

Islamic Religious Leadership Ideology: Implications and Challenges for Social Transformation in Democratic Africa

Rev. Fr. Hyginus Chibuike EZEBUILO, PhD

Abstract

Various sources have influenced and shaped the ideological orientation and outlook of Islamic religious leadership in successive epochs in the history of Africa. This orientation has by and large been sustained in the contemporary democratic dispensation. Employing the analytic and critical methods in philosophy, this article develops a more informed identification of the historical sources that have generally shaped the leadership ideology of African Muslim leaders. Based on this identification, the discussion reflects critically on the sociopolitical implications of, and challenges posed by the various historical influences for achieving positive social transformation in contemporary democratic African societies. The study appreciates the prevailing relevance of particular elements from the leadership ideology and outlook that existed in primordial African society to guide a contemporary African Muslim religious leadership towards a fundamental reorientation. The article concludes by challenging, especially African Muslim religious leaders, to adopt ideas of leadership such as “savior,” “provider,” “protector,” among other leadership ideas, for ideological reorientation and practical leadership in order to engender an enduring sociopolitical transformation and service to the people.

Keywords: Muslim, religion, leadership, Africa, democracy, ideology.

Introduction

Leadership is a practical skill encompassing the ability of an individual or group of individuals to lead or guide others. According to Clearly (2003):

Leadership is a matter of intelligence, trustworthiness, humanness, courage, and discipline...Reliance on intelligence alone results in rebelliousness. Exercise of humanness alone results in weakness. Fixation on trust results in folly. Dependence on the strength of courage results in violence. Excessive discipline and sternness in command result in cruelty. When one has all five virtues together, each appropriate to its function, then, one can be a leader.

Looking at machine theories of the state, one may be right to affirm that the need for the realization of human development goals was part of the reasons for the abandonment of the state of nature to that of civil society. Specifically, for the English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), the end of

government is the preservation of life. Hobbes' state of nature is characterized by war (force) and there is no law, no property, and no justice in such a state. Thus, the principal obstacle to the preservation of life was natural egoism. The solution is an institution of a common power to provide man with security (Oluwagbemi-Jacob, 2018). Thus, the pivot of Hobbes' notion of the origin of society is self-preservation. It is also in this context that one can understand the ruler's role of "distributing to everyman his own" (Macpherson, 1968:296, cited in Oluwagbemi-Jacob, 2018). This view implies the protective function of the state to all citizens of the commonwealth.

Looking at Hobbes' narrative, it is not difficult to draw social transformation concerns there-from. To start with, what Hobbes meant by preservation of life is linked to modern day human security concerns such as life and health of the individual, family and community, hunger, safety and the security of the environment. It focuses on the protection of individuals against both violent and non-violent threats to their lives and human dignity (Ladan, 2003:11).

Looking at social transformation through the lens of human security immediately reveals concerns bordering on social, economic and political well-beings of persons and societies. Security is both transformational and developmental. It is part and parcel of social and human development to be specific. It is from this perspective that one can begin to make sense of Hobbes when he said that if the sovereign asked an individual to kill himself, maim, abstain from food, medicine or anything without which he could live, then the individual should disobey the sovereign. Health and food security form part of the essential ingredients of human and societal development.

For John Locke, transformation categories consist in freedom and equality in the context of ownership of private property. Specifically, Locke affirms that the end of government is the preservation of property. The human and social transformation categories are evident in Locke's articulation when one understands that by 'property', Locke meant life, liberty and estates. He didn't mince words in affirming that this is the reason why the state or government exists. Further, the relevance of the state was to be assessed in terms of its ability to perform in this direction.

In the course of tracing the historical path of Nigeria, the eminent Nigerian novelist, Chinua Achebe, once asserted that "the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership" (Achebe, 1983:1). This fact can be applied to the whole of Africa. The problem with Africa is the problem of leadership.

In similar vein, Chikwendu Ukaegbu maintains that Africa's leaders, both past and present, exhibit fatalistic orientation, and lack a sense of per-

sonal or group self-efficacy and as such, should be held responsible for the socio-political and economic problems in the continent (Ukaegbu, 2007:161). Bennett Odunsi also believes that poor leadership may be one of the important challenges that Africans are facing when he states that the pervasive political wrangling, civil strife, economic disorder and social malaise endemic in Africa today flow, in part, from ineffective leadership (Odunsi, 1996:66).

