

## Governance Circle's Proposal for Facilitating a One Hand, One Heart Organization

Approved: October 3, 2008 (Blue text indicates a change from previous draft – 1/09)

### I. Core Principles

- A. We rely on Allah and His Holy Books and Messengers and our Guide, Sidi Muhammad al-Jamal ar-Rifa'i ash-Shadhuli, as our sources for wisdom and guidance in our human affairs.
- B. We turn to Allah for guidance in all our decisions and actions.
- C. We acknowledge the obligations of leaders to the people, and people to their leaders.
- D. We strive to actualize the Religion of Unity and the Message of Peace, Love, Mercy, Justice, Freedom and Beauty in all our actions and associations with one another and the world, in accordance with the Promise (bayat) we have taken with our Guide.

### II. One Hand-One Heart Shura Circle Model

#### **A. Schematic Diagram**

A diagram is provided to create an overall schematic of our branch of the Shadhiliyya Tariqa, based in the United States. It shows how the various elements relate to one another. Circles represent teams of people working on common aims. The outer circles have more narrowly defined practical tasks and scopes, which may change fairly rapidly, while the progressively more central circles (including the Councils and One Hand One Heart Board) have broader aims and accountabilities.

*Note: The non-profit religious corporations representing the tariqa and its constituent organizations will have to comply with state and federal laws, and this may require some further refinements in this model, as well as to the by-laws. We propose that the existing corporations (SSC and USHS), if possible be unified. It is strongly recommended that we begin implementation before legal restructuring, except where necessary to remain in compliance with state and federal laws regarding non-profits. If it is legally required that the corporations remain distinct, we anticipate some restructuring to fit this new model, requiring at a minimum, significant rewriting of by-laws.*

#### **B. Council Functions**

1. The **University Council, Mother Center Council, Council of Shadhiliyya Communities (CSC), National Tariqa Council, and Council of the Honest** all represent, in a new, more inclusive and sustainable form, elements of the tariqa that already exist.
  - a. **The University Council's** main function is to develop and manage the university.
  - b. **The Mother Center Council's** functions are to develop and manage our holy land and mother center for the benefit of the entire national tariqa.
  - c. **The Council of Shadhiliyya Communities (CSC's)** functions are to represent, connect and facilitate mutual support among all regional communities.
  - d. **The National Tariqa Council** functions as a central unifying administrative body for the entire organization, assuming many functions of the current Shadhiliyya Sufi Center Board that are not ceded to the Mother Center or CSC.
  - e. **The Council of the Honest** functions as the membership of the non-profit religious corporations (Shadhiliyya Sufi Center and USHS) representing the national tariqa, approving all new Board and administrative Council member appointments. Additional functions are guardianship of core Sufi principles, spiritual guidance, and support for the tariqa through active participation and leadership,
2. Each of the Councils, like the other circles, is to be semi-autonomous, and each will be responsible for managing their own finances (as appropriate), development and administration.
3. Each Council is functionally linked to the Board and to its outer circles creating top-down and bottom-up communication and movement.

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### **C. Administrative Council Membership**

1. As with all the shura circles, the four administrative Councils – the University Council, the Mother Center Council, the Council of Shadhiliyya Communities and the National Tariqa Council – would be comprised of one, or more commonly two, representatives elected from each of their linked outer-level circles, establishing a bottom-up organizational structure.
2. Any of the four administrative Councils may also invite in additional non-voting guests to bring specific expertise or background as needed.
3. Each administrative Council may also include up to two people specifically nominated by our Guide.
4. All Council memberships have a limited, renewable term of no more than four years, and are subject to approval by the Council of the Honest.

