

**THE MEANINGS OF *HIKMAH* IN ABU-TALIB AL-MAKKI'S
'*ILM AL-QULŪB* AND WISDOM IN YORUBA WORLDVIEW: A
COMPARATIVE DISCOURSE**

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Abstract

The background to this study is the plurality of the meaning of the concept of *Hikmah* in Islamic Philosophy. The problem of the study is to answer the epistemological questions of sources and justifications of wisdom within the context of the meanings of wisdom given by Al-Makki in his work *Ilm al-Qulūb*. The study aims at translating and analysing a significant portion of the said work so as to expose its thought on wisdom to an Islamic Philosophical examination, with a comparative touch from the Yoruba conception of the sources of wisdom. Historical method was adopted in the paper and the challenges addressed in the paper included elements of translation, annotation and content analysis. The quintessential finding was that Al-Makki's gave six meanings of wisdom that suggest some forms of acquired knowledge as sources of wisdom and nine meanings that suggest some behavioural justifications of wisdom. On the whole, Al-Makki's epistemology is not alien to the African Traditional Religion's conception of wisdom in that they both affiliate wisdom to the Divine. Al-Makki's thought however gives a more explicit taxonomy, though, his meanings fall short of the consideration of being elderly as a source of wisdom, whereas, the source is seen as the major epistemological factor in the discussed African Philosophy. The paper therefore recommends that, for the thoughts of Al-Makki to be applicable in an environment like the Yoruba culture, it becomes imperative to add elderliness as an epistemological factor, especially since it is not alien to the general Islamic worldview.

Keyword: *Hikmah* (wisdom), Abu Talib al-Makki, *Ilm al-Qulūb*.

Introduction

Philosophy originates from two Greek words which are *philos* and *sophia*, meaning the love of wisdom. *Hikmah* means wisdom, a concept that represents *sophia* in Islamic philosophy. Technically, among numerous definitions, philosophy can be generally defined as the logical analysis of language and the clarification of the meaning of words and concepts. Since Islam is a religion that mandates reading, learning, meditation (*tafakkur*) and reflection (*tadabbur*) as evident in Q96 i.e. Suratul 'Alaqamong others, it is therefore not an overstatement to say that Islam has in its intellectual heritage a unique philosophy of knowledge. One of the Sufi scholars that tried to discuss the meanings of wisdom is Abu-Talib Al-Makki. Therefore, this study is based on Al-Makki's definitions of the term *Hikmah* (wisdom) as explained in one of his books titled *'Ilm al-Qulūb*. The purpose of the comparison between Al-Makki's and Yoruba epistemologies is to deduce the applicability of Al-Makki's theories and thoughts in a Yoruba environment. It should be noted that Q16:125 orders that callers to the religion should do that with wisdom (*hikmah*). So, it becomes important for a caller in Yoruba environment to know the connotation of *hikmah* in both the Islamic and Yoruba worldviews.

Conceptual Clarifications: Wisdom, Knowledge and Epistemology

Literally, wisdom can be described as the ability to make sensible decisions and give good judgment based on the experience and knowledge that someone possesses. Being wise requires that the individual makes deliberate efforts at reasoning and seeking knowledge of things through critical thinking and striving to make a concrete judgment. Such individual must cultivate a very high degree of questioning ability and an unending urge to gather information while possessing the necessary mental prerequisites to separate between speculations, fantasies and realities. If philosophy means the zeal or love to attain the far knowledge about the reality of things, then wisdom can be said to be a high degree of knowledge.

In his exegesis of Q2:269, Sayyid Qutb describes wisdom as the precious intellectual gift of God which enables people to reason and evaluate their actions and to seek moderation and forethought in their attitudes and behaviour. What a great gift, indeed, he said.¹

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that deals with the theories of knowledge. It is widely known as the philosophy of knowledge. According to Robert Audi, epistemology broadly conceived

may consider not just the scope of our knowledge and justified belief but also the scope of our rational belief and even of other rational attitudes toward propositions, such as certain kinds of acceptance, presumption, and faith. This extension of epistemological appraisal to other, weaker attitudes provides more scope for rationality than there would be if belief were the only object of rationality. The same strength of evidence or grounding may take us further in the domain of attitudes like acceptance, presumption, and faith than in that of belief.²

From this, it can be deduced that epistemology means the philosophy of knowledge, while wisdom is the heart of philosophy or its synonym in some cases. What one refers to as wisdom can be referred to by the other as knowledge while another person sees it as an ordinary imagination. A discussion of the philosophy of wisdom fits into epistemology when we consider wisdom as a higher form of knowledge and intelligence.

