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Today, we need:

- Reinstating Intentionality in All Procedures.
- Activating Self-Accountability Alongside Institutional Oversight.
- Adopting the principle of intention in interpreting actions.
- Incorporating piety as part of professionalism.
- Integrating Piety (Wara) into Professional Standards.
- Embedding the phrase “May it be accepted” before endorsing any decision.

From this starting point, this article comes in the hope of serving as a foundation for a comprehensive scholarly project through which we aim to establish this concept—both theoretically and practically—

under the title:

“The Foundational Project for the Science of Spiritual Governance in Endowments”, so that this initiative may become a bridge between:

- Text and purpose
- System and piety (Wara‘)
- Evaluation and Divine Blessing (Baraka)
- Document ... and Intent

And finally: as some endowers stated in their wills: “Seeking reward from God... hoping for acceptance by God”.

Perhaps it is time we restore this phrase to its rightful place—in the literature of governance, at the forefront of operational manuals, and at the heart of every endowment decision.

3. Endowment Code of Honor:

- A signed pledge executed upon assuming trusteeship, containing ethical and spiritual commitments such as:
- "I pledge to uphold the endower's intent in all decisions."
- "I commit to exercising piety (wara') in matters of uncertainty."
- "I vow to maintain God-consciousness in every action."

4. Qualitative Indicators for Spiritual Governance:

Not all indicators are financial; rather, one can ask:

- Were the most vulnerable prioritized?
- Was a jurist consulted in cases of uncertainty?
- Were beneficiaries treated with dignity in all communications?
- Did you examine your intentions before authorization?

Conclusion: From a Moment of Meditation... to Establishing a Discipline:

What began as a reflection on a phrase written in an endowment document: "May it be accepted by God" has transformed into a research project aimed at restoring balance between form and purpose, between procedure and integrity, and between system and intention. This article has revealed that spiritual governance is not a sentimental tendency nor a substitute for institutional governance. Rather, it is an integral dimension in endowment jurisprudence, a refined practice that safeguards the work from within.

How Can We Implement Spiritual Governance in Institutional Practice?

For spiritual governance to transition from concept or realm of ideas to practical application, it must be transformed into clear, actionable practices within the waqf environment. However, this formulation must be designed to both preserve its essence and uphold its core values.

1. Incorporating Values into Organizational Guidelines:

- Allocate a section in governance manuals titled: “Ethical Pillars in Endowment Management.”
- Include concepts such as: intention, piety, justice, humility, and mercy.
- Translate each value into organizational behavior: for example, intention—recording the endower’s purpose in every disbursement decision.

2. Training Trustees on the Jurisprudence of Intention and Purpose:

- Design training programs that cover:
- Endowment rulings (Ahkam al-Waqf)
- The endower’s condition and its areas of interpretation
- Administrative piety (al-Wara’)
- Jurisprudence of justice in cases of ambiguous texts
- Using real-life stories where piety led to success and reliance solely on the system led to failure.

1. An Unregistered Endowment—Yet Ongoing and Fruitful:

A small family waqf in one of the villages was never officially registered nor had any notarized deed. Yet family members have passed down its trusteeship generation after generation. Its yields are distributed to widows and orphans, managed with respect, discretion and piety. There was no formal bylaw... but there was sincere intention, reverence, and consciousness of God's oversight.

2. A Registered Waqf Plagued by Conflicts and Stagnation:

A large, legally documented waqf - complete with a board of superintendents and regular reporting - has nevertheless witnessed disputes among superintendents, beneficiary complaints, and failure to fulfill the endower's stipulations. The flaw lay not in the system itself, but in the absence of sincere intent, the dominance of personal interests, and the hollowing out of the endowment's original purpose.

3. The Complete Waqf: When Form and Spirit Align:

One waqf institution successfully demonstrated this principle by incorporating the endower's intent into its operational bylaws, providing superintendents with training in waqf jurisprudence, and implementing an "honor code" as part of its appointment procedures. These measures produced tangible results including increased public trust, smoother operations, and sustainable outcomes. This practical example proves that spiritual governance represents more than just an idealistic concept - it becomes an achievable reality when supported by genuine conviction and determined will.

When the terms of the endowment are unclear or conflicting, priority is given to the endower's original condition and true intention.

Islamic scholars established that the founder's sincere intention is the ultimate guide for interpreting endowment terms.

2. In Legal Systems: A Fundamental Legal Principle:

In modern administrative and judicial systems, the principle of good faith is firmly established in contract interpretation, liability assessment, and penalty mitigation—provided the action was based on genuine intent. Saudi administrative courts have invoked this principle in several rulings concerning administrative decisions made by officials who acted without intent to cause harm or violate regulations.

