

# THE POSITION OF SALATUL-ID AL-ADHA IN NIGERIA ON ARAFAT DAY IN SAUDI ARABIA

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**Abstract:** The issue on moon sighting in Nigeria has been a serious problem in observing the two Muslim Festivals for so many years. It has been a source of controversy among Ulama and other members of the society, leading to starting and ending of the fasting of the month of Ramadan differently in this country. The paper discusses that Muslims are asked to look for the new moon when stating or ending the fast in the month of Ramadhan and the this criteria should be considered When two (2) reliable persons sighted the new moon or Completion of 30 days of the month of Sha’aban. Scholars view on Astronomical calculations were also highlighted and Differences of Matali or places of the Rising of the Heavenly bodies (Especially the Sun) were also acknowledged stated that if the distance between two places exceeds 2226 kilometers is binding but if it is less than that is not binding. The Position of salat-ul-id al-Adha in Nigeria on Arafah Day in Saudi Arabia were also provided explaining that Every Muslim community observes eid al-adha according to its own sighting of the crescent of Dhul-Hijjah. And all the scholars of Islam unanimously agreed that eid al- Adha is on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Dhul-Hijjah which is determined by sighting of the moon in each locality and not in the 10<sup>th</sup> of Dhul-Hijjah in makka. Eid-al Adha and Arafat are independent of each other and that each place works according to its moon sighting and dictates of their respective authorities and put an end to the Eid al-Adha on Arafat day controversy,

**Key Words:** Moon Sighting: Arafah Day: Eid al-adha: 10<sup>th</sup> of Dhul-Hijjah: Month: Ramadhan: Nigeria; Muslim Ummah

*“In the name of Allah, the Beneficent the Merciful Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon His Messenger, Muhammad, his family, companions and those who follow their guidance up to the last Hour”*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The issue on moon sighting in Nigeria has been a serious problem in observing the two Muslim Festivals for so many years. It has been a source of controversy among Ulama and other members of the society, leading to starting and ending of the fasting of the month of Ramadan differently in this country. This issue is aggravated to the extent that a sharp difference is created between Nigeria and Saudi Arabia, thereby threatening the Unity of Muslims in Nigeria and the Muslim world at large.

This paper is an attempt to throw more light on this perennial problem and to offer suggestions based on the views of Ulama on how to solve the problem.

## 2. MOON SIGHTING:

In Islam, Muslims are asked to look for the new moon when stating or ending the fast in the month of Ramadhan. The Prophet (SAW) is reported to have said: “When you see the crescent (of Ramadhan),start fasting, and when you see the crescent (of Shauwal) stop fasting; and if the sky is overcast (and you cannot see) then regard the (crescent) the month of ramadhan (as of thirty days)<sup>(1)</sup>. This criteria is also applied during the observance of id al Adha and animal sacrifice on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of Zul Hijrah respectively.

The requirements of Islam enjoined on Muslims concerning sighting of the new moon are the following;

1. When two (2) reliable persons sighted the new moon.
2. Completion of 30 days of the month of Sha’aban
  1. Regarding the first requirement two reliable Muslims are required to witness the appearance of the new moon, however, if one reliable person acknowledge the sighting of the new moon could be

accepted as indicated in the Hadith that a Bedouin came from al-Harrah and reported the news of sighting the new moon. He was taken to the Prophet (SAW). The prophet asked him.

*“Do you testify that there is no god but Allah?” He replied, “yes” and the prophet (SAW) again asked him “Do you testify that Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah?” again the Bedouin answered, “yes”. The Prophet (SAW) requested Bilal to announce the commencement of Ramadhan.”<sup>(1)</sup>*

This confirms that the witness of one person is sufficient for the commencement of fasting but when the situation warrants, the person could be doubted and, as in this case, be asked to take oath by confirming his faith. In this case, our leaders in Nigeria should require this confirmation of faith because the “witness” of today are not of the same caliber and honesty as those of the times of the prophet (SAW).