Knowledge is that which is known and understood, but it is often applied to acquired information on an established fact, skill or idea. Knowledge therefore is the product of learning. Wisdom is a form of knowledge which is internal and not often acquired or learnt. When one knows or gets an established information (knowledge) about something and gives it a personal thought by finding an answer to the question of “why” regarding the being of the thing, he will be able to give the reason and logic behind its existence, and that is his own wisdom. Correct or incorrect, wisdom is the directive that shows the intellectual ability of a person, just as knowledge is to the brain and heart. When one gives theories, explanations or illustration of cases from one’s knowledge and experience, all in the name of proving the validity of one’s new born intellectual baby, the body of those theories becomes a philosophy, which other people will see and acquire as knowledge on their own part. Epistemology is thus related to both wisdom and knowledge, being an important branch of philosophy. One’s philosophy of wisdom is one’s epistemology because wisdom is the major form of knowledge from which philosophies emanate.

A Brief Biography of Abu Tālib Al-Makki

Abu Talib Muhammad Ibn Ali Ibn Atiyya al-Harithi al-Ajami al-Makki was born in the province of al Jibal in the present day Iraq, but the actual date of his birth is unknown³. Indeed, sources available reveal little information which might shed light on this. Probably, he must have been born sometime between 930-940CE, considering his year of death

386A.H/996 C.E, his reported meeting with IbnSalim (d. 350 A.H/960 C.E) and his early education under Abu Said Ibn al-Arabi⁴.

Many sources indicate that al-Makki grew up in Makkah where he received his early education. He then left for Basra, one of the greatest intellectual and commercial centres at that time. None of the biographical dictionaries suggests the date of his departure from Makkah. According to al-Khatib, Ibn al-Jawzi and IbnKhallikan, al-Makki entered Basra after the death of Abu Hasan Ahmad IbnSalim (d. 350/960), a leader of the *Salimiyyah* School. The *Salimiyyah* School is a major factor in the education of Al-Makki. He affiliated himself to the *Salimites* and his writings portray some of their thoughts, as he claimed in the *Qut* to have met and seen IbnSalim, contrary to other reports which suggest that al-Makki entered Basra after IbnSalim's death⁵.

Al-Salimiyya is a mystico-theological school at Basra. Its doctrine is based on the teachings of Sahl al-Tustari, and its name is drawn from his disciples, Abu Abd Allah Muhammad IbnSalim (d. 297/909) and his son Ahmad IbnSalim. No writing of the father or the son is known and this school has been mainly represented by their opponents' views. As Massignon argues, the *Salimi* teachings may be sought in al-Makki's writings, as the *Qut* is filled with the sayings of Sahl al-Tustari, who is often referred to with an honorific title⁶.

Apart from IbnSalim (the son), three scholars' names should be listed as his teachers based on internal evidence in the *Qut*. These are Abu Said Ibn al-Arabi (d. 341/952), Abu Ali Kirmani and Muzaffar b. Sahl, each of whom al-Makki calls Shaykh. After some time in Basra, al Makki left for Baghdad, which was a major centre of Sufism at that time. Nothing has come to light in the sources available about the date of his departure for Baghdad. Very little is known about his activities in this city except that he is reported to have spoken in public whereupon he was rejected by the public because of his making strange utterances and because he was accused of being a heretic following a statement "nothing is more hurtful to the creatures than the Creator" which he publicly altered.⁷

After living for some time in Baghdad, Abu Talib died on the 6th Jumada 11, 386/7th June 996. He was buried in the Malikiyyah cemetery on the eastern Tigris. Details about his death are related by Ibn al-Jawzi in his *Muntazam*⁸.

Works of Abu Tālib Al-Makki

Al-Makki does not seem to be a prolific writer. There are about five books which have been attributed to him. His most popularly known

work is *Qut al-Qulub* through which he was elevated by later *Sufis* to the ranks of their outstanding personalities. His other works are *Ilm al-Qulūb* (which this study is based on), *Al-Bayan al-Shaf'i*, *Kitab Manasik al-Hajj* and a *Tafsir* of the holy Qur'an. However, out of all these four works, only *Qut al-Qulūb* and *'Ilm al-Qulūb* are currently extant. Although *al-Bayan al-Shaf'i* was studied in depth and explained by Ibn Abbad al-Rundi, it seems that the original text was lost afterwards.