3. In Waqf: Spiritual Governance Administratively Activates Good Faith

Integrating the principle of good faith into waqf governance tools serves as a bridge between jurisprudence and law, granting intention administrative weight within decision-making systems. This does not eliminate the need for regulations, but rather introduces a subtle criterion unseen by formal systems—one that prevents decisions from becoming routine and devoid of spirit.

Real examples demonstrate spiritual governance in action – both its presence and absence.

One of the clearest indicators of spiritual governance's importance in waqf management is the observable disparity in endowments' impact - despite having similar resources or procedures.

poor students of knowledge,” must the student submit an income statement? Or should it be given to those whose need is known and trusted without humiliation? Here, the importance of “understanding the purpose” and considering the intent becomes evident—rather than merely implementing the text.

3. Spiritual Governance Reduces Conflicts:

Many disputes that arise in family endowments, among trustees, or with beneficiaries often stem from a lack of piety, the dominance of personal desires, or a disregard for the endower’s intent. However, when sincere intention is upheld, when the endowment’s purpose governs decisions, and when the trustee remembers that they are merely God’s steward over wealth they do not truly own—many conflicts dissolve naturally, without the need for mediation.

The Principle of Good Faith: From Jurisprudence to System:

1. In Jurisprudence: Intent is the Foundation of a Valid Endowment and the Key to Interpreting Its Conditions:

In endowment jurisprudence, the mere existence of a written deed or verbal formula is insufficient. Rather, the endowment requires niyyah (intent) of seeking nearness to God (qurbah)—a fundamental condition for the contract’s validity.

Ibn Qudamah said:

“A waqf is only valid when made with the intention of seeking closeness to God, as it is a pure act of devotion that expects nothing in return.” [Al-Mughni, 5/610]

whether consciously or unconsciously—to incorporate spiritual and ethical dimensions into their provisions. This demonstrates the potential for harmonization between legal requirements and intentionality.

1. Spiritual Governance Operates Within the Regulatory Framework, Not Beyond It:

Regulations enforce compliance but cannot prevent deviation when intentionality is absent. Rules establish order but lack purifying capacity. This renders spiritual governance a vital safeguard for what formal systems cannot monitor or measure by forms.

Article 5 of the General Authority for Awqaf's charter explicitly includes among its objectives: "Developing the social and economic impact of Awqaf."

However, such "social impact" cannot be achieved through budgetary allocations alone. It requires:

- Infusing distribution mechanisms with a spirit of justice,
- Ensuring beneficiaries speak of "the dignity of entitlement" rather than merely "the value of support."

2. The condition set by the endower in the system... and the intent interprets it:

Most endowment systems recognize the necessity of respecting or adhering to the endower's condition. However, in practical application, this condition may be rendered meaningless if the intent is disregarded or if it is applied through a rigid interpretation. For example, if the endower states: "The proceeds shall be spent on

Conversely, when this ethical sensibility fades, replaced by self-promotion, hollow statements, and impersonal decisions, the community disengages. Donor participation wanes, and endower contributions diminish.

2. Spiritual Governance Preserves the Dignity of Beneficiaries:

Allah says: "The unaware would deem them self-sufficient because of their restraint, but you will recognize them by their countenance; they do not beg from people persistently." (Quran 2:273)

A beneficiary is not merely a number on a list, but a human being entitled to dignity. They require from the superintendent compassion before procedure, and empathy before metrics. This can only be achieved through a spirit that prioritizes purpose over mere regulations.

3. Spiritual Governance Sets an Ethical Example:

When the superintendent is observed declining financial incentives, voluntarily prioritizing beneficiaries, concealing his efforts rather than seeking recognition, or shying away from the limelight, ...people recognize the waqf as a moral exemplar. Trust is restored, and new endowers are encouraged to contribute.

The Legal and Regulatory Dimension of Spiritual Governance:

While spiritual governance is fundamentally rooted in values and intentions, it does not conflict with modern legal and regulatory frameworks. Rather, it complements and strengthens them from within. In fact, certain contemporary waqf systems have begun—

3. The Jurisprudence of Trust and Public Guardianship:

In Islamic law, the superintendent of a waqf is neither an owner nor a free agent. He is a trustee and an agent over Allah's property.

Ibn Taymiyyah said: "The superintendent of a waqf is like a guardian; he may not act except in the waqf's best interest."
[Al-Fatāwā al-Kubrā, 5/415]

Al-Shāḥibī said: "Benefit is the spirit of action, and purpose is the measure of its sincerity." [Al-Muwāfaqāt, 2/290]

This establishes that intent and purpose are not merely sentimental matters, but substantive juristic considerations in evaluating actions—forming the basis for legal rulings and guiding juristic reasoning.

