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UMAYRIBNSA'D, A MODEL FOR NIGERIAN GOVERNORS

Dr.AbdulWahabDanladiShittuandOniye, Olayinka Ibrahim

Department of Religions, University of Ilorin
shittudanladi@gmail.com/shittu.ad@unilorin.edu.ng, 08055062992/08061235260

Department of Religions, University of Ilorin
oniye.oi@unilorin.edu.ng, 07039027594

Abstact

UmayribnSa'd, a Companion of the Prophet Muhammad (saw), was made a governor of Hims during the reign of Khalifah Umar ibn Al-Khattāb. The communication gap betweenUmayr andUmar while in Himsmade Umar, the President, have a wrong impression about the attitude of the governor and this led to his removal from office. Coming to know his leadership style, the khalifah requested for his re-appointmentbut he rejected it. Using historical research methód, the writers identified lessons contained in the leadership style of Umayr and their relevance to Nigerian government. Findings of the research reveal that Umayr, like other Companions of the Prophet, was a carbon copy of his master, Prophet Muhammad (S.A), in character. The attitude of Companions of the Prophet to the management of public fundis a reflection of their understanding of the principles of good governance in Islam. The paper therefore concluded that Leaders in Nigeria should emulate Umayr in delivering good governance.

Keywords: Corruption, Governance, Khalifah, Umar ibn Al-Khattab. UmayribnSa'd

Introduction

Nigeria is a country with about two hundred million people.The country has thirtysix states andmore than four hundred (400) indigenous languagesor ethnic groups with diverse history, different cultural heritage, distinct religious values and distinctive orientations and world views. The states are under the management of an executive governor while the Federal Capital Territory(FCT) is under a minister. The country as a whole is endowed with tremendous human and natural resources such as 'fertile land, valuable agricultural products and rich mineral deposits. Oil and gas are some of the major sources of the country's revenue.Even though these mineral resources are being managed and controlled by the federal government, money realized is being shared on monthly basis among the thirty five governors and the FCT for the running of the states. This is in addition to what is being generated internally as revenue by each state. Incidentally, the wealth realizedis being controlled by a handful but selfish few leaders of the state, while a significant proportion of the population continues to wallow perpetually in abject poverty, scorching hunger and devastating diseases. Thus, the natural fortune of the country becomes a misfortune for most Nigerians, more than seventy percent of the people live below the poverty line. This unfortunate situation, where the unfulfilled majority only hears of millions and billions of naira exchanging hands among the unperturbed minority, makes the future generation of the country hopeless.

The corrupt habit of the ruling class contributed in no little measure, to the backwardness of each of the states of the federation because Allah has made it clear that wherever corruption becomes the attitude of the ruler, the totality of the community suffers a setback. . Allah says

ظهر الفساد في البر والبحر بما كسبت ايدي الناس ليذيقهم بعض الذي عملوا لعلهم يرجعون

Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of (the meed) that the hands of men have earned, that (Allah) may give them a taste of some of their deeds; in order that They may turn back (from evil).(Q30:41)

As Sha'râwi comments that the consequence of corruption in any society is that the people in the community will suffer a tough time which is not intended to inflict pain on them but rather, to correct them and re direct their thinking.[1]

Considering the level at which the governors are assumed to be wrongfully governing the states, it is pertinent to study the leadership style of one of the Companions of the Prophet, UmayribnSa'd. He was born in Madina.His father, Sa'dibnUbayd was one of the great Companions of the Prophet who participated with the Prophet in most of the battles against the unbelievers."

Umayr lost his father at a tender age and remained with his destitute mother who eventually remarried to JullasibnSuwayd, one of the richest men in Madinah.Jullas had a high love for Umayr so much that Umayr almost forgot his status as an orphan."[1]Umayrembraced Islam at the age of ten and from then, he remained a committed Muslim who would never allow a prayer to pass without him saying it behind the Prophet Muhammad."[1]Umayr lived some years after the death of Umar ibnKhattab and later died during the reign of UthmanibnAffan, the third of the four rightly guided Khalifs.

The regime of Umar ibn al-Khattab was characterized by remarkable events that history could not but document to make his life and that of the Companions that worked with him serve as model for emulation. The circumstance surrounding the nomination of Umayr as a governor to one of the provinces(Hims), the life style of Umayr as a governor in Hims, his system of governance and his life as an ex-governor all speak volumes on a corruption free governance of the companions of Prophet Muhammad. This work examined how Umayr governed the people of Hims in the light of the Qur'an and the *sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad.