Besides the failure of the political leadership, religious leaders who ought to be the moral conscience of the society have likewise failed in their responsibility to offer the much-needed leadership to African societies, especially ethical leadership in the face of the enormous challenges of corruption and its consequences in the society. Thus the complaints of most Africans concerning the prevalence of lack of accountability, corruption, poor leadership among socio-economic and political leaders may also be relevant to the way that they have been experiencing their religious leaders. In a sense, the commonality of such tendencies affirms the notion that what happens in the religious context is often a reflection of what is going on in the larger society and vice versa. It could, therefore, be argued that any attempt to transform African societies should first begin with its religious institutions, which we supposed to be the bastion of ethical values (Agbiji, 2013). Inasmuch as such a transformation within Islamic religious leadership could be of immense assistance in repositioning it as the conscience of society, a key step in this direction requires investigating the historical sources that have influenced and shaped Islamic religious leadership ideology and performance. Revisiting the political trajectory could accordingly assist in guiding Islamic leadership towards improving their leadership ideology and practice for the common good of society in the future.

In this study, Islamic religious leadership ideology is defined as the ideas held by the Islamic clergy on leadership, and which form the rationale for their leadership practices and conduct. Accordingly, such ideas on leadership connote their belief and worldview, which justifies their mindset and behavior in private life, within religious circle and in the larger society. Against this background, this study seeks to develop a more informed identification of the historical sources that have shaped the leadership ideology of African Muslim leaders, and on the basis of this identification, to reflect critically on the socio-political implications of, and challenges posed by this historical influence for achieving positive social transformation in contemporary African societies. The questions that the article therefore seeks to address include: what historical sources of African leadership ideology have shaped the leadership ideology of contemporary socio-political leaders in Africa? How have these historical sources also shaped the Islamic religious leadership ideolo-

gy? Based on a consideration of the historical ideological conditioning of Islamic religious leaders, in particular where such conditioning appears to be poor, how may a change of mindset on their part impact positively on the socio-political conditions in the contemporary African context?

African Precolonial Leadership and the Formation of Leadership Ideology

Richard Ruderman defines leadership as the guidance of a group, party or political entity undertaken by an individual. The guidance which leaders offer could be by inspiration or charisma through which they provide their followers with a vision that functions as a map to new and unfamiliar terrains (Ruderman, 1995:725-729). Both the concept of leadership and leadership styles in contemporary Africa have been influenced by at least two broad sources: initial and subsequent sources (Agbiji, 2013). The initial sources comprise the pre-colonial historical heritage: Christianity and Islam. The subsequent sources are the colonial and the various post-colonial African historical leadership practices that followed the initial historical heritage (Agbiji, 2013). Thus, both the initial sources, which laid the foundation for the formation of leadership ideology and the subsequent sources from colonial and post-colonial leadership practices, all constitute sources through which the leadership ideology of African leaders has been shaped.

In traditional African societies, leadership practices and styles vary from people to people and from place to place. In many instances, the most prominent sources of leadership in the community are the kings, queens and rulers. However, in view of the fact that not all African societies have had rulers or leaders in the form of kings, queens and chiefs (Agbiji, 2013), there are other sources through which leadership has flowed to the people, for example, family, clans, age grades structures, etc. Most leaders in African traditional societies occupy a special place in the personal lives and broader social conventions and conceptions of their people by virtue of their office. Mbiti has observed that “where these rulers are found, they are not simply political heads: they are the mystical and religious heads, the divine symbol of their people’s health and welfare” (Mbiti, 1999:177-178). These rulers may not necessarily have outstanding talents or abilities, but their office constitutes a link between human and spiritual rule. Thus, people regard them as God’s earthly viceroys. It is on this premise that these rulers are accorded extremely high positions and titles such as ‘savior’, ‘protector’, ‘child of God’, ‘chief of the divinities’, and ‘lord of earth and life’ (Agbiji, 2013). Such leaders are not only allowed to do what they wish, but they are assumed to be incarnations

of God who have proceeded from heaven and therefore possess power over natural phenomena (Mbiti, 1999:177-178).

