To Mom, Dad, and Nigel
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HIJRA AND HOMEGROWN AGRICULTURE: FARMING AMONG AMERICAN MUSLIMS

By

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In general, my research examines how groups of Muslims interpret and embody religious and environmental beliefs and practices, create religious identities, craft communities, and negotiate the boundaries and points of connection between their communities and larger Muslim, cultural, and ecological communities. My study of three American Muslim Sufi groups with farms as part of their religious communities demonstrates the many roles that farms and farming can play within communal life. I argue that members of these communities draw upon their Islamic beliefs, their identities as American converts, American history, and their ideas about the role of religion and nature in a meaningful life, in order to create distinct Muslim communities. These communities, in turn enable them to live out their beliefs, develop new awareness about the environment, and negotiate their places in the American religious landscape and the Islamic tradition. Their communities demonstrate continuity with and diversity in the Islamic tradition and in American religious history. These groups demonstrate distinctly Muslim ways of engaging and valuing the natural world – a topic that has received very little attention in either Islamic or environmental studies. More broadly, my research helps frame farming as both an important spiritual practice and a
way that religious communities interact with larger social and ecological wholes. By collecting original data on understudied Muslim communities and providing comparative analysis, my research will contribute to the study of Islam, American religious history, and religion and nature.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This is a project about American Muslims, religious farms, and the interpretation, embodiment, and creation of religious and environmental beliefs and practices. My study of three American Muslim Sufi groups with farms as part of their religious communities demonstrates the many roles that farms and farming can play within communal life. Members of these communities are using farms and projects on these farms to live and develop ideas about the environment, to craft religious identities, to negotiate between their communities and larger Muslim, cultural, and ecological communities. These farms help them craft distinct ways of being Muslim that resonate with their identities as Muslims and converts, their commitment to a Sufi order, and their understandings about the environment and food. The experience of farming has also influenced religious and environmental ideas and practices. This work on understudied Muslim communities contributes to studies of identity and community formation and negotiation, religion and the environment, American religious history, the Islamic tradition, and intentional communities. Being involved with these farms, these Muslims are creating religious meaning through dynamic negotiations with everyday life and demonstrating the importance of lived religion in the development of religious ideas about the environment and in the construction and negotiation of their religious identities and communities.

Sufism and Farms in the United States

At the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm, the Dayempur Farm, and the Farm of Peace, Muslims are using the institutions of farms and the experience of agriculture to explore and enact complicated relationships between their environmental and
religious beliefs, practices, and institutions. Believers involved with these farms are attempting to live particular relationships with God and nature, developing and struggling with ideas about the environment, and undertaking innovative forms of intentional agricultural living. In short, by being involved with these religious farms, they are doing nothing less than crafting unique ways of being Muslim in the United States, based on their identity as converts to a particular form of Islam.

My interest in religion and the environment and Muslims in America blossomed while an undergraduate at Colgate University. Concerned with the ethics of science, I entered college as a biology major. Like many American teenagers prior to 9/11, I began my studies knowing very little, if not nothing, about Muslims and the Islamic tradition. I found little discussion of ethics in my science curriculum, but I was fortunate to take a religion course, titled Religion, Science, and the Environment, which not only discussed the ethics of science but also introduced me to the complicated relationships between values and ethics and people’s relationships with the natural world.

Taking an extended study course on the Islamic heritage of Turkey, making friends with diverse Muslim women, and the attacks on 9/11 furthered influenced my research interests. The increased media coverage on Muslims and Islam, along with my own increasing education and experience, brought into focus how little information was available in the public realm. I was surprised by the lack of information on the role of Muslims in America and western history presented in the American media. It was the convergence of my personal and academic experience that solidified by desire to study Muslims in America. I also continued my study of religion and the environment, focusing on the relationship between Islam and nature.
The seeds for this project were planted when I found a link to a website for the Muhammad Farm, while researching the Nation of Islam during my graduate studies at Vanderbilt University. At the University of Florida, I began to see the potential for Muslim farms in the United States as a research topic, because they would be an area where Muslims were actively engaging their environment. However, they proved to be a far richer topic than I imagined, encompassing my interest in American Muslims, empowerment, community and identity formation, and attempts by Muslims to understand their relationship with the natural world.

This study began as a project to investigate issues concerning religion and nature, such as religion and environmentalism, agrarianism, intentional living, food, and land use. As I learned about the communities in depth, I broadened my research to look at community and identity formation, gender, networking, and the nature of the Islamic tradition in America.

In this work, I focused on three American Sufi communities: The Dayemi Tariqat’s Dayempur Farm in Illinois and the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm and the Shadhiliyyya Sufi Center East’s Farm of Peace, which are both in Pennsylvania. I learned about these farms by word of mouth and the internet. I was introduced to people involved with the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm by Dr. Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons. During my visit, members mentioned a farm community in Indiana. A Google search informed me that this second farm was actually the Dayempur Farm in Illinois. I learned of the Farm of Peace from someone in the Dayemi Tariqat.

Together, the individuals and communities involved with Muslim farms represent a diversity of membership, experience, thought, and practice within the American and
Muslim story. These Muslim communities arise from different concerns and ideas about the place of religion and nature in a good, meaningful life. They also demonstrate particular attempts at intentional living and agriculture.

Some of these communities are only gardening and others have functional farms. I call these places as farms, because the communities call these areas farms. Practitioners do not always talk about the activities on this land as farming; instead many describe it as gardening. There is also a community where they are only gardening, because most of their land is in a conservation program. As part of the program, they planted trees, and they elected to grow fruit trees. The other two farms refer to the areas where they grow fruits, vegetables, and nuts as gardens. These gardens are different than the garden at the Bawa Muhaiyatdeen Fellowship Farm, which is decorative. Although they refer to these areas as gardens, part of the definition of farming is cultivating land, which occurs at each of these three locations. Farming is a term that also encompasses the myriad of activities that go into running a farm, activities that take place every day on these three farms.

There are also important similarities among these groups. These are all religious communities that include farms. They are places where they live out their religious beliefs and practices, as well as their ideas about society, food production, self-sufficiency, and human-nature relations. These are all groups of indigenous American Muslims, who converted to Islam at some point in their lives.\(^1\) Although each

\(^1\) By indigenous American Muslims, I mean people or people’s parents who were Americans before they were Muslims. Marcia Hermansen uses the term to refer to “Muslims of European and Euro-American origin” (Marcia Hermansen, “Roads to Mecca Conversion Narratives of European and Euro-American Muslims,” *Muslim World* 89 (Jan. 1999): 56-89). I expand this term to include people of African or Caribbean origin as well. Haddad and Smith also use the term “indigenous” (Yvonne Yazbek Haddad and Jane I. Smith, *Muslim Communities in North America* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), xvii; and Jane I. Smith, *Islam in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), x and 57).
community has a membership of mixed ethnicity, the majority of members involved with
the farms, are white. They are all groups of Sufi Muslims that identify as part of the
Islamic tradition. Sufis are Muslims that practice a mystical form of Islam and are
usually focused on knowing and experiencing God. They typically join a group
associated with a lineage of teachers that is called a tariqa, which follows a spiritual
teacher called a sheik and has specific religious practices. These sheiks are thought to
transmit wisdom through a chain of transmission that traces back to the Prophet
Muhammad.

The beginnings of Sufism are contested. Some of the issues arise, because there
are debates as to when the terms Sufi and Sufism originated, what they meant, and to
what they referred. ‘Ali b. ‘Uthman al-Jullabi al-Hujwiri, a Persian scholar (b. circa 990)
summarized some of the first debates about the term Sufi, explaining that

Some assert that the Sufi is so called because he wears a woollen garment
(jama‘-i suf); others that he is so called because he is in the first rank (saff-i
awwal); others say it is because the Sufis claim to belong to the Ashab-i
Suffa. . .  Others. . . declare that the name is derived from safa (purity).
These explanations of the true meaning of Sufism are far from satisfying the
requirements of etymology, although each one of them is supported by
many subtle arguments. . . The name has no derivation answering to
etymological requirements, inasmuch as Sufism is too exalted to have any
genus from which it might be derived.2

Many scholars believe that the term Sufi was first used to refer to people who wore
wool garments, which distinguished them from other renunciants who wore linen or
cotton. Other scholars have debated the idea that a term for wool-wears would come to
signify mystics or radical ascetics. Ahmet Karmustafa argues that the term Sufis
was first used in the middle of the third/ninth century to refer to groups that were

distinguished because of their unique mystical identity, and the term *sūfiyya* was used to refer to the entire mystical movement. According to Karmustafa, this mystical movement and identity “emerged from within the renunciatory modes of piety (*zuhd*) during a period that extended from the last decades of the second/eighth to the beginning of the fourth/tenth century.”³ Scott Kugle explains that Sufism developed during this time as a response to the imperial ideology that arose after Muhammad’s death and that these Sufis “taught a kind of noetic knowledge based on personal experience, inward illumination, and mystical intuition.”⁴

Sufism has also been defined in a number of ways by different groups throughout history. During the colonial period, Orientalist scholars defined the term Sufism as fundamentally different from Islam. In fact “the essential feature of the definition of Sufism that appeared at the time was that it had no intrinsic relation with the faith of Islam.”⁵ Often European scholars looked for the sources of Sufism outside of the Islamic tradition. There were scholars who believed that the origin of Sufism was found in Iranian culture. Others focused on the influence of Neoplatonic ideas or Christian thought on Sufi beliefs.

The history of western scholarship on Sufism was driven by the desire to separate Sufism from Islam, and thus “treating Sufism as an abstract mystical philosophy, these scholars entirely ignored the social context of Sufism as expressed in Sufi orders, the


institutions formed around saints’ tombs, and the role of Sufis in politics.”⁶ Further, “creating Sufism as a new category of culture permitted it to be enjoyed and appropriated by Europeans (and Americans), precisely because it was separated from the newly emerging (and, to them, largely negative) category of Islam.”⁷

However, Muslims in premodern societies often did not identify Sufism as unrelated to Islam. As Ernst notes, “for much of the previous millennium, most of the outstanding religious scholars of Mecca, Medina, and the great cities of the Muslims world were intimately engaged in what we today call Sufism.”⁸ In fact, Kugle argues that “Sufism encompasses what might be called ‘popular Islam’ in the period from the eleventh century until the middle of the nineteenth century, when Sufis were increasingly displaced or brazenly assaulted by extremist Wahhabi or literalist Salafi interpretations of Islam.”⁹

Sufism has encompassed a diversity of ideas and practices throughout history. As early as the second century, the term sufīyya “designated not one distinct social group but several different social types, or, more properly, it was the name of a particular orientation towards piety.”¹⁰ Historically, there have been disagreements about the definition of and practice of Sufism, as the term has included a broad range of groups, practices, and beliefs. There have been Sufi thinkers, such as Ibn ‘Arabi and Shah Wali

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⁷ Ibid, 199.
⁸ Ibid, xiii.
⁹ Kugle, Sufis and Saints’ Bodies, 7.
¹⁰ Karmustafa, Sufism, 7.
Allah, who have tried to synthesize differing views from throughout Sufi history. These summary writings were often used by orientalists to forward colonialist goals.\textsuperscript{11}

Sufism, as defined by Orientalist scholars, has influenced modern Islamic thought about Sufism. Some groups of Muslims during and after colonial times utilized this distinction between Sufism and Islam for various aims. Fundamentalists have presented Sufism as an internal threat to Islam, and according to Ernst, “polemical attacks on Sufism by fundamentalists have had the primary goal of making Sufism into a subject that is separable from Islam, indeed hostile to it.”\textsuperscript{12} Some “Muslim modernists have been highly critical of Sufism, not on the grounds that it is foreign to Islam but because they see it as a medieval superstition and a barrier to modernity.”\textsuperscript{13} Webb explains that “Sufism has always been an ‘alternative’ discourse in the Islamic world, existing in tension with stricter, legalistic elements in the tradition.”\textsuperscript{14} Ewing, during her fieldwork in Pakistan, observed that Sufi figures were described in a variety of ways, because of “versions of modernity, Islam, and secularism [vying] for dominance in the political arena.”\textsuperscript{15}

Debates over the relationship between Sufism and Islam continue today among Muslims, non-Muslims, and even scholars. According to Ernst,

\begin{quote}
the underlying assumptions of the early Orientalists are still active, despite the relatively much larger base of knowledge that is currently available.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{11} Malik, “Introduction,” 3.

\textsuperscript{12} Ernst, The Shambhala Guide to Sufism, xiv.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, 199.


\textsuperscript{15} Katherine Pratt Ewing, Arguing Sainthood: Modernity, Psychoanalysis, and Islam (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 44.
There are still scholars who cherish the notion that they can discover and announce the true ‘sources’ of Sufism in terms of Hindu, Buddhist, or Christian ‘influence.’  

As late as 1971, some scholars still “defined Sufism in opposition to legalistic ‘orthodoxy’ . . . [and] as a ‘natural expression of personal religion.’”

The relationship between American Sufi communities and the Islamic tradition is even more complicated in the United States, because there are both non-Muslim and Muslim Sufi groups in the United States. In the United States and Europe, some New Age groups developed Sufi communities, defining Sufism as something outside the Islamic tradition. They have "emphasized classical Sufism’s goal of the transcendent unity beyond all distinctions (including religious differences) to the point of denying any essential connection of Sufism with the religion of Islam.” This explanation of Sufism has also appealed to universalists, as well as New Age spiritual seekers. This history has led to a "tendency among academics, anticult groups, and traditional Muslims alike to lump the American-bread Sufi groups into categories such as 'cults,' 'New Age,' 'popular,' or 'unorthodox.' "

Categorizing all American Sufi groups as un-Islamic fails to account for American Sufi communities, such as these three farm communities, which are Islamic Sufi groups.

16 Ernst, Shambhala Guide to Sufism, 18.
17 Ewing, Arguing Sainthood, 48.
In highlighting the particular ideas and practices of these three farm communities, I do not intend to put their believes and practices in opposition to those from the Islamic tradition. Instead, I hope to contribute to understandings of the diverse communities, beliefs, and practices that are a part of the Islamic tradition.

Marcia Hermansen has categorized Sufi groups in America into two categories, hybrids and perennials. Hybrid movements more readily identify with the Islamic tradition, whereas perennial movements de-emphasize Islamic characteristics “in favour of a ‘perennialist’, universalist’, or ‘traditionalist’ outlook.”

Perennial movements often believe that there is secret religious truth to be found in all traditions and cultures. In her study of literature among American Sufi movements, Hermansen found that there were connections between perennial and hybrid Sufi movements in the United States. There were members from each type of group that mentioned groups or people from the other category in their writing. She also found that groups of Sufis in the United States, regardless of their relation to the Islamic tradition, may take advantage of places where other mystical or New Age groups advertise, such as “bookstores, universities, health-food shops, and in local mind-body-spirit newsletters.”

Some of these practices were found among the farm communities in this study. Coleman Barks is a member of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship and mentioned in books by perennial Sufis. Both the Dayemi Tariqat and Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East

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22 Leonard Lewisohn, “Persian Sufism in the Contemporary West: Reflections on the Ni‘matu’llahi Diaspora,” in Sufism in the West, ed. Jamal Malik and John Hinnells (New York: Routledge, 2006), 53. This quote describes how the Ni‘matu’llahi order, a Sufi order started in Persia in the 800s, spread word about the order when entering a new American city.
are healing orders and are actively involved with broader, non-Muslim healing communities, which might be described as New Age. 

There are other scholars who contend that both these schools of thought have contributed to American forms of Sufism. In the introduction to the compilation *Sufism in the West*, Damrel explained that

> American Islamic mysticism is the product and project of two complimentary forces . . . the diverse vitality of the substantial multi-ethnic and multi-generational US and Canadian Muslim communities. A second powerful factor is a more generally conceived ‘spirituality’ that investigates and sometimes incorporates religious beliefs, symbols and rituals from a dizzying host of sources, including Islam and Islamic mysticism.\(^{23}\)

This history and debates surrounding Sufi groups makes it necessary to carefully explore the role that the institutions of farms and the practices on them play in these communities. These religious communities with farms are one way, but not the only way, that these Muslims are able to negotiate their identities and construct a community that reflects their experiences and their positions within the United States, American Sufism, and the Muslim community. I take a lived religion approach to studying these farms, which is an approach that highlights religious production and meaning in everyday life and institutions.

The answers given by members of these farms when asked about the farms highlight diverse sources used to shape religious identity, action in the environment, and ideas about nature. They also demonstrate some of the ways that religious communities attempt to enact or explain their ethics. Overall, these answers are another example of indigenous and local processes of identity formation and appropriation of the Islamic tradition. These processes take place within the context of

the Islamic tradition, the American Sufi tradition, and the experience of farms and
griculture. They also provide an opportunity for Muslims to engage nature as part of a
religious organization, making them fertile ground for exploring the relationship between
nature and specific Muslims’ religious and environmental beliefs, practices, and
institutions.

**Methodology**

I began my research with two questions: how do Muslims’ beliefs, practice,
communities, and institutions influence involvement in their rural surroundings and how
does participating in agriculture influence religious beliefs, practices, and communities.
To answer these questions, I drew upon the interdisciplinary field of religion and
ecology, using historical and social scientific methods, as well as lived religion
perspectives, to address my research questions. I used ethnographic methods to
conduct research with people involved with the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm,
the Dayempur Farm, and the Farm of Peace. I also referred to primary sources from
these communities, historic and ethnographic accounts of American Islam, and
theoretical insights from research on religion and nature and Muslim minorities. To
contextualize my study, I have placed my research within the broader history of
Muslims, Sufism, intentional living, and nature religion in America.

I visited these farms to conduct focus groups and interviews with central figures
involved with the farms or the history of the farms. I also engaged in participant
observation when invited to partake in a task or practice. My decision to focus primarily
on open-ended interviews and participant observation is based on the call by religious
anthropologists, such as Meredith McGuire and Sarah McFarland Taylor, for more qualitative studies on religion.  

I took several trips to the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm over the course of a year. I made a trip to the Dayemi Tariqat and Dayempur Farm, as well as to the Farm of Peace. During these trips, I was given primary source materials from these organizations, such as pamphlets, community publications, and videos. I also used information that these communities posted on websites. I referenced ethnographic and theoretical accounts of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship, but nothing has been written about the Dayemi Tariqat or the Farm of Peace.

To help situate my ethnographic work historically, I used primary source materials on other Muslim farms, such as interviews, articles from local and religious newspapers, journals, pamphlets, and newsletters. I also used historic and ethnographic accounts from other scholars of American Islam, such as Edward E. Curtis, Michael A. Gomez, Carolyn Moxley Rouse, and Robert Dannin, who have included information on farms and food in their analysis of other issues.  

**Insights from Farms**

By collecting original data on understudied Muslim communities and providing comparative analysis, my research contributes to the study of Islam, American religious history, and religion and nature. There has yet to be a monograph on agriculture

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among Muslims in the United States, and studies of rural, southern, Sufi, or primarily white communities of Muslims have been absent from studies of Islam in America. At these farms, there is a process of identity negotiation and construction, as well as a development of religious ideas about the environment, taking place as these Muslims explain the importance of the farms, apply the experience of farming to their understanding and performance of their religious and environmental beliefs and practices, and explain the relationship between nature and the Islamic tradition.

According to the field of lived religion, religion is created and negotiated throughout the realities of daily life. My work demonstrates the roles that lived experiences, specifically agricultural practices and communities in rural areas, have played in constructing and shaping American Muslim communities, networks, identity, practices, and beliefs. As Edward Curtis, a scholar of American Islam has explained, “religious identity [is] not only . . . a matter of one’s theological beliefs but also one’s ritual activities, ethical imperatives, and communal affiliations.”

My work finds that engaging nature or the institution of a farm can be part of the construction of a religious identity.

Part of everyday negotiation within these Muslim agrarian communities is an engagement with the textual tradition. Members of these communities reference ideas from the textual tradition. As Sufis, they also strive to live the example of their sheikhs, who are considered to be examples of the Prophets. The figure of the sheikh brings together the lived and the textual in their example. Their followers are then trying to embody this example themselves.

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My work explores the specific role of religious beliefs, practices, and institutions, as well as ideas about and experiences with nature and food, in these Muslims’ decisions to undertake farming and particular environmental actions on these farms. Within these communities, farms have been places where religious belief and practices are in dynamic negotiation with ideas about and experiences with nature and food. They demonstrate complicated connections between religious and environmental beliefs, practices, and institutions.

These connections should be important to environmental ethicists, as well as scholars who study religion and ecology. Many environmental ethicists have become interested in religion, because it is understood as a type of lived ethics or practical philosophy. It is seen as a place where theory and practice are brought together. Others, such as Oelschlager, have been taken with the ability of religion to provide the social capital to challenge the dominant social paradigm that is environmentally destructive, as well as providing new narratives.\(^{27}\) My project demonstrates how Muslims in these three communities are living ideas about the environment in a religious setting and some of the ideas or experiences motivating these actions.

The field of religion and ecology was founded upon the idea that worldviews influence actions. Many accounts of Islam and the environment focus on texts or on the practice of Muslim populations abroad, often with the aim of providing information that can be used to construct a normative Islamic ethic, which will speak to how all Muslims should live. The examples of these communities demonstrate that necessity of including studies of diverse groups within the field of Islam and ecology, and the need

for scholars to avoid engaging the Islamic tradition as something that is rigid, confined, or fixed. They also highlight the importance of experience in crafting religious beliefs and practices.

**Negotiation of Identity, Community, and Environmental Ideas**

I argue that members of these communities draw upon their Islamic beliefs, their identity as American converts, their understanding of their place in American history, and their ideas about the role of religion and nature in a meaningful life to create distinctively Muslim communities. These communities, in turn, enable them to live out their beliefs, develop new awareness about the environment, and negotiate their places in the American religious landscape and the Islamic tradition. These communities demonstrate distinctively Muslim ways of engaging and valuing the natural world that are particular to their identity as American converts to Sufi Islam. More broadly, my research helps frame farming as both an important spiritual practice and a way that religious communities interact with larger social and ecological wholes.

Members of these communities use these farms differently, and members often have differing ideas about the role and importance of the farm in the community. In using the farm in particular ways, these Muslims are negotiating and constructing their identities as Muslims and expressing beliefs about the role of nature in good life. With their actions on and descriptions and explanations of the farms, they are negotiating their identities as American converts to Sufi Islam, as well as articulating some environmental beliefs.

Often through these farms, Muslims who would not have become involved with the environment are farming and non-Muslims have been working with or have joined Muslim communities. Frequently, the religious community or broader communities of
support have been central to the success of the farm and farming has been a point of contact and means of networking. These farms have also helped these Muslims to live alternative ideas about community, to morally engage nature, and to connect to broader communities.

Experiences on the farms have influenced religious and ecological beliefs and practices. Some of these Muslims explained how being involved with the environment is influencing their religious ideas or rituals, expanding their understanding of what kind of practices are religious practices. These Muslims are also using the experience of agriculture to create ways of being Muslim. They also learn about nature, cultivation, or conservation through experiences on their farms. Religious institutions and practices can play a role in creating experiences or ideas about nature.

Through farming, these Muslims have acted in ways that demonstrates a concern for the environment. Many members of these groups are developing environmental awareness and activism through their involvement with their religious farms. However, this has introduced ambiguity concerning the importance of the natural world in a meaningful religious life. Some members of these farms described and enacted conflicting religious ideas about the environment. There is a tension between religious ideas about nature as distracting from the goal of experiencing God and ideas that Muslims are required to treat nature in a specific way in order to live God’s will and as good Muslims. As they develop ideas about the environment through their experience with nature, they are considering these new ideas and diverse teachings about the material world from the Islamic tradition in constructing and enacting their ethics.
Intentional Communities, American Muslim Identity, and Islam and Ecology

My work is interdisciplinary, utilizing and contributing to studies of agrarianism or environmentalism among religious communities in the Americas, identity formation and negotiation among American Muslims, and Islam and ecology. My focus on religious communities and environmental practice, the relationship between Islamic and environmental ideas, practices, and institutions, and community and identity formation connects these groups of scholarly literature. In particular, my work adds to all of these fields, by investigating groups that have yet to be studied. I am also identifying the role of farms and engaging nature in religious identity and community negotiation and construction. Most studies of Islam and ecology have failed to investigate this connection between religion and ecology, while many studies of American Muslims and identity have yet to focus on these particular institutions and religious ideas and practices.

My project is informed by studies of religious groups involved with the environment, undertaken by religion scholars in an attempt to better understand the connections between religion, intentionality, and environmentalism. My project compliments Rebecca Gould’s At Home in Nature: Modern Homesteading and Spiritual Practice in America, Anna Peterson’s Seeds of the Kingdom: Utopian Communities in the Americas, and Sarah McFarland Taylor’s Green Sisters: A Spiritual Ecology. I have used similar methods, a historical ethnographic approach, as these scholars. I also bring together some of the questions that some of these scholars have addressed, such as the role of engaging nature in creating religious identity, ideas about and barriers to utopia, and ambiguity in these people’s relationships with nature. I focus on
communities of American converts to Sufi Islam, groups that inhabit distinct spaces within the American religious landscape and have different identities to negotiate.