Governance in Islam

The Qur'an does not give a clear text on governance as we have it in the contemporary world butdiscusses what could be referred to as attributes or characteristics of government. The concern of Islam is not governance but welfare of the people which can be achieved through a just and principled order in the society. Allah promised in the Qur'an to support those who support Him in making the land habitable for mankind. He describes those people as"Those who, when given authority in land, establish (system of) *alah*, give *zakah* and enjoin what is good and forbid what is wrong (Q22:41). These are the people who, when made a leader, demonstrate their ability to overcome greed and self interest, and help their community to provide help to the poor and needy. In a similar verse, Allah enjoins justice and fairness when one occupies an office of authority. Allah says: "O you who believe, stand up as a witness for Allah in all fairness, and do not let the hatred of people deviate you from justice (*'adl*). Be just, this is closest to piety" (Q 5:8). In this verse is a rule that a leader must be fair in justice dispensation to both friends and foes. In dispensing justice, he must neither look into the hatred he has for a group or the harm he will be exposed to in dispensing justice. Justice dispensation is a responsibility of a leader and he will account for his stewardship in the day of reckoning.

Two verses are more direct in respect to the responsibilities of the ruler and the ruled. The verses are accepted by scholars as being direct on good governance. The firstverse discussesthe responsibilities of a governor and the second emphasizes that when the governordischarges his responsibilities as a ruler, those who are ruled are saddled with the responsibility of obedience to the authority. Allah says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَى أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ
تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ
تَأْوِيلًا

Allah doth command you to render back your Trusts to those to whom They are due; and when ye judge between man and man, that ye judge with justice:

Verily How excellent is the teaching which He givesyou! for Allah is He who hears and sees all things. O ye who believe! obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you. if ye differ In anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if ye do believe In Allah and the Last Day: that is best, and Most suitable for final determination.(Q4:58-59).

Commenting on these verses, IbnTaimiyah considers the ability to deliver trust to whom they are due to be a non negotiable responsibility of a leader. He further supports his argument with the word of Umar ibnKhattabwho said that whoever entrusts a non qualified person with an office of responsibility because of his love for him or his relationship with him has betrayed Allah and His messenger.[v]The issue of returning back a trust to its owner is followed immediately with justice in adjudication. The head of a state is a leader and the resources of the state is a trust kept with him for which he must not wrong the followers in the disbursement of the trust. As the issue of trust is found between the ruler and the ruled, it is equally of importance between the masses that are ruled. If everybody would have given the trust to those who are due, the issue of judgment with fairness would not have arisen. Justice is needed to regulate inadequacy in the delivery of trust by the authority which is in charge of the affair.Two themes are considered important in the discussion of *al-amanat* as contained in the work of IbnTaimiyyah and they are : selection and appointment of officials, which must strictly be based on qualification and merit, and fair distribution of wealth in the community.[vi] Leadership in Islam is unique and distinct because while the ordinary leader or a politician thinks about the next election when he had not spent a month in the office, the statesman thinks of the next generation and how to make the land habitable for them. As for a leader who leads in the way of Islam, he thinks of the temporary nature of his life, his possible death at anytime, the final end of the world as a whole, the resurrection after death , the rendering of account for his deeds, the judgment that follows and the admission of mankind to either the paradise or the hell fire. His consciousness about all these things informs his steadfastness in his stewardship.

In verse fifty nine of SuratulNisa'i, Allah enjoins obedience to Him, to His Prophet and to *UlulAmr*, (people of authority).IbnJarir, in one of his interpretations of *UlulAmr*, considers them to be head of the state who obeys Allah and His Messenger in their leadership.[vii] While the previous verse could be considered as discussing the roles of the leaders, verse 89 discusses the responsibility of the led in being obedient to the constituted authority. When the leader is conscious of his role as a leader and the led performs his obligation, a peaceful society will be formed. It therefore follows that principles of an Islamically approved system of government are*shura* (consultation), *al-ta'awun*(cooperation), *al Adalah* (justice), *al Musawah* (equality), *alHurriyya* (freedom), and*al Maslaha* (people's welfare) to which the Islamic government is committed to uphold. Any system of government which implements these principles has repelled crisis and established peace and order and such government isqualifiedto be called an ideal government.