The sacred position of African rulers is demonstrated in a number of ways. For example, they are not seen in ordinary life; no reference must be made to either their eating or their sleeping; they must be spoken well of; their followers must bow or kneel before them; they have sexual rights over the wives of their subjects; and their illnesses and death are not usually mentioned (Agbiji, 2013). The family members and close associates of the rulers also enjoy high esteem. While in some societies, traditional rulers are succeeded by members of the royal family, in other societies the ruler's successor could be chosen by a council of chiefs. Priests, prophets and the religious founders of African traditional religion constitute another source of leadership in many African societies (Mbiti, 1999:183).

Let us make quick reference to Nigeria as part of Africa. Besides the broader African context, the formation of leadership ideologies also occurred among the various ethnic groups in pre-colonial Nigerian societies. The basic political units in pre-colonial Nigeria were the village, village group, clan, state, chiefdom, kingdom, empire and caliphate (Chukwu-Okereke, 1997:5). Using the three major tribes in Nigeria, namely Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo, as our points of reference, we will now briefly elaborate on how these varied societies were ruled and on the leadership ideology that held sway among the people.

The Hausa-Fulani and Kanem-Bornu system of administration was centralized (Agbiji, 2013). After the 9th century AD, Islam made incursions into this region via the trans-Saharan trade routes. The arrival of Islam in this area through the Jihad of Uthman dan Fodio soon altered the rhythm of the economic, political and social life (Ndo, 1997:27). It was, indeed, this development that gave rise to the establishment of the emirate system with the Sokoto and Gwandu emirates as the most prominent in the empire. The Emirs of Sokoto and Gwandu empires were assumed to have the power of life and death over the other emirates within their subdivisions. Of these two most prominent emirates, that of Sokoto, headed by the Sultan of Sokoto, exercised the highest level of religious and political power over the others. "Islam was used to reinforce the political and social structures of the state" (Agbiji, 2013). Emirs exercised both a high level of authority and enormous power over their subjects and, in most cases, they were very dictatorial. An emir could be removed by a general consensus of the senior officers of the ruling houses if he became a dictator (Ndo, 1997:28). However, this rule was rarely put into practice as a result of the powers which the emirs wielded. It is important to note at this point that the prevailing leadership style was often

authoritarian and also a combination of religious and political leadership invested in the same individual (the emir) (Agbiji, 2013).

Leadership among the Yoruba was also unique. They are the dominant group on the west bank of the Niger to the south. The Yoruba kingdom of Ife and Oyo were founded around 700-900AD and 1400AD respectively (Agbiji, 2013). In about 11th century, adjoining compounds, known as Ile-Ife, were transformed into a number of city-states under dynasties. The Benin kingdom is linked historically to the Yoruba kingdom. Political and religious authorities resided in the Oba (king), who was assumed to be a descendant of the Ife dynasty (Agbiji, 2013). The Oba was chosen to rule based on the royal family that had the royal blood of Oduduwa. His candidature had to have the blessing of the senior chiefs (Ndo, 1997:29). Despite the fact that each Oba exercised his independent authority within his jurisdiction, he was traditionally expected to look to the Ooni of Ife for leadership. Administratively, the Oba was expected to follow the advice of his council of chiefs and elders. An Oba who ruled autocratically could be compelled to commit suicide through the presentation of an empty calabash (Ndo, 1997:29). It can therefore be argued that the Yoruba system of leadership was more democratic than that of either Hausa-Fulani or Kanem-Bornu. However, as in the Hausa-Fulani context, even when Obas became autocratic, they were seldom removed, as they held enormous power over the area they ruled (Agbiji, 2012:96).

The area which comprises the diverse Igbo kingdom was situated to the south-east of the Niger. In the south-east and south of modern Nigeria other kingdoms such as Calabar, Opobo, Bonny, Brass, Eleme, Kalabari and others flourished (Akpeninor, 2007:31). It may be observed that the Efik and Opobo, for example, were ruled by kings and that there was a leadership structure in place that was different from that in other neighboring communities. However, many other communities such as the Olulumo, Ikom, and Etung had leadership structures that were similar to that of the Igbo. They, however, lacked centrality (Agbiji, 2013) due to tropical nature of the area (Ndo, 1997:31). Besides the Council of Elders and the Village Assembly, the age-grade system represented another vital structure that assisted in the enforcement of law and the provision of social services and leadership in the community. The Igbo and the other neighboring groups held personal freedom in high esteem and resented any form of autocratic government. It would thus not be incorrect to say that leadership in Igboland was predominantly democratic (Agbiji, 2012:97-98).