### **D. One Hand-One Heart Board of Trusted Servants**

1. The One Hand-One Heart Board will create and periodically update unified vision, mission, purpose and value statements for the entire organization, with input invited from the entire national tariqa.
  - a. Its main functions are broad policy-making and long-term planning on matters beyond the exclusive scope of any one Council; ensuring good coordination among the Councils; promoting unity and serving the tariqa.
  - b. The Board will also have responsibility for any decisions it is required by law to make.
2. The One Hand-One Heart Board will be made up of the following trusted servants:
  - a. Two elected representatives from each of the four administrative Councils, and three from the Council of the Honest. Membership of the Board thus represents the entire tariqa.
  - b. Additional non-voting guests may be invited in by the Board (as with the administrative Councils), to bring specific expertise or background as needed.
  - c. Up to two additional trusted servants may be specifically nominated by our Guide.
  - d. All trusted servants serving on the One Hand-One Heart Board will serve limited, renewable terms of no more than four years, on a staggered schedule and are subject to approval by the Council of the Honest.
3. Quorum: At least one person from each Council must be present at a meeting for a decision to be valid.

### **E. Council of the Honest**

1. The Council of the Honest provides spiritual guidance and wisdom, safeguards the integrity of the organization, constitutes the membership of the non-profit religious corporations (SSC and USHS) representing the national tariqa, and promotes the growth and well being of the tariqa. It also inspires and supports all beloveds to embody the teachings and give the message of love and unity.
2. Council of the Honest membership consists of those who have taken the Council of the Honest promise with our Guide.
3. The functions of the Council of the Honest include:
  - a. Being the membership for the non-profit corporation.
  - b. Receiving periodic (at least annual) reports and accounts from the Councils and the One Hand, One Heart Board and providing comments and guidance through consultation with each.
  - c. Supporting our National Tariqa and all of its components (including outreach and support of enrollment for the University) through active participation and leadership.
  - d. Providing spiritual guidance and support, holding Sidi's vision and guidance for the tariqa, and guardianship of our core Sufi principles (Qur'an, Sunnah and Hadith) within the tariqa.

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### III. Proposed One Hand One Heart Governance Process

#### **A. Shura Circle Autonomy and Accountability**

- ◆ ~Leaders must allow themselves to be held accountable to the people – any claim of infallibility is contrary to Islamic law (e.g., Abu Bakr as first caliph – “I am not the best of you. If I do well, help me; and if I do wrong, set me right”).

~(Q. 42:38) – Those...whose affair is decided by consultation (shura) between themselves...this is better and more enduring.

1. Tariqa governance comprises a set of self-organizing and semi-autonomous “shura circles” (teams) that are whole entities in their own right, and also parts of (represented in) larger circles.

*Note: For example, the Sufi School East circle is part of a larger Programs Circle, which is part of the Farm of Peace Circle of Trusted Servants, which will be part of the Council of Shadhiliyya Communities, which will be part of the One Hand One Heart Board: see Diagram 2.2.*

The aim, or overall purpose and major accountabilities of each circle are created and mutually agreed upon with the circle above it, in alignment with the vision, mission and principles agreed to for the tariqa as a whole, within the wisdom of the prophetic tradition, the real Islam and the teachings of our Guide.

3. Within each circle's domain (which may or may not include separate income generation and expenditure, within the larger budget of the tariqa organization/s), that circle is then responsible for its own leading, doing, assessing and learning. It determines its own goals and strategy (in alignment with the overall aim), its own structure, programs, work activities and record keeping. This includes assigning roles, accountabilities, and performance measures within the circle.
4. Circles and their members seek to make explicit and clarify in detail what they will count on each other for, and how their assigned roles and accountabilities intersect with others in the tariqa, community or organization, accordingly;
  - a. The work functions in each circle are delegated to circle members, working individually or as committees, and are done autonomously.
  - b. This means that these people (like the circles themselves) have permission to take whatever action is needed in the moment, while remaining accountable to the circle (as the circle is accountable to the next inner circle).
  - c. This requires that individuals and circles take responsibility for their own contribution to the situation, and if through their mistake or breach of agreed policy, the system is thrown out of balance, that they take action to restore the balance.
  - d. Where work is delegated to individuals in exchange for payment or other substantial benefits, a clear written agreement is required, setting out conditions, accountabilities and reporting requirements.
5. Accountability and transparency is also promoted by each circle keeping minutes of meetings, including decisions made, and making broadly available, at least yearly, reports updating its community and/or next inner-circle on the activities of the circle, including its financial transactions.