Umayr, The Governor

When Umar Ibn Al-Khattab was made the Khalifah of the Muslim community with the death of the first Khalifah, AbubakarSiddiq in 634 A.D, The people of Hims in Syria complained bitterly of the governors appointed to the city.It was on the ground of looking for a righteous leader that Umar appointed UmayribnSa'd as the governor of Hims.[viii]Upon his assumption of office, he called the inhabitants to a congregational prayer after which he addressed them. In his speech, he praised Allah and thanked Him, and he sought for the peace and blessing of Allah on His Prophet Muhammad, he then said:

الا ان الإسلام حائط منيع وبابه وثيق، فحائط الإسلام العدل، وبابه الحق، فإذا انقض الحائط , وخطم الباب استفتح الإسلام. فلا يزال الإسلام منيعا ما اشتد السلطان، وليس شدة السلطان قتلا بالسيف ولا ضربا بالسوط ولكن قضاء بالحق، وأخذا بالعدل

O people! Islam is a mighty building and a strong gate, the wall of Islam is justice and its gate is truth, when the wall is collapsed and the gate is demolished,Islam becomes fenceless. Islam will remain strong as long as the central authority is strong, the strength of the authority lies not in its sword to kill or its cane to whip but in the capacity to dispense justice and to administer it.[ix]

Umayr spent a year in Hims without writing a single letter to the Khalifah concerning the affairs of his region nor sending any taxhe collected to the central treasury.The fear that the position of authority could corrupt the governor made Umar to summon his secretary saying: "Write to UmayribnSa'd and say to him:

"بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم. من عمر بن الخطاب إلى عُمير بن سعد، السلام عليك، فإني أحمد إليك الله الذي لا شريك له، وأشهد أن محمدا عبده ورسوله، وقد كنا قد وليناك شيئا من امر المسلمين، فلا أدري ما صنعت، أوفيت بعهدنا، أم خنتنا، فإذا اتاك كتابي هذا - إن شاء الله تعالى- فاحمل إلينا ما قبلك من فيء المسلمين، ثم اقبل، والسلام عليك".[x]

In the name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful. A letter from Umar bn Al Khattab to UmayrbnSa'd. May the peace (of Allah) be on you. I praise Allah that has no partner and I testify that Muhammad is His servant and messenger.We have given you a responsibility over the affairs of Muslims but I do not know how you handled it. Whether you fulfilled our covenant or betrayed us. When my letter reaches, by the grace of Allah, bring forward whatever you have gathered from the Muslim's tax . Peacebe on you.

When Umayr received the letter, he left Hims immediately and came to Umar on foot with only a pouch, a vessel and a cup. Explaining his leadership style to Umar, he said that when he arrived Hims, he called the righteous persons of the town to a meeting and gave them the responsibility of collecting the taxes, whenever they collected any amount of money he would seek their advice and spend it (all) on those who were deserving among them. Umar was happy with Umayr on this and made a move to renew his appointment as the governor but Umayr rejected going for the second term and said: "such a period has gone. I will no longer serve under you or under any other person."[xi]Umayrthen asked the permission of the khalifah to go back to his village on the outskirt of Madinaand live there with his people.[xii]

Years after Umayr had gone to his village, Umarsent Harith, one of his trusted aides, with a bag containing one hundred *dinars* to take to Umayr and give him if he is found in a position of a needy and if not, the money should be returned to him.Harith stayed with Umayr as his guest for three nights.Each night, he was given a small flat piece of barley bread, on the third day, he had to leave on the information he got from a local man that Umayr was feeding Harithfrom the only food he had for himself and his family.Harith dropped the hundred *dinars* and returned to Umar to inform him of how he met Umayr. Umar later invited Umayr and offered to give him money and clothe, Umayr rejected the gift of the money but accepted clothe to give to his wife.[xiii]

The governance style of Umayr in the face of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet

The governance style of Umayr is a guide for Nigerian leaders. His nomination to the office, his inaugural speech, his relationship with the governed and his attitude towards the fund of the state are all worthy of discussion when seeking a corruption free governance for Nigeria.

