann* (conjecture).

### 4. Shykh Adam's Compilation on '*ikhtilaj*'

Unlike *ru'ya* which, together with its interpretation, has caught the attention of many Muslim writers, the same cannot be said of '*ikhtilaj*'. Apart from the attribution made to Iman Hasan<sup>20</sup> and the one made to Ibn Sirin by Shaykh Adam<sup>21</sup> which is even suspect, we are not aware of any concrete work on '*ikhtilaj*'

Shaykh Adam Abdullah al-Ilori (d.1992), in 1969 published a pamphlet on '*Ikhtilāj*' which he attributed to Ibn Sirin. Ibn Sirin was a *Tabi'* reputed for his great esoteric knowledge especially as it relates to dream interpretations. Indeed, many works on dream interpretation are attributed

to him, the most popular of which is *Ta'biru 'r-Ru'ya* of Al-Kali titled *Ibn Seerin's Dictionary of Dreams according to Islamic Inner Tradition*.<sup>22</sup> Shaykh Adam's work, printed by Matba'atuThaqafati 'l- Islamiyyah is a pamphlet originally written in Arabic. It was thereafter, perhaps because of its usefulness, translated into Yoruba by an anonymous translator. The work, which together with the Yoruba translation runs into 20 pages, has also been reprinted severally.

The work opens with the *Basmalah* after which Allah's Blessings are sought for Prophet Muhammad. This is followed by a line of poetry which reads:

وفي كل شيء له آية # تدل على أنه الواحد

Translation-

In everything, there is a sign \* pointing to the fact  
that He (Allah) is One

The author cites this line of the poem purposely to convince the reader that Allah could, through any means or any sign He desires such as *'ikhtilāj* disclose information to man; and that *'ikhtilāj* is one of such ways or signs. The author describes *'ikhtilāj* as an expression used for some voluntary uncontrollable movements sometimes noticeable in some parts of the body. He writes further that medical doctors attribute *'Ikhtilājto fullness of the body or dust emanating from food*. He, however, submits that contrary to the medical doctors' position, *'Ikhtilāj* is a form of notification or warning for whoever experiences it concerning some future occurrences.<sup>23</sup>

Since *'Ikhtilāj* can occur in any part of the body, the Shaykh has identified and interpreted its occurrence in 115 parts of the body starting with the different organs in the head and ending with the smallest left toe. Based on the interpretations, it is observed that *'Ikhtilāj* could portray either a good or bad omen. To a very large extent, in interpreting *'Ikhtilāj* in the work, consideration is given to whether the part of the body is right or left. For instance, the interpretation given for *'Ikhtilāj* occurring on the right side of the nose is that the person will be saved from *hammandghamm*(grief) and *fitnah* (tribulation) whereas, if it occurs on the left side, he will succeed in a venture and if he is a sick person, he will be cured of the illness.<sup>24</sup>

At times, gender consideration is taken into account in the interpretation. For instance, it is believed that when *'Ikhtilāj* occurs to a male at the back of his head, it signifies that a kind of calamity will befall the

person, but he will thereafter be saved from such calamity, whereas, if it is experienced by a female in the same spot, it signifies marriage.<sup>25</sup>

### 5. The Yoruba Muslims and Belief in 'Ikhtilaj

The Yoruba Muslims have expressed divergent opinions on *ikhtilaj*. It is observed that the opinion expressed is a function of their inclinations. The Yoruba Muslims and the *Aafas* among them who are inclined towards Yoruba Traditions believe that *'ikhtilaj* is one of the ways by which the Almighty gives information to man. To them, it is a form of *wahy* and as such, it has interpretative significance. A good number of them have copies of the pamphlet compiled by Shaykh Adam which they consult from time to time whenever they experience *'ikhtilaj* in any part of the body, while they also express belief in the interpretations given by the Shaykh in his compilation.<sup>32</sup> It should, however, be mentioned that few of them express reservations for some of the interpretations given in the compilation. They argue that there are instances when the interpretations given by the Shaykh in his compilation do not come to pass.<sup>33</sup> There are also among them those who believe that the work of Shaykh Adam is not deep enough as it treats the subject on a surface level and gives general interpretations. Those knowledgeable among them in *Hisab* or '*Ilmu 'l-Falak*<sup>34</sup> are of the view that to interpret *'ikhtilaj* correctly, the horoscope of the one who experiences it has to be consulted and the spiritual origin (i.e. whether *hawai-* of wind, *ma'i-* of water, *nari-* of fire or *Turabi* of sand) has to be taken into consideration.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, in their opinion, the interpretations given by the Shaykh in the pamphlet are not always correct.