In addition, as opined by Sharehu (2006), if a group of good Muslims confirm the sighting of the new moon could be accepted.

## 2. Completion of thirty days (30) days of Sha’aban

Once sha’aban completes thirty days, and the new moon has been sighted by the Muslims therefore automatically the following day is first Ramadhan, Muslims should start fasting. This shows that even if it scientifically proved that the birth of new moon has taken place but it is not sighted by the naked eye, it will be presumed not to be there, based on the traditions of the Prophet (SAW) and the practice of almost all the earlier Muslim Scholars.

*In a hadith narrated by Anas, he said, when the prophet arrived in Medina, he met them had two annual festivals, so the prophet enquired, ‘what are these two days? They said these are days of merry making in the pre Islamic period. Then he said, ‘Allah Has exchanged them for you with what is better; the Eidul Adha (the Eid of animal sacrifice) and Eidul Fitri (the Eid at the end of Ramadan fasting).’ It was recorded by Abu Dawud and Nasa’iy.*

## 3. MOON SIGHTING AND ASTRONOMY:

Astronomy is a study of heavens in an effort to understand the underlying principles governing the behavior of the planets, stars and galaxies and the universe in general.

The Muslims scholars have different views concerning using Astronomical calculations in that Muslims should not rely on the Knowledge of Astronomy to determine the sighting of the new moon, while others like opines that it is allowed to use astronomical knowledge statement of the prophet (SAW) which says “Iqduru Lahu” means that you should use your experience using scientific facts which should be seen as complimenting the religious statement.

One can therefore propose that the mixture of the two views could be practiced in Nigeria as the same system adopted in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Authorities depend on astronomical calculations to establish their country’s Islamic civil calendar, but still ask its citizens to look for the new moon.

Astronomical and Islamic definitions of new moon differ.

The astronomical definition says when the sun and the moon have the same right ascension (RA), technically known as conjunction, is called a new moon, while the Islamic meaning called a new moon, while the Islamic meaning of the new moon is based on tradition that it should be visible with the naked eye after the astronomical new moon called conjunction<sup>(2)</sup>, therefore the new moon cannot be seen if the conjunction did not take place. The view of the majority of jurists is that astronomical calculations should not replace physical sighting of the crescent. However it should be noted that some scholars, such as Mutarrif (among the Tabi’un) and al-Shafi’iy, approve the use of astronomical calculations, in place of physical sighting of the moon, under certain conditions, such as when there is an overcast on the 30<sup>th</sup> night<sup>17</sup>. In the same vein, the scholars are unanimous that any claim of moonsighting must be scrutinized and if it contradicts established common and expert knowledge (‘urf) about the moon (astronomy inclusive) it should be rejected.

#### 4. DIFFERENCES OF MATALI' (PLACES OF THE RISING OF THE HEAVENLY BODIES, ESPECIALLY THE SUN):

It is a known fact that there are differences in Matali' between various countries in the Muslim world. These differences affect the beginning and ending of our religious duties such as fasting and Hajj. This led to a question whether the sighting of a new moon in one part of the world suffices and is binding on other places or not? Some jurists hold the view that if the distance between two places exceeds 2226 kilometers is binding but if it is less than that is not binding.

Al-Sayyid Sabiq, (1973) mentioned that majority of Jurists are of the opinion that wherever the new moon is sighted it becomes beginning on all Muslims to start fasting or end it, this is substantiated by a tradition of the prophet (SAW) which says:

*“Start fasting after you have seen it (ie the new crescent) and end the fast (at the end of the month) when you see it. If it is overcast and cannot be seen, then estimate its sighting (ie presume that sha’aban lasted for thirty days. (Bukhari and Muslim)*

This issue of differences in Matali' could be further clarified with the tradition reported by Kurayb which pays “Kuraib reported that while I was in ash-sham (modern Syria), the new moon of Ramadhan appeared on Friday night. I returned to Madinah at the end of the month. “there, Ibn Abbas asked me: “When did you people see the Moon?” I said: “We saw it on Friday night. “He will not stop fasting until we complete thirty days or until we see the new Moon.” I said: “isn't Mu'awiyah sighting and fasting sufficient for you?” he said: “No, this is the order of the prophet (SAW) of Allah”.