Rebecca Gould’s *At Home in Nature: Modern Homesteading and Spiritual Practice in America* addresses both the modern phenomena of homesteading in the United States, as well as the genealogy of ideas that led to the contemporary practice. At the heart of her book, Gould argues that homesteading is ultimately about both “individual and cultural choices and the meaning that is made from them.” Further, Gould grapples with homesteader’s place within broader environmentalism and ecological preservation/activism.

Approaching the subject as a participant observer and a historian, Gould’s study is both sociological and historic. For Gould, homesteading “means choosing to center one’s life around home, a home consciously built with attention to a particular place in the natural world.” Gould argues that there are two major processes happening in homesteading, “the sacralization of nature is a central, persistent theme in the cultural work of homesteading. But ‘making the self-made self’ is a corresponding, and sometimes competing, theme.” Nature, according to Gould, is sacred to homesteaders, but their “environmentalist lives and their spiritual lives emerge from their commitment to the conscious cultivation of ‘staying at home.”’

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29 Ibid, 2.

30 Ibid, 55.

seeming zealous turn to the environment, there is ambivalence towards nature among homesteaders.

Homesteading involves symbolic, cultural work that often arises from a longing for ritual. As Gould states:

The work of homesteading, what homesteading does, is a response to culture and also of remaking of it. Certainly, the work of homesteading is utilitarian, but it is also a highly symbolic practice. Whether examining the garden or eating, work or play, it becomes clear that the daily practices of homesteading involve certain kinds of spiritual and cultural work.\textsuperscript{32}

This spiritual and cultural work must take place within cultural constraints, as “nature’ and ‘religion’ are always shaped by historical and social contexts.”\textsuperscript{33} It is these constraints that lead to much of the ambivalence of the homesteaders. According to Gould, homesteading forms a counter community, rather than necessarily directly engaging the dominant paradigm, and homesteaders search for religious meaning outside of institutional religion. Homesteaders are controlling nature, but in a different way from the capitalistic society, against which homesteaders rebel.

The relationship between groups that are ambivalent toward nature yet ethically engaged with nature is an important tension within my own work, as is the relationship between these alternative attempts at communities and utilitarian and capitalistic ideas about nature. However, the Muslims, involved in these farms, search for religious meaning within institutional religion rather than outside of it. Given their identity as converts and as Sufis, they are members of groups often placed at the boundaries of

\textsuperscript{32} Gould, \textit{At Home in Nature}, 103.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, 3.
the Islamic tradition, providing examples of important negotiation of religious and environmental beliefs that can take place on the boarders of traditions.

Anna Peterson’s *Seeds of the Kingdom: Utopian Communities in the Americas* focuses on issues concerning the ability of localized, alternative communities to contribute to large scale economic, environmental, and social change. Peterson uses this work as an attempt to “explore the values that undergird sustainable practices, even when the practitioners may not have systematized the ethical or intellectual grounding for their actions,”34 because she understands these to be useful tools in attempts to rebuild overly consumptive societies in the developed world. Specifically, she focuses on Old Order Amish communities in the United States and Progressive Catholic repopulated communities in Chalatenango, El Salvador, as examples of communities that are attempting to live their values and in the process have engaged in a more sustainable way of living. Peterson argues that these communities raise important issues concerning the role of utopias, especially religious utopias, within environmentalism.

According to Peterson, the Old Order Amish represent one of the most successful agricultural countercultures in the United States. They work smaller farms that have lower environmental and energy impact, while providing most of their basic needs. Part of the sustainability of these farms is due to the strong sense of community and self governance found among the Amish, as well as their alternative understanding of success, which is deeply rooted in conceptions of community. Further, their understanding of place and the importance of land is informed by their theology and

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history of persecution. They feel that they are called to realize the kingdom of God on earth. However, they take pains, due to their focus on community and belief in nonviolence to live independently from mainstream society and government assistance. This success in agriculture does not solely arise from a continuation of ancient farming practices. Instead, the Amish carefully weigh the potential benefits or harms of new technology through their alternative system of values.

Progressive Catholics in El Salvador have a similar history of persecution, but this persecution took place more recently. They were displaced and then repopulated due to a civil war in El Salvador. They, like the Amish, understand the importance of land and the insecurity of being landless. They too wish to construct communities that embody their theological principles. However, there are some important differences between these Catholics and the Amish. These Catholics are much poorer and live in an area that is less fertile, making them more reliant on destructive farming patterns. These Catholics were included to show the possibility of these utopian visions for areas that are not ecologically sound and that persist through difficult times like war and exile. Further, they have a centralized religious authority, although on the local level they have constructed societies that focus on civic, participatory democracy. Finally, they believe that they are called to engage society, working to change it, using violence if necessary.

Despite these differences, Peterson notes some important similarities about these groups that may be instructive for other attempts at reconfiguring society. The first is that the vision of a good and worthwhile life is grounded in an idea of a harmonious community. Second, people’s material needs are met. Third, there is collective
decision making, and finally, community members strive to meet material needs in ways that are environmentally sound and that preserve human dignity.

She argues that these communities and their utopian visions are helpful in creating alternative ways of living, because people need critical utopias to reimagining the future. The biggest danger to utopias, according to Peterson, is complacency and the belief that there is one correct way to live. She believes that religions may play a role in creating these communities, because "many religions contain rich and diverse traditions of thought about how to connect the local and the universal, the real and the utopian, and how to weave these connections into a narrative that unites the past, present, and future." She concludes that these larger processes, policies, and values need to be addressed, if these local communities are going to be influential for the ways that most of society lives.

Peterson’s observations about utopias influence my own work. These Muslim farms have some of the same characteristics that Peterson identifies when comparing Amish and El Salvadorian communities. Her work highlights some of the ways that religion can influence and support utopias. I explore the role of religious beliefs, practices, and institutions in the creation and maintenance of Muslim intentional communities. She also identifies the necessity of outside support and barriers to utopias, something important to the existence of these Muslim communities.

Together, these two works provide some additional insights for my own work. These two works identify the need to recognize human dependency on nature and inability to fully control it, as key to reconfiguring society. Further, they argue that

democratic processes need to be renewed. All of my informants spoke at length about
the various communal governance, conflict management, and project management
systems that existed within their communities. Learning how to work together was an
important part of all of these communities for both practical and spiritual reasons.

Within the three farm communities, members have also constructed groups where
success is defined in different terms that it is by the dominant hegemony. Members of
these farms are concerned with the ability of these agrarian communities to effect
mainstream society. They also explained the necessity of engaging in a process of
reinvisioning or interpreting the future. Although nature and sustainability is important, it
does not seem to always be central to these movements. Ecological soundness is often
a byproduct of other concerns or practices.

My work is also similar to Sarah McFarland Taylor’s *Green Sisters: A Spiritual
Ecology*. In her book, she focuses on the phenomena of green sisters, which are
Catholic nuns who have been called to address environmental concerns as part of their
religious calling. Focusing on groups in the United States and Canada, this is not a
work focused exclusively on religious communities with farms; however some women
are engaging in cultivation as part of this attempt to address environmental issues.

Her work highlights the multiple ways that these women are attempting to address
these issues, through actions such as gardening, agriculture, green building methods,
retrofitting buildings and communal automobiles, putting land in trusts, protesting,
establishing learning centers, and creating “‘green’ liturgies.”[^36] The multiple ways that
these women are attempting to live “environmentally sustainable lifestyles both as a

daily spiritual practice and as a model to others” are many of the ways that the Muslims on these farms are engaging the environment and attempting to live ethically in nature. The Muslims on the three farms are often undertaking these practices as a model to others and as part of their regular religious practice. She also focuses on the diverse sources within Catholicism and from outside of the Catholic tradition that influenced the development of this movement.

Besides investigating the ways that these women are addressing these issues, she also explores how the movement of green sisters is reinvigorating Catholic life, especially the place of religious women in the Catholic tradition. Influenced by the definitions of religion from Jonathan Z. Smith, Charles H. Long, and Thomas Tweed, she explains how the sisters are doing religious work that allows them “to reinhabit their worlds of meaning” through physically engaging nature. The role of engagement with the environment as part of the construction of religious vocation is important in my own work. My work also looks to see how these Muslims are using farms and agriculture to negotiate their identities within the broader American religious landscape and how farms can be a point of connection between diverse groups in the United States. Green sisters are part of grassroots, organized movement within Catholicism, whereas these farm communities are independently originating responses to a variety of situations.

These three works on intentional communities are all studies on Christian groups and homesteading. My project focuses on Muslim communities. There is limited information on Muslims’ involvement in agriculture. There are some newspaper articles

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37 Taylor, Green Sisters, 2.

38 Ibid, 11.
that focus on the role of Muslims as consumers of agricultural goods. As part of a larger study investigating the phenomena of African American conversion to Islam, Robert Dannin provides an ethnographic account of an unsuccessful American Muslim agricultural community, the Jabul Arabiyya: Muslim Community, Governed by Sharia, in New York. In his description, he raises issues concerning the success and continued existence of an intentional Muslim community in a primarily Christian or secular society.

Michael A. Gomez, Edward E. Curtis, Carolyn Moxley Rouse, Vibert White, and Mattias Gardell have all written about Elijah Muhammad’s farming program. Gomez focuses on the historical importance of land ownership among African Americans, looking particularly close to the relationship between controlling women and then controlling land among the ideology and practice of the Nation of Islam. Rouse’s Engaged Surrender: African American Women and Islam and Curtis’s Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam, 1960-1975 focus on the importance of food in crafting identity and community among members of the Nation of Islam. Rouse explains the history of the Nation of Islam’s farm program as part of an ethnographic account of the importance of food in crafting identity among some Sunni African American women.

Curtis argues that the Nation of Islam needs to be understood as an Islamic group with

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41 Gomez, Black Crescent.

42 Curtis, Black Muslim Religion; and Rouse, Engaged Surrender.
religious meaning, not just a political or social movement. He focuses in part on the role of lived religion, including a chapter on food, in the construction of religious meaning and identity among members of the Nation of Islam.

These works provide useful historic and ethnographic information about some Muslim communities involved with agriculture. However, these sources look at different farms, focusing on African Americans who are Sunnis or members of the Nation of Islam, whereas I am focusing on Sufi groups where the membership is predominately Caucasian. Further, I am analyzing the role of practices on farms, as well as institutions and outputs, in community and identity formation. I am also looking at the role of these institutions and beliefs in the attempts by these groups to live religious and environmental ideas.

This study is unique compared to these works on American Muslims, because I am also exploring the influence of farming and religious beliefs, practices, and institutions in shaping ideas about and actions in the environment. With this focus, my work is intended to contribute and build upon literature in the field of Islam and ecology. There have been several important edited volumes, as well as journal articles and articles in other edited works, addressing issues pertaining to the relationship between Islam and ecology. There have been few monographs on the Islamic tradition or Muslim communities and the environment. Most of those books have been intended to help find resources within the Islamic tradition to improve humanity’s ethical relationship with the environment.
Much of the literature on Islam and ecology focuses on mining the Islamic traditions for resources that can be used to craft an environmental ethic. There have also been articles that critique the possibility of finding resources for an environmental ethic within the Islamic textual tradition. There are some articles and books that focus on Muslims’ practices in the environment; however they mostly focus on the practices of Muslims in Muslim majority countries. Most of the edited volumes on Islam and Ecology contain both types of analysis, as does Richard Foltz’s monograph, *Animals in the Islamic Tradition and Muslim Cultures*.


Seyyed Hossein Nasr was the first person to explore an Islamic response to the environmental crisis. In 1966, Nasr was invited to the University of Chicago to deliver a series of lectures on religion and nature, because he was “a follower of a non-Western religion and culture, yet somewhat acquainted with modern science and its history and philosophy.” They chose Nasr because he was born and raised in Iran, coming to United States for his later education. He also earned a doctoral degree in the History of Science and Philosophy at Harvard University focusing on the Islamic tradition. These invited lectures were published in a monograph entitled *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* in 1967.

Nasr is a proponent of *philosophia perennis*, a school of thought associated with Frithjof Schuon, Titus Burckhardt, and Rene Guenon. Followers of this type of philosophy believe that there is a universal set of truths and values common to all humanity, but that they are expressed through a variety of cultures and philosophical traditions. These ideas are dominate throughout *Man and Nature*, as well as Nasr’s other works. He explains that the Islamic tradition has something to offer all of humanity, not just Muslims.

In *Man and Nature*, Nasr argues that the environmental crisis is “an externalization of the destitution of the inner state of the soul of . . . humanity,” because people only view nature through a scientific worldview and will not tolerate non-scientific

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worldviews.\textsuperscript{48} According to Nasr, humanity needs to reawaken the proper attitude toward nature to curb the environmental crisis. He argues that “the pure monotheism of Islam which belongs to the same Abrahamic tradition as Judaism and Christianity never lost sight of the sacred quality of nature as asserted by the Quran, and that Oriental Christianity and Judaism never developed the attitude of simple domination and plunder of nature that developed later in the history of the West.”\textsuperscript{49}

Besides being one of the first people to write about Islam and the environmental crisis, Nasr has written extensively on Sufi thinkers, including articles on Sufi philosophers and the possibility of their thought being used as a response to the environmental crisis. However, he has not looked at contemporary Sufi communities and their ideas about or practices in the environment.

The first compilation to address issues concerning the Islamic tradition and its views on the environment was \textit{Islam and Ecology}, which was edited by Fazlun Khalid and Joanne O’Brien and published in 1992. It was commissioned by the World Wildlife Fund for Nature UK and the International Consultancy on Religion, Education, and Culture to address the environmental crisis. It was published as part of a larger series on world religions and ecology. It was aimed at Muslim and non-Muslims scholars and non-specialists. The articles draw heavily on traditional textual resources to address ideas such as the centrality of God in natural law, environmental ethics, the role of science in Islam, the use of natural resources, economic systems, desert reclamation,

\textsuperscript{48} Nasr, \textit{Man and Nature}, 3.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid, 5.
and conservation. The purpose of the book was to provide “a comprehensive presentation of the Islamic position on ecology.”

M. Izzi Dien’s *The Environmental Dimension of Islam* was one of the first monographs on Islam and ecology and had a similar goal as *Islam and Ecology*. The purpose of Izzi Dien’s work was to investigate “the role that Islam could play in . . . helping improve people’s awareness and respect for the environment.” Izzi Dien wrote this work as a follow up to a popular paper that he wrote and as a reaction to the environmental ideas and writings that were being imported to Muslim communities. He noticed that most materials reflected the experience of the society that originally wrote it and was “detached from the indigenous Islamic culture.” He intended for his book to contribute to global attempts at conservation.

These two works on Islam and ecology are also helpful for providing a broader context for the Sufi farms. None of these three sources focus on the lived experiences of Muslims as Muslims attempt to explain their environmental actions religiously or to find, enact, or create religious environmental ethics. In fact, much of the literature on Islam and ecology is concerned with mining the Islamic tradition for information that can be used to create a worldview that will be environmentally friendly.

There have also been articles focused on specific geographical areas, historical movements, government, or interpretive groups. Many of these articles are found in an important compilation called *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*, which presents

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52 Ibid, 5.
historical, current, and possible Islamic and Muslim responses to environmental issues and contributions to environmental ethics. Articles include attempts to mine the tradition, as well as these studies of particular Muslim communities.\textsuperscript{53} Richard Foltz’s book, \textit{Animals in the Islamic Tradition and Muslim Cultures}, analyzes textual sources, as well as practice among Muslims around the world, focusing on Muslims living outside of the United States. This book looks at Muslims’ attitudes toward animals.\textsuperscript{54}

These studies are discussed in length in Chapter Six, because they provide some insight on how to approach studies of Islam and ecology from a lived religion perspective. They also provide examples of the diverse ideas and contexts that influence Muslims’ attitudes toward and actions in the environment. These works have primarily focused on communities in Muslim majority areas.

My study contributes to this work, by taking a lived religion approach to studying groups of American converts to Sufism, a group previously overlooked. My work also focuses on the ways that these Muslims have lived out or developed ideas about nature or religion through the context of farm communities in the United States. I also look at the role of experiences in nature in the construction of Islamic identity and practices.

\textbf{Chapter Outline}

I explore these issues in the following chapters. Chapter Two provides a history of agriculture among groups of Muslims in the United States. From Muslim slave in the colonial period to the Sufi groups covered in this project, these Muslims have used farming or farms as a way to construct communities or sustain religious identities.

\textsuperscript{53} Foltz, Denny, and Baharuddin, \textit{Islam and Ecology}.

\textsuperscript{54} Foltz, \textit{Animals in the Islamic Tradition and Muslim Cultures}. 
Farming has been a point of contact between Muslim communities and the broader American community. Some of these groups have undertaken farming as a way to create a religious community, whereas others have been able to assert their identities or create their own Muslim communities, because of their involvement with agriculture. For some of the groups, farming is part of an attempt to live out ideas about economics, the environment, or society, as well as religious ideas or practices. These historic examples provide further context and places for analysis of the Bawa Muhammed Fellowship Farm, the Dayempur Farm, and the Farm of Peace.

The following three chapters, Chapter Three, Chapter Four, and Chapter Five, each provide an overview of a single community and its farm. Chapter Three focuses on the Bawa Muhammed Fellowship Farm and the Bawa Muhammed Fellowship. Chapter Four covers the Dayemi Tariqat and the Dayempur Farm. Chapter Five concentrates on the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East and the Farm of Peace. Each chapter is divided into sections titled “History,” “Space, Place, and Institutions,” “Practices,” “Future Plans,” and “Community.” Together, these sections provide an overview of each of the farms and the communities with which they are associated, including information on the types of activities on the farms, the reasons people value the farms, and how various people understand the role of the farm within their community. These chapters also focus on the role of the farms in crafting religious identity and community, as well as the ways that these Muslims are using these spaces to negotiate their place in the religious landscape.

The “History” sections provide an overview of the creation of each community and its farm, as well as the development of practices on the farm. This section often
contains information pertaining to the purpose or intention of the farm within the community. There is also a description of some of the practices that previously took place on the farm. The section titled “Space, Place, and Institutions” provides an overview of these topics within the broader community, as well as on the farm. It includes a description of the farm and its buildings, as well as the climate and growing conditions.

The sections entitled “Practices” provide information on religious, agricultural, and environmental practices within the community as a whole and on the farm, as well as environmental actions that community members do outside of each farm. These practices often provide examples of the ways that members are constructing gender roles on the farms and negotiating their identity and community within the Islamic and American religious landscapes. This section also frequently includes examples of the ways that these Muslims are engaging non-human nature and negotiating their relationship with non-human communities. The section “Future Plans” contains information on the future practices and institutions on the farms, providing more information about how these Muslims are engaging nature, negotiation identity, and crafting community. They also provide additional information on the purpose and intention of these farms.

“Community” explains the composition of the group associated with the particular farm and its relationship to other Muslim communities. I also provide some information on the religious ecology of the state and county of the community and farm. There is a detailed discussion of the ways that each Sufi community, the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship, the Dayemi Tariqat, and the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East, has attempted to
build relations and negotiate the boundaries with non-Muslims communities, especially through agricultural practices or the institutions of the farms. Understanding the ways in which the farms and agricultural communities are part of the complex ways in which these American converts negotiate their place in American life and the American Muslim community.

Chapter Six focuses on the role that engaging nature on the farms has played in shaping religious ideas and practices. Using theories from environmental ethicists about the importance of experience or practice, I argue that studies of Islam and ecology need to include studies of ideas and practices shaped by experiences in nature. Through various types of experiences, such as observation, conservation, and cultivation, members of these farms are developing ideas about God, the Prophet Muhammad, themselves, humanity, and nature that are often then influencing their actions in the environment.

Although experience is an important, often overlooked, part of how these Muslims create values about or practices in nature, these Muslims are still influenced by religious ideas, practices, and institutions, as well as other religious, ecological, and cultural ideas about the environment. Chapter Seven looks at the role of the Islamic tradition, both the ideas and the institutions (including these farms), on ideas about and practices in the environment. It also provides an overview of other ideas that influence environmental attitudes and practices. Sometimes, religious ideas and practices on the farms do not coincide. Instead, some of these Muslims are living contradictions present from their experience and inherited religious tradition.
CHAPTER 2
LAYING THE GROUND WORK: THE HISTORY OF FARMING AMONG AMERICAN MUSLIMS

The Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship, Dayemi Tariqat, and Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East are part of a long tradition of Muslims in North America and the Caribbean, who have used farming to help create Muslim communities and a place in American culture. Since colonial times, different groups of Muslims in the Americas have been involved with agriculture. The accounts of these various groups reveals the long and often overlooked history of many different Muslims in rural areas, the numerous ways that agriculture has influenced or shaped Muslim communities in the Americas, and some of the historical events and religious ideas that influence or are interpreted by contemporary Muslim communities with farms. These earlier communities are part of the American, and Muslim, story that helps provide a historical and religious context that informs a detailed analysis of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm, the Dayemi Tariqat’s Dayempur Farm, and the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East’s Farm of Peace.

In areas throughout the United States and Caribbean, diverse groups of Muslims have been involved with agriculture in various ways. Enslaved Muslims and free blacks made important contributions to agriculture during the colonial period of the 16th through 18th centuries. At the start of the 20th century, Syrian Muslim became agricultural laborers and homesteaders in North Dakota. Influenced by the experience of the Great Depression, African-American Sunni Muslims attempted to create an intentional agricultural community, named Jabul Arabiyya, in the 1940s. In the 1950s, Yemeni Muslims came to work as agricultural laborers in California and some stayed permanently. The Nation of Islam has been trying to create a system of farms that will support a self-sufficient black nation. In 1985, a group of African-American Sunni
Muslims created an intentional agricultural community called New Medinah. Finally, some Muslims have started farms in order to raise food based on their environmental and religious beliefs. These farms demonstrate the variety of ways that agriculture has contributed to the rich history of American Muslims. Like others around or before them, Muslims involved with the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm, the Dayempur Farm, and the Farm of Peace are using agriculture to craft community, and negotiate boundaries and points of connection between their communities and larger Muslim, cultural, and ecological communities. They also embody and interpret religious belief through farming.

**Legacies from Muslim Spain**

The first Muslims to have an influence on American agriculture were Spanish Muslims, who are also called Moors. Until they were expelled in the “Reconquest” of 1492, Muslims played a central role in many aspects of Spanish society, including not only cultural and religious but also economic, technological, and agricultural developments. Although it is likely that the first Muslims in the Americas were Spanish Muslims or former Muslims, who came as a part of Christopher Columbus’s crew, Spanish Muslims did not have a direct influence on American farming.\(^1\) Instead, Spanish settlers who “traced their legal antecedents back to both Roman and Moorish law, and their technology to Moors,” brought and implemented these Muslim influenced agricultural practices and laws.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) Gomez, *Black Crescent*, ix.

The influence of Islamic law and ideas was especially evident in Spanish water law.\(^3\) Muslims brought water laws and irrigation technologies to the Iberian Peninsula, specifically Valencia, Murcia, and Granada. Muslims ruled the southern half of the Iberian Peninsula from the eighth century until 1236, when Christian rulers began controlling various cities. Although Muslims lost control of the area, throughout the 13\(^{\text{th}}\) centuries, Muslims formed the majority in provinces as far north as Zaragoza. Granada remained under Muslim rule until 1492 and especially flourished in the second half of the 14\(^{\text{th}}\) century. The Spanish church began forcing Muslims to convert to Christianity in 1499. Despite this violent persecution that lasted several centuries, it is hypothesized that some never truly abandoned their Muslim faith.

Islamic water law has developed from a religious mandate to provide for poor and outcasts of society. Islamic law pertaining to water has been developed to protect the basic need of all people for water. Water cannot be owned in its natural state. Further, water belongs to the community and everyone has the opportunity to benefit from it, if they do not harm other’s rights in the process. Specific rules concerning water have been laid down according to the origin, size, kind, and usage of the water. Sources of fresh water discussed in legal texts are rivers, waters springs, wells, and rain water. Rivers include natural rivers (large and small), as well as human made canals and irrigation channels. Further, there is a hierarchy to claims on water. Priority is given to right of thirst; domestic activities, such as washing and cooking; the needs of livestock; then agriculture. Rights to water are also determined according to who first established use of the water or who is upstream. However, laws were also established to

\(^3\) Clark, *Water in New Mexico*, 9.
encourage the development and continuation of technologies such as irrigation that allow for the productive use of water and land. People can claim ownership to access to water that has been modified and “only when water is appropriated and separated from its source, as in a vessel or cistern, does it become the processor’s property, which can be sold, gifted, and otherwise disposed of.”

Often specific laws changed to adapt to the ecological realities of particular areas. However, the spirit of Islamic water law, which sought to protect basic needs, was adopted and adjusted to the context of various Muslim communities.

These ideas were used in the development of the laws and practices in various areas of Spain. In Spain, “the prevailing principle was that the basis for the water right was beneficial use; furthermore, the water right was inseparable from land.” Canal users joined together to form water associations. Representatives from these water associations were appointed to an administrative body that charged people who used the water, maintained the infrastructure for water use, and allotted water. These associations protected communal interests.

When Spanish settlers arrived in America, they developed practices and laws that addressed the particular context of Spanish life in the Southwest, while drawing upon this Muslim legacy. A person could use water originating on his land until the water flowed outside of the boundaries of his ownership. Water not originating on private

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6 Clark, Water in New Mexico, 10.