#### **B. Shura Circle Composition and Linkages**

1. Each circle will include two members representing each of its linked outer circles elected for a specific, renewable term of no more than four years.
2. Each circle may invite in any additional non-voting guests as needed and may choose to open any meeting for others to observe.
3. Outermost circles will normally have an open door for any interested members of the tariqa, relevant community or organization who have himma to participate in or observe that circle.
4. Each circle is linked to its next inner and outer circles by two people who participate fully in the decision making of both circles (the “double-link”). Of these two, the “lead link” is primarily responsible for representing the needs of the inner-circle in outer-circle meetings. The “representative link” primarily represents the needs of the outer-circle at the inner-circle meetings.
5. By agreement between any two linked circles the lead link is chosen one of three ways:
  - a. The outer-circle assigns the lead and representative links from their elected representatives.

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- b. The inner-circle assigns the lead link from one of the two elected representatives.
- c. The inner-circle assigns the lead link from either circle, leaving only the representative link to be elected by the outer-circle.

In this way, it is ensured that each circle's decision-making process takes into consideration the needs of its linked (inner and outer) circles.

6. The timing of new link appointments should be coordinated between linked circles, to ensure some continuity of membership in the inner-circles.
7. In the case of community circles, the circles may also include one or two members nominated by the Guide as leaders (for a specific term, renewable), subject to agreement by the community.
8. Any circle is empowered to remove a member prior to the expiration of his or her term, if, on receipt of a signed, written complaint, and after due consideration of both evidence presented and response by the member, it is determined that the member has broken a law in a way that reflects negatively on the good reputation or legal standing of the organization.

### **C. One Hand One Heart Decision-Making (this section amended Jan 09)**

- ◆ *~(Q. 42:38) – Those...whose affair is decided by consultation (shura) between themselves...this is better and more enduring. Shura circles:* In the prophetic tradition the preferred method of governance is shura or consultative decision-making by a representative democracy.

*~Two hadiths reported by Ghazali: 1. My community will not come to consensus on a wrong... 2. It is your duty to stand by the united community....*

*~(Q. 3:64) – None of us shall take for lords any but Allah.*

*~Abu Bakr – If I disobey God and His messenger, you owe me no obedience.*

1. This holistic and integrative decision-making process is designed to prevent people or teams from missing or overriding an important perspective on an issue because they don't see its value. **It is grounded in turning to Allah for guidance and assumes that each perspective emerging from this process probably holds a piece of the truth. On important matters, some or all members of a circle may make use of the guidance prayer (salatul-istikhara) as used by the Prophet, saws – see e.g., "How the Arrival is Realized" pp. 178-179). The goal is then to integrate perspectives as quickly and effectively as possible.**
2. **Decisions are crafted through integrating the core truth or value in each perspective put forth.** For a proposal to gain approval, the circle then addresses all "principled and paramount" objections, refining the proposal until it finds a non-objectionable path forward (consent).
3. **Decisions must be consistent with the mission and principles adopted by the tariqa, community, organization or circle. Feelings are respected, but objections are valid only if they present a reasonable argument for why a proposal will result in a breach of those principles or will create an unacceptable dysfunction.** Individuals cannot block a proposed action simply because they are fearful or don't like it. *If their concern is strong, however, a sincere effort should be made to help them reflect to see if there is a principled and paramount objection, and if so, whether it can be integrated, since it is important that all circle members at least be able to live with each circle decision and support it. This allows us to hold each other in love and find the truth within each different perspective without judgment, blame or separation.* Research shows that group decisions based on such integrative processes are reliably better than decisions made individually by the most able member.
4. **Decisions are made rapidly and in small increments based on present understanding,** then refined and updated continuously as new information and guidance emerges.
  - a. Any decision can be revisited and altered by consent at any time, allowing organizations to experiment, learn and adapt quickly in a complex, rapidly changing environment. This is a dynamic and flexible way of guiding the organization toward its goals by holding an aim in mind, staying attuned to emerging reality and making frequent course corrections along the way.