The point of reference in this tradition is that Abdullahi ibn Abbas did not consider the sighting of people of Sham while he was in Madina even though the distance between Madina and Syria is not too far and said this is what the prophet (SAW) commanded as. It is quite unbelievable to state that Abba ibn Abbas can violate what is established as the Sunnah of the prophet (SAW). Again, its episode happened in Madina where there were a lot of companions present at that time, had it been that Abdullahi Ibn Abbas was wrong in his judgement, the companion around could have corrected.

#### ***Position of salat-ul-id al-Adha in Nigeria on Arafah Day in Saudi Arabia.***

Salatul-id al Adha is conducted on the tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) of Zul-Hijjah every year, while Arafah Day is the 9<sup>th</sup> of Zul-Hijjah in Saudi Arabia. Those performing Hajj should celebrate the Arafah Day in a specific place called Arafah and other Muslims all over the world are requested to Observig voluntary fasting in commeration with the Day of Arafah. The Muslim Ummah is divided on the performance of Satul-Id-al-Adha on the Arafah Day considering differences of geographical locations of the Muslims countries and the interpretations of some legal terms and expressions, particularly the differences in the sighting the crescent of Ramadhan, Shawal and Zul-Hijjah

Every Muslim community observes eid al-adha according to its own sighting of the crescent of Dhul-Hijjah. And all the scholars of Islam unanimously agreed that eid al- Adha is on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Dhul-Hijjah which is determined by sighting of the moon in each locality and not in the 10<sup>th</sup> of Dhul-Hijjah in makka. Eid-al Adha and Arafat are independent of each other and that each place works according to its moon sighting and dictates of their respective authorities and put an end to the Eid al-Adha on Arafat day controversy, is the strong indication that, the people of Medina performed their Eidul Adha in 10 AH not in accordance with the Arafat day in Mecca but according to their own sighting while the prophet SAW was away on farewell pilgrimage. In Medina the moon was sighted on Wednesday night, while in Mecca, it was sighted Thursday night, so the 9<sup>th</sup> day of Dhul Hijjah, 10 AH was Thursday and Friday for Mecca and Medina respectively. The person the prophet appointed to oversee Medina while he was away was Abu Dujanah, Simak Bin Kharashah Assa'idiy or Siba'u Bin 'Arfatah Al Gifariy.

We need to understand the Shari'a, what it imposes on a person is what is demanded of him and not what it imposes on someone else. For a person resident in Nigeria, what is demanded of him is Eidul Adha and the Animal sacrifice on the day proclaimed to be the 10<sup>th</sup> of Dhul Hijjah by his leaders in accordance with their own

new moon sighting, and not what Shari'a demands of a pilgrim or someone resident in Saudi Arabia or any other country.

It is also important to note that, Shari'a did not ask us to follow Saudi Arabia, and we cannot say that, those that went by the provisions of the Shari'a and did what their leaders ordered them to do and in accordance with the provisions of the law, that their Eid prayers or sacrifices are vitiated. Had it been so, the prophet SAW would have made a categorical statement to that effect. Only Allah and His messenger can determine whether an act of worship is valid or not. Therefore when Nigeria and some countries in the World may celebrate Eid al-Adha on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Dhul-Hijjah which may not coincide with the Saudi authorities, it does not mean the such Id is not in conformity with the sunnah. Prophet said "your Id is the day you gather for it".

## 5. CONCLUSION:

The paper discussed the existing controversy over co-inciding eid al-adha in Nigeria and Arafah in Saudi Arabia. Different views of ulama have been identified and finally established that eid al-adha is independent of Arafah because both are observed on different days, therefore the observance of eid al-adha on Arafah day in any part of the world is allowed and accepted in Islam.

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