7 Ibid.
property became state property and was used by everyone for domestic needs. Special permission was needed to use water for other purposes, preserving the right of all people to water for their basic needs. However, water law was also influenced by Roman practices, a desire to settle new territories quickly, and legal rulings from the monarchy. It was not until African Muslims were forcibly brought to the Americas as slaves, that large numbers of Muslims came to live in America and directly influenced American agriculture.

**African Muslims during Slavery**

During the colonial era, the success of American agriculture depended on African knowledge and labor. In the Americas, colonists began growing Asian and African crops, such as sugar, rice, indigo, and cotton, which were sought but not grown by Europeans. They looked to Africans for cheap labor and their knowledge of these crops, as well as their abilities with horses and cattle.

Slave owners often asked for slaves from Muslim majority areas because groups of Africans from particular areas were known for having specific agricultural knowledge. Others requested Muslims because they thought Muslims’ religious beliefs were thought to make them better workers. Some plantation owners requested slaves of specific ethnicities, because biological and anthropological theories of the time, which Sylviane Diouf calls “pseudoanthropology”, assigned qualities and defects to various groups of African people. Finally, educated Muslims in Africa may have been captured more frequently, because they were likely more mobile than other Africans. Some traveled to

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acquire religious knowledge from renowned Muslim scholars and others traveled to teach or convert people. There were also some who were merchants, who traveled as part of their trade.\[^{10}\]

It is difficult to provide reliable numbers for the number of Muslim slaves in the Americas or in North America. One of the reasons for this difficulty is that it is difficult to determine how many people were imported to the Americas and what religion they may have practiced. Often estimations depend on lists of slaves and runaway notices. Diouf estimates for the total number of Muslim slaves in the Americas, ranged from 15 to 20 percent of all the slaves in the Americas. Depending on the estimation of the total slave population, which varies among scholars, the number of Muslim slaves ranges from 1.4 million (plus or minus 20 percent) to three million.\[^{11}\]

Other scholars have attempted to count the number of Muslim slaves in North America. Estimating that approximately 53 percent of slaves imported into British North America came from regions with Muslim populations while recognizing that not all of these slaves would be Muslim, Gomez estimated that thousands of African Muslims, if not tens of thousands, were imported to southern areas in North America.\[^{12}\]

\[^{10}\] Diouf, 34-37.

\[^{11}\] Ibid, 45-48. Diouf estimates, based on percent of populations of different regions sold into slavery and the potential size of Muslim populations in these regions, that the Muslim population was 15-20 percent of the total slave population. She explains that various historians have different estimations for number of people shipped to the Americas as slaves. Philip Curtin has estimated that 9.5 million people (plus or minus 20 percent) were sent to the Americas. Many consider this number too low. Joseph Inikori estimates that 15.4 million people is closer to the truth.

\[^{12}\] Gomez, *Black Crescent*, 143.
Austin estimates that approximately 40,000 Muslim slaves arrive in the territories that became the United States before 1860.\textsuperscript{13}

The first enslaved African agricultural laborers, who were possibly Muslim, began arriving in North America between 1625 and 1626 in New Netherland (today New York City and surrounding area).\textsuperscript{14} These slaves were often Malagasy from Madagascar, an area where Islam took hold among residents in the 12\textsuperscript{th} century if not earlier. Because they were so central to the security and agricultural success of the Hudson Valley, slaves in New Netherland could marry and own land, livestock, and other property. Some, who were granted half-freedom, could even work for themselves. However, they could be re-enslaved if they failed to pay the Dutch West India Company crops and livestock or to work for the company when needed. Anthony Jansen Van Salee (c. 1607 – 1676), a black Muslim, became one of the largest landowners on Manhattan prior to 1639, due to his prosperous farming.\textsuperscript{15}

Some colonists requested Muslim horsemen, because African Muslims had been buying horses from Arab merchants for centuries, and many African Muslim kingdoms had impressive cavalries as early as the 14th century. To fill this demand, slave dealers took people from the Wolof, Mandingo, Tukulor, and Fulani areas of Senegambia. Some slaves used their familiarity and skills with horses for rebellion. Runaways knew

\textsuperscript{13} Allan D. Austin, \textit{African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles} (New York: Routledge, 1997), 22.

\textsuperscript{14} Gomez, \textit{Black Crescent}, 128.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 132.
how to handle slave owners who came after them on horseback, and some escaped slaves managed to steal horses and then use them to harass plantations.\footnote{Gomez, \textit{Black Crescent}, 17; and Diouf, \textit{Servants of Allah}, 148.}

In South Carolina, Virginia, Georgia, and Louisiana, planters requested Senegambian and Sierra Leonean slaves because of their skills in rice and indigo cultivation.\footnote{Diouf, \textit{Servants of Allah}, 47 and 71.} The French in New Orleans preferred Muslim slaves and attempted to import more Muslims, because of Muslims’ religious beliefs and practices, which they believed made them superior plantation managers. They thought that the Senegambian sense of modesty and decency (as demonstrated through dress), belief in one God, and stress placed on the importance of literacy made Senegambians better equipped for the job than non-Muslims. Allen hypothesizes that these ideas influenced preferences for Senegambian slaves, as slavery spread throughout North American colonies.\footnote{Allen, \textit{African Muslims in Antebellum America}, 33.}

Between 1733 and 1807, Senegambians made up 19.5 percent of the slaves imported to South Carolina, and it is thought that they accounted for as much as 21 percent of the total slave trade in North America. Not all Senegambians were Muslims, however most Muslim slaves were Senegambian.\footnote{Diouf, \textit{Servants of Allah}, 47; and Gomez, \textit{Black Crescent}, 162. Gomez estimates that as much as 21 percent of the slave trade in North America came from Senegambia. He also explains that most Muslim slaves came from Senegambia, noting that Senegambia was a vast area and that the size of the Muslim population varied depending on the area and historical period. Diouf provides the estimate of 19.5 percent for the period between 1733 and 1807.}

Although African slaves were sought for their agricultural knowledge and experience, many Muslim slaves were not farmers before they came to America. Instead, according to Austin’s study of 75 Muslim slaves in the Americas, some Muslim
were teachers, some were training to be lawyers (qadis) or imams (religious-political leaders), three were military officers, one was a prominent trader, and several were students before becoming enslaved. A few had been herders, rice planters, and blacksmiths, and some had managed agricultural slave gangs in Africa.\(^\text{20}\)

Regardless of their previous professions, many African Muslims began working in the fields. Sometimes practicing agriculture could help Muslim slaves assert some autonomy and pieces of their identity. Enslaved people were often ordered to fish, hunt, and cultivate a small garden, so plantation owners would not need to feed their slaves. This meant that slaves had to work on their day off, but it also gave Muslims the ability to maintain some religious practices and cultural identity. By raising their own food, Muslim slaves could eat according to some religious dietary rules.

Gardening or farming could also allow some slaves a measure of economic independence. Ibrahim Abd ar-Rahman Jallo “Prince” (b. 1762) was able to grow extra vegetables that he could sell in town. Job Ben Solomon (b. 1701) worked for his freedom, and “his curiosity about and ability to handle agricultural and other tools led to gifts worth more than five hundred English pounds, and he gathered more money and enough other valuables to make his return to the Gambia luxurious by any standards.”\(^\text{21}\)

Many Muslims rose to important positions on the plantations or gained their freedom. Some became slave drivers, a position that they may have held in Africa, and at least six became plantation managers. In Jamaica, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq (b. 1789) kept

\(^{20}\) Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America*. The position of these Muslim in Africa prior to being enslaved may be due in part to the kinds of records that are available. Often stories focused on Muslim slaves, who were seen as exceptional or unusual by their owners. As a result, there is significant information on a few Muslim slaves who were thought to be noteworthy.

\(^{21}\) Ibid, 47.
his owner’s books in Arabic. Sometimes having these important positions made it difficult for these slaves to gain their freedom. Among those who were freed, some became landowners in the United States or eventually returned to Africa.

These Muslims may have achieved such positions because of their elite training and status in Africa. Many Muslims were multilingual and accustomed to dealing with people from diverse cultures, which made them well equipped to manage others. Some of them were promoted, had their work load lessened, or were freed, because their owners discovered that they were literate.

Others may have sought a new position because they were not willing or accustom to doing agricultural labor. Some African Muslims, such as the Fulbe, believed that farming was done by people with a lower status. Other Muslims were pleased with some jobs on a plantation but not all. Some slave owners noted that, “Muslims of Senegambia ‘are excellent for the care of cattle and horses, and for domestic service, though little qualified for the ruder labours of the field, to which they never ought to be applied.’”

Some African Muslims possibly gained better positions or their freedom due to American ideas about the racial superiority of Muslims, who were considered more similar to white people than non-Muslim Africans. Starting in the 1800s, these ideas likely developed because racial ideas of the time made “it . . . more acceptable to deny any Africanness to the distinguished Muslims than to recognize that a ‘true’ African

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22 Diouf, Servants of Allah, 103; and Austin, African Muslims in Antebellum America, 41 and 44-45.

23 Austin, African Muslims in Antebellum America, 46.

24 From Dr. Collins, a slave owner. Quoted in Gomez, Black Crescent, 180.
could be intelligent and cultured but enslaved nevertheless.” Muslim slaves were labeled as Moors, Turks, or Arabs by colonists to help establish a distinction between these educated Africans and preconceived notions about the nature of black Africans. Colonists explained that Muslim slaves were superior because they were thought to have a different racial origin or foreign “blood,” as compared to non-Muslim Africans. These differences were thought to influence Muslim slaves’ appearances and their mental capabilities, although some colonists thought that Muslim slaves had higher intellectual abilities because of the influence of Arabs on African Muslims. Some plantation owners put Muslim slaves in supervisory positions, because they believed that Muslim slaves, who could not be true Africans, would feel contemptuous towards Africans and loyal towards whites.  

These Muslims were part of an agricultural system that was central to American history and development. There are various theories about the influence of these early Muslim beliefs and practices on the creation of later African-American proto-Islamic and Muslim groups. Scholars have yet to make a concrete connection between these Muslims and later American Muslims. These Muslims did not choose to farm. However, in some instances agriculture provided ways for them to construct or maintain a religious identity. Agricultural knowledge could be used to assert some kind of independence. Being able to grow their own food allowed some Muslims to practice aspects of their faith as Muslims. For some, their religious identity influenced their

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26 Ibid, 97-102.

27 Curtis, Islam in Black America; and Gomez, Black Crescent.
particular experience in the Americas, possibly contributing to their capture, position on
the plantation, or even their freedom in some instances.

**Early Arab Muslim Immigrants**

In the late 1800s, Arab Muslim immigrants started arriving and staying
permanently in the United States. Most came seeking better economic opportunities.
Like their African predecessors, there were a few who came because the United States
government was in need of their agricultural knowledge. However, most became
involved with agriculture after arriving in the U.S., because it was a better economic
opportunity. For these Muslims, homesteading also provided the space for them to
create ethnic communities and religious institutions, while also being involved in an
important American experience.

In the 1850s, the United States government investigated the potential of raising
camels in the desert of the Southwest. To conduct this experiment, the government
imported 33 camels and five handlers (two Turks and three Arabs) to Arizona. The trial
failed, but at least one handler stayed permanently in the United States, moving to
California to be a prospector.²⁸

There was more substantial immigration of Muslims to the United States, as
Syrians, from the Ottoman Empire (specifically the areas that would become Lebanon
and Syria), started coming to America in the late 1800s. Like many in this era, they
came seeking economic opportunity and because they no longer wanted to live under
Ottoman rule. Some became “sodbusters,” joining other American homesteaders who
helped clear the plains and settle North Dakota, by applying for a free 40-acre parcel of

land from the federal government. So many Muslim Syrians moved to North Dakota that they were able to have a practicing Syrian Muslim community and to build their own mosque and Muslim cemetery in the late 1920s or early 1930s.

Mary Juma and her husband were among the first Syrians to homestead in western North Dakota in the first decade of the 20th century. They, like many other Syrians who settled in the area, came to the United States through Canada, working as peddlers. Juma recalled that “In 1902, we came to western North Dakota where we started to peddle. It was at the time when there was such an influx of people to take homesteads, and for no reason at all, we decided to try homesteading too.”

People were moving to areas in the Western United States to establish homesteads, which were track of land of up to 160-acres in particular areas that could be purchased inexpensively if residents met certain requirements. The Preemption Act of 1841 was one of the first federal laws that established rules for Americans to establish homestead. Most homestead claims were not filed under this act, but were filed under the Homestead Act, which was enacted in 1862. This law made it easier for people to establish and claim homesteads. Anyone who had not taken arms against the American government could file an application, improve the land by living on it and planting crops, and then qualify for the deed of title for the land. These rules were established to make it There were subsequent acts in 1909 and 1916. The purpose of these acts was to distribute public land and increase settlement and farming in the west.

This form of homesteading, which is different than the modern homesteading studied by Rebecca Gould, has been critiqued because it was linked to the ideology of

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manifest destiny, which is usually a religiously charged concept that can often “connotes arrogance and racism” and a desire to achieve God’s will and to live as a religious model.\textsuperscript{30} Contemporary agrarian advocate Wendell Berry has also critiqued the practice for contributing to Americans’ current state of disconnection from place. He argues that it is an ideal that drove people to move in order to enact a vision of a better life.\textsuperscript{31}

Other Syrian Muslims also settled in North Dakota and established homesteads because of established Syrian communities. Most moved to North Dakota in the early 1900s. Approximately thirty percent of Syrians in North Dakota were Muslims, whereas nationally only ten percent of Ottoman immigrants between 1880 and World War I were Muslims.\textsuperscript{32} In Ross, North Dakota, there were more than 20 Muslims.\textsuperscript{33}

The Jumas migrated as a married couple, but some Syrian men came alone. Often they worked as agricultural laborers rather than or before starting their own homesteads. These men also found work on section crews and in factories. Usually the pay at these various jobs was much better in America. Prior to moving, Mike Abdallah, a Syrian immigrant who moved to North Dakota in 1907, had made 25 cents per day as an agricultural laborer. In North Dakota, he made $25-$30 per month.

Unlike most African Muslims who were enslaved, the majority of Syrian immigrants had been farmers in the Middle East, a livelihood that was no longer profitable due to declining prices for farm products. Although they had experience with agriculture,


\textsuperscript{32} Curtis, \textit{Columbia Sourcebook}, 29.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, 4.
Syrians farmed in North Dakota differently than in the old country. The climate in North Dakota featured harsh winters, whereas their homeland was temperate. However, in the United States, farmers used horses and machinery rather than doing everything by hand and with oxen. In North Dakota, Syrians raised cattle and chickens, as well as crops. These Muslims did preserve some Syrian practices. Mary Juma explained that the thing that set her family’s “farm apart as a Syrian-American home is all the buildings are located close to the house, and all the chickens and sheep come close, even to the doorstep of the house.”

Although early farms were successful, some people would continue to peddle when things were slow. These Syrian immigrants were interviewed by the Works Progress Administration’s Federal Writers Program in the 1930s, during the Great Depression. By the time of these interviews, some found the success of their farms had dwindled, and others found that livestock was more successful than crops.

Providing for themselves on homesteads in North Dakota, Muslims from Syria were able to practice their faith. The first recorded group of Muslims praying together in the United States was the Syrians in Ross. Mary Juma would have the community to her house for Friday juma prayers. Sometime between 1925 and 1929, the community built a nondescript mosque. The community also had a cemetery, where they buried their dead as Muslims with graves that sometimes had markers with Arabic writing.

34 Quoted in Curtis, Columbia Sourcebook, 33.
They observed Ramadan together, ending the month by visiting each other. According to WPA interviews, Syrians described how they ate food killed in a *halal* manner.\(^{36}\)

By the 1930s and 1940s, the community was in decline, and the mosque was abandoned in 1948. Some farmers and their families moved away because they were forced out of business by a drought in the 1930s. Among those who stayed, some ceased to practice as Muslims, whereas other joined churches.

**Early African American Sunni Muslims**

Immigrant Muslims were not the only ones who became involved with agriculture and created communities and religious institutions in rural areas. There were American groups of converts throughout American history that combined agriculture, ideas about food, self-sufficiency, and the environment, and religious beliefs and practices to create intentional religious communities with farms. The earliest attempt at such a community was undertaken by African-American Sunni Muslims in the late 1930s.

The “Jabul Arabiyya: Muslim Community, Governed by Sharia” was the first true attempt at an intentional Muslim farm community. Founded by African-American converts to Sunni Islam in 1938, it was located near Buffalo, New York. Given their experience of the Great Depression and their practice of Sunni Islam, community members in Jabul Arabiyya wanted to own land to create a community where they could live their religious beliefs, as well as their beliefs about economic self-sufficiency. By

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\(^{36}\) *Halal* is a legal term that refers to anything that is permissible or lawful. In relationship to food, *halal* can refer to food that is free of any forbidden food, such as pork or alcohol. It can also have ramifications for the way that food is produced, especially food that comes from animals. One of the best know set of *halal* regulations concerning food, focuses on the way that an animal is slaughtered for consumption. Like many ideas and legal categories in the Islamic tradition, the meaning and rules of *halal* have been interpreted and enacted differently by many groups of Muslims.
the 1990s, the community appeared to be falling apart, and it likely no longer exists. Influenced by factors that continue to shape agriculture in America, Jabul Arabiyya was a pioneering group that used religious language and ideas to explain its farm community and that provides lessons about barriers to small-scale religious farms.

Jabul Arabiyya means “Mountain of the Arabic speakers,” an appropriate name for a community situated among steep hills. Covering as many as 300 acres, the community included the Masjid Ezaldeen, and each family had a dwelling with a quarter acre plot, so that they could grow crops. Although each family had a plot and had to grow their own crops, the community owned the deed for all of the land. By the late 1990s, the area was littered with abandoned houses, and in the surrounding area, “there were a few chicken coops and utility sheds. Secondary or tertiary woods encroached on the fields from beyond.”

This community was founded in part by Daoud Ghani. In 1903, Ghani (originally named David Duffy) was born to Baptist parents who worked as sharecroppers in Columbia, South Carolina. Once married, Ghani moved north to Buffalo, New York where he found a job working in the Republic Steel factory.

His migration north coincided with the Great Migration, which took place from 1915 to 1930. The realities of sharecropping, Jim Crow legislation, revived Ku Klux Klan activity, a trend towards urbanism, and the development of agricultural machinery and large scale farming led African Americans to move away from the south. During this time, African Americans were drawn to the Northern cities by thriving industry and

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38 Ibid, 118.
stories that portrayed the cities as a promised land. However in the cities segregation and racism persisted, with white fear, urban living conditions, and transportation systems contributed to separation. The Great Migration “resulted in new religious, political, economic, social, and psychological needs of the African-American community and thereby encouraged the growth of new urban religious and political movements.”

The history of the Great Migration has influenced Muslims’ practice in the United States. The changes in agriculture that contributed to the Great Migration have also influenced movements that oppose industrial agriculture, including the back to the land movement, modern homesteading, and the slow food movement. Some of the individuals involved with the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm, the Dayempur Farm, and the Farm of Peace have been influenced by these movements. The social and economic changes caused by the Great Migration influenced the development of some Muslim groups in the United States, as well as some Muslim farms. These changes contributed to the creation of the Nation of Islam, which has its own farm program and has influenced more recent agricultural communities. Further, trends from this time, such as the shift to urbanism from rural living and the move away from small-scale farms to factory farming, created a large population in America that has little to no knowledge or connection to agriculture. Many recent Muslim farms, such as the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship and Dayemi Tariqat, have been part of an attempt to reclaim or reconnect to agricultural knowledge and production.

For Ghani, his desire to own land started before the Great Migration, when he was only fourteen. Studying the story of the Garden of Eden, he began realizing the

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importance of land and how much a person could provide for oneself with land.  

Although his inspiration for owning land was partially religious, he felt alienated from his church because it failed to discuss the story of Eden, and members rebuked his idea of joint land ownership. He also joined a Masonic order, but they also rejected his ideas. These groups were skeptical of his plan, because they did not want to be indebted to white farmers. It was not until he became involved with Muslims that he met people who shared similar ideas about land ownership.

Ghani was first introduced to the Islamic tradition when one of his coworkers invited him to attend a class on Islam and Arabic given by Sheik Suphan, who was probably an Ahmadiyya sheikh. The members of the class eventually replaced Suphan with Muhammad Ezladeen, a Sunni Muslim teacher who studied in Egypt and was opposed to the Ahmadiyya movement. Members of the class also established the Adenu Allahe Universal Arabic Association (AAUAA), paying Ezladeen to be the religious leader of the association. Ezladeen taught the community Sunni Islamic practices, such as praying five times a day, and had members change their names. However, it was Ezladeen’s teachings about the concept of *hijra* that persuaded Ghani to fully embrace Islam.

A concept with a long and rich history in the Islamic tradition, *hijra* is an event that is important to all Muslims. *Hijra* is the instance when Muhammad moved his followers

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40 Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 120.

41 Ibid, 121 and 285. The Ahmadiyya Movement is a Muslim group from India, who sent missionaries to the United States in the 1920s. It has been considered heterodox by many other groups of Muslims because of some of its teachings, including ideas about continued prophesy, Jesus, and its founding figure, Ghulam Ahmad. (Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, 110-114).

from Mecca to Medina, and it is used to mark the beginning of the Muslim calendar. At its most basic, *hijra* is understood as the event that started the Muslim community, although the ramifications and meanings of this event have been debated by many different Muslim communities. It has had special meanings for different groups of Muslims who have attempted to create intentional communities.

For members of Jabul Arabiya,

Ezaldeen emphasized the Islamic concept of *hijra* as key to genuine religious and political autonomy. This would safeguard the new Muslim’s reclamation of their African (or Hamitic) identities. By banding together in ‘units’ (communes) they could purchase property and incorporate themselves as a religious institution. The self-sufficient community would be governed by *sharia* law. The process of retreating from the world of infidel to consolidate a community of observant Muslims was called *hijra*, first undertaken by the Prophet Muhammad in the year 622 C.E.\(^{43}\)

In addition to providing an ideological foundation for land ownership, Ezaldeen helped organize the search for land. By becoming Muslim, Ghani had a new religious justification for his quest and institutional support from his newfound religious community, as well as a sense that God was guiding him in his quest.

The community found 300 acres of land near West Valley, and members who had savings used them to make a down payment. Many of the core members moved immediately and started building family dwellings. Ghani remembers that it “was all beautiful farm land. They was growin corn there when we bought the place . . . he pointed across the street and north to the hill, ‘nothing but forest, back up that way. We built the houses with our own hands, about four before we stopped’.”\(^{44}\) The houses often had gas stoves, no running water, heat from wood stoves, and oil lamps for light.


\(^{44}\) Ibid, 127.
Ezaldeen told them to build houses, then a mosque, then stores, and then a jail, telling them, “this is your country. Nobody rules this but you.” By 1938, it had a population of 57.

From the beginning, their community, Jabul Arabiyya, had difficulty establishing relations with surrounding groups, both non-Muslim and Muslim. Ezaldeen had told the community to quietly buy up land adjacent to the first purchase so that the white neighbors would not resist an all-black rural settlement. Ezaldeen advised, “Get as many acres of land together as possible because once you buy a place and the neighbors get on to what you’re after, they are going buy right under you and you won’t be able to expand.” However, the surrounding community did notice the new neighbors. The Buffalo Courier-Express wrote an article about the community in 1946. There were also some instances of violence. By the late 1990s, relationships with the surrounding area had improved.

There were groups of Muslims and non-Muslims who did show interest supporting in Jabul Arabiyya, but usually to achieve their own ends rather than to help the community reach its goals. Ghani always turned down these offers. At one time, a group of Muslim immigrants wanted to invest in the community to produce halal dairy and meat products; however they also wanted to use the group’s autonomy to bring in immigrants. Ghani turned them down, because he did not want American Muslims to become the minority in the community. He also rejected an offer to construct a halfway

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46 Ibid, 126.

house for recent parolees, because the community was also created to keep crime away. In the 1980s, an attempt by the Nation of Islam to take over the community was also unsuccessful.

Due to the lack of Muslims in the area, members of the community tried to recruit and convert outsiders. However, it was hard to find new members. There were many African-Americans who were skeptical about becoming Muslims, even though the idea of owning land appealed to some of them. Ghani remembers talking with his mother and father:

I explained to them what I really had in view, like getting a few people together to buy land and raise our own food and meat. . . So my mom said, ‘That’s all right for that, see, but the religion, see, you are going to get in trouble.’

Many black business owners feared converting because they believed that they would lose their Christian customers. Ghani’s co-workers ridiculed him and were not eager to join, in part because he drove sixty miles to and from work and paid as much as he would to live in the city. The only people that Jabul Arabiyya seemed to attract were those on welfare.

This was part of the reason that the community struggled financially. People contributed to paying off the mortgage when they could. Those on welfare paid very little, and those with jobs paid the bulk of the mortgage. However, many mill employees did not want to give over their income to the community. The community also got into tax trouble, as they were not locally tax exempt, despite being exempt on the state and national level. Most members of the community had to survive by tending small

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gardens and by raising livestock, which included chicken, goats, geese, and ducks. This was especially difficult in an area that has long winters.

Problems arose as new members arrived with little experience or knowledge of farming. There was no practical advice or knowledge being shared between experienced and inexperienced residents. Most of the founding members came from Buffalo, but many of the newcomers came from urban areas, such as Harlem. Old members often failed to help new members, because they thought that new people would learn best through experience. This often made it difficult for new members to be successful agriculturally, regardless of the level of work they put into the land. Further, unlike Muslim farms today, Jabul Arabiyya did not receive help from any outside government or nongovernmental programs. Thus, many people still relied on the outside world for employment.