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- b. **The threshold for decision-making is a workable, non-objectionable decision, not the "best" decision.** The best decision is the one that emerges over time, based on guidance and learning in action.
5. In this decision-making approach **most authority is delegated**, via each circle's integrative process, to individuals or small working committees or teams (three-person teams generally work best). It is more efficient to assign the authority to make specialized decisions, within appropriate budget constraints, to those most qualified and motivated to act. Recipients of such delegated authority remain accountable to the circle, and if this authority later proves to be too broad or too limiting, the circle can change the allocation of responsibility at any time.
6. Similarly, **any circle may agree – by consent – to assign any particular decision**, either in advance or where consensus has not been achieved after repeated efforts, **to be handled in a different way**. For example, **it can be handled by referring to an appropriate person or body in the tariqa for facilitation, mediation, guidance or decision, or for decision by majority vote**.
7. It is recommended that each **circle also adopts a default process in advance, for situations where there is a failure to find consensus** on a significant issue, or failure to resolve a dispute or to clear ongoing tensions. The steps of this process (subject to variation by consent) are:
  - a. If the circle is unclear on the appropriate implementation of the *shura* process to reach consent on the issue, invite the Governance Circle or its nominee to provide training and/or **facilitation in the shura process** as needed to reach a decision.
  - b. If proper application of the *shura* process does not resolve the matter, schedule and hold a **special meeting for a sulha (reconciliation) process**. Acceptable, experienced facilitators for *sulha* should be agreed in advance by consent (see separate description). More than one 2-3 hour session may be required and should be scheduled in advance in case it is needed.
  - c. If the *sulha* process does not resolve the issue, elect by consent a delegation of three circle members to **consult Sidi and ask for his guidance**.
  - d. In the unlikely event that consideration of how to proceed on the issue in light of Sidi's guidance does not yield a consent decision, **a decision on the issue may be made by majority vote**.  
The circle may agree by consent to opt for an alternative procedure at any stage, such as skipping one or more of these steps; or referring the decision to a working committee or linked circle; or setting up a mediation between two parties; or if mediation fails, an arbitration as allowed by the SSC (or USHS) by-laws.
8. Any individual circle or committee member who stands to gain materially from a decision by that circle or committee should declare their interest in advance and not continue to participate in that decision.

### **D. Integrative elections**

1. People are assigned to key roles within each circle (facilitator, secretary, etc.), or as "lead" or "representative" links to outer or inner circles, through an integrative election process. This election process is similar to that used for any other decision including open discussion and turning to Allah for guidance.
2. Each group member can nominate a candidate (it may be themselves) and explain his or her reasons for supporting this person. Members may change their support based on new information or insights in the discussion that ensues, or on new guidance.
3. Based on this, the facilitator proposes a nominee, and any principled responses/objections are either integrated or the facilitator proposes another nominee, until no more objections are raised.

## **IV. Foundational Principles of Our Branch of the Shadhiliyya Tariqa (Rev. 8/26/08)**

- A. ***We rely on Allah and His Holy Books and Messengers and our Guide, Sidi, as our sources for wisdom and guidance in our human affairs.***