The Meanings of Wisdom in *'Ilm al-Qulūb*

This book is said to be the second of the only two extant works of Al-Makki apart from the *Qūt*. Compared to the *Qūt*, the *'Ilm* is less popular; less studied in the available research works and scantily referred to in the available appendixes of *Sufi* traditions or Islamic philosophy books. The edition of the *'Ilm* available to this researcher was published in 1964 by Abdul Qadir Ahmad Ata in Cairo which, according to W. Amin and Seako Yazaki, was published from the 315 folios' manuscript, number 113 in Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyyah in Cairo⁹.

The opening chapter of Al-Makki's *'Ilm al-Qulūb* contains fourteen definitions of *Hikmah* (wisdom) and a subsidiary explanation of the virtue of the wise which is taken in this work to be the fifteenth meaning. Some of the meanings appear to have been propounded by Al-Makki himself while he mentions sources for some others. The meanings are:

1- Understanding the technical aspects of the Quran

'Ilm al-Qulūb has it that:

قال ابن عباس رضي الله عنه الحكمة هي المعرفة بالقرآن ناسخه ومنسوخه ومحكمه ومنتشابهه ومقدمه ومؤخره وحلاله وحرامه وأمثاله¹⁰

Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, said: wisdom (*Hikmah*) means to have knowledge about the Qur'an; its abrogating and abrogated (verses), its precise and identical (verses), its forwarded and backwarded (verses), its legalizations, prohibitions and parables.

2- Prophethood

'Ilm al-Qulūb has it that:

وقال السدي الحكمة هي النبوة. قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: كاد الحكيم أن يكون نبيا.¹¹

Assadiy said: wisdom (*Hikmah*) means Prophethood. The prophet may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him said: a wise one is almost a prophet.

3- **Foresight**

'*Ilm al-Qulūb* has it that:

وقيل الحكمة الفراسة. قيل لبعض الحكماء، ما الفراسة؟ قال الإصابة بالظنون
ومعرفة ما لم يكن بما
كان.¹²

Wisdom (*Hikmah*) means physiognomy. One of the wise ones was asked: what is *al-firāsah*? He said: correctness of guesses and the knowledge of what it is not from what it is

4- **Intellect**

Al-Makki said in '*Ilm al-Qulūb*:

وقيل: الحكمة العقل. وكذلك حكي في التفسير عن ابن عباس في معنى¹³
قوله... وأتيناها الحكم صبيًا.

It was said that wisdom (*Hikmah*) means intellect. That is how it is reported from the *tafsir* of Ibn Abbas in interpretation of the word of His...and we gave him wisdom at childhood.

5- **Fear of God**

It is contained in '*Ilm al-Qulūb* that:

وقيل الحكمة هي الخشية. ونحو هذا جاء عن الربيع بن أنس في قوله تعالى:
العلماء. قال من لم يخشى الله من عباده فليس بعالم¹⁴ إنما يخشى الله من عباده

It was said that wisdom (*Hikmah*) means fear. A similar report came from Ar-rabi' bnAnas regarding the statement of Allah the Most High that “only the knowledgeable ones among the servants of Allah fears Him”. He said: “anyone that does not fear Allah is not a knowledgeable person”.

6- **Understanding of the exegesis of the Qur'an**

'*Ilm al-Qulūb* has it that:

وقيل: الحكمة هي الفقه في تفسير القرآن. قال ابن عباس: ليس شئ من القرآن
إلا وقد نزل في شئ ولكن لا يعلمون وجوهه. وقال ابن عباس رضي الله عنه:
مسح رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم رأسي
ودعا لي بالحكمة وقال: اللهم فقهه في الدين وعلمه التأويل واجعله إماما¹⁵
للمتقين.

It was said that wisdom (*Hikmah*) means the understanding of the exegesis of the Qur'an. Ibn Abbas said: There is nothing in the Qur'an except that it was revealed regarding an issue, but they (people) do not know the phases (of such issue). Ibn Abbas also said: the Messenger of Allah rubbed my head and prayed for me to have wisdom and said: Oh Allah! Make him to have understanding of the religion, and

teach him the indepth meaning of the Qur'an, and make him a leader for the pious ones.