Some families split up due to the difficulty of living in Jabul Arabiyya. According to Haaneyfan Rafeek, there were terrible domestic conflicts among residents, and it was a very unstable environment for the youth. Children attended public schools in the West Valley, but they also took Arabic and Islamic classes in the community. As they got older, most children moved away. In fact, Shabburn and Haaneyfan Rafeek were the only children raised in Jabul Arabiyya that did not leave. Although their father left when they were young, their mother raised them and their 11 siblings, surviving off livestock and a garden.

Often children left the community because they could not find jobs in the area or wanted to marry nonbelievers or white people. Further problems arose as pioneers died or retired from their factory jobs, leaving little income for the community. Ghani
passed away in 1995, and the population dwindled to fewer than 20 adults. In summarizing Jabul Arabiyya, Robert Dannin observed that,

the community was supposed to grow into a self-sufficient town with shops and services. Instead it depended on facilities and cash from outside. It was supposed to promote a communal spirituality embodied in the Islamic umma. Instead it produced an isolation that was all the more shocking in comparison to the pluralism of religions and creeds that any child might witness in the neighboring towns where everyone still worked and socialized together although there were several different churches.\(^{49}\)

Despite its shortcoming, members of the Jabul Arabiyya were empowered and assisted by their religious beliefs and community to take the risk and make sacrifices necessary to establish this community where they could live out their ideals. In attempting to create a place around their religious beliefs and practices, some were forced into a closer relationship with nature and were almost completely reliant on farming as a result. The religious community provided institutions, resources, and support that enabled people on welfare to earn their living through agriculture. However, they did suffer from a lack of knowledge, resources, a common purpose and outlook on the nature of the community, and connections to larger networks of support. Often, aspects of their identity, including their religious identity, created barriers to assistance from other groups.

**Yemini Muslim Immigrants**

Since 1957, farms in the San Joaquin Valley of California have depended on Yemeni migrant workers.\(^{50}\) Over the years, the population of Yemenis in California has changed, altering their religious practices and their place in American life. Prior to the

\(^{49}\) Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage*, 138-139.

1970s, there were so many Yemeni workers that farms made accommodations for their religious practices. However, these Muslims did not usually settle permanently in the U.S., unless they married someone from America. Starting in the 1970s, Yemenis stopped working on farms at such high rates, leading to a decline in accommodations for their religious practices. Nevertheless, those who remained began bringing their families from Yemen to America.\textsuperscript{51}

The first immigrants to California were young men from villages in central Yemen. Men immigrated because of turbulent political conditions at home and the increased chances of getting a job in the United States. They first immigrated to Northeastern and Midwestern cities; however, the pull of agricultural jobs and the example of early Yemenis led them west. Finding the Yemenis to be reliable and hard workers, growers sponsored Yemenis’ travels, and the population increased.\textsuperscript{52} At this time, Yemeni men came to California temporarily and sent their wages back to their families in Yemen, although some settled permanently in the United States when they married and started families with Hispanic and other women from the area. They were such a large part of the worker population that there were work camps that housed only Yemenis.

However, by the mid-1970s the population had decreased, as some left agricultural work for jobs in the automobile industry, permanently returned to Yemen, or went to work in Saudi Arabia, where it was cheaper and easier to obtain a visa. In the early 1990s, the Yemeni population in the San Joaquin Valley began growing again and

\textsuperscript{51} Friedlander, “The Yemenis of Delano.”

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid, 424-425.
became more permanent, as Yemenis brought their families to America. Before, in the 1950s and 60s, young men came to America, worked, and then returned to Yemen.

Yemeni labor has been central to the success of family-owned and corporate farmers in Central Valley, where they worked alongside Hispanic, Italian, Yugoslavian, Hindu, Sikh, and Persian immigrants. Table grapes have been the major crop, but Yemenis have also harvested plums, pears, apricots, cherries, melons, asparagus, and other fruits and vegetables. Agricultural work has been seasonal, so many have not had a steady paycheck or place of employment, although veteran foremen have earned annual salaries. Workers have usually prepared vineyards in the spring and harvested grapes in the summer and fall. In the winter, many have traveled south to look for work.

Before the number of Yemeni workers declined in the late 1970s or early 1980s, individual and communal prayers would take place at labor camps, where many workers lived. Those camps that housed only Yemenis would often have a makeshift mosque. Many farm workers did not fast during Ramadan due to the strenuous nature of agricultural labor in California. By 2008, most Yemenis no longer lived in camps, prayed at home and scheduled their prayers around their work on the farms. Others had left agriculture and had become independent businessmen, such as shop owners.

**Nation of Islam**

The Nation of Islam is a distinctly American form of Islam that developed in the 1930s. Elijah Muhammad’s interpretation of W.D. Fard’s movement was a separatist movement that emphasized that W.D. Fard was God and that Elijah Muhammad was

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53 Friedlander, “The Yemenis of Delano,” 435-437

54 Ibid, 431.
Fard’s prophet. Elijah Muhammad taught that black people need to remove themselves from the white economy by becoming self-sufficient. Therefore agrarianism and establishing an agricultural base for the Nation has been central to the movement, even though the Nation of Islam’s temples have been primarily located in cities.

In 1964, in response to the needs of lower-class black city dwellers, Elijah Muhammad, the prophet of the Nation of Islam, created the Three Year Economic Savings Program. It “called for black people to pool their resources by contributing $10 a month to help fight against poverty, want, unemployment, abominable housing, hunger and nakedness of the 30-40 million black people in America.”55 Part of this plan included a system of farms that would produce food and the raw materials for housing and clothing, providing economic self-sufficiency as well as ritual purity and food security.

Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam were concerned with establishing a separate black nation, and thus were concerned with black men’s property rights. According to Gomez, men’s reclamation of women “was a prelude, a first step, a necessary exercise in preparation for the more elusive goal of establishing usufructuary in the actual land.”56 Therefore, within the ideology of the Nation of Islam, the issues of land ownership and of controlling of women have been linked.

Elijah Muhammad may have gained some of his inspiration for his farm system when he was jailed for sedition in the federal correction institution in Milan, Michigan. This institution was relatively self-sufficient, as it had a three hundred acre farm that

56 Gomez, Black Crescent, 334.
produced food for prisoner and staff consumption. Before his release, Elijah encouraged his followers at Detroit’s Temple No. 1 to purchase cattle and a 140 acre farm in White Cloud, Michigan

By 1975, the Nation owned 5,000 acres of land in Georgia, 1,000 acres in Michigan, and 9,000 acres in Alabama. On these farms, Muslims raised corn, string beans, apples, tomatoes, okra, soybeans, and various grains. They also raised chickens, cows, and sheep. The Nation also owned dairy and meat processing plants and fish importing businesses. The Nation of Islam had a supermarket on South Cottage Grove Street in Chicago that sold produce and meat from these farms. Specifically, they sold chickens from Michigan and watermelons from Georgia. These programs employed dozens, if not hundreds, of black men as distributors. Elijah Muhammad supervised a multimillion-dollar business empire, which consisted of a printing press, farms, restaurants, a meat packing plant, trucks, a clothing factory, and a small bank.57

Whether or not Muhammad was inspired by his stay in prison, economic self-sufficiency and job creation were central to his understanding of the purpose of the Nation of Islam farms and related businesses. He believed that black people must “take their mouths out of the White man’s kitchens.”58 Further, he wanted his followers to ‘do for self’ and avoid the white-run economy. With his system of farms, Elijah Muhammad aimed to provide jobs, but he also wanted to provide better food.

These farms had a religious dimension due to their role in food production. Food is central to the construction of religious identity for many different groups of Muslims. This was very much true for the Nation. For many religious people, including Muslims, the production, distribution, preparation, and consumption of food provide important ways to control, regulate, and clean the body. For the Nation of Islam, food has been a way to combine the physical and the moral. According to Elijah Muhammad, “Islam ‘dignifies the black man. . . It heals both the physical and the spiritual by teaching what to eat, when to eat, and what to think and how to act’.”

Members of the Nation of Islam “practiced their religion not only by reciting their prayers and creeds but also by paying attention to what they ate. . . [and] members often described their commitment to Islam not only as the conversion of their soul but also as a demystifying of their minds and the liberation of their bodies.” Food has been used by the Nation as a way to delineate the group, craft identity, reduce ambiguities, embody resistance, and ascribe sacredness.

Food was central to the beliefs and practices of the Nation of Islam, especially as it related to issues concerning the black body. Throughout history, African Americans have not always been able to protect themselves and their families from harm and/or humiliation. Therefore, “the black body has been and continues to be an important symbol of the struggle for black liberation more generally.”

Early black activists, such as Frances Ellen Watkins and Alexander Crummell, were concerned with civilizing and

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61 Ibid, 96.
protecting the black body by nurturing families, uplifting the black race, and encouraging traits such as thrift, sexual propriety, industriousness, and temperance.\textsuperscript{62} With the advent of the Nation of Islam, ethics of the body became Islamized, and food became an important way to embody and signify a new identity.

Diet was especially important in the discourse on ethics of the body. Food was and continues to be an important way to control, regulate, and clean the body. Nation members received an 18 page treatise of permitted and prohibited foods. They could eat white cabbage, cauliflower, eggplant, okra, carrots, mustard greens, turnips, spinach, tomatoes, celery, lettuce, green and hot peppers, white potatoes, fresh corn, radishes, asparagus, whole wheat bread, white fish, trout, bass, salmon, small navy beans, string beans, and June beans. They were not allowed to eat cornbread, pig, carp, catfish, crustaceans, mollusks, rabbits, possum, squirrel, coon, lima beans, butter beans, black-eyed peas, green cabbage, collard greens, pinto beans, kidney beans, and brown field beans. Many of these forbidden foods were associated with slave culture. Members were also encouraged to avoid red meat and highly processed foods, although these foods were not prohibited.\textsuperscript{63}

Elijah Muhammad’s \textit{How to Eat to Live} was another publication that laid out dietary rules for Nation members. In this two volume work, believers were told to eat only one meal a day, in order to save money and be healthier. Members were also encouraged to fast as it was thought to take away evil desires. Changing one’s diet was thought to have healing powers. It was though that such actions could cure high blood

\textsuperscript{62} Curtis, \textit{Black Muslim Religion}, 96-97.

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid, 98.
pressure, diabetes, colds, fevers, ailments of the heart, headaches, stomach aches, and ulcers. Besides contributing to physical diseases, bad food, along with drinking and smoking, was also thought to contribute to social diseases contracted during slavery. Thus, “following the dietary rules of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, according to many NOI members, was good for body and soul. A Muslim diet purified the black body, kept it morally clean, and made it physically strong.”

Food rules have influenced ideas about gender among members of the Nation of Islam. Some scholars, such as Doris Witt, have argued that within the Nation of Islam soul food symbolized the role of women in polluting the black body. Women were seen as polluting the body physically, intellectually, and spiritually. Thus, by getting rid of soul food, the Nation of Islam was ridding its members from contamination from women. However, other scholars, such as Carolyn Moxely Rouse, complicate this theory, explaining that food and food taboos are mechanisms that women can also use to negotiate race, class, and their role in the family and society. Food can be used to contend with dominate ideologies, such as Christianity, western medicine, capitalism, and feminism. Further, she explains that eating is a process of social communion, religious commitment, and personal expression.

Gender norms for members of the Nation have also been explained through the association of women with farmland. Elijah Muhammad says, in the *Message to the

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Blackman, “the woman is man’s field to produce his nation. If he does not keep the enemy out of his field, he won’t produce a good nation.”

Further, discouraging interracial dating or marriage, he said,

we protect out farms by pulling up our weeds and grass by the roots, by killing the animals and birds, and by poisoning the insects that destroy our crops in order that we may produce a good crop. How much more valuable are our women, who are our fields through which we produce a nation.

These quotes from Elijah Muhammad explain that to produce a good crop, women need to be esteemed as mothers and protected from cultural contamination. Through the connection of women and farmland, a woman and her body becomes “seen primarily [as] a tool of procreation and reproduction, as farmland exists for the purpose of raising crops.”

Women thus become symbols and measurements for the Nation’s purity, strength, and power, both as a movement and in relation to actually establishing a nation.

Although the Nation sold most of the farmland, the Nation’s early farms have provided some of the ideological stimulus for the development of late 20\textsuperscript{th} and early 21\textsuperscript{st} century farm projects by members of the Nation of Islam and Sunni Muslims. Others who were involved with Elijah Muhammad’s farms have become involved in creating nonreligious farm programs. Motivated by religious beliefs and practices, as well as

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67 Muhammad, \textit{Message to the Blackman in America}, 58.

68 Ibid, 60.

69 Gomez, \textit{Black Crescent}, 324.

70 For example Rashid Nursi, who oversaw the Nation’s 13,000 acres of land in the 1970s, now runs an organization called Truly Living Well in Atlanta. Ridgely Abdul Mu'min Muhammad. “Urban Gardens.” \textit{The Farmer} 9, no. 10 (2006), \url{http://www.muhammadfarms.com/Farmer_Oct14_2006.htm} (accessed March 26, 2010).
ideas about self-sufficiency, the Nation of Islam’s system of farms was an attempt to create an agriculturally based religious community on a grand scale.

The Nation of Islam also underwent other changes upon Elijah Muhammad’s death. Elijah Muhammad’s son, Warith Deen Mohammad, became the Supreme Minister of the Nation of Islam on February 26, 1975. He began changing the name of the organization in 1976, and it went through several different names. First it was called the World Community of Islam, then the American Muslim Mission, and eventually W.D. Mohammad dissolved any official group of believers, although he continued to have followers. Besides changing the name of the community, W.D. Mohammad mandated sweeping changes that moved the Nation from a “racial-separatist” organization to an American Sunni community.

He abolished the doctrine of black racial supremacy, allowed whites to join, refuted W.D. Fard’s divinity, and did not recognize Elijah Mohammad as the Messenger of Allah. Instead, the group members began to practice the five pillars of Islam, including believing in one God and Muhammad, fasting Ramadan according to the lunar calendar, and praying towards Mecca. Further, W.D. Mohammad eliminated anti-American attitudes and practices within the official doctrine of the organization. The group no longer worked towards a separate state, and members began to vote, pay taxes, and salute the American flag. In fact, W.D. Mohammad paid all the back taxes, primarily by selling all the businesses (including the farms). In 1978, W.D. Mohammad

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71 Warith Deen Mohammad changed his name from his birth name, which was Wallace Delaney Muhammad, in 1980.
72 Turner, Islam in the African American Experience, 223.
decentralized the leadership of the Muslim American Community, creating a council of six imams.\textsuperscript{73}

These changes also involved a shift in food taboos. Members no longer followed Elijah Muhammad’s rules concerning food, and many formerly banned foods were now permitted. According to some scholars, as members of the Nation embraced Sunni Islam, these African-American Muslims could embrace the heritage of slavery with slaves as actors in history rather than objects. This created a shift in attitudes about women and their relation to the black male body.\textsuperscript{74}

Besides becoming more accepted in the United States, the restyled movement gained approval internationally. W.D. Mohammad was praised by Muhammad Ali al-Harkan, who was the secretary general of the Muslim World League, for the changes he made to the Nation of Islam, and “as a result, the Imam became an official consultant and trustee of da’wa activities sponsored by the Gulf States in America.”\textsuperscript{75}

W.D. Mohammad did not undermine all that the movement had believed or done prior to his tenure as leader. He “held that Fard’s doctrine about ‘white devils’ was not meant to be understood literally, interpreting it as a psychological smoke screen for his community work among the black lower classes.”\textsuperscript{76} Further, he credited his father with the “First Resurrection” that introduced African Americans to Islam.

\textsuperscript{73} Turner, \textit{Islam in the African-American Experience}, 225-226

\textsuperscript{74} Rouse, \textit{Engaged Surrender}, 105-126.

\textsuperscript{75} Curtis, \textit{Islam in Black America}, 120. Although first used to talk about God inviting people to Islam, \textit{da’wa} translates to mean “to invite one to Islam” and is also used to talk about Muslims spreading the Islamic religion. (Geneive Abdo, \textit{Mecca and Main Street: Muslim Life in America After 9/11}(New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 175).

\textsuperscript{76} Turner, \textit{Islam in the African American Experience}, 225.
Not everyone embraced these changes. On March 7, 1978, Louis Haleem Abdul Farrakhan announced a split from W.D. Mohammad’s group, which was called the World Community of Islam at the time. He named his group the Nation of Islam, and in 1979, he began publishing the Final Call. He urged people to continue believing that W.D. Fard was Allah and that Elijah Muhammad was his messenger. He also has discouraged integration and pushed for black control of community resources.

These two groups have had a substantial influence on the composition of the American Muslim community. From 1996 to 2001, estimates placed the number of Muslims in the United States at anywhere from three to nine million people with most estimates at five to 6.9 million. According to data from the February 2008 Pew Forum U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, 24 percent of Muslims are Black (non-Hispanic), which makes them one of the largest ethnic groups within the American Muslim community. Since the 1970s, the majority of African-American Muslims have been Sunni Muslim.

**New Medinah**

Members of both of these groups, followers of W.D. Mohammad and members of Louis Farrakhan’s Nation of Islam have established religious communities with farms. Muslims associated with W.D. Mohammad and his organization created New Medinah in the 1980s, as place to develop and live their religious beliefs, as well as their ideas about human-nature relations. New Medinah is an intentional agrarian and religious

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community, where people both live and work. New Medinah has been a place where these Muslims, much like earlier Muslims who were involved with agriculture, have been able to craft religious identities and institutions, as well as an intentional community. The practice of farming among members of New Medinah have helped them network to larger religious and American communities and networks of agriculture.

Members of New Medinah have created an Islamic community by creating a space that includes religious institutions and other structures, such as street signs, that involve other ideas from the Islamic tradition. The purpose and meaning of this community have been explained using religious ideas, such as hijra, a sense of Islamic history, and the example of Elijah Muhammad. Members of New Medinah have elected to live their religious identity and beliefs by creating an intentional community that is intended to serve as a model for Muslims and non-Muslims. It includes people outside of the immediate space of the community, and it depends on larger networks of support. They also actively work to reach out to people and groups outside the intentional community. Originally motivated in part by the desire to live a more rural life, members have increasingly become concerned with sustainability and become involved with more environmentally sound ways of farming. Finally, other aspects of identity, such as gendered identities, are being negotiated, in part, through the work on the land.

New Medinah, an intentional community of African-American Sunni Muslims, who associate with W.D. Mohammad and his followers, grew out of an earlier project of W.D. Mohammad’s group which was then called the American Muslim Mission. In the early 1980s, W.D. Mohammad attempted to establish an independent Islamic community, which was going to be called Elijahville. With this attempt at a Muslim city, “Elijah
Muhammad’s vision of a separate black state in America was transformed into a wish for realizing independence *within* the United States, similar to that of the Amish position: self-supporting, autonomous in religious matters, and politically quietist.”\(^{79}\) W.D. Mohammad planned to build this community on farmland, which had been purchased under Elijah Muhammad’s leadership, in Terell County, Georgia. W.D. Mohammad held a convention on the land in 1983, but the community failed soon after the event. It may have floundered due to financial troubles or because Elijah Muhammad’s children sued, claiming the property as theirs.\(^{80}\) In part due to these legal battles but also because he wanted his followers to be fully part of the global Muslim community, W.D. Mohammad officially dissolved the American Muslim Mission.

Although there was no longer officially an American Muslim Mission, according to some scholars “the movement continued informally and acquired a 64 acre farm in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, which was called ‘New Medina’ . . . and is the longest lasting of the rural properties acquired by the movement.”\(^{81}\) The original 63 acres of the community were bought by the Muslim Business Association for a Muslim retreat center in 1983. However, in 1985, some of the purchasers suggested that the area be used as an Islamic residential community, and ground was broken for the community in 1987. As of 2003, it was home to approximately ten families, and it still has been hosting


\(^{80}\) Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad*, 371.

retreats for the broader Muslim community. In fact, the announcement for the 2010 New Medinah Retreat states that “the Spirit of Elijahville is Still Alive in New Medinah.”

New Medinah is an intentional agricultural community in Southern Mississippi, where residents’ desire to live out their faith has coincided with their craving to connect with nature or a more rural existence. They wanted a place where they could live and work in a rural area, strive for economic independence, and practice their religious beliefs. The community covers 64 acres of land in Sumrall where many, although not all, of its approximately 225 members live and work.

Intentionally planned to have minimal impact on the environment, families live in houses that are clustered together, which leaves plenty of open space for gardens, a large farm and pasture area, and woodlots. On the land, there is also a mosque, a Clara Muhammad School, and the only exclusively Islamic cemetery in Mississippi. The community also owns another plot of land that does not adjoin the community land where they are partnering with the University of Southern Mississippi to grow organic crops. Some residents manage the cultivation of organic fruits and vegetables, but pastured poultry is the main agricultural enterprise, and most members have jobs outside of the farm. Although they live together, each family is responsible for its own economic well-being.

Covering rolling hills, the area is a prime location for agriculture. Snow rarely falls in the winter, although there are the occasional hard frosts, and the summers are long, providing a long growing season. However, in this area “many small row crop farms . . .

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have given way in recent years to cattle and cash timber operations." This, a shift towards large scale agriculture, is a common trend within American agriculture. Many scholars and environmental activists understand this shift as contributing to American's disconnection from the food production systems and to the rise of factory farming practices that can negatively impact the environment.

The Muslims who bought the land for a retreat center expressly picked the area, "because of its natural beauty and its central location in the state, expecting that it would draw Muslims from nearby cities such as Hattiesburg and Laurel as well as Muslims from the coast." To pay the mortgage on the land, the group grew watermelons and corn. However, in 1985, Rashad Ali and Abdul Shareef crafted a plan to create an intentional community that would be called New Medinah.

According to Ali, Elijah Muhammad was part of the inspiration for the place, as Elijah Muhammad said "get a piece of this earth to call your own." Further, Ali drew inspiration from Medina, the city of the Prophet, in the Middle East. Ali was especially moved by the history of Medina, which he described as a place of wisdom and scholarship that brought Arabic numerals and other innovations of math and science to the rest of the world. Ali was driven by the thought that "if the old Medinah could bring Europe out of the Dark Ages, what could New Medinah do for Mississippi and

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New Medinah was intended to be a place that could also provide enlightenment to the surrounding areas.

With these visions in mind, Ali crafted a proposal that drew on global Islamic history, while also reflecting the experience and history of some American Muslims. By merging these narratives, Ali created New Medinah as a bridge between these two, often considered disparate, groups. Further, he constructed an explanation which reflects the experiences of many community members, who first converted to the Nation of Islam, usually from a Christian background, and then reoriented their beliefs and practices to the global Muslim community as W.D. Mohammad transformed the Nation of Islam into a Sunni group. There have been some members who have converted directly to Sunni Islam.

The various institutions and practices of the community situate it in terms of African-American Islam, their personal experiences, the larger Muslim community, and the Islamic tradition. Along with the mosque, cemetery, and school, most of the streets are named after the 99 names of God or prominent Muslims figures from throughout Islamic history. However, some are named after founding members of the community. The call to prayer is played five times a day.

The community officially began in 1987 with a groundbreaking ceremony. W.D. Mohammad, along with other prominent imams and Muslim business and civic leaders from throughout the Southeast, attended and even participated in the ceremony. In total, there were more than 5000 people at the event.

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86 Quoted in Reckdahl, "Mississippi Muslim."
The first family to move to New Medinah, the Mahmouds, bought an acre of land during the groundbreaking in 1987. Despite petitions of surrounding landowners who contested New Medinah, the Mahmouds moved to the area in 1988. They are considered the first community members to make the hijra. Ali has defined hijra as a spiritual journey.\textsuperscript{87}

Most families have faced economic hardships upon moving to New Medinah. Members of the community are responsible for their own economic wellbeing, and many residents still commute to nearby cities to work or are self employed. Although, the community is not a commune, there are economic plans for New Medinah.\textsuperscript{88} There have been plans to build a spa and cabins on a plot of land behind the mosque. There has also been talk of constructing a health-care complex and a halal chicken processing plant. Community members also assist each other through a “pass-on” program where one community member gives its goat’s offspring to another resident. Rosa Shareef explains that “by using livestock raised within your group, everyone knows how it was raised.”\textsuperscript{89}

The Shareefs are one of four families in New Medinah that have raised poultry on pastures. They raise Cornish Cross chickens, broad-breasted white turkeys, and Rhode Island Red Chickens, which they use for meat and for eggs. They rotate the chickens between two five-acre pastures every year. The chickens are left free to eat bugs, grass, and worms, but the Shareefs also supplement the chickens’ diet with high protein poultry feed. During processing time, Rosa, Alvin, their children, and some

\textsuperscript{87} Reckdahl, “Mississippi Muslim.”

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{89} Quoted in Berton, The New American Farmer, 137.
other members of the community slaughter, clean, and package approximately 95 chickens a day. The Shareefs have marketed their eggs and poultry under their own label and maintained their own customer base.

The goats and sheep are left to graze on the pasture where the poultry were formerly grazing. In terms of goat production, the Shareefs have raised approximately 20 goats per year, which are sold to Muslims in the surrounding area. These Muslims primarily use the goats for religious ceremonies, and “all members of New Medinah seem happy to have access to buying a local product that is raised and slaughtered following their religious standards.”