The inaugural speech of Umayr calls for a study. The content of the speech delivered on assumption of office in Hims was an indication that he was determined to rule his people with justice and truthfulness. He likened Islam to a building that is mighty and the mighty building he said, is justice. The gate to the fence is truth. He meant by this that justice in leadershipcannot be compromised. This thought provoking speech agrees with the word of Allah;

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ إِن يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىٰ أَن تَعْدِلُوا وَإِن تَلْوُوا أَوْ تُعْرِضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا

O ye who believe! stand out firmly for justice, As witnesses to Allah, Even As against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. follow not the lusts (of your hearts), Lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, Verily Allah is well- acquainted with all that ye do (Q4:135).

Allah addresses the Muslim community who are the faithful believers to fulfill the duty of a believer in upholding absolute justice. Muslims are enjoined to attain an ideal standard that was not attained by generations before them. The verse enjoins Muslims to disregard every emotion, prejudice or interest and to maintain God fearing path. Allah has an understanding of the hard effort needed to achieve this absolute justice among which is the strive to overcome natural weakness and selfish interest. The social status of a person should not be a reason why he should be denied or favored. FakhruddinarRāzī comments that when Allah says" even if it is against yourself". The phrase has two interpretations; the first is for the offence to demand that you make a verbal confession against yourself, and the second is that you should be firm in justice even if it would cause you a harm.[xiv]Collaborating the necessity for justice by a leader, the Prophet said:

إِنَّ أَحَبَّ النَّاسِ إِلَى اللَّهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَأَدْنَاهُمْ مِنْهُ مَجْلِسًا إِمَامٌ عَادِلٌ وَأَبْغَضَ النَّاسِ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَأَبْعَدَهُمْ مِنْهُ مَجْلِسًا إِمَامٌ جَائِرٌ

Verily, the most beloved of people to Allah on the Day of Resurrection and the nearest to Him will be the just leader. The most hated of people to Allah and the furthest from Him will be the tyrannical leader.[xv]

The administrative strategy adoptedby Umayr is such that would make it easy for a governor to dispense justice.Umayr ruled by consulting righteous men among his people on how to spend the resources gathered and all were spent on those that were in dare need of assistance. Even the prophet of Allah who enjoys the guidance of Allah, was enjoined to consult with his people on issues of public affairs as contained in Qur'an3:159. What is worth noting is that governance is easy when the leader is rightly advised and he takes to the advice. The institution of *shura*(consultative committee) has been in existence from the time of the Prophet and it was practiced by all Companions of the Prophet. The Islamic *shura* is different from the institution of the law makers in the practice of democracy because members of the *shura* are guided by the laws of Allah and the sunnah of the Prophetwhile in democracy, it is the people that make laws for the people. But then, if a leader in a democratic system of government have in addition to the law makers, special advisers that are not only loyal to him but also to Allah, the leader will have the tendency of being guided aright. In Nigeria, the state houses of assembly that are state law makers are either the promoters of the ideas of the governors or the advisers with selfish interest. Attached to the governors are special advisers on different matters. It is unfortunate that governors in Nigeria see themselves better informed than the advisers and the advisers are constraints to consider the interest of the governor before they advice or else, they will be tagged rebels. This is because the governors are not seeing the public office as public trust.

Umayr refused to enrich himself with the state resources because of his strict adherence to the dispensation of justice. Knowing surely that the wealth of the state is for the welfare of the citizens, what he considered paramount in his administration was the welfare of those in the society. Unlike governors in Nigeria, he does not wish to count the number of his rides and his buildings, what he counted was the number of his success in leadership. A leader is considered a shepherd answerable to Allah by the Prophet and that was the resting pillar of all the Companions of the Prophet.

Umar ibn al-Khattab summons Umayr when he was not sure of the administration of Umayr. The step taken by Umar was a mechanism for check and balance in leadership. The problem with governance in our country is the executive power given to the state governors so much that the federal government cannot intervene in their governance. Unlike what is obtainable in islam, the governance is not central and the governors exercise an unquestionable power on the resources of the state because they own their mandate to those who elected them. This is probably one of the deficiency of democracy. Once a governor assumes power in Nigeria, he remains unshakeable for the tenure period except for the state house of assembly who are powered by law to impeach and in most cases, the governor buys the law makers.