However, as for the Yoruba Muslims who tend towards orthodoxy, they share the same view with the orthodox medical practitioners. To them, no meaning should be attached to *ikhtilaj* which is just a voluntary palpitation of muscles that medically cannot be adduced to any malfunction of the body system. In effect, *ikhtilaj* has no interpretative significance. The interpretations given by Shaykh Adam in his compilation, to the orthodox Yoruba Muslims, are of no significance and where they turn out to come true, the orthodox Yoruba Muslims would rather see it as mere coincidence (*sadaf*).<sup>36</sup>

### 6. Conclusion

It could be concluded from the above enunciations that there are two opposing views concerning whether or not *'ikhtilaj* has an interpretative meaning. While the like of Shaykh Adam as espoused in his work and some

traditional Muslim *Aafas* believe it has, many do not attach any significance to it. On the correctness of its interpretations, those who believe that it has interpretative significance confess that it is not always correct but argue that the fact that it, many times, turns about to be reality is an indication that 'ikhtilaj has interpretative significance and should not be treated as mere occurrence. And that where it does not work, it could be that it is interpreted wrongly and that does not inform a conclusion that it is wholly insignificant. Conversely, the opponents argue that the fact that its interpretation is not always correct shows that it has no interpretative significance while they consider the occasions where it works to be mere coincidence (*sadaf*). They argue further that 'ikhtilaj has no established basis either in the Qur'an or hadith. To them, expressing belief in 'ikhtilaj is like expressing belief in *Tatayyur*. Findings, however, reveal that attaching interpretative significance and meaning to 'ikhtilaj was common among the old Yoruba Muslims. They were often heard making reference to 'ikhtilaj experiences and attaching meaning to it. Perhaps, it was due to its popularity among them that spurred Shaykh Adam to compile his work which he attributed to Ibn Sirrin. Shaykh Adam's work has, however, further popularized belief in 'ikhtilaj among the few who have access to it. It is hereby recommended that the Muslim scholars in Yoruba land need to develop educational program through all available media to enlightening pepolethe concept of ikhtilaj within the Islamic framework. This could help them to have complete reliance on Allah.

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### **Conflicts of Interest**

We declare and acknowledge that we do not have any competing interest, such as financial, personal, or other interests attached to writing this article.

### Authors' Contribution

We designed this study to examine the belief in 'ikhtilaj among Yoruba Muslims with the view to determining whether it has interpretative meaning and whether it is to be considered as belonging to the class of *tatayyur* or *wahy*, as such, we analyze textual authorities from Islamic texts scholarly works and historical documents, also qualitative approach was employed through semi structural interviews and the study finds that in the light of Islamic law principles, 'ikhtilaj has no interpretative meaning and it is to be considered as *tatayyur* and not *wahy*.

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*Hantu* is adulterated form of the Arabic word, *Khatt*, which means writing. *Hantu*, among the Yoruba Muslim *Aafas*, is used to refer to the writing made with a kind of ink called *tadawa* on black slate called *walaa*. This, after completion, is washed with water and given to the patient to drink. Sometimes, he may be asked to bath with it. It may also be mixed with soap, perfume or pomade. In some cases, some other ingredients are added to the *hantu*. It is believed that such ingredients will further boost the efficacy of the *hantu*.

*Nakali* as commonly pronounced by the Yoruba Muslim *Aafas* is adulterated form of the word '*naql*' which literally means among others, report, transcription, copy, tradition, transfer etc. it is specifically used by the Muslim *Aafas* to refer to certain manuscripts containing some secret reports which they call *asiri* on how to use some prayer formulas to achieve certain ends. Perhaps because such reports exchange hands among Muslim *Aafas*, they call it *naql*.

This view is expressed among others by Shaykh Mahmud Sulayman, a spiritual consultant and founder of *Ma'had Mahmud lil'ArabiwallIslami*, Ota Ikosi, Agbowa, Ikorodu, Lagos State. He is aged 60 years. Interview conducted on 10/8/2022.

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M. J. At-Tabari, *Jami' u'l-Bayan fi Ta'wili'l-Qur'an*, (Cairo: Mu'ssasatu'r-Risalah, 2000)

M. Y. Ibn Majah, *Sunan Ibn Maajah*, (Beirut: Maktabatu Abi Mu'ata, No. 3538)

This is the view expressed by Dr. AbdulkabirOlaiya Suleiman, President, Skola Research Foundation, BalaGogo Compound, Osunte Road, Offa. Interview conducted on 22/01/23. The same view is expressed by most Yoruba Muslim spiritual consultants.

*ibid*

*Ilmu'l-Hisab* is the use of the Arabic alphabetic letters, according to their numerical value; *Ilmu'l-Falak* is astrology, which is the study of the position of the stars and of the movements of the planets in the belief that they influence human affairs. These two sciences are used to read people's horoscope.

This view is expressed among others by Shaykh Mahmud Sulayman, a spiritual consultant and founder of *Ma'had Mahmud lil'ArabiwalIslami*, Ota Ikosi, Agbowa, Ikorodu, Lagos State. He is aged 60 years. Interview conducted on 10/8/2022.

This is the view expressed by Dr. Miqdad Ali Miqdad of the Department of Religions, History and Heritage Studies, Kwara State University, Malete on 11/03/2023 and a host of other *salafi* Muslims interviewed on the subject Yorubaland.