7- **Knowledge from God**

Ilm al-Qulūb has it that:

وقيل: الحكمة هي العلم. لقوله تعالى "وعلمناه من لدنا علماً"¹⁶

It was said that wisdom (*Hikmah*) means knowledge, for the proof of the word of Allah the Most High "and we taught him knowledge from ourselves".

8- **Correctness in statements**

Ilm al-Qulūb has it that:

وقيل الحكمة الإصابتة في الأقوال. إن نطق بنطق بالله وإن سكت سكت مع الله¹⁷

It was said that wisdom (*Hikmah*) means correctness of one's statements such that when one talks, one talks of God, and when one keeps silent, one does with Allah.

9- **Prophetic tradition**

Ilm al-Qulūb has it that:

وقيل الحكمة أحاديث النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم التي هي شرح أحكام القرآن

وبيانه وتفصيل

مجملاته.¹⁸

It was said that wisdom (*Hikmah*) means the sayings of the Prophet (Muhammad), may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, which are the explanation of the rulings contained in the Qur'an, its elucidation, and clarification of its integrated verses.

10- **Correctness of statements of deeds and desires**

Ilm al-Qulūb has it that:

وقيل الحكمة الإصابتة في الأقوال والأعمال والإرادات. لا يقول إلا الله ولا

ما يريد الله¹⁹ يعمل إلا لوجه الله ولا يريد إلا

It was said that wisdom (*Hikmah*) means three things: correctness of one's statements, deeds and intentions. He will not speak except for Allah, he will not do except for the sake of Allah and will not intend except that which Allah intends.

11- **Modesty and related virtues**

Ilm al-Qulūb has it that:

وقيل الحكمة ثلاثة أشياء: الحياء من الملك الجبار وحفظ الحرمة للنبي المختار

والولد والجار²⁰ ورعاية حقوق الأهل

It was said that wisdom (*Hikmah*) is made up of three things: Modesty in relation to the Majestic Sovereign, protection of the sacredness of the chosen prophet, and

protection of the rights of the household, the children and neighbourhood.

12- **Scrupulousness**

Ilm al-Qulūb has it that:

وقيل الحكمة هي الورع²¹

It was said that wisdom (*Hikmah*) means scrupulousness.

13- **Memorization of the Quran**

Ilm al-Qulūb has it that:

وقيل الحكمة حفظ القرآن عن ظهر القلب²²

It was said that wisdom (*Hikmah*) means to memorize the Qur'an by heart.

14- **Understanding the delicate aspects of the Qur'an**

Ilm al-Qulūb has it that:

الحكمة هي فهم لطائف القرآن ووجوهه ومعانيه²³

It was said that wisdom (*Hikmah*) means to understand the delicate or deeper aspects of the Qur'an and its forms and meanings.

15- Having stated these fourteen meanings; this study is also interested in a virtue which Al-Makki attributed to the wise person. It can be said that Al-Makki defined wisdom in its *fifteenth meaning as an act of being dynamic*. He said:

يحتاج أن يكون الحكيم صاحب فطنة عليم يفرق لكل واحد منهم من بحره على مقدار فهمه وعقله ويزنه بميزانه ويظهر²⁴ ويسقيه بكاسه ويكلمه بلسانه ما يمكن إظهاره ويخفي ما يحسن إخفاءه

The wise one (*al-Hakīm*) is in need of being an intelligent person, a scholar who scoops each person from his ocean, gives water to each person with his cup, speaks to him in his tongue according to the level of his understanding and intellect, and measures him with his measure. He reveals what should be disclosed and conceals what is good to be concealed.

Al-Makki's Epistemology and the Qur'an and Sunnah

The Islamic conception of wisdom can be well understood by looking into the Quranic usage of the word, and what the prophetic traditions say about it.

First, the Qur'an states that *Hikmah*, i.e. wisdom, is originally an attribute of God. He is the All-knowing and the Wise. The names '*Alim* and *Hakim* appear thirty seven times in the Qur'an, referring to Allah as

the All-knowing and the Wise. In the same vein, the Qur'an sees *hikmah* as an intellectual gift from God to man, with which the wise ones (*ululalbab*) remember Allah in all things. This is contained in Q2:269 which reads:

He grants wisdom to whom He pleases; and He to whom wisdom is granted receives indeed a benefit overflowing; but none will grasp the Message but men of understanding.