People from the surrounding area, as well as community members, purchase products from New Medinah farmers. The Shareefs spend no money on advertising, so all of their sales depend on word of mouth and repeat customers. Their main market is the statewide Muslim market. However, to market to non-Muslims customers, they originally “posted fliers on bulletin boards in the area, put articles in the local newspapers, and acquired business cards in order to tap a specialty niche market.”

Most of the residents of New Medinah have come from urban areas and have little to no agricultural experience. Hailing from cities, such as Chicago, they have moved to New Medinah because they want to earn their livelihood with their hands, live rurally, own land, and/or live their Muslim beliefs. Further, many community members value

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91 Ibid.
“being away from the big cities, eating healthy food that we grow with few chemicals, and uncrowded living conditions.”

The Shareefs and the Mahmouds received a SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) grant funded by Heifer Project International, which provided training sessions, start-up funds, and equipment. Other New Medinah families have also been involved with Heifer Project International through the Marion County Self-Help Organization.

Agriculture and the other farm products have provided an avenue for outreach to larger communities, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. Since participating in the Heifer Project International program, The Shareefs, especially Rosa, have become spokespeople for pastured poultry. They spoke at the Small Farmers Conference in Nashville in 1997, and Rosa was an invited speaker at the 2nd Annual International Conference of Women in Agriculture, which was held in Washington, D.C. in 1998.

Further, the residents of New Medinah have used agricultural practices as a way to connect with their neighbors. For example, “families in New Medinah also work with a Mennonite family who lives close by and raise pastured poultry, have hatchery capabilities, and sell feed.” The residents of New Medinah have held classes, which are open to all children in the county, on the care of horses, small engine repair, and cultivating seedlings in a greenhouse. Further, Rosa has used a community garden to teach horticulture to local youths.

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92 Reckdahl, “Mississippi Muslim.”

93 Fanatico, Pastured Poultry, 12.

94 Ibid.
In these ways, the community of New Medinah is cultivating relationship with their non-Muslim neighbors. The neighbors originally opposed the community through petitions, but since then the surrounding community has actually apologized to residents of New Medinah for their initial distrust. Local farmers have explained that they originally thought that New Medinah was going to house a cult, but they say that they now know better. Through agricultural activities, the residents of New Medinah have helped expose the local community to Muslims and the Islamic faith, and have brought an Islamic tradition to an area that previously did not know many Muslims or much about Islam. In a keynote at New Medinah’s tenth annual retreat, Ed Morgan, the mayor of Hattiesburg at the time, said, “I don’t know if I have met a group of individuals that have done as much to demonstrate their faith, to do positive things that really have to do with making a community special.”

There have been some Muslims who do not live in New Medinah but who still considered themselves part of the New Medinah community. For example, the muezzin (the person who performs the call to prayer) has driven 76 miles roundtrip to attend Jumah (the main Friday prayer service). For many outside members, the various Islamic institutions found in New Medinah have been a reason to come to the community.

The community has had especially close ties with Muslims from New Orleans, especially from the Masjidur Rakeem community. People from New Orleans have made frequent trips to New Medinah, often times for workshops and dinners. In fact,

95 Quoted in Reckdahl, "Mississippi Muslim."

96 Reckdahl, "Mississippi Muslim."
the Muslims from New Orleans were a major part of the reason that New Medinah exists at all. They provided support, especially in terms of helping with the clearing of land and the building of houses.

Gender roles are crafted through the experience of farming and the lens of religious ideas. Although Rosa Shareef is the main farmer in New Medinah, the community still abides by what members consider to be Islamic gender norms. In the mosque, women must pray behind the men. The community believes that this practice helps both men and women focus on their prayers. Further, the community stresses that women can be anything they want, except for religious leaders, because the community is located in America. Some residents became involved with New Medinah because they had the desire to own land. However, they are not concerned with creating a nation, and control of land and women do not seem to be linked as they were within Elijah Muhammad’s religious teachings. Instead, rules that limit women’s role in prayer and as religious leaders are explained as religiously mandated and helpful to both genders.

In New Medinah, residents are not only remaking and signifying their world based on their religious beliefs and experiences, but they are also reconstituting the world in terms of human-nature relations. They have all decided to move to a more rural way of life, and many have chosen to engage in work that reminds them of their connection with nature. As Gould explains, in her work on homesteaders, intentional living is ultimately about both “individual and cultural choices and the meaning that is made from them.”

By living deliberately and reconstructing their world, Muslims in New Medinah

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are defining what it means to live as a Muslim in America, to belong to a religious community, to be a member of an intentional community, to cultivate connection with nature, and to be a Muslim man or woman. Muslims who are a part of New Medinah are making choices based on religious beliefs, economic realities, and ideas about the benefits of rural life.

**Muhammad Farm**

Under the guidance of Louis Farrakhan, the Nation of Islam restarted the farm program with the creation of the Muhammad Farm. The farm has been part of an attempt, again on a different scale, to create a farm system that supports the entire community of believers. This current attempt to achieve self-sufficiency among member of the Nation of Islam is unique because it relies on the internet, is attempting (due to necessity) to create a community that transcends religious boundaries, and is engaging in projects such as organics due to economic rather than environmental motivations. Muhammad Farm also provides further examples of barriers to creating religious communities that depend on their own farms.

In 1991, Farrakhan reestablished the Three Year Economic Savings Program, not as a program only lasting three years, but instead as an ongoing project consisting of consecutive three year strategic programs of action. In December 1994, using money from the Three Year Economic Program, Farrakhan purchased 1,500 acres of the previously contested land in Terell, Georgia. In conjunction with this farm, the Nation created a Ministry of Agriculture, which exists,

> to develop a sustainable agriculture system that would provide at least one meal per day, according to the teachings of the Most Honorable Elijah Muhammad for the 40 million black people in America. Also this system should provide the necessary raw materials for the production of clothing and housing for the 40 million are [sic] more black people in America. This
requires the attainment, proper utilization and conservation of the useful land and using science and technology to make the non-useful land useful.\textsuperscript{98}

According to undated literature on the farm’s website, the Ministry also has nine short term goals: to increase contributions to the Three Year Economic Program; to attain the proper equipment and services needed to make Muhammad Farms a viable enterprise; to hire a farm manager and equipment repair specialists that are familiar with large scale agriculture; to use the Farm Marketing Coordinators to expand the available markets; to solve the transportation and storage problems which are limiting the products and markets; to change people’s eating habits; to increase volunteer numbers; to “develop an officers’ training boot camp and youth camp;” and to make alliances with other black farmers and organizations.\textsuperscript{99}

Although the Nation only owns one farm, the Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Ridgley Mumin Muhammad, who runs the farm in Georgia, has estimated that it would need 6.3 million acres, $2 billion of equipment, and 18,000 farmers to provide one meal per day to 40 million people. Muhammad sees the farm in Georgia as a catalyst for larger social change, and advises that “we should not look to this farm for our total food needs. We must encourage the development of alliances with the 18,000 black farmers still in operation along with purchasing more land and developing more farmers.”\textsuperscript{100}

During the farm’s first five years, members of the nation grew “a variety of vegetable and row crops in an effort to find the right combination of enterprises to make


\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid.
the farm successful.” However, the farm is plagued by lack of human resources, difficult growing conditions, such as the soil quality and the dry climate, and weather conditions, such as drought, that have affected all farmers in the area. Currently, only the Minister of Agriculture and his wife live on the farm, although he believes that the farm would be most productive if there were ten families living there. The rest of the labor comes from volunteers.

Not only is the Nation attempting to create an intentional community on the farm, it is attempting to link all believers into a community that has a system of farms at its foundation. This farm has linked believers by marketing and selling its produce through buying clubs associated with Nation temples in Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, Ohio, California, Louisiana, Alabama, New Jersey, Arizona, Mississippi, and Washington, D.C. These groups have done most of their communication through email and the farm’s website. In fact, Louis Farrakhan has instructed each household of believers to get a computer so that the Nation can communicate electronically. The farm has offered to deliver food anywhere in the United States.

Even with this infrastructure in place, the farm is struggling economically. In an attempt to expand available markets, the farm has begun producing “organic” food that is free of chemicals but not USDA certified organic. As of 2008, there were 20 acres of land set aside for this kind of produce, and Muhammad was considering expanding

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101 Muhammad Farms, "Ministry of Agriculture Resource List."
organic food production. This type agriculture has been more labor intensive, making it difficult to expand production.\textsuperscript{102}

The Muhammad Farm, like the Nation’s earlier system of farms, is part of a plan to create an intentional community at a much larger scale than most other Muslim farm communities. The project was started as a religious activity and draws upon the group’s earlier ideas about food and economic security. Like Elijah Muhammad, the Minister of Agriculture teaches that black people should produce the material necessary for shelter, clothing, and food. The ecological and economic realities of the Muhammad Farm are changing ideas about what food should be grown and eaten. These realities are also stretching the boundaries of the community and what it means to have an intentional community. The religious community associated with the Nation has provided the main market for this farm, but the farm is limited by its ability to produce food and to reach members of this broader community. Due to the mandate to provide raw materials for all black people in America, the Minister of Agriculture has been active in working and networking with other black landowners, whether Muslim or not.

\textbf{Other Muslim Farms}

Recently, there have also been individual Muslims who have created religiously motivated farms. Zaid Kurdieh, an American born Muslim whose ancestors lost their farm in Palestine in 1948, and his wife Haifa Kurdieh, a Palestinian born in Jordan, own and run the Norwich Meadows Farm in Norwich, New York. On their farm, they aim “to

\textsuperscript{102} Muhammad Farms, “Ministry of Agriculture Resource List.” The Minister of Agriculture defines organic food as “from a culture and consumer point of view, ‘organic’ indicates healthy food produced without artificial chemicals.” The food produced on the Muhammad Farm is not USDA certified organic.
grow food organically and sustainably while incorporating Muslim values and practices into their work.”\textsuperscript{103}

Not only do they raise meat that meets halal standards, they also draw inspiration from the Prophet Muhammad and are concerned with creating tayyib foods, which pertains to raising an animal or other agricultural product in a pure or good manner. Among American farmers, tayyib seems to be primarily applied to livestock, and the Sufi Farm of Peace is also motivated to raise its animals according to the principle of tayyib. Despite being inspired by the specifics of their faith, the Kurdiehs, when dealing with customers, “prefer to focus on teaching more universal ideas of healthy eating and local, organic farming.”\textsuperscript{104}

\textbf{Conclusion}

These stories demonstrate how agriculture has influenced the experiences of many different Muslims in America. For early Muslims in America, farming was often the reason that Muslims came or were brought to North America or migrated to specific areas within the United States. Being involved with agriculture often provided a measure of autonomy, either economic or spatial, that allowed Muslims to create religious communities or craft religious identities. Agriculture has sometimes been a point of encounter between Muslims and other Americans. These farms are part of American traditions of religious intentional communities, agrarianism, nature religion, and all demonstrate a desire to become reconnected to the food system. They have also been shaped directly and indirectly by events in American history, such as the


\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.
Great Migration, the Great Depression, the history of farming in the United State, and the American religious landscape.

These communities represent a diversity of membership, experience, thought, and practice within American Islam. Learning about these groups provides many examples of the indigenous and local processes of identity formation and appropriation of the Islamic tradition. They demonstrate how various ideas, such as *halal* and *hijra*, from the Islamic tradition are used to situate and explain their communities and work on the land. Edward Curtis has noted that “religious identity [is] not only a matter of one’s theological beliefs but also of one’s ritual activities, ethical imperatives, and communal affiliation.”¹⁰⁵ For some of these American Muslims, agriculture has played a role in ritual activities, often by supplying materials for religious practices. Farms have also been places where Muslims, such as those associated with Jabul Arabiyya or New Medinah, act out ethical imperatives. They have also been a part of some American Muslims' communal affiliation. The farms function in all of these ways for members of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm, the Dayemi Tariqat's Dayempur Farm, and the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East's Farm of Peace. The following three chapters provide overviews of the three communities, including the role of farms and the practices on them in the construction of identity and community among Muslims involved with these three communities.

These Muslims have particular religious identities that are articulated on and through these farms. Their unique Muslim identities, communities, and institutions are part of the complicated ways that they bring their religious tradition to bear on their

practices in and ideas about the natural world. Their practices, beliefs, and institutions as part of American Sufi communities are important and have been little studied.

Farming or the management of farms are also part of the ways that these Muslims embody their religious and other identity, while creating or becoming open to new discourses within the tradition. Studies of converts have observed that

Conversion does not stop at the moment of embracing Islam, and it is not solely a mental activity of accepting a new belief. It requires embodiment of new social and religious practices. Within this process of embodiment and learning new practices, new ideas and insights are created that can generate new discourses and receptivity to other voices of Islamic discourse.106

Embodiment and a negotiation with religious discourse takes place on these farms and through activities on and for the farms.

On these farms, community members have been inspired and limited by religious and agricultural beliefs, institutions, and practices, personal and communal experiences, the geography of the area, and various cultural ideas and histories. On these farms, members’ experiences and beliefs, as well as religious practices, affect the places’ institutions and practices. These farms and the involvement of various people arise from different ideas about the place of religion and nature in a good, meaningful life. These farms and their communities are making unique attempts at intentional living and agriculture. They are engaging in farming to various extents and using the place for a variety of activities. People have not just brought their existing ideas and practices to bear on the farms, instead experiences on the farm have also shaped religious and environmental beliefs, institutions, and practices.

Chapters six and seven will demonstrate how embodied experiences in nature can influence religious ideas and practices pertaining to the environment. Through experiences on the farm, these Muslims are developing particular religious ideas about the environment, leading them to embrace particular interpretations within the tradition or develop ideas that may have not been articulated in such ways before. There sometimes is tensions between what people do on the farms and their religious teachings.
In Coatesville, Pennsylvania, up an unassuming road marked Fellowship Drive and lined with trees, is the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm. At the top of the road lies a woody area dotted with small buildings – the caretaker’s house, a covered prayer space, a kitchen and meeting building, and an equipment shed. Just beyond these buildings and trees, the land opens to reveal the mazar, a white shrine with arched windows and a domed roof on a cleared lawn, surrounded by manicured trees and a garden.¹ In the August sunlight, the white of the mazar almost glowed against the vibrant green of the trees and grass. The mazar serves as the final resting place of Muhammad Raheem Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, the community’s spiritual teacher. Just beyond the mazar is rolling farm land covered in grasses and different types of trees.

On this, my second trip to the farm, I was lucky to have a lively, impromptu tour on golf cart of the land. During the ride, my guide explained that the alignment of the garden’s arbors with Bawa’s feet is the axis from which everything radiates. His thoughts echoed a statement I heard in earlier interviews about Bawa’s presence making the land sacred. For many, the mazar and the figure of Bawa is the heart of the farm community. My analysis begins with Bawa’s story and the history of the Fellowship and the development of the farm and farm community. Following the contours of the farm and surrounding area as it spreads from Bawa’s shrine, I will also describe the Fellowship and the farm, the practices of the Fellowship and the farm,

¹ Mazar means tomb or shrine.
future plans for the farm, and communities with which members of the Bawa 
Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship have become involved through the farm.

This chapter and the following two chapters each provide an overview of a farm 
and its associated community. These chapters describe the history, space, place, 
institutions, practices, future plans, and composition of these communities, as well as 
their relations with various Muslim and non-Muslim communities. These examples 
provide illustrations of the complex ways that American Muslims become Muslim.

These chapters also highlight the purpose and importance of the farms within 
these communities. To understand how religious beliefs, practices, and institutions 
influence Muslims’ actions in and ideas about the environment, it is important to 
understand their specific beliefs, practices, and institutions. There is a diversity of 
traditions within the Islamic tradition and among Muslims in the United States.

Having rural communities provides these Muslims with unique spaces on the 
American religious landscape. These spaces are usual outside of spaces with large 
Muslim populations, making them freer in some ways from the influence of other 
Muslims. However this also makes these communities unique within their rural setting.

These farms are also institutions that fit within traditions of American religious 
expression. Robert P. Sutton, who wrote two volumes attempting to provide a cohesive 
explanation of communalism in American history, argues that “the utopian tradition is an 
unbroken motif, not an erratic and fragmented experience. There was never any 
extended period of time when an important experiment, or experiments, was not 
underway.”

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\(^2\) Robert P. Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience: Secular Communities, 1824-2000* 
(Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2003), ix.
At these farms, Muslims are negotiating and constructing identities. The history of agriculture among Muslims in America demonstrates the diverse roles that lived experiences, specifically agricultural practices and communities in rural areas, have played in constructing and shaping American Muslim communities, networks, identities, practices, and beliefs. Similar processes are taking place on these three farms. These farms are places where everyday life, the environment, and religious beliefs come together. The choices, actions, and experiences on farms contribute to religious understanding and identity.

The Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship originally bought farmland for a cemetery, but members began cultivating some of the land after it was bought. The use of the land changed as people became overworked and again after Bawa’s death. Since the construction of Bawa’s shrine, the property has become more of a park. This is a farm where the use of land has changed with the needs and desires of the community. Historically, establishing the farm and using it in different ways has been part of a process of community and identity formation and negotiation. Even when the community has not been engaged in cultivation, the farm has been a place where community members live intentionally, attempting to carry out religious, social, and environmental ideals and practices. They have had to make choices as to how to use, preserve, and build on the land. People involved with the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm have also had to decide how to maintain the mazar and cemetery, as well as how to host pilgrims.
History – Bawa, Fellowship, and Farm

One of my informants put a recurring sentiment best, “without Bawa there would be no farm.”³ For most people involved with the Bawa Muhaïyaddeen Fellowship Farm, the history of the farm begins with the story of its religious leader, Sheikh Muhammad Raheem Bawa Muhaïyaddeen, who was a renowned spiritual teacher and healer in Sri Lanka before moving to Philadelphia.⁴ In the United States, he inspired a religious community and the formation of the Fellowship Farm. He communicated religious lessons using metaphors from farming and also helped teach his members how to farm, cook, and eat. He inspired and motivated various projects on the farm. The creation of a community and farm has necessitated an ongoing negotiation within the Islamic tradition, American culture, and the American landscape. Plant cultivation and the institution of the farm have served multiple roles within the community and among various members.

Before coming to the United States, Bawa earned a reputation as spiritual leader and healer in Sri Lanka. When asked about the history of the farm, some of the people who helped establish the farm began with hagiographic stories of Bawa’s life and work

³ Philip, interview by author, August 15, 2009, Coatesville, PA.

⁴ The term sheikh is a title given to a Sufi teacher or master. It is also transliterated shaykh. Members of the Bawa Muhaïyaddeen Fellowship and the Dayemi Tariqat primarily use the spelling sheikh. The Bawa Muhaïyaddeen Fellowship’s pamphlet on visitor protocol says both shaikh and sheikh, so it is possible to find alternative transliterations within one group. Members of the Farm of Peace talk about teachers in their Sufi lineage using the spelling shaykh. However, in their online materials, they and the larger organization, the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center, usually refer to Sidi Muhammad as their guide rather than shaykh. I will use the transliteration sheikh for consistency, except when the other spelling is used in a direct quote. Bawa Muhaïyaddeen Fellowship, Visitor Protocols; Shadhiliyya Sufi Center, “Our Guide,” 2010, http://www.suficenter.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=13&Itemid=4 (accessed January 28, 2011); Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East, “The Sufi Way,” 2011, http://www.suficentereast.org/the-sufi-way (accessed February 1, 2011).
in Sri Lanka to explain how he came to be a teacher in Philadelphia.\textsuperscript{5} Bawa’s early history also demonstrates the importance of farming and healing in his early teaching. Members also told me that Bawa’s experience with farms indicates that he knew how difficult farming could be and how he understood that farming would not appeal to all Fellowship members. The following background comes from my interviews, other scholarly works on the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship, and materials produced by the community, including *The Tree that Fell to the West*, a book published by the Fellowship that contains stories that Bawa told about his life.

Some say Bawa was invited to Northern Sri Lanka around 1899 to combat harmful things like black magic or sorcerers and to teach people who were open to the truth of God.\textsuperscript{6} Others do not speculate about the early years, because there is not really any information. Instead they focus on his life post 1940. Throughout his time in Sri Lanka, there were periods when Bawa “had contact with people and times when he lived in the wilderness in the jungle.”\textsuperscript{7} Prior to the early 1940s, he spent most of his time in the jungle, although there are accounts of his travels.\textsuperscript{8} Little is known about his time in the jungle, but he did use stories about the jungle in his teaching.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item The informants reflected on the hagiographic nature of these stories when they were recounting them to me. Reflecting on the people who asked Bawa to move to Wattala, a city outside of Colombo, he recalled that “this story, of course, you know, Eleanor, every story is a miraculous story, you know. He didn’t know. . . where, he only heard there was a guru, and he went up and he stayed in the hotel and somebody knocks at the door and says I’m here to bring you to the Guru, the Guru told me to get you. You know everything is like that. You heard it a lot. And, it’s just, you know, the way it is and the way that people remember it.”(Umar, interview by the author, October 17, 2009, Philadelphia, PA.)
\item Umar, interview.
\item Ibid.
\item Webb, “Third-wave Sufism,” 91-92.
\end{enumerate}
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According to members of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship, Bawa began teaching around 1940, when he encountered people he promised to teach in Kataragama, a pilgrimage site for Buddhists and Hindus. Kataragama is also an important site for Sri Lankan Muslims, because it is the home of the eternal mythological figure, Hayath Nabi Appa. One of my interviewees explained that these people were supposedly the children who Bawa promised to teach when he turned away people requesting him as their teacher in 1919. After traveling for 40 more days, he met them in Northern Sri Lanka. Other accounts, from people in Sri Lanka, remember him emerging from the jungle and being approached by pilgrims of a local shire, some of who explained that they had encountered Bawa in their dreams or in mystical meetings.

The honorific Bawa means “father.” This title also has other meanings in Sri Lanka. According to Mohamed Mauroof, a former follower of Bawa’s from Sri Lanka, “Bawa’ is used by Sri Lankan Muslims to refer to the original, primordial human being – Adam, the father of mankind.”

The Muhaiyaddeen is a title that has multiple meanings in Sri Lanka. According to Mauroof, “Muhaiyuddeeen [stet] is an object of veneration to many people in South Asia among other things as somebody to appeal to in times of crises.” There is a folk song

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12 Ibid, 33. Mauroof uses the transliteration Muhaiyudddeeen throughout his dissertation. Muhaiyaddeen generally means "reformer or reviver of religion."
about the life and activities of the Muhaiyuddeeen, a figure seen as almost saint-like.\textsuperscript{13} Mauroof explains that Bawa sometimes told stories about his own life, which were similar to those found in the folk song. Sometimes he would tell stories that were not about himself but that were similar to the song.\textsuperscript{14} Bawa also taught “Muhaiyuddeeen as being synonymous with a kind of knowledge potentially present within the human self, i.e. as a human psychic characteristic.”\textsuperscript{15} Bawa annually celebrated the Kutb Muhaiyuddeeen feast in his ashram.\textsuperscript{16}

Most of Bawa’s students during the early years in Sri Lanka were Hindus and Muslims from the Jaffna area. People came to him because of his ability as a medical and spiritual healer. In 1952, Bawa moved to an \textit{ashram} in town.\textsuperscript{17} He also applied to the government to lease land for farming, and

The farm, located south of Jaffna, was the beginning of his teaching example through both service (to the poor – by helping them clear the jungle and teaching them to cultivate the land) and teaching through the metaphors of foundational processes such as ‘farming’: clearing the land (the ‘inner jungle’), planting the seed, nurturing it with water, clearing the weeds that would choke off growth, being vigilant so that the roots can grow deep (the ‘taproot’) to the source of water (divine truth) below, attaining the fruit – all of which became symbols he used for the spiritual life and process of growth within.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{13} Mauroof, “The Culture and Experience of Luminous and Liminal Komunesam,” 33-37.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, 37-38.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 38.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, 48.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, 46.
\textsuperscript{18} Webb, “Third-wave Sufism,” 92.
Bawa would also teach using “fables about the jungle – its inhabitants and their characteristics.”\(^{19}\) According to Mauroof in his dissertation which was published while Bawa was still alive, “Bawa owned and cultivated three ‘farms.’ On one he cultivated rice, on the other vegetables and fruits. The third one has coconut in it.”\(^{20}\) Bawa cleared jungle or waste land to create these farms.

Bawa also used his farm to grow plants that he used when healing people.\(^{21}\) Bawa would also use plants from the jungle.\(^{22}\) People I interviewed remembered that by the time Bawa arrived in the United States, he had two farms that he kept in Sri Lanka. One farm was used to support his *ashram*. The other was used to feed the poor and was located further south in Puliyankulam.\(^{23}\) Community members remember that when Bawa arrived in Philadelphia, his passport listed his profession as agriculturalist.\(^{24}\)

Muslims from Colombo came to Jaffna, met Bawa, and invited him to come teach in a suburb outside of Colombo.\(^{25}\) Starting in the 1950s, Bawa began traveling from the north to the more cosmopolitan areas surrounding Colombo to teach.\(^{26}\) In 1955, he laid the foundation for a mosque north of Jaffna that would be built by his American

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\(^{19}\) Webb, "Third-wave Sufism," 92.