The Social Dimension of Spiritual Governance:

Waqf is not merely a charitable financial act; it is a social institution with profound impact on public trust, community stability, and distributive justice. Spiritual governance restores the waqf's connection to people and grants it the moral meaning that is not written by regulations.

1. Community Trust Isn't Built by Reports Alone:

When people witness a waqf being administered with justice - where the administrator avoids questionable practices, shuns personal prestige, and prioritizes the needy and rightful beneficiaries - trust grows naturally. This happens even without published reports or organized conferences.

intended.” [Agreed upon]. This hadith (the quotes of the Prophet PBU) is foundational in every aspect of worship and is considered a major principle in Islamic law (Sharea), upon which the validity or invalidity of an action, as well as its acceptance or rejection, is based. Just as intention is a condition for the validity of prayer and fasting, it is even more critical for endowment, as it is a purely financial act of worship. Imam Al-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: “Endowment is an act of pure devotion that requires intention, and its purpose should be the pleasure of Allah the Almighty.” [Al-Rawda, 5/356], Ibn Qudamah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: “Endowment is only valid with the intention of seeking closeness to Allah, as it is an act of pure charity/donation with no material compensation sought”. [Al-Mughni, 5/610]

2. The Endower’s Conditions in Fiqh: A Purpose That Cannot Be Neglected:

The four Sunni schools agree that the endower’s conditions are legally valid as long as they don’t contradict a clear textual ruling. They are treated as binding contracts.

- Malikis: “Endowment is a binding contract based on the endower’s condition.”
- Shafi’is: “Endowment follows the endower’s condition. If unspecified, the judge applies discretion based on benefit.”
- Hanafis: “The endower’s condition is like a divine command.”
- This confirms that intention and purpose matter not just in wording, but in execution.

dimension (faith aspect) in the management of endowments. It represents the natural extension of understanding endowment as a financial act of worship, rather than merely an organizational process. At its core, an endowment is a devotional act founded on sincerity, with the intention of drawing closer to Allah, as stipulated by the majority of scholars.

An analytical comparison:

- Institutional Governance focuses on: procedures, authorities, transparency, and efficiency.
- Spiritual Governance focuses on: intention, integrity, the endower's purpose, and consideration for the rightful beneficiaries.
- Institutional governance is reviewed through performance reports, while spiritual governance is reviewed with the fear of Allah.
- While institutional governance asks:
 - Was the procedure followed?
 - Spiritual governance asks:
 - Was the trust fulfilled?

When the two unite in a single endowment entity, work becomes upright and fruitful.

The Sharia and jurisprudential foundations of spiritual governance.

1. Intent and Purpose as Foundational to Waqf's Validity:

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "Actions are judged by intentions, and every person will have what he

From this contemplation emerged the realization that true governance is not merely managed through reports but calibrated by conscience; not activated by forms alone but rooted in the heart.

The Gap Between Form and Spirit:

In modern endowment practice, we often encounter a paradoxical reality: a legally perfect waqf—meticulous in its documentation,—yet hollow at its core, leaving no tangible impact on people's lives. Conversely, there exists a modest, informally documented endowment, administered with taqwa (God-consciousness), innate justice, and a living conscience, that yields greater benefit than a hundred pages of bureaucratic records. This very gap proves that institutional governance alone is insufficient, just as bare intention no longer suffices in our complex age. What we need, then, is a bridge that connects form to purpose, procedure to conscience, and system to niyyah (original intent).

Defining Spiritual Governance and Analyzing Its Structure:

The discussion of spiritual governance does not seek to establish an alternative concept to institutional governance, but rather to uncover a critical dimension absent from much contemporary organizational literature. Spiritual governance is neither an emotive label nor a sentimental term—it is a value-based framework that complements institutional structures while preserving the higher purpose of practice.

Proposed Definition:

Spiritual Governance: It is a system of self-regulation based on intention, guided by purpose, and controlled through piety. It complements institutional governance by reviving the spiritual

Spiritual Governance in Endowments (Awqaf): From a Moment of Meditation to the Establishment of a Discipline

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When the Document Speaks the Language of Intent:

While reviewing the endowment deeds of Ushayqir—as documented in The Register of Al-Sawwam Endowments in Ushayqir and The Endowment Deed of Saqr bin Qatami in Ushayqir, both prepared by Prof. Ibrahim bin Muhammad Al-Sama'il and published by Sae for Endowment Development—I was struck by certain recurring phrases that appear across multiple endowment documents:

"May it be acceptable to God," "Seeking the Countenance of God Almighty," "To be distributed to those who do not beg from people importunately."

These are not legal terms, nor accounting jargon—but a living spirit inscribed and transmitted, reflecting a purpose deeper than financial distribution: a donor's intention, a trustee's apprehension, and a beneficiary's rightful due.