Having revealed the two broad modes of *Hikmah*; the Original, which is Allah's attribute, and the gift of God to man, it is necessary to add that this gift (wisdom) is of two forms; two modes; two levels. The Qur'an refers to wisdom as *hikmah* or *hukm*. In the first usage, the word *hikmah* is often mentioned together with 'Holy Book' i.e. *al-kitab wal hikmah*. This appears nine times in the Quran. In the second usage, *hukm*, i.e. wisdom or power to rule, is mentioned alone, or along with the word *nubuwwah* i.e. prophethood, as it appears in three verses of the Qur'an. Therefore, altogether, there are three modes of wisdom, going by the Qur'anic usage:

1- *Hikmah* of God: This can be defined as the omniscience of God.

This, no one possesses except Him. Not even the angels who are created from light. The confession of the angel is one of the numerous proofs for this assertion in the Qur'an. Q2:32 reads:

They said: Glory to You, of knowledge we have none, save what you have taught us: In truth it is You who is perfect in knowledge and wisdom.

Actually, the angels were knowledgeable enough to correctly suggest bloodshed and rancor as results of the creation of man, but they could not see the divine wisdom behind the creation of man.

2- *Wisdom of the prophets which is bestowed on them by God as a complement of prophethood to ease the application of the scriptures in guidance and rulership:* This can be defined as the intellectual way of life of the prophets of God; a special gift bestowed on them to complement the books or prophethood given to them, and a tool of teaching the practical aspects of the message they preached. In the case of the Qur'an given to the nation of Prophet Muhammad, *hikmah* means the *Sunnah*; the prophetic tradition; his way of life. Q62:2 reads:

It is He who has sent amongst the unlettered an apostle from among themselves, to rehearse to them His Signs, to sanctify them, and to instruct them in Scripture and Wisdom, although they had been, before, in manifest error.

- 3- Wisdom bestowed on a non-prophet:** Wisdom is seen in other parts of the Qur'an, as an intellectual excellence in man. This man may be anybody onto whom Allah wills to bestow His mercy, regardless of race, generation, age, religion and other factors. Q2:269 cited above is a proof for this.

It must be stated here that the third form of wisdom is opened to struggle and quest from human being. Among its agents are education, piety, scrupulousness, exceeding supererogatory worship rites, selflessness and the likes of good virtues. The gift is not just free for all and sundry. For the love of wisdom, the Qur'an preaches virtues which will qualify a man to receive this special gift from God.

The Islamic conception of *hikmah* reveals that wisdom is an intellectual virtue that can be attributed to God, the Prophets and anybody who strives for it. The love of wisdom and the quest to possess it through the painstaking way declared by the Giver of wisdom is part of the unique features of Islamic philosophy. Therefore, Abu-Talib Al-Makki's *Ilm al-Qulub* appears to have captured squarely the Islamic view of wisdom. This is because he did not only attribute wisdom to God (by defining it as the words of God ie the Quran) but also used metonymy or linguistic metaphor (*majāz mursal*) to coin out meanings that fit the wisdom of the prophets (by defining wisdom as prophethood) and also the non-prophets (by describing wisdom as fear of God, scrupulousness among other virtues of wisdom).

Noteworthy is the fact that meaning number three (physiognomy or foresight as a meaning of *hikmah*) and number five (piety as meaning of *hikmah*) are directly related to the sayings of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. The contested *hadith* reads that: the foundation of wisdom is the fear of Allah". This has been attributed to Prophet Muhammad by some scholars as a *hadith marfu'* (ie one which is attributed to the Prophet), while others see it as a *mawquf* (a chain of narration that stops at the *sahabah*).²⁵ Also, to be able to foresee things before their realities turn out is a special gift of light which God gives the believers. Prophet Muhammad said: "Beware of the believer's intuition, for indeed he sees with Allah's Light".²⁶ Elements of foresight in the history of believers are most traceable to Umar Ibn Al-Khattab. Al-Lālikai, Yusuf An-Nabahāni among others recorded various scenarios when Umar was said to seen visions.²⁷ Also, various books of Quranic exegesis recorded how Umar foresaw the need for the revelation of some injunctions and they were so revealed afterwards.²⁸ On the other hand, meaning number thirteen in Al-Makki's epistemology (ie to memorize the Quran) needs to be looked into.