\(^{22}\) Mauroof, “The Culture and Experience of Luminous and Liminal Komunesam,” 44.


\(^{24}\) Umar, interview.

\(^{25}\) Ibid.

\(^{26}\) Umar, interview. Mauroof says that Bawa began visiting a house in a central province in 1962 ("The Culture and Experience of Luminous and Liminal Komunesam," 52).
followers in the 1970s. By 1966, the ashram employed a scribe, a translator, and chauffer full-time.  

Eventually Bawa was asked to move to Colombo. With the permission of his students in the North, he moved in with a family. The husband of the family was a doctor who would go on to earn a grant to study at the University of Pennsylvania. Bawa’s first trip to the United States would be timed with the husband’s stay at the University of Pennsylvania.

Another one of Bawa’s students, Mohamed Mauroof, came from Sri Lanka to the University of Pennsylvania as a graduate student. He helped to spread the word about Bawa and was involved with the Fellowship during the early years. He left the Fellowship as he was writing his dissertation on the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship.

As part of a co-op of “academics and non-academics pursuing different paths of the American counter-culture,” Mauroof met Carolyn Fatima Andrews and began telling her stories about Bawa. Andrews had a vision in 1963 and had been searching for spiritual meaning. Her experience coupled with Mauroof’s stories and encouragement led her to write letters to Bawa asking him to come and teach in America.

A few other people became interested in bringing Bawa to America. To be able to legally sponsor Bawa’s visit to the United States, they had to start an organization,

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28 Umar, interview.
30 Umar, interview; Muhaiyaddeen, The Tree That Fell to the West, xiii-xv; and Mauroof, “The Culture and Experience of Luminous and Liminal Komunesam,” 62-64.
which was the beginning of the Fellowship.\textsuperscript{31} They eventually got the paperwork in order, Bawa agreed to come (he had actually told his followers in the 1940s that he would be going to America), and in October 1971 Bawa arrived in the United States for the first time. Bawa was greeted by 21 people at the airport.

By 1972, there were 150 paying members of the Fellowship, which had primarily grown by word of mouth and publicity drives, such as publishing books.\textsuperscript{32} Often meetings would have as many as 200 people in attendance. The community also developed branches around North America, and Mauroof estimated the population of these branches at 7000 people in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{33} Many of Bawa’s followers were spiritual seekers prior to joining the Fellowship, and some of his early disciples “speak of themselves as belonging to that generation of 1960s ‘spiritual seekers’ in America.”\textsuperscript{34}

The community first held meetings in a house where several of Bawa’s followers lived. As Bawa’s audience increased, the community rented a house in West Philadelphia from a professor on sabbatical. Then they moved to a house across the street. In 1973, they bought the Fellowship House, which is now called Fellowship Hall, in Overbrook.\textsuperscript{35} Bawa and several of his followers from Sri Lanka took up permanent residence in the United States in 1972, although Bawa would still take lengthy trips back

\textsuperscript{31} Legally, Bawa would not be permitted to enter the country without the sponsorship of a “formally constituted legal organization.” Mauroof, “The Culture and Experience of Luminous and Liminal Komunesam,” 65.

\textsuperscript{32} Mauroof, “The Culture and Experience of Luminous and Liminal Komunesam,” 69, 71-72.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, 74.

\textsuperscript{34} Webb, “Tradition and Innovation,” 81.

\textsuperscript{35} Umar, interview.
Bawa also took several American members back to Sri Lanka. He took several members in 1972 and some in 1976-77.

Bawa gradually introduced his followers to Islamic beliefs and practices. One member said that it was five years before Bawa mentioned Islam in his teachings. In fact, "Without exception, the original members of the community maintain that it was Bawa’s ‘love action,’ his capacity to teach ‘what we needed, when we needed to hear it, and how we would be able to hear it,’ that won their affection and commitment."  

Members of the Fellowship provide differing accounts of when particular beliefs or practices were introduced to the community. According to Webb, often members would not recognize the Islamic imagery or ideas being used in Bawa’s teachings. It would not be until later that they would recognized that Bawa was teaching using lessons from the Qur'an, hadith, and specific Sufi sources. Often this was because of the way that Bawa taught. He would gradually introduce the layers of meaning of or ways of doing a particular practice. Sometimes there were some members who knew some Sufi literature already, who were able to pick up on some of the sources of these lessons.

Bawa introduced dhikr between 1972 and 1976. Some members remember Bawa administering shahada, the testimony of faith, in 1972. The community did not perform salat until 1981. Members of the community built a mosque between 1982 and 1984. Further, as Bawa’s following got larger, he used more and more Islamic sources in his teachings.

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38 Ibid.
In America, Bawa continued his work as a healer, and he “grew specific plants for use in healing recipes and salves.” The Fellowship House in Philadelphia had almost an acre of land, and followers used some of it for a garden. Two members in particular led the efforts and helped create a large vegetable garden that consisted of raised beds made of railroad ties.

Some Fellowship members already had experience growing vegetables. One of the people who led the work on the garden at the Fellowship House planted a garden on land owned by a Fellowship member and brought those vegetables to the Fellowship. Some people in the Fellowship would also occasionally go to work on a member’s farm in Northern Maryland.

Bawa was actively involved with the garden. One person remembered that Bawa would “come out and he used to sit there and . . . tell us what to do and show us what to do.” Community members explained that Bawa’s practicality and experience as a farmer influenced the types of plants in the garden. Some reminisced that “he liked utilitarian things better . . . he wasn’t against flowers or any of that, but he was a farmer.” However, he did have them plant vegetables that he liked to eat, such as broccoli, cabbage, carrots, kohlrabi, nokool, tomatoes. They even planted some tropical plants at Bawa’s insistence. Bawa had people plant crops as close as possible.

In my interviews, people stressed Bawa’s spiritual focus, but they also highlighted Bawa’s practicality as well. Bawa’s mission in the United States was to “teach and

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40 Muhammad A., interview.
41 Umar, interview.
42 Ibid.
comfort . . . [his] children." As part of this undertaking, Bawa would fix things and cook, as well as talk to people as they had questions. Many people fondly recalled how Bawa taught them to cook and introduced them to leafy green vegetables.

Often the problems Bawa would fix were practical. For example, the garden at the Fellowship House was limited in size, because Bawa used some of the land for a long driveway and parking lot. He did this, because people had been breaking into or slashing the tires of Fellowship members’ cars that were parked along the street. People stopped gardening at the Fellowship House in the early 1980s, when the community built a mosque on the land that had formerly housed the garden.

In 1976 and 1977, some members of the community went with Bawa to Sri Lanka and worked on one of his farms. According to “Communism and Komunesam,” a text recorded from Bawa’s oral teachings and cited in Mauroof’s dissertation, Bawa continued to help farm his land in Sri Lanka, even after moving to the United States. Bawa had cleared 13 acres of forest and would “plow the soil, and till the soil, and plant the seed, and reap the harvest” to grow enough sugar and rice to feed his followers. He estimated that he needed 125 pounds of sugar per month and about 800 measures of rice to provide for everyone.

For some members of the Fellowship, their trip to Sri Lanka was the first time that agriculture was part of community life. They would wake up every morning at 3am to work on the farm, and Bawa taught them that there were many levels of meaning.

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43 Umar, interview.
44 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
associated with agricultural work. While on this trip, there was discussion of getting some land in America. However, the catalyst for the purchase of farm land was the death and funeral of a Fellowship member.

In the late 1970s, after a Fellowship member died, Bawa had the community look for land to use as a cemetery. Bawa told his followers that “we need to collect money, because we have to buy a farm. We have to buy some property, because people are going to need to be buried in the proper way, and it has to be affordable for them.” A member recalls that Bawa “saw how the traditional funerals were done. He said we absolutely have to buy land to create a cemetery.” One Fellowship member remembered that it was the same kind of practical mindset as the decision to create a driveway and parking lot at the Fellowship House.

Some Fellowship members suggested that they look in New Jersey, because they had been part of Jewish farming communities in the Vineland area. Their parents owned farms around Vineland, because their relatives had migrated from Europe to Southern New Jersey to join intentional Jewish agricultural communities. Between 1882 and 1892, individuals and aid societies in Europe and the United States established four Jewish agricultural colonies, the Alliance colony, Carmel colony, Rosenhayn colony, and Woodbine colony, in Southern New Jersey. There were also

47 Umar, interview.
48 Philip, interview.
49 Umar, interview.
50 Leo Shpall, “Jewish Agricultural Colonies in the United States,” Agricultural History 24 no. 3 (July 1950): 120-146.
three other colonies in New Jersey, Montefiore, Riga, and Ziontown, that lasted for a much shorter period of time.\textsuperscript{51}

The Jewish agricultural communities formed in New Jersey were influenced by political events in Russia in the 1880s, which led to persecution of and violence against Jews, as well as anti-Semitic stereotypes that Jews were parasites because they worked as peddlers, merchants, and middlemen.\textsuperscript{52} The Alliance colony, which was the first colony in the area, was formed by the Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society. They selected a location six miles from Vineland in Salem County due to its proximity and ease of access by rail to markets in New York and Philadelphia. Although the other colonies ended earlier, the Alliance colony still existed in the 1930s,\textsuperscript{53} and these communities were “instrumental in involving [Jews] in agricultural pursuits that continued long after the colonies had ceased to exist.”\textsuperscript{54}

Members of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship started searching for land by looking in New Jersey. They looked at one farm that was next to the Salem nuclear plant. The Fellowship members were not in favor of buying land next to a nuclear plant, but Bawa thought it would be great, because the roads would always be clear and well maintained. The reservations of the community members won out, and they did not buy

\textsuperscript{51} Shpall, “Jewish Agricultural Colonies in the United States.” 145.


\textsuperscript{53} Shpall, “Jewish Agricultural Colonies in the United States,” 141-143

\textsuperscript{54} Bartelt, “American Jewish Agricultural Colonies,” 354.
that land. They also looked at other farms, and even brought some dirt from one back
to Bawa, who said it did not smell right. 55

They finally found some land, approximately 50 acres, in the Vineland area. There
would have been eight acres for a cemetery, and plenty of land to divide into building
lots for individual members to buy so that they could build a house. However, after
collecting money, this deal did not work out either. 56

Some Fellowship members believe that it was fortunate that they did not end up in
South Jersey, which they considered south of the Mason-Dixon Line. They told me that
"we were a little too diverse a group for south Jersey with . . . Blacks and Jews . . . and
Sufis and Muslims and whoever else was there. It was just not going to work down
there." 57

Charles Ginty, who lived in Coatesville, became involved in the search for
farmland. Besides residing in Coatesville, he was a builder who knew about properties
in the area. 58 He was the one that found the land that currently belongs to the
Fellowship.

Having become frustrated by the search for land, he was about to go back to
Bawa and tell him that it was too hard. However, he saw a little glimmer of light in the
grass. Looking down, he found a quarter, which had the same date as his birthday. He
took this to be a sign and when he returned to the Fellowship House, Bawa told him that
he had seen the light in the land. Seeing the light in the land was important because

55 Muhammad A., interview.
56 Umar, interview.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
the farm is considered by some Fellowship members to be an outward manifestation of the light inside or as illuminating the light of wisdom.\textsuperscript{59}

In January 1980, the Fellowship started the process of purchasing the land. Part of the process involved securing permission from the local government so that they could bury people according to Islamic practices. It took approximately eight months to get permission to have a cemetery and to bury people without a concrete overbox. According to one Fellowship member, the local government also “said that they were happy that [Fellowship members] were going to be in the neighborhood and that they welcomed us to the neighborhood and that we were going to be a good addition to the community.” This same person noted that “individually people have fear, but the governing body accepted us.”\textsuperscript{60}

Together, the Fellowship and some of its members bought 57 acres. The institution of the Fellowship bought a fourth or a half of an acre of land for a cemetery. The rest of the land was purchased for Fellowship members, who bought parcels of various sizes. Members bought parcels of land so that they could build their own house. There were legal obstacles to this plan, and people eventually had to give up their plots.\textsuperscript{61} However, there are some people still working to make a residential community on the property.\textsuperscript{62}

Almost from the outset, the land was used for more than just a cemetery. Fellowship members became involved in clearing and cultivating the land. The property

\textsuperscript{59} Mark, interview by the author, August 15, 2009, Coatesville, PA; and Umar, interview.

\textsuperscript{60} Umar, interview.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{62} Philip, interview.
became a place to learn from the experience of farming which taught religious lessons, as well as lessons about humility, cooperation, unity, and taking care of the needy and one’s community.

One of the members who was integral in the creation and maintenance of the garden at the Fellowship House remembered that “when the land was bought, it just seemed like a natural thing to become involved, because I was always kind interested in more gardening than farming.” 63 Another member suggested that

man and land have this connection, [and] I think there was an adventuresomeness to it too and in the ideal of living out off the land too. Many of us still had that kind of like string still attached to us too to go up there into the land and live off the land and develop it. So Bawa used a lot of those energies to play into the development of this place. 64

By July, they were able to plant their first crop, which was lima beans that covered no more than an acre. According to person involved with the farm in the first year, who recalled the following while laughing,

we started farming as best we could. We didn’t really have any tools or anything, but we did the best we could. We brought back big bags of lima beans, and then everybody in the Fellowship House, Bawa said shuck those lima beans, and we were all down there. And then when we finished we had a great big bowl of lima beans like this, and Bawa cooked them all up and everybody ate them. 65

They did not buy the land in good condition. 66 The previous owner had used heavy machinery to grow corn and soybeans, so the soil was compacted and overused

63 Muhammad A., interview.
64 Philip, interview.
65 Umar, interview.
66 Sally, interview with the author, August 15, 2009, Coatesville, PA; and Philip, interview.
and great deal of the topsoil had blown away. Some people also remembered, while laughing, that

we would try to plant, we were trying to plant squash and melons and stuff, and you’d dig and by the time you got the rocks out, instead of having a squash mound, you had a hole. And so you’d have to scrabble around to find some dirt make sort of a mound. We put cardboard boxes around to mulch.  

They did use manure to help reclaim the soil. They were also left to the mercy of the woodchucks, because no one who was involved with the actual planting lived in the area.

As people began to farm, they found that they needed structure, so they created a farm committee, around 1980 or 1981. One early committee member remembered, “I don’t think Bawa really said like ok fellows, ladies, let’s get you organized. We went to him and said you know Bawa this is what we would like to do.” They became a group that would “caretake the land. Their directive from Bawa was to take care of the land, to farm it, to maintain the buildings, the grounds, and the gardens.”

There were between 14 and 18 people that had various functions on the farm community. Umar Mycka was the original chairman of the farm committee. Mycka got involved with the farm, when Bawa said that the Fellowship needed to collect money for a cemetery, which was sometime in 1979 or 1980. In addition to the chairman, there was a secretary, a treasurer, people in charge of the landscape, another group

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67 Umar, interview.
68 Sally, interview.
69 Umar, interview.
70 Philip, interview.
71 Muhammad A., interview.
responsible for the gardening, and another for the maintenance of the machines.\footnote{72} A flow chart from the committee identifies the need for two master material controllers (one in Philadelphia and one at the farm), an equipment manager, a safety coordinator, a work group leader, an assistant group leader, a material handler worker, group safety man worker, two workers, a personnel coordinator, two cooking coordinator (one in Philadelphia and one at the farm), a child care person, and an information person. All of these were listed under the overseer (the chairman), who was listed under the executive committee, then Bawa, then God.\footnote{73}

The farm committee and early farmers were mostly left to make their own decisions. However, Bawa was adamant that they should not borrow money to run the farm.\footnote{74} If they ran into a problem that they could not solve, they were to talk to people in the executive committee. If they could not solve the problem, then the farmers could ask Bawa for a solution.\footnote{75} The committee tried to keep three things in mind while doing a project, “one was to work with and propagate Bawa’s teachings. The second one was to work in unity and to do the job. . . And the third was we were trying to make a profit. If we could do those three things in a project, we considered that to be a successful

\footnote{72} Umar, interview.

\footnote{73} Personal collection.

\footnote{74} I asked if this was because of Islam teachings against charging or paying interest, but they told me that “it wasn’t the interest. I think that Bawa didn’t want any of us to get in over our heads.” (Umar, interview).

\footnote{75} Ibid.
The entire Fellowship has been run by committees, and the farm committee was very well run. The farm committee “had kind of monthly meetings, [and] . . . some of the minor institutions of the [Unionville Branch] Fellowship were kind of established.” They held work sessions called vēlai days, which were named using the Tamil word for work. They also came up with different ways to raise funds. They sold food from the farm and had bake sales and car washes. One member told me that “anything legal we did” to raise money. During one of my interviews, two former members of the farm committee reflected jokingly that selling produce from the farm to pilgrims could be a great marketing opportunity. They even imagined that Bawa would support such an endeavor, telling a story of the time that he sold pieces of large pumpkin netting a total of $90 for the entire pumpkin.

These work sessions and fund raisers projects would often involve everyone in the community. Even if they did not members of the farm community remembered that by doing projects, we would energize the whole Fellowship. . . . People would see us working and they wouldn’t necessarily come to do what we were doing, but they would say oh boy, ah I remember I was supposed to do something up on the third floor. Then they would go up and do it. Now everybody’s doing something, let me go do something. So that type of thing would kind of happen.

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76 Umar, interview.

77 A member noted, “one of the things [Bawa] said about us was, he said if all of my committees worked like the farm committee then. . . his work would be a lot less.” (Umar, interview).

78 Muhammad A., interview.

79 Umar, interview.

80 Umar, interview; and Muhammad A., interview.

81 Muhammad A., interview.

82 Umar, interview.
As of 2010, there is still a farm committee and events on the farm for the entire Fellowship. The farm committee only includes one or two of the original members, including Sally Green, who is still on the committee.\(^{83}\) Some of the early members who are no longer on the committee feel that the group has a different focus, because the farm has become primarily a park and a place of pilgrimage.

Written in 1982, a letter from Bawa to Mycka, whose given name is Joey, lays out the “farm work” that needs to be done. The letter identifies Mycka, a horticulturalist by training, as the head of the farm.\(^{84}\) The letter also indicates other ways they hoped or planned to use the land. In the letter, Bawa warned that “according to Pennsylvania laws it would be virtually impossible to have our ablutions house on our property.”\(^{85}\) Therefore, Bawa told them to redirect their money into constructing “God's House.”

He also gave detailed instructions for preparing and using the land. He told them to clear one section of level ground for the cemetery. Once the land was cleared, they were told that they could plant grass. They were also told to plant grass on any area that cannot be cultivated. They were to keep the good timber for planks and to sell the rest of the useable wood as firewood. There was not as much quality timber as there might have been, because while waiting to hear if they would get approval for a cemetery, the owners high timbered the land. Bawa also asked Mycka to put up no trespassing signs, because trespassers were hunting on the farm land.

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\(^{83}\) Muhammad A., interview.


\(^{85}\) Ibid.
Bawa told them to grow a cash crop on usable ground that was not needed immediately for a cemetery. Bawa explained that “it is good for us to cultivate the maximum amount of land. It is not good to do less. We should plant as much as we can.” There was also a farmer leasing some of the land, and the committee used some of his equipment. In the letter, Bawa told Joey to ask all members to contribute money to rent other machinery for ten days to use on the farm.

Bawa also gave instructions for the future of the farm. He suggested buying machinery at government auctions, because the community was going to need machinery to sink wells and plow the land. Written before it was discovered that people could not build individual houses on the land, the letter recommended sinking a well for each house and using the water to build solar energy units. Bawa also suggested constructing a windmill that could be used for heat and electricity. The plans of constructing houses and alternative sources of energy have not been realized on the farm, but there is an attempt to gain permits to build a retirement community, using green building techniques.

From 1980 to 2000, there was a group that would go out and farm on the weekends. One noted, “if you go out now, in the area, like if you’re looking at the mazar, the area to the right were all these landscaping plants are, and this nice grassy area, that was where we had raised beds at one point.” They would drive out to the farm, camp, and work all weekend building and cultivating plants. According to one woman,

86 M. R. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, Letter to Joey Mycka.
87 Ibid.
88 Muhammad A., interview.
these weekends included, “50 hours of killer labor.” Despite all this work, one member called it “a pretty low key operation” in these early years.

They cleared the land and did some vegetable gardening, growing things like mung beans and watermelons. They also grew nursery stock. In fact some of the trees and bushes that are still there were originally intended to be stock plants. They also grew landscape plants, including the ones used around the mazar. They would bring the vegetables to Philadelphia to show to Bawa and to use in communal meals and to sell as a fundraiser. Bawa did also come to the farm to supervise what people were doing on the farm.

They raised money to make improvements to the land. Bawa bought them a tractor, and they or the Fellowship bought the rest of the equipment. Members of the farm committee and Fellowship members built the buildings on the ground.

There was a small group of people that ran a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) for two years, and three people were paid to run it. One farmer remembers, it “was just a two year kind of adventure in farming. And I would have to say it was the best two years of my life. Honestly at the end I was almost dead, but we were just learning.” Community members remembered that the CSA made the farm a vibrant place. People would come to help harvest the food and to cook for the farmers.

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89 Umar, interview; and Muhammad A., interview.

90 Umar, interview.

91 Sally, interview.

92 Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a system where consumers buy shares. The farmer is supposed to provide a certain amount of food per share, however by paying for a share at the beginning of the season or before the season starts, the consumer is assuming along with the farmer the risk of farming. If the crops fail, the consumer will not get their money back.

93 Sally, interview.
During this time, they grew so many vegetables, that a member remembers “there was so much, we sold it after the subscriptions. Then, we sold it to the neighbors, and we brought it down to the Turkish diners. . . We didn’t waste fruit, but we were running around . . . [selling] it.” 94 They sold their produce to diners as far away as New Jersey.95 They ended the CSA because “one couple that was involved had one child and another on the way and it was just not economically feasible at that point.”96 After the CSA closed, then they had a “kind of Fellowship garden [and] then people had their private gardens because they wanted to grow tomatoes and things.”97

People quit farming at different times for various reasons. Some people quit farming when they had to give up their building plots. Others stopped farming because there were changes in their family responsibilities. Some early farmers also mentioned that it was difficult to sustain the farm because the committees running the Fellowship were not supportive.98 There were some who stopped because the difficulty of the workload was damaging their health.99

The letter from Bawa to Mycka also mentions the formation of the group that would become the Unionville Farm Branch of the Fellowship, which another important group involved with the farm. They are a distinct branch of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship in Coatesville. According to the letter, this branch of the Fellowship had not

94 Umar, interview. Sally also mentioned how productive the soil was during those years.
95 Sally, interview.
96 Ibid.
97 Umar, interview.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
been formed yet and would include people who lived three to four miles from the farm. The soon to be members of the Unionville Farm Branch offered to help saying “that if [Umar and the farm committee] plant the crops, this Fellowship will give whatever cultivation help is needed during the week, according to your directions. They are living close to the farm, so if they are asked to help and given the responsibility, they are willing to help.”¹⁰⁰ Bawa told Mycka to delegate work and suggested that Mycka accept help from the Unionville group on weekdays. That way members from Philadelphia would only need to come to the farm on weekends.¹⁰¹

The Unionville Farm Branch was formed in 1982. While visiting Bawa in Sri Lanka in the winter of 1981-1982, some community members suggested to Bawa that they start the branch, because there was a lot to do on the land and more people were coming out to the land. Bawa said that they absolutely should and that was the beginning of a small branch of local people. The Unionville Farm Branch “started very small as a way to get together and actually sort of integrate in the Unionville community back then.”¹⁰² They held “poster meetings to bring people so that they could understand who we were, sort of a bit of outreach. And many people from Philly came and then together it was sort of a funny family, sort of a cohesive group.”¹⁰³

The community in Coatesville has its own identity that is connected to but distinct from that of the community in Philadelphia. One unique aspect is the importance of the farm to their lives. When I visited in December 2009, members of the Unionville Farm Branch

¹⁰¹ Ibid.
¹⁰² Philip, interview.
¹⁰³ Ibid.
Branch was not yet called the Unionville Farm Branch, it was called the Unionville Fellowship Branch. During the meeting I attended, members mentioned petitioning to change the name of the branch to the Unionville Farm Branch, because the farm has been so central to the heart and duty of these community members. As of summer 2009, the branch consisted of approximately 12 families for a total of about 30 to 40 members. In 2010, someone told me that there are approximately 20-22 families living within a 15 mile radius of the farm. There has been more involvement from people in Philadelphia, since Bawa’s passing, because the branch has organized events.