In sum, it is evident that before colonization, the major tribes that constitute modern Nigeria and the other smaller groups that lived around them were diverse in terms of their history, culture, political development and re-

ligion. One may place these societies in two main categories, namely centralized (state) and non-centralized (stateless). Agbiji (2013) observed that while the Igbo kingdoms, in particular, and other kingdoms around them were non-centralized, the Sokoto Caliphate and other northern emirates were highly centralized. Also included in this category, but without the high degree of centralization, were the Benin, Oyo and other Yoruba traditional institutions. The highly centralized and non-centralized societies had clearly defined demarcations between the rulers and the ruled. Those demarcations were usually based on wealth and ascribed status (Agbiji, 2012:98). Despite such differentiation, it should be understood that in all African traditional societies, the rulers were highly venerated and they had great influence in their communities. Also, spiritual and political authority was invested in the same individual (Agbiji, 2012:96). We shall now turn to the various influences on the leadership ideology of African societies.

Influences of Christianity, Islam, and Globalization on African Leadership Ideology

Christianity could be considered as part of African indigenous religion in view of the fact that it has had a lengthy history on the continent. However, it may also be argued that it falls into the category of a later arrival on the shores of Africa, long after the evolution of African traditional religion, albeit before Islam. Christianity was long established in North Africa, Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt before the 7th century. "It was a dynamic form of Christianity, producing great scholars and theologians like Tertulian, Origen, Clement of Alexandria and Augustine" (Mbiti, 1999:223). There is, therefore, no doubt that it was the impact of Christianity that led to the emergence of these outstanding scholars, whose influence extended to a broad range of men and women. It is, thus, assumed that these men especially were able to bring their Christian-imbued leadership virtues and skills to both the Church and to African society (Mbiti, 1999:223).

Subsequent contact with Christianity on the African continent came about as a result of the activities of the missionaries who came to Africa during the colonization of the continent. During this period, Masango notes, "African religion and its leaders were challenged by the missionaries, especially in the way that they brought change" (Masango, 2003:316). Such changes led to some of the leaders and the people adopting Western concepts of leadership and discarding their own African religious values, customs and culture (Masango, 2003:316). As a result of the impact of Christianity on the concept of ideology and practice of leadership in Africa, leadership was shaped by education and professionalism. "Not only did African leaders come to be

evaluated by Western standards of leadership, the use of traditional methods of leadership was considered barbaric by some Westerners" (Masango, 2003:317). Although the traditional ideology and styles of leadership were severely affected, they were not completely eradicated (Agbiji, 2012:92). Yet, some African leaders did derive positive lessons from the biblical teachings on leadership. Christian concepts such as "man being created in the image and likeness of God," "love for one's neighbor," and "the body of Christ" enriched the value that African leaders accorded to human life and the positive assertion of leadership on their subjects (Masango, 2003:317). In addition, these concepts contributed to the unity of communities as the Christian converts who had attained leadership positions sought to live out the Christian ideals in their villages and communities (Masango, 2003:317).

Now, within a century of the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632AD, Islam had swept through the whole of North Africa, as well as the Horn of Africa, reaching southwards to the east coast of Africa (Mbiti, 1999:236). As is the case with early Christianity, Islam may arguably be considered part of African indigenous religion in view of the fact of its lengthy history and interaction with communities and cultures on the continent. This fact, however, has several implications and challenges. The trade routes as well as the commercial activities between the Arab world and North Africa contributed significantly to the spread of Islam on the continent (Mbiti, 2003:236-240).

Recounting the impact of Islam on the Nupe, a tribe in northern Nigeria (or the middle belt), Mbiti notes that "since Islam came to Nupe as a religion of conquerors and the ruling class, what counts is, first and foremost, the assimilation to upper-class culture and, only secondarily, the deliverance from unbelief" (Mbiti, 1999:240). This assertion implies that the social impact of Islam on the Nupe may be regarded as an example of what happened in other parts of Africa into which Islam made incursions. While Islam has provided a point of reference for a sense of pride and superiority in the Muslim convert, it has been less successful in touching the deeper levels of the soul of its converts (Mbiti, 1999:240).