The ordinary memorization of the Qur'an without knowing its meaning and application may not be considered as a means of wisdom. Apart from the many practical examples of that which can be seen among the Muslims, the Qur'an clearly declares that an ordinary memorization of a holy book is not good enough, as recorded in Q62:5.

“The likeness of those who were loaded with Tawrah, then did not observe it is as the likeness of the ass bearing books...”

However, one may agree with Al-Makki if the thirteenth meaning is not taken in isolation. This means, the memorization of the Qur'an can be added to the understanding of the exegesis of the Qur'an, understanding the technical aspects of the Quran and the understanding the delicate aspects of the Qur'an, which are meanings six, one and fourteen respectively.

Al-Makki's epistemology is also seen to have excluded an important source of wisdom which is being elderly. This can be seen as a major defect in Al-Makki's epistemology because elderliness is an epistemological factor that is strongly emphasized in the Qur'an. Age, specifically forty, is mentioned in the Qur'an to be a point at which God bestows wisdom fully on mankind. Passages Q46:15, 12:22, 28:14 of the Qur'an point to that.

And when he attained *his maturity* and *became full grown*, we granted him wisdom and knowledge...Q28:14

...until he attains *his maturity* and reaches *forty years* ... Q46:15

Still on the expatiation of the age factor as an important aspect of *Hikmah*, one may want to give Al-Makki some excuse for his lack of mentioning the age factor throughout his theories in his study. Such excuse may be found in Q19:12 where Prophet Yahya was given wisdom by Allah at a childhood age. Similar is that of Prophet Isa in verse 29 of the same chapter. Our answer to this philosophical paradox is that the Qur'an mentioned age forty and childhood all in reference to Prophets. When prophethood is no more, *hikmah* plays a vital role and the possessors are seen as pseudo-prophets. Though, the possession of *hikmah* by non-prophets has been tied with the wish of Allah as cited earlier (Q2:269), regardless of age, status, gender or race. But how often can one find a child with *hikmah*? The scarcity of such informs us that the age factor may be or may not be considered in reference to the prophets but very much applicable to the non-prophet possessors of *hikmah*.

Al-Makki's Epistemology and Some Islamic Scholars' Thoughts

Al-Makki's thought is quite similar to that of Shaykh Ibrahim Al-Kawlakhi who also sees knowledge as an endowment that represents prophethood which is directly bestowed from the Divine. In his exegesis on Q18:65 where Allah says: "So they found one of Our servants, on whom we had Mercy from ourselves and whom we had taught knowledge from Our own", Al-Kawlakhi said:

هذا العبد هو خضر. أعطاه الله رحمة وعلمه علما لدنيا وهو الذي لا يلقنه
إنما هو من عند الله تبارك وتعالى ومحله قلب²⁹ الأثيخ ولا يؤخذ من الكتب
العبد

the slave of Allah (in that context) is Khidr. Allah gave him mercy and taught him a divinely bestowed knowledge, which is the knowledge which is neither instructed by the teachers nor read from the books. It is just from God the Most-Blessed, the Most-High, and its location is the heart of man.

This shows that apart from the prophets, people who are special in their dealings with God can be chosen by Him for a kind of lower divine inspiration. That is seen to be the implication of 'who He wills' in Q2:269.

Similarly, Shaykh Adam Abdullah Al-Ilory share the same epistemology when he sees divine knowledge bestowed on saints as a representative of the revelation bestowed on the prophets. Al-Ilory said:

لكن الله تعالى لما رفع بساط الوحي والنبوة والمعجزة وضع مكانه
والكرامة فى الولاية³⁰ بساط الإلهام والرؤيا

When Allah has stopped (prophetic) revelation, prophethood and miracle, He replaced them with inspiration, dream and sainthood miracle.

Al-Makki and Yoruba Epistemology

In West African culture, the Yoruba people for instance, wisdom is often attributed on the one hand to the elderly ones. Their age and experience are seen as sources of deep and careful thinking. Proof on this can be found in the following Yoruba proverbs:

- 1- "fifi ogbón ológbón s'ogbón ni kù jẹ kíá p'àgbà ní wèrè", meaning "learning from other people's wisdom (i.e. experiences) is the reason for not tagging an elderly one as being crazy".
- 2- "t'omodé bá ñ gégi nígbó, àgbàlagbà ló mọ'bi tó máa wósí", meaning "when the minor one is cutting a tree, the elderly one knows the direction to which it will fall".