Bawa passed in 1986, and the community built a mazar of Moghul design. It was the first mazar of its kind in the United States, and it was dedicated in 1987. Most members of the Unionville Farm Branch did not move to Coatesville until after Bawa’s bodily death and creation of his mazar. Like the many pilgrims from around the world who come to the holy site, community members were drawn to living near the mazar and grounds. One member of the Unionville branch explained “after [Bawa] passed, a number of us felt, [since] he was buried at the farm, that there was a duty to be close, to care for the cemetery, and to build the mazar that covers his grave, and then just protect the land around that site. We all, I felt very strongly that with his body being there, it became sanctified ground. I felt a very strong personal calling to be there and be a part of the effort to protect the area.”\textsuperscript{104}

There was renewed effort on the farm. The same member remembers “It just, everything moved out from the mazar kind of. The lawns around it were cleared, and then just gradually, [with] the energy we had [and] volunteered time, we just

\textsuperscript{104} Sally, interview.
moving out from that center and doing more and more things. That’s the reason we moved out” there.105

The use of the land also started to change. Some people stopped farming, as the land became more popular as a pilgrimage site. The space has also moved away from farming because of “just the whole evolution of, with the mazar there.”106 Spaces where sheikhs are buried are important within the Sufi tradition. People come to tombs, because some believe “that particular places are affected by the spiritual concentration (himma) of the masters who lived and meditated there.”107 Often “the place of bodily entombment is more closely connected with the spirit than is any other material phenomenon,” therefore, a shrine can increase seeker’s spiritual focus through contact with the material remains of the saint, the place can mediate a patronage relationship between the pilgrim and the saint, and/or shrines can have healing powers.108 For many of these reasons, after Bawa’s passing “pilgrims that come to pay their respects to Bawa [have] increased.”109

Some members have noted that this increase in pilgrimage "has its own sort of difficulties in terms of raising crops, because people from various cultures, one of the things that they want to leave with is some of the barakat or the grace of the sheikh," which is a power or blessing that flows through the person due to his or her closeness

105 Sally, interview.
106 Muhammad A., interview.
107 Ernst, The Shambhala Guide to Sufism, 72
108 Ibid, 73.
109 Muhammad A., interview.
Because of the importance of the physical site where sheikhs are buried, pilgrims began taking food from the gardens, because "they want to take some of that food, they want to take some of those crops back with them." In fact, "People were coming and just kind of stripping the gardens and stuff." One early farmer noted that "It's great, it's a communal thing, it's a community, but as you bring in all these ethnic groups and all their traditions . . . you can get overwhelmed."

Bawa's death also led to a change in leadership of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship. As of 2010, the Fellowship still does not have a sheikh. Bawa did not appoint a successor, and no one has risen from the ranks and been accepted as the next teacher.

The use of the land has changed, since it became Bawa's final resting place. In 2000, the members of the farm committee put land from the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm into the Conservation Resource Environment Program (CREP) run by the state and federal government. The program lasts ten or twelve years and approximately 80 acres are in the CREP program. This is a program that has farmers stop using their land to grow crops and instead pays them to plant grasses and trees to help protect streams and prevent erosion. As part of the program, members of the Fellowship have planted over 800 trees.

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111 Muhammad A., interview.

112 Ibid.

113 Umar, interview. Other members of the fellowship were quick to point out that one of the benefits of being involved with the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship was because they were part of such a diverse group. (Philip, interview; and Sally, interview).
The community joined this program, because it was more lucrative than farming. They also hoped to bring back native species and to help restore the soil quality. The land being used for this project had been rented to a farmer outside of the Fellowship. He was supposed to rotate the crops but did not. He just grew corn, and as a result there was terrible soil erosion, which also affected the area where the trees and grasses are planted. This decision helped shape the farm into what it was when I started visiting in 2008. As one member noted “it’s not like a family farm, now it’s more of a park. It’s more of a destination.”

**Space, Place, and Institutions – the Fellowship and Farm**

This destination, the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm, is an important place for members of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship and the Unionville Farm Branch. It consists of 108 or 109 acres of land, “among the rolling hills and tall trees of Chester County.” It is 40 miles west/southwest from the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship headquarters in Philadelphia, which consists of a main building, the Fellowship Hall, and a mosque built in a Sri Lankan style by Fellowship members. Bawa’s room, especially his bed, is also considered sacred space. To get to the farm requires driving through a rural and agricultural area of rolling hills covered with farm land. Most of the area immediately surrounding the Bawa farm is more developed, covered in single family homes with small yards.

The Fellowship began with 57 acres of land for the farm and acquired more when some other Fellowship people bought acreage. There is a peninsula of land owned by

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114 Umar, interview.

a non-Fellowship member that extends into the Fellowship’s property. There is another approximately 400 acres adjacent to farm that are privately owned by members of the Fellowship. One of the reasons that they bought this land was to prevent development from happening close to the Fellowship Farm. There are also four families that live on a cul-de-sac that runs alongside Fellowship Drive. Some have houses with backyards that abut the Fellowship Farm.

Much of the farm land is sloped, which presents a challenge in terms of maintaining soil quality. However, I was also told that the farm is “right next to Lancaster County there, and Lancaster County is some of the best soil in the whole country. And, we’re like some of the best soil in Chester County, so our conditions are really good.” Remembering the yields during the CSA, one member described the soil as fertile and incredibly productive.

The soil has sustained some damage over the years. As part of joining CREP program, an official from the USDA (United Stated Department of Agriculture) came to the farm to inspect the soil. A member who was there remembers that the official “kind of picked up a handful of soil, and he practically cried because the soil was so depleted. And he said that after ten years in the program we’d be back in really great shape, could really fly. The top soil would be rebuilt.” This program will also return the soil to an organic state.

Coatesville is located in Chester County which has a Moderate Humid Continental climate. However, the area averages 126 days with subfreezing temperatures and 32-

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116 Umar, interview.
117 Sally, interview.
118 Ibid.
36 inches of snow per year, which is 12-16 inches more than the average in Philadelphia. The growing season, which is measured as the freeze free season, lasts on average 171 days. Summer temperatures average between the mid-80s and 60s, and the weather is humid. The annual precipitation for the area is 49 inches per year, and slightly more than half of this falls in the spring and summer. According to one member this was adequate rainfall for farming, plus the Fellowship installed an irrigation system.

The farm includes the mazar (a shrine to mark Bawa’s grave), an Islamic cemetery, a building called the Welcome Center, a covered pavilion for praying near a garden. All of the buildings on the farm property, except for the prayer pavilion, are white and green. The mazar has a simple white stucco room with a green marble floor and a copula. Inside, it is bright and airy with lots of windows. Bawa’s body is in the middle, facing east to Mecca, and his tomb has a covering with beautiful embroidery. The covering is changed occasionally so it does not always look the same. There is a notch in the wall to indicate the direction of Mecca. There are carpets on the floor. There is embroidery on the walls and two sets of low bookshelves. One set contains Qur’ans and the other contains Bawa’s teachings and al-Buhkari’s hadiths. The mazar is set in a garden and flanked by the cemetery. A pamphlet published by the Bawa


121 Umar, interview.
Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship describes the mazar as a place intended for quiet study and reflection.\textsuperscript{122}

In the pamphlet, it is explained that “the flower gardens and grounds surrounding the Mazar are an extension of this peaceful sanctuary and are here for everyone’s enjoyment and quiet contemplation.”\textsuperscript{123} One member told me a story about the connection between the garden and mazar, stating

I remember one day somebody came out to the farm who was extremely emotionally distraught. . . They went in the mazar for a little bit of time and then they came out and just laid down in the garden, you know just right there on the ground, and just let it soak into, just let negative energy be absorbed. I think that we all sense that the natural part of the farm is almost like an outer component of the mazar right around it.\textsuperscript{124}

The garden is called Bawa’s garden and is also intended as a quiet place for talking and reflecting. In the garden, community members do perennial beds and have gotten funding for the project from a donation from a big wedding. One follower told me that some members even find the garden to be their mosque, and he referred to the open area between the flowers as their prayer mat.\textsuperscript{125}

The Welcome Center is located in a building that is also called the farm kitchen. Across the driveway from this building is another building that has ablution rooms.\textsuperscript{126} The Welcome Center has two sections, the kitchen and the gathering room, which are separated by sliding doors. The cooking area is private and the gathering room is used for community and wisdom meetings, as well as to welcome guests. The gathering

\textsuperscript{122} Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship. \textit{Visitor Protocol}.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{124} Sally, interview.
\textsuperscript{125} Mark, interview.
\textsuperscript{126} Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship. \textit{Visitor Protocol}.
The gathering room has Bawa’s books, DVDs, and CDs for sale. On three sides of the gathering room are doors with windows. There is also a television set with a built-in VCR and another VCR mounted from the ceiling in one of the corners of the room. The gathering room also has an electric kettle to make tea.

The farm’s role, significance, and use has changed due to the construction of the mazar. The property has become a place of pilgrimage, and members of the Fellowship consider it a public place, rather than a private farm. The visits by pilgrims also influence the kind of work that Fellowship members do on the farm. The site has a lot of Pakistani Muslim pilgrims, as well as pilgrims from around the United States. Over the summer, the farm will have five or six hundred Gujarati Muslims from New York, New Jersey, Boston, Connecticut, and Canada come to the farm. The influx of visitors has been stretching the systems at the farm. The farm is also the site of several annual celebrations, as well as the maulid ceremony, which honors Bawa’s birth, and the ‘urs ceremony, which commemorates his death. Visitors of any faith are welcome anytime between sunup and sunset.

If the community knows that there are a large number of pilgrims coming, they will put out food and drinks at the welcome center. Even if they are unprepared for guests, they will at least try to offer tea to anyone who comes to the farm. Some members told me that “I don’t think we ever knew that we were going to be spending as much time as we are offering a cup of tea to somebody who comes, rather than going out and being in

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127 Umar, interview.

128 Philip, interview.
the field." On one of my trips to the farm, 60 people from a Qadiryyah order in Sanford, Connecticut were scheduled to visit the farm. Although they postponed their visit by a day, I did get to see the farm prepared for so many pilgrims. All of the doors to the Welcome Center were open, and there were coolers of water and tea and lots of food. Even without the group in attendance, there were some pilgrims walking around the property and visiting Bawa's shrine.

The garden, the land, and the buildings also have an importance because of the work that Fellowship members have put into them. One member noted,

Some people when they see the garden, and they know that we're a volunteer group, and they just look at the love that's put into it. There's a relationship, or they feel that. People who are aware of that section, they go 'oh my, look at all that duty that is here.' We have that all the time when pilgrims come. . . ‘Oh well we just take care of it.’ They just go 'oh ma shâ' Allâh. That is amazing.' So they get it. It's a reaffirmation of faith in God and purpose.130

As part of the CREP program, the community had to plant hundreds of trees. Most of the trees planted were fruit trees, and they call the area with the trees the orchard. It is located past the mazar and all of the other Fellowship buildings on the property and away from Fellowship Drive. It is accessible after walking through a grassy plain and down a hill.

**Practices – Fellowship, Farm, Environmental Practices**

The Bawa Muhaiyadden Fellowship has practices religious practices rooted in the Islamic tradition and in their identity as Bawa's followers. The farm community also has its own religious, agricultural, and conservation practices that take place on the property. Even agricultural practices on the farm can help members come to know God.

129 Philip, interview; and Sally, interview.
130 Philip, interview.
As a member explained, “Bawa’s view of Islam was a way of life . . . a way to act with your fellow human beings. There’s a certain way you act with compassion and love, and that was not like the *shari'at* that that we learned about very slowly . . . which has its points too.”

The Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship “has scheduled daily prayers, classes on the Qur’an, Arabic language, and the Qur’anic recitation, resources for all stages of community life, . . . [and] books and scheduled talks (now on video tape) by their founder, Bawa Muhaiyaddeen.” Bawa aimed to teach his followers to realize “the essential unity that human beings have with God, that only God exists.” Bawa taught his followers orally. Most of his speeches were given in Tamil with some sprinklings of English. Therefore, he had a team of American and Sri Lankan translators who immediately translated much, but not all, of his work. Some of this translating was done as he taught. Many members told me that Bawa used “innumerable stories and analogies and allegories about nature and man, animals and man in order to teach us that.” Another explained the same idea pointing out Bawa’s use of examples concerning agriculture or plants. Bawa also told members that one of the best ways for children to learn about God was through experiences in nature.

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131 Philip, interview.


134 Philip, interview.

135 Umar, interview.

136 Philip, interview.
Bawa taught that “growing a garden was like the four major religions and Sufism.” This lesson explained that the four religions, Hinduism/Buddhism, fire worship, Christianity, and Islam/Judaism all correspond to different stages on a spiritual path. Actions within a garden also correspond to these stages. The first step in a garden is to make the intention to garden and to create a plan. The second step is removing all obstacles to the intention to plant. The third step is the moment of anticipation before the planting. Everything is ready; the spirit of the place is there although it does not exist yet physically. The fourth step is working to cultivate things in the garden. Finally, there is fruit, and this moment is the Sufi part of gardening. The point of cultivation is to produce food and to find and supply that food to the person in need of that taste. This lesson was not only important for explaining the journey and purpose of Sufism, but this lesson was also provided as an example of the motivation for cultivation on the farm. One member explained that agriculture is “a way of life, it’s a livelihood. It’s all those things, but then there’s the human aspect of it, which is really devoid of plants. . . It’s the person’s interaction with the plants.”137

Bawa’s followers, both in Sri Lanka and America, recorded and published some of Bawa’s teachings. Bawa’s Sri Lankan followers published two books in 1972.138 In the United States, Bawa’s followers were intent on recording their master’s teachings, and they have scores of videos and audio recordings. There are recordings of Bawa that are still being translated. Recordings of Bawa, both audio and visual recordings, are an

137 Umar, interview.
important part of rituals for all members of the community, including those who live by
the farm.

They have also used some of these recordings to publish 32 books. During each
of my visits to the farm, the headquarters, and to people’s homes, I was given books. I
was given a general book of Bawa’s teachings, the first book published in the United
States, a children’s book, Bawa’s book on Islam and Peace (one of his most popular
books), and a book of stories that Bawa told about his life. The children’s book is an
interpretation of Bawa’s teachings by one of his followers.

According to one member, Bawa “wanted to share with us what he had learned,
which really was the kalimah, and we were a little hard learning. He backed us up a few
times to where we got to the point where we could try to comprehend it. Backed us up
with you know the silent kalimah and the out loud kalimah and then some recitations of
the dhikr and then five times prayer.”¹³⁹ As of 2009, members identify themselves as
doing various practices in the shari‘at and their Sufi tradition. They do dhikr, which are
rituals for remembering God that vary from one Sufi brotherhood to another. The
community has also embraced other Islamic practices. They do salat, which translates
to mean prayer and is used by some members of the Fellowship as a short-hand for
prayer five times a day, as best they can. They fast during Ramadan and observe all

¹³⁹ Umar, interview. Kalima is defined by the fellowship as “The affirmation of faith – Lā īlāha illallāhu:
There is nothing other than You, O God. Only You are Allah.” (Muhaiyaddeen, The Tree that Fell to the
West, 196).
the ‘ids. Many of the Fellowship members have been on ‘umra or hajj.’\textsuperscript{140} They also hold classes on the Qur’an and Arabic.\textsuperscript{141} 

Most members attempt to pray five times a day, although they say it is difficult to do in America. Prayers are to be practiced according the Hanafi school of law.\textsuperscript{142} There are some members who will do 51 times a day prayer. This type of prayer is considered acceptable, because the five times a day prayer was a 51 times a day prayer before Muhammad went on the mi‘rāj.\textsuperscript{143} 

Another form of prayer that some members practice is inner five times prayer. This is a form of prayer based on the five prayers during the day. Each of these prayers, \textit{fajr}, \textit{duhr}, \textit{‘asr}, \textit{maghrib}, and \textit{‘isha}, which are usually associated with times of day, are associated with different situations in a person’s life.\textsuperscript{144} One member explained to me “if there is a time when there’s emotional upset and really what’s called for is a plan of action not something being uprooted or peacefulness, it’s I need a plan, then that’s the time to do that \textit{fajr} prayer.”\textsuperscript{145} 

The Fellowship’s \textit{dhikr} involves chanting “Lā ilāha ill-Allāh.”\textsuperscript{146} I was told that “it’s a meditation practice, but also almost in tandem with that is a process of self-inquiry. . .
So when you’re doing the *dhikr* is the meditative practice, but behind that is to find out what is . . . your true identity and you pair it. . . So there’s that constant thing throughout your day, it’s almost like it doesn’t end after you sit and do *dhikr.*" Another practice unique to the community is *maulids*, which are recitations to honor important religious figures. Members of the Fellowship offer *maulids* to the Prophet Muhammad, Bawa, and ‘Abdul-Qadir al-Gīlānī. This is a common practice among other Sufi communities.

When asked about how their practices had changed since becoming involved with the fellowship and the farm, some people answered that they were moving to inner practices. One also explained

> we’ve fulfilled the precepts of Islam so we’re working on the left hand. And on the right hand, Bawa said that everything has a lesson, every single thing that happens to you whether in joy or sorrow, everything has a point. . . There’s a contemplative way of learning, where you just observe and you assess . . . the point of it is to gain piece of mind. When you’ve reached that point . . . then there are other things that can happen.

Unionville Farm Branch has its own identity and practices. One of the unique aspects is the importance of the farm in the lives of branch members. In December 2008, members of the Unionville branch were petitioning to change the name of their branch to the Unionville Farm Branch, because the farm has been central in the heart and duty of these community members. People from the Unionville Farm Branch, as well as from the broader Fellowship come for some of the regular practices, such as the

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147 Sally, interview.

148 Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship, *What is the Fellowship?*

149 Muhammad A., interview.

150 Philip, interview.
dhikr. Some come to participate in “community ‘work days’ and ‘zikr days,’ where children have a summer camp.”¹⁵¹

There is a daily dhikr in the mazar at 4:30am every morning. They also have Sunday morning Wisdom Meetings. During Sunday morning Wisdom Meetings at the farm, the worship begins with a recitation of the Fatiha (the Opening), which is the first verse of the Qur’an. At the Wisdom Meeting that I attended, community members sang it while resting the back of their hand on their thighs, and at the end they then touched their faces. Next, community members read out loud from Bawa’s book on God and Psychology. The particular lessons used the example of a car mechanic.

During the Sunday Wisdom Meeting, which was not held in a mosque, did not involve traditional prayers, and was not performed during one of the five prayer times, all women covered their hair for the portions that involved the recitation of the Qur’an and teachings from Bawa, whether from a book, audio recording, or video. As a visitor, I also covered my hair for these parts of the meeting. After these portions of the meeting, people discussed business pertaining to the Fellowship branch, and some but not all of the women covered their hair. Some wore traditional scarves and others wore bandanas. I had forgotten to bring a scarf with me on one of my visits to the farm, and a woman loaned me one so that I could visit inside the mazar. A pamphlet containing protocol for people visiting the mazar only states that "all visitors should be modestly dressed."¹⁵²

¹⁵² Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship. Visitor Protocol.
After the reading, we watched a movie of Bawa teaching in Philadelphia. Bawa was sitting in a bed propped up by something that was covered with green fabric. On the video, community members were sitting with their heads covered listening to Bawa’s teaching. There was a woman who spoke over Bawa, translating his lessons as he taught them in Tamil.

The worship concluded with a CD recording of Bawa. There was a song in a foreign language with breaks in it, and during these pauses, the previous part of the song was translated into English. The CD began to skip, so the worship was concluded early. These meetings are either held outside in the prayer pavilion or inside in the farm kitchen, depending on the weather. One of my visits to the farm was during a school break, and there were children at the Wisdom meeting.

Muhammad Abdullah Lowe is the caretaker of the farm. He took this position around 1986. He is responsible for maintaining the cemetery and the mazar and doing a little gardening. He also fulfills the role of the imam at the farm. As one member explained

[Lowe] is really the imam out at the farm. Although he doesn’t accept the title and he wouldn’t say it, and really if the Fellowship people asked you who was the imam at the farm they would say there isn’t one, but really there is one and it’s Muhammad Abdullah. And he maintains Bawa’s five times prayer and the sunni hanifa school. When Muhammad Abdullah does the call to prayer, then they all line up behind him. And of course, if they don’t want to line up behind him, they don’t have to, but if they line up behind him, they’re going to do the prayer the way that we do it because otherwise it’s going to be chaos, and he has the respect of that.

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153 Muhammad A., interview.
154 Umar, interview.
The Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship has published a pamphlet that provides some information on the Fellowship and on the Fellowship Property. It also lays out general guidelines for visitors and specific guidelines for the mazar, cemetery, and property. Generally, visitors are to be quiet and respectful of other guests and modestly dressed. These rules are also repeated in the mazar protocol. No food or drink is allowed in the mazar or cemetery. They also ban musical instruments, sound systems, oil, perfumes, incense, food, and drink in the mazar, and they ask that people silence their cell phones when in the mazar. Women in menses are asked not to enter the mazar and cemetery. Small children and pregnant women are also told not to enter the cemetery. In the mazar and on the property, if visitors have brought children to the mazar, they need to supervise their children and to hold them to the same guidelines.\footnote{Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship. \textit{Visitor Protocol}.} Visitors are not allowed to plant flowers or plants on the graves.

As for the property, guests are prohibited from camping on the property. Guests are also forbidden to bring meat and fish on the property, because the Fellowship was instructed to follow a vegetarian diet. This request is also repeated on the farm’s website.\footnote{Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm, “Notes about the Farm,” \url{http://www.bawafarm.org/notes.htm} (accessed February 13, 2011).} Visitors are also reminded not to pick flowers or vegetables from any of the gardens. They are also asked to “be conservative in water use” and to clean up after themselves. Groups of twenty or more are to contact the Mosque Secretary before they visit, and people can be asked to leave if they do not follow the protocol.\footnote{Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship. \textit{Visitor Protocol}.}
The pamphlet for visitors mentions the dietary practices of the Fellowship. The practice surrounding food and eating has been important for many Fellowship members. Bawa had his followers eat a vegetarian diet, and most members continue this practice. However, sometimes they make exceptions when traveling, and one person told me about an exception that he made when invited to someone’s home while on ‘umra.

Bawa gave several reasons why people should be vegetarians. He explained that there was no meat in the United States slaughtered according to religious rules called dhabh rules. These guidelines include practices that prevent stress hormones from entering the animal when it is killed. Some members took Bawa’s words as a warning “about [the] practical aspect of not eating meat, plus all the chemicals, the hormones, and all those things, [even though] he didn’t mention all that.” He also explained that each animal has spiritual qualities and eating those animals will undermine a person’s spiritual neutrality.

Those community members who have been involved with the farm have tried a variety of agricultural practices throughout the history of the property. They started out gardening and growing vegetables. Next, they created a CSA and rented out some of the land to a local farmer. In 2000, they enrolled in a government project to help restore the land and local wildlife. Currently, they are engaged in practices to maintain the CREP land and Bawa’s garden, as well as to lay the foundation for the future of the farm.

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158 Philip, interview.
159 Ibid. This idea was also repeated when I spoke informally with people at the headquarters.
Each community member has a different role on the farm. One does the irrigation and mechanical work, another mows. Community members explained to me that a farmer is a businessman, a botanist, mechanic, laborer, engineer, and a scientist, because of all the different things that need to be done to keep a farm going. None of the people involved with the farm have formal training in farming. One member attempted to go to school in agriculture but had not completed the proper prerequisites.¹⁶⁰ There is a community member who owns a farm, but he has not been heavily involved with the Fellowship Farm.¹⁶¹

Without training, they have learned how to farm through research and trial and error. Some member identified Sally Green as an excellent researcher. She usually uses books to come up with a plan. The community also belongs to the Pennsylvania Association of Sustainable Agriculture (PASA), which holds classes, workshops, and field days.

Some members noted that sometimes there is a disconnection in the execution. Part of the difficulty is that no one makes their living from the farm, so all the labor is volunteered and everyone farms in addition to their full-time jobs. When asked when they find the time to maintain the farm, they explained that they used every spare minute that they have.

In fact, most everything is donated or money is raised through a fundraiser. As one person explained,

all the work done at the farm, all the maintenance, and oversight that’s donated time. All the labor, if you want to call it that, is donated. Ninety-five

¹⁶⁰ Umar, interview; and Muhammad A., interview.

¹⁶¹ Philip, interview; and Sally, interview.
percent of it, I mean we have to have people come and service the tractors and backhoes and things like that. The rest comes from donations, people donate. They donate the money for the rest of it, and it comes from a large cross-section. There are wealthy people in the Fellowship who give. There are the pilgrims who come with great devotion.162

They are able to donate because there are different donation boxes around the farm. There is one for the mazar, one for food, and one for the future mosque.163

The farm committee makes a plan for the work on the farm, but they try to encourage everyone to get involved. This even includes getting children involved with and exposed to the farm. I was also told that “especially during the summer, moms and parents will organize camps or a special day so a lot of kids are exposed to different aspects of gardening and farming and things like that.”164

Led by two women, the community began planting native crops in 2002 and has been focused on planting native plants of the area, such as pines and birches. The women instituted this change when the normal amount of trees failed to take after their first planting. Having observed decreased populations of some species, they hope that planting native species will attract pheasants and indigo buntings, as well as other animal and insect species.

The community also planted switch grass and cold/warm grasses as part of the conservation program. They have had trouble growing the grasses, because they need to be precise about when they cut the grasses every year. If they cut the grasses too early, the seeds are not ready to fall into the ground. If they are too late, the seeds are no longer ready. They are having trouble, because people work on the farm as

162 Philip, interview.
163 Ibid.
164 Sally, interview.
volunteers and most people had full time jobs. Also, the people who know how to do things and the ones that carry out actions are not always the same people. A member told me that one woman knows a lot about the grasses and their biology but that it was one of the men who actually mowed the grasses.

In 2009, they also grew persimmons, asparagus, raspberries, zucchini, squash, and a field of potatoes. To maintain these plants, they do a tremendous amount of weeding, protect them from deer, and prune. They also grow them with as little pesticides as possible.¹⁶⁵

The current farm committee is also trying to establish a foundation that they can use for future development, such as larger scale farming, alternative energy systems, and additional buildings. They are also figuring out where and when it is best to do these activities. They explained that the spiritual side of their actions on the farm was doing everything with patience and perseverance.