Umayr rejected the renewal of his tenure in the office as a sign of piety and contentment for his position. A leader who is conscious of the day of accountability will not wish to perpetrate his stay in an office of responsibility. Allah says in Qur'an 3:140 that the days of this life are rotational and an office of responsibility is a trial for mankind. This is a great lesson for our leaders in Nigeria. If they had it at the back of their mind that they will spend a single term, it is most likely that they will be conscious of their responsibilities to the masses and their duties to Allah.

Conclusion

The effect of the inaugural speech of Umayr was in no doubt, a torchlight with which he paddled the canoe of leadership as explained earlier. It is certainly the understanding of the teachings of Islam, the guide of the Qur'an and of course, the sunnah of the Prophet that was responsible for the leadership style adopted by this great companion. Nigeria has a lot to learn from the leadership style of this great companion if at all there is the determination and the political will to move the nation forward. The following are suggested to be adopted for the good governance in Nigeria;

1-anybody who will be nominated to contest for governorship must be chosen by merit and on the availability of good record regarding him. Party leaders should consider the acceptance of an aspirant on merit of morality and discipline as a process for progressive politics

2-the fear of Allah should be considered the bedrock of the characteristics for which a person will be accepted as a contestant in politics. Citizens should launch a campaign of not voting for anybody whose God's consciousness is questionable. Citizens should not lose their votes by selling it or allowing themselves to be tricked with material gains.

3-declaration of asset should be considered a condition for an aspiring governor to pick a form. The law should allow for a check and balance in governance. The president of the federation should be given a statutory power to call a governor into order and investigate the way and manner the resources of the state is being managed

4-the masses should be courageous to rise against any governor who is found corrupt. His day of doom should not be delayed to the next period of election. Rather, there should be a machinery that will be strong enough to call the governors when they are found to be corrupt

5-incorruptable Islamic scholars should accept it as a responsibility to always check the activities of the governors when they are noticed to be derailing. It is the submission of the authors of this paper that if governors of our time should imbibe the leadership style of Umayr, citizens of the country will enjoy the dividends of democracy.

[i]Muhammad Mutawalli As-Sharawi,*Al-Khawatir,* Vol. 18(Cairo: Akhbaru al-Yawm, 1997) 1479

[ii] Muhammad Sa'd. *At Tabaqatul Kubra.*Vol. 3(Beirut: DarulKutubilIlmiyyah.n.d)349

[iii]AbdulRahmanRafat al-Basha, *Suwarun min HayatusSahabah(*Beirut:DarunNafa'is. 1992), 239.

[iv]AbdurRahmanRafat al- Basha, 237.

[v] Ahmad ibnAbdulHakimibnTaimiyya, *As SiyasatusShar'iyya* (Saudi Arabia: Ministry of Islamic Affairs. 1418A.H.), 12.

[vi]Ahmad bnAbdulHakimbnTaimiyya…9.

[vii] Muhammad Jarir, At Tabari, *Jāmi'u l-BayānfiTa'wīlilQur'an* ,Vol. 8 (Beirut:Mu'assasaturRisālah, 2000), 497.

[viii]Muhammad Sa'd, *AtTabaqatul Kubra* Vol. 4 (Beirut: DarulKutubilIlmiyyah.nd),277

[ix] Muhammad Sa'd, *At Tabaqatul Kubra,* Vol. 4 (Beirut: DarulKutubilIlmiyyah(nd)),375.

[x]Muhammad ibn Ahmad, *Tarikhul Islam waWafayatilMasha'irilA'lam*, Vol. 34 (Beirut; Al MaktabatutTawfiqiyya),51

[xi] Khalid Muhammad Khalid Thabit, *RijāluHawlarRasūl,* Vol. 1*(*Beirut: DarulFikr, 2000),284.

[xii]This is contrary to the view of some historians who maintained that Umayr remained a governor on Hims after that period and was only removed by UthmanbnAffan. See Muhammad ibn Ahmad, *Tarikhul Islam waWafayatilMasha'irilA'lam* (Beirut; Al MaktabatutTawfiqiyya.),3/115.

[xiii]AbdurRahmanRafitulBasha.*Suwarun…242.*

[xiv] Muhammad ibn Umar ArRazi, *MafatihulGhayb-At TafsirulKabir*, Vol.11(Beirut:DarulIhya'itTurathilArabi),241

[xv]At Tirmidhi, Muhammad Isa, *Al-Jāmi'ulKabir; SunanuTirmidhi*, Vol. 5.(Beirut: Darul ArabilIslami, 1998), .Hadith. 1329.