- 3- “*ohun t’ágbàbá rí lóri ijòkó, b’òmòdé bá g’orí òrùlé kò leè rí*”, meaning “what the elderly one sees while sitting down, if the minor one climbs the roof, he cannot see it”.

These proverbs point to the idea that wisdom is sought from the elderly ones on issues that concern life experience and in executing some life’s tasks that appear hard or unsolvable.

Another sphere in Yoruba belief system is that wisdom is sought from *Òrúnmìlà* through *Ifá* divination, on issues that bother on destiny, hidden or metaphysical aspects of life, such as to know the right one among the options of marriage partners, jobs, trades and other things that have to do with one’s destiny or future. This is because it is believed that *Òrúnmìlà* was present when human destiny was sealed. And so, he is called *Elérí ipín* “the witness of human destiny”. It is generally believed that he was sent into the world together with *Òrìṣà-ńlá* (believed to be the arch divinity) in order to guide humans. Since *Òrúnmìlà* is believed to be able to decipher cause of events and sacred mysteries, Yoruba people consult the priest of *Òrúnmìlà* known as *babaláwo* (the father of the mystery).³¹ Here, *babaláwo* stands as a major custodian of wisdom in Yoruba traditional worldview because he is the one that can administer and interpret the system of divination through which *Òrúnmìlà* communicates to people by *Ifá* divination.

On the whole, the African tradition too has a coded philosophy of knowledge and wisdom. They too believe that there is a form of information that only the spiritual realm can supply. They attribute human wisdom to experience and old-age, unlike the monotheistic faiths which often attribute wisdom to the possession of the knowledge of the revealed books, the number of *hadith* memorized and devotion to worship, with little or no consideration for the age or experience of the ‘wise’ religionist. The centre point of African Religion and Al-Makki’s views on wisdom is attributing mystical wisdom to the divine, and that the divine communicates through some human beings. The difference however is that while African Religion is about a priest interpreting some signs to decode the divine communication, Al-Makki stipulates some qualities and virtues which the wise one would have done before his heart gets pure and qualifies for being illuminated by the divine. The qualities are parts of what he directly stated as the meaning of wisdom.

As earlier pointed out, there is a major defect in Al-Makki’s epistemology which has been observed in the section on the Qur’an and Sunnah above and can reduce the applicability of his thought among the Yoruba. The factor is that of elderliness. When someone has the required

scriptural knowledge of the religion and possesses the necessary behavioural justification of being a wise person, but appears to be very young, the Yoruba may not submit to his wise words of advice. Apart from the fact that this is already obvious in their philosophical proverbs as examined, studies of scholars such as A. Agbaje, O. A. Adeboye among others have shown that the Yoruba have a culture that attaches authority to eldership. Olufunke Adeboye concluded in his paper titled: *The Changing Conception of Elderhood in Ibadan, 1830-2000*, that elderhood (among the Yoruba) is not just a terminal state of existence but a category that is imbued with power and authority.³²

From the foregoing, one can safely conclude that the age factor is a common ground between the Quranic perception of wisdom and the stand of Yoruba culture. However, another Yoruba proverb says “*Ọmọdé gbón àgbàgbón la fídá Ilẹ-Ifẹ sílẹ*” This means: Ile-Ife was founded on the wisdom of both the young and the old. This proverb seems to suggest that age is not a factor of wisdom. However, there are various types of wisdom which the Yoruba express with the same word: “*ogbón*”. The type of wisdom that translates to *hikmah* in the Islamic worldview is closer to experience and deep thinking, which is not applicable to a minor ie. *Ọmọdé*. A proof that the word “*ogbón*” in Yoruba philosophy is a multifaceted concept can be seen in another Yoruba proverb which reads: *Àáyá gbón, Ògúngbè gbón; Àáyá n tiro Ògúngbè n bèrẹ*. This means: The ape is wise and so is Ogungbe; as the ape limps, so Ogungbe squats. This shows that there are different types of *ogbón* since animals cannot outsmart human beings. Regarding animal as being ‘wise’ informs that not all the types of ‘*ogbón*’ in Yoruba’s conception of wisdom can translate to *hikmah* in the Islamic worldview. In this direction, Olajuyin A. Oyebanji’s research throws more light on Yoruba’s wisdom related in proverbial expressions.³³

Summary

The summary of the findings of this study is as follows:

- 1- Al-Makki’s thought on the concept of *hikmah* i.e. wisdom concurs with the Quranic view. It also agrees with the thought of Islamic thinkers and philosophers (two of which are cited earlier) who agree that wisdom exists in two forms namely:
 - a- Gifted knowledge or esoteric wisdom or light of the soul; *al-ilm al-batini* or *al-hikmat al-wahbiyyah* (in Sufi terms) or *hikmat al-ishraq* (in the Suhrawardi *Ishraqi* terms).