Inasmuch as Islamic religion may have contributed positively to African communities, the inculcation of a sense of pride and superiority embodied in the ultimate culture of a class-cult has been detrimental to the development of a positive leadership ideology and qualities in members of African villages and communities, and it is unlikely that Islamic converts who assume leadership positions in their communities would regard themselves as being accountable to their fellow villagers (Agbiji, 2013). Most importantly, because such a conversion is more social than spiritual, it may lead to the

fragmentation of the community by creating class distinctions and the use of force in leadership (Mbiti, 1999:240).

It is common knowledge among politicians that, when appointed as political officers, appointees are made to sign their letters of resignation, which are then kept in the custody of the chief executive (governor or president). This exercise is aimed at extracting absolute loyalty from the appointees and also at facilitating their easy removal from office at any time the political leader so wishes (Agbiji, 2012:105).

A key function of political leadership is the formulation of policy for the purpose of delivering the benefits of governance to the citizenry. It is seriously doubtful whether the political class in Africa, so far, has shown a responsible commitment to dealing with the challenges of poverty, underdevelopment, corruption and irresponsible leadership. Many Africans are of the opinion that the political hegemony of Islamic ideology is still under the influence of the politicians who came to power soon after independence. There is a widespread belief that the politicians are in politics for their own personal gain. It may therefore be argued that their fatalistic tendencies and lack of imagination in their policymaking provide clear proof of their political incompetence with regard to running the intricate affairs of government.

Throughout the colonial and post-colonial history of the African continent, the leadership ideology and practices of its leaders have been influenced by leadership notions that may be traced to one or more of the leadership influences derived from the African traditional heritage: The Christian or the Islamic religious influence. In addition, leadership influences have also been derived from other sources including the social and cultural impact of globalization. It is, in fact, essential not to overlook the positive and negative effects that globalization has had on African leadership ideology and engagement.

Robert Schreiter has argued that there is no single definition of the term globalization (Schreiter, 1997:5). However, he does explain that globalization has to do with the "increasingly interconnected character of political, economic and social life of the peoples on this planet (Schreiter, 1997:316). Information technology is also playing a vital role in the ever-increasing influence of globalization.

Agbiji (2013:86) rightly notes that "the influence of globalization on all societies is inescapable and globalization has impacted on...African communities...both positively and negatively." An important example of the negative impact of globalization has been the fact that in today's world of the 'haves' and the 'have-nots,' globalization is being used by the leaders of the powerful nations to co-opt and control the leaders of the weak nations of

which many nations of Africa constitute the bulk. It is in the main for this reason that we call on Mosques and Islamic religious leadership to offer the much needed leadership to African societies (Chipenda, 1997:23).

However, African countries have also benefited from the positive aspects of globalization such as effective communication systems and the exchange of technological ideas between the developed and developing countries that have led to the improvement in the living conditions of people in the developing world. But could the formation of Islamic religious leadership ideology have escaped the negative influences that ensued from the leadership ideology and practice during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras and from the social changes brought about by globalization?

Poor African Leadership and the Formation of Negative Islamic Leadership Ideology

Leaders come from a culture and culture imparts character traits for leadership (Lanre-Abass, 2008:124). As such, culture can offer both good or poor character traits for leadership. Culture could therefore be seen as source of influence for the formation of ideology and consequent human behavior. Like the African political leaderships, African religious leaders came from a culture which is not different from that of the political leadership, especially in the sense of the socio-political and economic culture. Such a culture of leadership, which has contributed immensely to the frame of reference of both secular and Islamic religious leadership and leadership practices, could be traced back in the first place to some leadership tendencies embedded in the African heritage.

As noted already, leaders in African traditional societies occupy a special place in the personal lives and broader social conventions and conceptions of their people by virtue of their office. Accordingly, Mbiti (1999) observes that where these rulers are found, they are not just political heads; they are the mythical and religious heads, the divine symbol of their people's health and well-being. This sort of traditional leadership ideology constitutes a source for the formation of contemporary leadership ideology. Among other things, this source (which reflects high esteem for socio-political and religious leadership) and the privileges and succession plans for such leadership may have positive dimensions. However, it also constitutes a ground on which a negative leadership ideology can be formed. Such negative influence could become a basis for the exploitation of the masses and the manipulation of leadership to serve selfish interests. Unfortunately, large number of African religious and secular leaders has been influenced by this leadership ideology.