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1. We take our understanding and models of right action specifically, though not exclusively, from the Quran, the Sunnah, and the Shadhiliyya Way, striving for balance between outward forms of worship (*shari'ah*) and an active, transformative, spiritual, inward reality with Allah (*haqiqah*).
  2. Our spiritual practices are those prescribed for us by Allah and our Guide.
- B. *We acknowledge that Allah has certain rights upon His Creation. These are:***
1. That we worship only Allah.
  2. That we rely only on Allah, and trust in His plans for us.
  3. That we accept and respect the essential Unity of all religions, which support realization of the One God.
- C. *We strive to actualize the Religion of Unity and the Message of Peace, Love, Mercy, Justice, Freedom and Beauty in all our actions and associations with one another and the world, in accordance with the Promise we have taken with our guide, Sidi Muhammad al-Jamal ar-Rifa'i ash-Shadhuli.***
1. As members of this branch of the Shadhiliyya Tariqa who have taken hand with our Guide Sidi, through 'The Promise', we form a unified community to achieve a common purpose: the actualization of the Religion of the Unity. In this we acknowledge the oneness of creation in Allah. As part of creation, we seek to have our organization reflect this essential unity and so we commit to working together as one hand and one heart.
  2. As Sufis we aspire to follow the laws of polite manners (*adab*) both outwardly and inwardly, to abide by Divine Law and to emulate the moral ethics and character traits of all the Prophets and Messengers who follow the Light of Allah - Muhammad, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, et al (*saws*).
  3. We strive to establish peace and bring healing and love in all that we do by practicing kindness, inclusiveness, charity, generosity, forgiveness, tolerance, respect and cooperation in all of our interactions
  4. We do not discriminate based on race, color, age, gender, nationality, religion, culture, physical traits, wealth or poverty. We deeply respect freedom of belief, the dignity of all stages of spiritual walking (development) and the privacy of individuals.
  5. We strive to form a loving community: a) by recognizing that the basis of community rests on respect rather than coercion; b) by overcoming hostility through practicing reconciliation, forgiveness and self-responsibility; c) by developing relationships based on love, compassion, respect, assistance and understanding; and d) by promoting, excellence (*ihsan*), morality and virtue while honoring individual free-will.
  6. Consultation (*shura*) and consent is our primary method of decision-making. However, if agreement is not reached after repeated consultation, wherein we take our desire to Allah for clarification and we earnestly work to integrate the wisdom in the divergent perspectives (including seeking outside opinions and information), we can consent to a different style of decision-making, such as standing with the majority, as sanctioned in the Hadith. (*see note below*)
  7. We, as a community sincerely seek to align our actions with the Will of Allah, securing the pure and good abundance of Allah, in order that we may spend in the Way of Allah, and give to the needy.
  8. We provide education that encourages, inspires and enables people to pursue the lofty ideals contained within the Light of Allah's Essence (Mohammedan Reality) and to strive for the perfection of the *nafs* (self).
- D. *We recognize and strive to abide by the obligations of leaders to the people and the people to their leaders, as laid out in the Prophetic tradition of Community.***
1. We respect the nomination of leaders by our Guide for specified periods of time. We assign leadership, for specified periods of time, to those serving on the One Hand One Heart Board, the Councils and other *shura* circles. We elect representatives to carry our interests and desires to the inner circles of the organization. We honor these leaders and representatives for their wisdom and subservience to Allah and the Sacred Laws (*shari'ah*).

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2. We stand beside our leaders as partners, each of us striving to carry our respective responsibilities with excellence (*ihsan*). We have eyes to see and discern and are not blind followers, always asking Allah for more knowledge. Our leaders actively seek and respect our knowledge and our will.
3. We value our leaders as servants who protect our faith, feelings and thoughts because they treat all people with equality, stay within Sacred Laws, turn to God for guidance, and with a soft heart exemplify humility, kindness and truth.
4. We form Councils and circles to discuss, deliberate and decide issues of common importance (*shura*). The members of our community share responsibility for, and carry out the administration of, our organization.
5. Our sisters and brothers of higher spiritual rank (Council of Honest) provide spiritual guidance, protect the integrity of the organization, and lead and support outreach efforts. They inspire and support all beloveds to embody the teachings and to give the Message of Love and Unity.

*Note: Decision making by consensus (e.g. consent) is best; but if the people cannot agree after consultation (shura), Hadith validates the principle of standing with the majority: (e.g., Q. 42:38 - Those...whose affair is decided by consultation (shura) between themselves...this is better and more enduring.) And three hadiths reported by Ghazali: 1. My community will not come to consensus on a wrong, and if you disagree, follow the largest group; 2. It is your duty to stand by the united community and the majority; 3. The hand of God is upon the majority.*