- b- Acquirable knowledge or exoteric wisdom; *al-ilmaz-zahiri* or *al-hikmat al-kasbiyyah*.
- 2- Being a prophet or saint is a high form of wisdom. In other words, the message of religion cannot be passed by any prophet or cleric successfully except with wisdom. Being wise is one of the four fundamental qualities of prophets (in the Asha'risunni school).
 - 3- The findings in this study include that Al-Makki can be enlisted along with the Muslim philosophers because his thought throws light on the concept and definition of wisdom, theosophy, epistemology, the characteristics and virtues of a wise person among other philosophical topics.
 - 4- That the book's title, i.e. 'Knowledge of the Hearts' can be said to have been named after wisdom, which is to the heart as knowledge is to the brain.
 - 5- That Al-Makki's thoughts are applicable in an environment of Yoruba culture, especially if elderhood is added to the factors enlisted by Al-Makki. This will enable callers to Islam in a Yoruba environment to fit into the view of wisdom of their people and use that in calling, as required by Q16:125.

Conclusion

Wisdom being regarded in the Qur'an as related to the 'will of Allah' implicitly means that Allah gives it to anyone He wishes among the qualified hearts, regardless of the race, age, generation, and social status or system of belief. The divine wisdom bestowed on the heart is therefore synonymous to what is regarded as the knowledge that dwells in the hearts (*'ilm al-Qulūb*) in Abu-Talib Al-Makki's philosophy of knowledge. The quintessence of Al-Makki's epistemology therefore ends at what the possessor of such divine knowledge does in the outside world, i.e. when one claims to have wisdom, what will be his conducts? He lives in peace with everyone and seeks orderliness in all his personal and social endeavours, hence his proliferation of the meanings of *hikmah* into modesty, asceticism and other behavioural definitions. In the same vein, the last meaning of wisdom by Al-Makki (being dynamic as a quality of the wise) summarizes this findings in that the wise is supposed to be able to use his wisdom to interpret the moral and ethical aspects of life more effectively. He can use it to reduce the rigid attitude towards religion and promote the message of love for all because he now possesses a potential to significantly pin down the essence of religion which could maintain the socio-moral upbringing of the society in the most peaceful way.

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Appendix

A Tabular Representation of Al-Makki's Epistemology

Numbering	Meanings of Hikmah	Epistemological position of the meaning. (Source and Justification)
1	Understanding the technical aspects of the Qur'an	Justification of wisdom. This is because it takes wisdom to understand the technicalities of the Qur'an
2	Prophethood	Source. This is because Prophethood entails that God has equipped the prophet with define wisdom.
3	Foresight or physiognomy	Justification. It takes wisdom to foresee.
4	Intellect	Source. It is used to attain wisdom through thinking and observation
5	Fear of God	Source. It attracts the divine wisdom to be gifted to one.
6	Understanding of the exegesis of the Qur'an	Justification of wisdom. This is because it takes

		wisdom to understand the exegesis of the Qur'an
7	Knowledge from God	Source. Saints (<i>awliya</i>) such as the Qur'an's Khidr and Umar bn Al-Khattab get endowed with such.
8	Correctness in Statements	Justification. It is an application of wisdom
9	Prophetic Tradition	Source. Wisdom is derived from it and applied in 1 and 6 above and 14 below.
10	Correctness of statements of deeds and desires	Justification. These are acts that come from the application of wisdom.
11	Modesty	Justification. It is an application of wisdom.
12	Scrupulousness or Asceticism	Source and Justification. Source in that it is an act of self-restrain which purifies the spirit and makes it to get divinely bestowed with wisdom. Justification in that it can be a result of wisdom.
13	Memorization of the Qur'an	Source, if applied.
14	Understanding the delicate aspects of the Qur'an	Justification
15	Being dynamic	Justification