In Nigeria, for instance, among the Hausa-Fulani and Kanem-Bornu of northern Nigeria, whose political leadership has historically been strongly influenced by Islam, emirs who are seen as both political and religious leaders are assumed to have the power of life and death over their emirates. The same emirs also exercised enormous power over those they ruled and were often dictatorial. Over the years, such leadership ideology could also have rubbed off on both the political and religious leadership, having provided a frame of reference for leadership in all strata of society. Despite the degree of democratic practices within the contemporary Nigerian societies, authoritative and hereditary leadership, especially among the Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba, were often the norm; *the ruled were often viewed as the servants of the rulers*.

Both Christian and Islamic religious influences also played their respective parts in shaping the leadership ideology of contemporary Africa. African leaders were challenged by the missionaries to adopt Western styles of leadership, which led to the abandonment of African leadership values, customs and cultures (Masango, 2003:316). As Agbiji (2012:92) noted, the traditional ideology and styles of leadership were not completely eradicated even though they were severely affected. However, the leadership challenge brought about by the imposition of Western styles of leadership by the missionaries and the jettisoning of African values initiated a culture or ideology of leadership that portrays the leadership as knowing it all, while the followers were just to take orders and be led to wherever the leaders wished.

The upper-class culture that was, for instance, derived from Islamic religious ideology by Muslim converts during the Islamic jihads and subsequent spread of Islam resulted in class distinctions and use of force in leadership, especially in societies where Islam had made incursions (Mbiti, 1999:140). This source of leadership ideology has led to considerable class distinction and the use of force by leaders in many African societies such as Nigeria. It could be from this premise that many African political leaders view themselves as superior to their followers and as such, feel insulted when asked by them to tender explanations for unacceptable conducts. They also often draw up the national constitutions to fit well with this sentiment. Indeed, some religious leaders go as far as threatening their followers with curses when they are called to answer certain questions.

It has been argued, meanwhile, that the problem actually lies with political leaders and that this problem has its roots in longstanding immoral tendencies. The immoral tendencies include self-interest, greed among leaders, and a failure to acknowledge ethical values that could engender responsible leadership in society (Lanre-Abass, 2008:124). Frankly, the foundations of the culture of poor leadership in Africa cannot be divorced from the influ-

ences on leadership derived from primordial Islamic leadership practices. The poor ideological foundation of leadership, which has served as a well-spring for successive African leaders across the spectrum of leadership can be traced to traditional African leadership ideology, depicted in leadership practices in African societies. Our contention is that the formation of negative leadership ideology in traditional African societies that ought to have been reformed in the course of history has, by and large, been upheld by African socio-political, economic and religious leadership in successive African historical periods.

Towards the Re-orientation of Islamic Religious Leadership in Contemporary Africa

Over the years, various individual crises of leadership have engendered the general crises of political leadership in Africa. Religious leadership has not made matters better off, in that religious leaders hardly do enough to criticize the moral decadence in the political and socio-economic realms. When opportunity to speak with political leaders presents itself, the religious leaders often choose instead to seek for project fund from the leaders; and to make this a success, they sometimes praise the leaders even when it is obvious that the leaders deserve only blame.

Besides, these religious leaders are also implicated in various forms of scandals and corruption that deprive them of the moral authority to criticize political leaders. In other words, religious leaders are not setting the right example for their followers. Generally, leadership failure appears to arise more out of character failure than unwise decision-making (Gibbs, 2005:27). Unfortunately, where such leadership failure occurs, there are dire socio-economic and political consequences. One of the crucial contributions that the Islamic religion could provide in African societies, especially through its leadership and the adherents, is a frame of reference in which the existing value system may be critically examined. Another is to foster the values that should inspire politics.

More so, religion has the responsibility to be a unifying factor and vehicle for socio-political and economic development, as against being an inspiration for war and division and even terrorism. The persistence of corruption and irresponsible leadership in many African countries have resulted in many years of hardship and suffering for the vast majority of African citizens as civil society and the rule of law disintegrate. Thus, an Islamic religious leadership with a debased value system does not only spell doom for society; it loses its social relevance and as such, must vacate its privileged position as the bastion of moral values for the wellbeing of society. In order to avoid such

a dethronement, Islamic religious leadership must seek a re-orientation of its leadership ideology.

How else can the workings of the minds of African Islamic religious leaders (or what could be referred to as their ideological formation) be discerned except by observing their actions, listening to their words, reading their writings, and examining the issues that engender their energies? There is no longer any doubt that many African religious leaders are obsessed with titles; advancing the commercialization of religion and shady deals; serving as palace prophets for the political and economic elites; and manipulating their followers and, indeed the African populace, for selfish gains. The Islamic religion is no exception, and these attitudes are often carried to the political spheres. The quality of leadership that emanates from the formation of a responsible and creative leadership ideology and practice is vital for the progress and wellbeing of any human society (Achebe, 1983:1-3; 19-25). Where the leadership ideology is distorted, a re-orientation is crucially needed. This is especially true of the kind of leadership ideology that should govern the practice of Islamic religious leadership in Africa. The leader often comes from a religious background which influences his leadership practices. For as Agbiji (2013) remarks, leadership cannot achieve substantial socio-political and economic transformation without the component of legitimate socio-religious, political and economic conscientization. Such crucial endeavors can be given impetus by the positive religio-social, political and economic legacies that can be gleaned from the history of leadership in various African societies. This is where Islamic leaders should play their roles as the structural engineers and architects of society. But such engineering and re-engineering should begin with the leaders themselves to make it more effective among their followers and the wider African societies.

Drawing from the primordial African context and based on the rich leadership ideological elements from this context, African (religious and) political leaders should be reminded that they are not simply political heads: they are the mystical and religious heads, the divine symbols of their people's health and wellbeing. Islamic religious leadership ideology should be re-orientated towards the wellbeing of African populace, who find themselves engulfed in poverty and deplorable living conditions. This should be seen as a sacred responsibility that should be diligently carried out. As leaders, the office is the link between human and spiritual rules. Islamic leaders should re-orient their leadership ideology and practice based on the conviction that their prophetic voice and engagement are both a social and spiritual contract for which they are accountable to God and to humanity. As such their leadership should be a reflection of the rule of Allah in the world.

As God's representatives in the eyes of the people and based on their divine calling, African Islamic leaders are called to be with the people and for the people. Only then can their people understand them and speak their language and become sharers in their situations. Only then can they be heard as political and economic leaders as speaking for the people. Only then can they give hope to the hopeless who abound on the 'black continent' and the world so battered by pain and poverty. The extremely high positions and titles such as 'savior,' 'protector,' 'child of God,' 'chief of the divinities,' 'lord of earth and life,' 'his Excellency,' 'his highness,' 'his majesty', etc. accorded to (religious and) political leadership will be more meaningful if they can be cherished as the bearers of a leadership ideology which is life-enhancing in all ramifications.

Conclusion

This article has carefully examined the implications and challenges of Islamic religious leadership ideology for social transformation in democratic Africa. There is no doubt that the problem of today's Africa is a problem of leadership; and as Achebe remarks, the quality of leadership that emanates from the formation of a responsible and creative leadership ideology and practice is vital for the progress and wellbeing of any human society (Achebe, 1998:1-3).

We noted that throughout the colonial and post-colonial history of the African continent, the leadership ideology and practices of its leaders have been influenced by leadership notions that may be traced to one or more of the leadership influences derived from the African traditional heritage: The Christian or the Islamic religious influence. Many Africans are of the opinion that the political hegemony of Islamic ideology is still under the influence of the politicians who came to power soon after independence. There is a widespread belief that the politicians are in politics for their own personal gain. It may therefore be argued that their fatalistic tendencies and lack of imagination in their policymaking provide clear proof of their political incompetence with regard to running the intricate affairs of government.

Islamic religion should, therefore, create a frame of reference in which the existing value system may be critically examined. It should strive to foster the values that should inspire politics. The Islamic religious leadership has the responsibility to be a unifying factor and vehicle for socio-political and economic development. Faith must collaborate with reason in discernment of right and wrong. The conclusion is to the effect that Islamic leaders should re-orientate their leadership ideology and practice based on the conviction that

their prophetic voice and engagement are both a social and spiritual contract for which they are accountable to God and to humanity.

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