One member explained that “the land was always secondary to Bawa. The primary thing was learning on the path, to discover who you were, who God was, where we came from, where we’re going, what’s our relationship with God.”¹⁶⁶ He also explained, “he always felt that from everything you can learn and I think that he also saw that from working at the farm whatever we endeavor we had out there, we’re going to learn from it either learn how to get together or learn how to grow a good tomato.”¹⁶⁷

Another person in the interview added that Bawa “said that there is nothing more noble

¹⁶⁵ Sally, interview.
¹⁶⁶ Philip, interview.
¹⁶⁷ Ibid.
than the sweat of a man’s brow falling on the earth, so the actual physical intention and growing food, he always supported that.”

**Future Plans**

In all of my interviews there was a focus on the future for the farm, in part because the conservation program was ending soon and because the use of the land changed after Bawa’s death. The land was bought to be a cemetery, used as a place for agriculture, but has gained importance as a religious space since Bawa’s passing. Some hope that the property will once again be used for farming, while others are making plans to help achieve that goal. There are also plans to build on the land, including a large mosque and a small village. There are tensions over these future plans, especially the nature of the mosque.

In some of my interviews, there was some reflection on the possibility that “later on, there’ll be more interest and maybe the administration in the Fellowship changes and then it becomes more of an agricultural thing. It’s great soil, there’s no reason they couldn’t. It’s just that there’s not the will to do it at this point.” Member of the farm committee have been trying to get the next generation participating in the planning, so that the next generation feel a sense of ownership and want to get involve with the farm. They are also planning to build a barn, a maintenance garage, and outbuildings in the fields to help make it easier to cultivate the land, and there is talk of getting the farm organically certified when the CREP program is over.

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168 Sally, interview.

169 Umar, interview.
The Unionville Farm Branch has been “seeking permits to build the mosque and Fellowship buildings and there’s most likely going to be around 43 homes in an old village style up on the hill side.”¹⁷⁰ Some see the village project as a continuation of the original plan for the land, where Fellowship members had bought plots to build homes. By pursuing green building practices and other things like storm water management, they are trying to create a “sort of self-sustaining community.”¹⁷¹ There has been debate and tension over the future plans, as some believe that the proposed mosque and related buildings go against the purpose and meaning of the property and Bawa’s teachings.

**Community**

The property has enabled people involved with the Unionville Farm Branch or the farm to connect with people in other communities, whether the broader community of Bawa’s followers, other Muslims, and non-Muslims. This has happened through events and activities involving the farm and the mazar. The practice of farming has especially helped them to integrate with their neighbors, who are primarily non-Muslim.

The Unionville Farm Branch is not the only branch of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship that is found outside of Philadelphia. The Fellowship also has chapters in Boston, Des Moines, Detroit, Toronto, New York City, and Washington DC, which hold weekly meetings. Monthly meetings are held in Berkley, Sacramento, Madison, London, and Colombo, Sir Lanka. Members of the Unionville branch are connected to these other communities virtually through the internet. The Fellowship maintains a

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¹⁷⁰ Philip, interview.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.
website, but the farm also has its own website that is linked to the Fellowship’s website. Community members who live by the farm also get to meet some of these people through the practice of pilgrimage.

One member of the Unionville branch explained that "since most of us were Americans or Canadians, non-Muslims, we were not born Muslims, we had a very slow introduction into . . . other Muslims and their views of Islam."\(^1\) In the early days of the Fellowship, Fellowship members met Muslims when they came to visit Bawa, and they also met other Muslims if they went on *hajj* or *‘umra*. Now that Bawa has passed, some Muslims come to the farm on pilgrimage. There are also some members of the "Fellowship who go out publically speaking and go to different gathering of Muslims."\(^2\)

The broader communities surrounding the Unionville Farm Branch and the Fellowship headquarters in Center County and Philadelphia are primarily Christian or unaffiliated with a religious tradition, making members of the Fellowship a religious minority in the area. In 2000, Chester County had a population of about 433,500.\(^3\)

Adding together the members claimed by Evangelical Protestant, Mainline Protestant, Orthodox, and Catholic groups, there were 221,846 Christians in Chester County. Catholic organizations claimed the largest number of members (140,577) of any religious group, and mainline Protestant organizations claimed 66,961 adherents.

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\(^1\) Philip, interview.

\(^2\) Ibid.

There were 192,701 people who were unclaimed by any religious body. This research placed the Muslim estimate at 5,823 adherents among four congregations.\footnote{This data excludes historically African American denominations (Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies, \textit{Religious Congregations and Membership in the United States, 2000}, http://www.theARDA.com (accessed February 13, 2011)).}


Bawa stressed the importance of relationships with one’s neighbors, and as a result, Fellowship members made sure to meet the people whose land bordered the farm.\footnote{Muhammad A., interview.} They also made connections through agricultural equipment. For example, as one member remembers, “when we put the irrigation system in from the stream, we talked to the neighbor and said would you like us to put an irrigation outlet near your home... we ended up doing things like that. We tried, we didn’t always succeed, but we tried.”\footnote{Umar, interview.}

Those who have been involved with the farm more recently have found that they have made connections through agricultural practices. One member explained that
“we’re organic farmers, so I think that’s been a major kind of connectivity. We joined the Pennsylvania Association of Sustainable Agriculture, so I went to a conference and just meeting people in the area all trying to do the same thing.”\(^{180}\) Another person mentioned the connections that are made as the Fellowship enters into business with people, such as the mulch suppliers. He explained “there’s an honesty, there’s paying your bills, there’s delivering the byproducts.”\(^{181}\) The Fellowship conducts business as the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship.

There are some people, who believe that the community is currently having some problems with the surrounding community in Coatesville. Some members of the community think that they have had trouble securing permits to construct their retirement village because people in town are skeptical of a group of Muslims.

**Conclusion**

Each community, the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship, the Dayemi Tariqat, and the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East, has a particular history and inhabits a specific place within the American religious landscape and broader Muslim community. With the longest history in the United States, the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship is better established and known within the American religious landscape and American Muslim community. However, the Fellowship has some distinctive characteristics, beliefs, and practices, as compared to other Sufi orders, in part because of Bawa’s unconventional lineage. Most members involved with the farm at varying points in its history explain

\(^{180}\) Sally, interview.

\(^{181}\) Philip, interview.
that the primary purpose of the farm was to cultivate Bawa’s teachings and to learn from working together.

Farming, metaphorically as well as literally, and the institution of the farm have been part of the fabric of this community and experience of some members of the community. Some have been drawn to the farm because it provided the opportunity to work with others or the land. Others became involved because the land became connected with Bawa and Bawa’s spirit, once he was put to rest there. However, people involved with the farm provided additional ideas about the value and purpose of the place. Some spoke of a duty to Bawa. Many reflected on the benefits of working as a community and having a place and project where a person could connect more deeply to the tradition and find their vocation in life. Others spoke about the lessons from nature and working as a community. Their reflections on the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm allude to subtle connections between spiritual and worldly dimensions of the community and the farm, as well as some tensions between these aspects.

Members of the Fellowship Farm have valued farming and the farms in different ways and have seen different purposes to the work. Some spoke of the metaphorical value of farming and how it provided lessons. It could illustrate spiritual lessons, force people to learn to work together, and be a place to embody Bawa’s teachings and practices.

Religious and environmental beliefs are manifest on the farm, often through the choices of how to use or treat the land. Farms enable these Muslims to have particular kinds of experiences or engage in particular practices, such as cultivation and conservation, that influence religious ideas about the environment. Members involved with the Fellowship Farm have developed ideas about the Prophet, conservation, and
an institution called hima. These beliefs from experience do not always agree with those that have been taught within their religious communities. These particular beliefs and practices are discussed in length in Chapters six and seven.

The practices on the farm have shifted over time due to changing needs of the community, as well as new religious and environmental ideas and practices. Many of the people who were actively involved with farming the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Farm have quit, as it became too difficult to balance maintaining a farm with a fulltime job and family obligations. As people became older, they often found they no longer had the time for the farm. There is a hope among some members of the farm committee that the younger generation will take over the farm. The farm committee has shifted their practices as they have developed new ideas about the environment and the meaning of the land. The community has worked to establish systems of self-governance and have particular practices that take place on the farm.
CHAPTER 4
THE DAYEMI TARIQAT AND THE DAYEMPUR FARM

By the end of my first day with the Dayemi Tariqat in Anna and Carbondale, Illinois, several members were asking me to consider retrieving my mom from the hotel in Kentucky where we were staying so we could spend the night with one of them. Having arrived for the first time at the Dayempur Farm only ten or so hours earlier, I had conducted some interviews, gone for lunch with people at the farm, toured the farm, scheduled more interviews, driven a community member from the farm to her home, attended the community’s worship service in Carbondale, explained myself and my work to everyone present at worship, had dinner with the community, and was offered several places to stay that night. It seemed what community members had told me was true, I could always find hospitality among the members of the Dayemi Tariqat.

My second day with members of the Dayemi Tariqat demonstrated the centrality of the community in these people’s lives and in the operation of the farm. My experience was apt given the fact that the Dayempur Farm is one of the institutions of the Sufi group the Dayemi Tariqat. The Dayemi Tariqat is part of a larger Sufi community, the Dayera Sharif, which began 1,400 years ago in an area that is now part of Bangladesh. Members of the Dayemi Tariqat follow the teachings of an American sheikh, Sheikh Din Muhammad Abdullah al-Dayemi, whom they often call Murshid, which is a title that means "respected guide."¹

The Dayemi Tariqat is an intentional community built on a desire to achieve God realization. Under Murshid’s leadership and direction, members have been creating a

¹ Dayemi Tariqat, Dayemi Tariqat: Our Path and Practices, 2008. Most community members just used this title to refer to their sheikh.
religious community, which they hope will be “a working educational model in which spiritual, environmental, social, economic and political realms are addressed in order to awaken spiritual consciousness in all areas of our lives.”

The farm has been foundational in creating an intentional community based on religious beliefs and practices that provides a vision for all of society and an alternative to current economic and agricultural systems. For members, the farm has played many roles. It is a place where people meet to serve, worship, learn, socialize, and progress in their awareness of God. It is one of the places where community members work to extend their understanding of religious practice. Through agriculture and other projects on the farm, members of the farm committee have made connections with groups of non-Muslims interested in similar practices.

Although Murshid lives on the farm, when I visited the Dayemi Tariqat he was away for five weeks in Bangladesh and Germany. The following history comes from my interviews with Murshid’s followers, including people who were with him before he became a Sufi sheikh, as well as literature produced by the Dayemi Tariqat. The central office was kind enough to include me on the mailing list for Divine Remembrance, a magazine published by the community. Its cover describes the publication as “the Journal of the Dayemi Tariqat.”

I begin my analysis where my interviewees began when asked about the history of the Dayempur Farm with the history of the community’s Sufi lineage, Murshid’s story, and the history of the Dayemi Tariqat and Dayempur Farm. I will also describe the

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institutions of the larger community and the farm, religious and agricultural practices, future plans for the farm, and relationships that members of the Dayemi Tariqat have developed through their religious community to other Muslim and non-Muslim groups.

**History**

To get to the farm in Anna, Illinois, I drove from Paducah, Kentucky northwest into rural southern Illinois. I passed expansive lots of farmland, rolling hills, houses with large lots, and hay bales. The exit for the farm was more built up with car dealerships, a Mexican restaurant, a Wal-mart, and a chain hotel. Down a tree lined state road, I found the farm in an area surrounded by other farms and when I first entered the farm, I passed the sheikh’s house.

The story of the Dayempur Farm is also best told by beginning with the figure of Sheikh Din Muhammad Abdullah al-Dayemi. His early experiences and training with two teachers in two different religious traditions has influenced the development of the Dayemi Tariqat as well as the role and characteristics of the farm in the community. He provides a connection to a larger Sufi group, the Dayera Sharif, a lineage that began in Bangladesh and that traces its lineage to the Prophet Muhammad. He has also been instrumental in developing and directing the Dayempur Farm and the other community institutions and activities that are part of the Dayemi Tariqat.

Murshid’s story begins with a prediction made 300 or 400 years ago by Shah Sufi Sayed Muhammad Dayem, a Sufi sheikh in Bangladesh who is part of the Dareya Sharif lineage and the namesake of the Dayemi Tariqat. Muhammad Dayem predicted

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that “the lineage would be taken outside of the family in the seventh generation and then spread to the rest of the world.” It is thought that this prophesy was about Murshid and the Dayemi Tariqat.

Publications from the Dayemi Tariqat explain that Murshid began his spiritual training “with a Jewish upbringing of religious and Hebrew schooling that instilled in him a strong responsibility for social actions.” At the age of sixteen, Murshid started following the teachings of Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar, who is also called Baba Anandamurti or Shrii Shrii Anandamurti, joining an organization called Ananda Marga. This is a religious movement based on tantric yoga, which was founded by Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar in Bihar in the 1950s. Murshid studied and lived the teachings of Baba Anandamurti for twenty years until Baba Anandamurti’s death in 1990. He was also trained as a monk in this tradition. Chuck Paprocki, the current manager of the Dayempur Farm and member of the Dayemi Tariqat, also followed Baba Anandamurti and worked with Murshid to realize Baba Anandamurti’s teachings before Murshid became trained as a sheikh.

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4 Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.


6 “Welcome to the Dayemi Tariqat,” 3; Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.


8 “Welcome to the Dayemi Tariqat,” 3.

9 Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.

10 Ibid.
Murshid’s prior religious training, including his yogic training under Baba Anandamurti, is openly embraced by the Dayemi Tariqat and Dareya Sharif. It is considered an integral part of Murshid’s training, even though the Dayemi Tariqat identifies itself as an Islamic group. An opening section called “Welcome to the Dayemi Tariqat,” which is found at the beginning of issues of *Divine Remembrance*, states that while our path and practice reflect a particular spiritual form and legacy, that of Islamic Sufism, we respect the divinely, right-guided teachings of all the Prophets of God. These are the very same teachings that have appeared in many forms and are the essence of the great spiritual traditions of the world.\[^{11}\]

At the top of this article, underneath the title are three pictures. One is Hadrat Shah Sufi Sayyid Dayemullah, Murshid’s Sufi teacher. One is a picture of Murshid, and the final picture is Baba Anandamurti, Murshid’s yogic teacher. Murshid’s teachers from both traditions are equally accepted.\[^{12}\]

Other publications by the Dayemi Tariqat also embrace and explain Baba Anandamurti’s ideas about development. Most issues of Divine Remembrance included articles about Baba Anandamurti’s teachings. Many of these articles can be found on a website run by one of the community members, which includes articles from as early as 2002.\[^{13}\]

\[^{11}\] “Welcome to the Dayemi Tariqat,” 2.

\[^{12}\] Ibid.

Specifically, Baba Anandamurti’s social philosophy has been highly influential in the development of the Dayempur Farm and the other social enterprises of the Dayemi Tariqat. Baba Anandamurti taught PROgressive Utilization Theory (PROUT). This theory taught that progress can only be achieved with spiritual intention. A follower described Baba Anandamurti as teaching “a very comprehensive philosophy that dealt with all of the different arts and sciences.”

Providing for people’s material needs was important to Baba Anandamurti’s theory of development. Baba Anandamurti identified five basic material requirements for life, which he called birthrights. These requirements are “food, clothing, shelter, healthcare, and education.” Murshid added a sixth birthright, which he called security and defined as “an environment free of fear.” According to Baba Anandamurti and Murshid, people need these things in order to survive and to thrive as human beings, because “true spiritual practice is impossible until the basic needs are met.”

Part of Baba Anandamurti’s teachings sought to repair broken economic systems. Paprocki explained that Baba Anandamurti’s


14 Chuck, interview, and Wayne; interview.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
Idea was that in order to revitalize the economy, globally, but at that time it was basically for third world countries, you revitalize agriculture. He set up farms throughout India that he started with a farmer, a nurse, and a teacher. Three people would go in and create a base and then they would start doing service to the communities, the villages around them.\textsuperscript{18} These bases would be developed into “master units” that would include various components, such as people to distribute seeds, people to teach agriculture, a baker, an orphanage, and they would “stabilize these rural areas and help them develop.”\textsuperscript{19} Baba Anandamurti also taught yoga and spirituality, as well as his social philosophy.

Intently studying Baba Anandamurti’s teachings about development in the 1970s led Murshid and Paprocki to start social projects in Carbondale, Illinois. They organized and ran a halfway house for teenage girls, a food coop, a solar energy business, a prison project, a technology library, and a place of worship. They even secured some government funding for some of their projects, which they lost in the 1980s.\textsuperscript{20}

In 1980, Murshid and Paprocki moved to New York City, creating a business driven by Baba Anandamurti’s philosophy that consulted on third world development projects.\textsuperscript{21} Murshid and Paprocki worked through the United Nations, which allowed them to meet people from all over the world and to learn “even more fully how . . . the economy is structured and who’s doing what and what the banks are doing.”\textsuperscript{22} It was through this work that Murshid was identified as a Sufi teacher.

\textsuperscript{18} Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid

\textsuperscript{20} Paprocki, “The Beginnings of Progressive Development.”

\textsuperscript{21} Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
Paprocki explained that there was a “kind of magical beginning” to Murshid’s role as a sheikh and the Dayemi Tariqat.23 By 1990, Baba Anandamurti died and then a “Sufi master called [Murshid] to Bangladesh.”24 Through their work at the United Nations, Murshid and Paprocki met Alam, a representative from the Dayera Sharif. About a week after their first meeting, Paprocki remembers that “Alam came to Dean . . . and he said I’ve been looking for you for a couple of years, my master sent me to find you, you’re the one that’s been prophesied in our lineage, you have to come to Bangladesh.”25 Alam explained that the community had been anticipating Murshid for 300 years and that Alam had been looking intently for Murshid for the past two years. According to Paprocki, “Alam told Murshid all of these personal details about his life that nobody could have known.”26

Neither Paprocki nor Murshid knew much about Sufism, besides being familiar with some Sufi art, but they figured that Murshid should go to meet the sheikh to learn more. In the fall of 1991, Murshid went to Bangladesh to meet Hadrat Shah Sufi Sayyid Dayemullah (Sheikh Dayemullah), the Grand Sheikh and Spiritual Director of the Dayera Sharif.27

A Sufi order in Bangladesh, The Dareya Sharif in Bangladesh includes four streams of spiritual lineage – Qaadiriyya Rahimiyya, Qaadiriyya Mun’imiyya, Chishtiyya

23 Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
‘Aliya, and Naqshbandiyya Mujaddadi. Followers of the Dareya Sharif trace the lineage of their teachers back to the Prophet Muhammad, through teachers such as Sufi Muhammad Dayem, Sufi Raushen ‘Ali, Sufi Ahmedullah, and Sufi Loqaytullah. Shah Mari initiated the order. He was a follower of Muhammad Dayem, who heard Muhammad Dayem’s prophecy about the lineage leaving the family. Sheikh Dayemullah was trained by his grandfather Shah Sufi Sayyid Adhmatullah and is also related of Sheikh Dayemullah.

The Dareya Sharif has run many schools, orphanages, and farms in Bangladesh. Paprocki remembers that “when we went to Bangladesh, we saw that Sheikh Dayemullah was doing the same thing” as the development work they were doing following Baba Anandamurti’s teachings. Sheikh Dayemullah also embraced Murshid’s earlier training, explaining that he wanted to continue working on development with Murshid. According to Paprocki, Sheikh Dayemullah elaborated that this work was “a spiritual base, Islam was a form, yoga was a form, but it’s a spiritual core and doing service.”

Not only did Sheikh Dayemullah wish to help Murshid and Paprocki continue their work, Paprocki also recalled that like Baba Anandamurti, Sheikh Dayemullah “was a giant. It was like he was a really live being. So we both recognized it, because we had

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28 Dayemi Tariqat, Dayemi Tariqat.
31 Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.
32 Ibid.
been with a master, a yogic master, and here was another master.”³³ For Murshid and Paprocki, the work and the teaching of the Dayera Sharif seemed to be a continuation of their earlier spiritual work.

After his first trip, Murshid started training in Bangladesh. Murshid would go twice a year for a couple of months at a time. While in Bangladesh, the sheikh would take him many places and introduce him to everyone as his son. Murshid was able to meet many people, because Sheikh Dayemullah “was one of those great lights . . . so everybody knew him.”³⁴ Sheikh Dayemullah also trained Murshid in the Qur’an and the order, including the spiritual practices, its institutions, and Murshid’s role as a sheikh. During these trips, Sheikh Dayemullah would be available to teach Murshid day and night.³⁵ According to Paprocki,

it wasn’t hard for [Murshid] to learn all of this stuff, in terms of the spiritual philosophy, it was the same. So it wasn’t a question of learning all of this stuff or learning how to have a spiritual discipline. He already had it, so it was just a question of translating [it] into this new language and different ceremonies and styles, but the intent and the goal and everything else remained the same.³⁶

A year or two after Murshid first went to Bangladesh to begin his training, Murshid and Paprocki dissolved their business, deciding that Murshid’s role as a sheikh was more important. People had already started to come to meet with Murshid. Murshid

³³ Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.
³⁴ Ibid.
³⁵ Ibid.
³⁶ Ibid.
established Sunday night practices, and he began teaching *salat* and the Qur’an, as well as other things.\(^{37}\)

Sheikh Dayemullah trained Murshid to be his successor in the West and his grandson, Sheikh Faize Mohammad Ahmedullah, to lead the community in Bangladesh.\(^{38}\) However, Sheikh Dayemullah also promised that “his son, Din Muhammad Abdullah [Murshid], would always be there for Faize Baba and the family as their elder and constant supporter.”\(^{39}\) When Sheikh Dayemullah died in January 1995, Murshid “was appointed as the *pir* and successor to Baba Dayemullah upon his death.”\(^{40}\)

In the mid-1990s, Murshid and his early followers decided to move to the country, because they felt that they could not accomplish their goals or do their work in New York City.\(^{41}\) In 1995, they bought land in Anna, Illinois, and Murshid moved with seven people to near-by Carbondale, Illinois.\(^{42}\) Seven people came from New York City, and the eighth person was from the Netherlands by way of Boulder. Carbondale was a coal town, and it also used to have various factories and plants, but they have all moved. The industry in the city is the University of Southern Illinois. Various community

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\(^{38}\) Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.

\(^{39}\) Koenig, “A promise realized,” 11.

\(^{40}\) “Welcome to the Dayemi Tariqat,” 3. The community defines *pir* as “a spiritual master or teacher.” “Remember the world glossary.”

\(^{41}\) Chuck. Interview; and Wayne, interview.

\(^{42}\) “Welcome to the Dayemi Tariqat,” 2.
members complained about the lack of planning and foresight that went into developing Carbondale.

Over the past 13 years, the community has created and run various institutions, including a restaurant, a general store, a preschool, an alternative medicine clinic, a home school cooperative, a park and garden, a community house, and a central office, as well as the Dayempur Farm. Central to all of these projects is God and a concern for being self-sufficient and revitalizing the local community based on resources available in the area. In 1990, the community started an Islamic cemetery on the farmland out of necessity after one of the Sheikh’s relatives died.

Things began and have developed slowly at the farm. Wayne Weiseman remembered being “the only one [at the farm in Anna]. . . the first year. And then little by little people started trickling in and volunteers showed up. And then we hired a couple of people and then things started moving from there.”43 The operations on the farm were small the first year. Weiseman remembers working 18 hours a day to start the cultivation on the farm and to help with other community institutions in Carbondale. The first year of cultivation, the community had a 2000 square foot garden.44

Membership in the community grew as well, spreading throughout the United States, Europe, and Japan.45 There was a group associated with the Dayemi Tariqat that lived in Minnesota and one in Colorado, but everyone ended up moving to Carbondale or to other areas, so these groups do not exist anymore.46 In 2003, the

43 Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.
44 Ibid.
45 “Welcome to the Dayemi Tariqat,” 1.
46 Jamal, Interview by author, August 2, 2009. Anna, IL.
Dayemi Tariqat “opened a Tekke in Dortmund, Germany.”47 This group grew from Murshid’s first trip to Germany in 1997.48 There is also a community in Austin. They meet twice each week and have two other meetings that occur monthly.49 Many members of this group eventually moved to Carbondale, and some members of the community in Carbondale moved to Austin. There is also a group that meets weekly in Folly Beach, South Carolina, and the group in Ibrahimpur, Bangladesh.50 There are students in many other areas too.

Murshid has explained that the community is entering into its third phase. According to an article in Divine Remembrance, “Phase One was the groundbreaking phase. Phase Two was the phase of building community.”51 It was during the second phase that Murshid was scrutinized. The third phase focuses on the community and having the community reflect and fulfill “the Whole of the Vision.”52

**Space, Place, and Institutions**

I began the second day of my visit in Carbondale getting tours of most of the community institutions from various members of the Dayemi Tariqat. Although most community members live thirty minutes away in the town of Carbondale, Illinois, the farm in Anna is considered foundational to the community. All of these institutions are places for members to realize the many parts of the community’s vision. The farm is

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47 “Welcome to the Dayemi Tariqat,” 1. A tekke is a “spiritual center for training.” (“Remember the word glossary.”) It is also the term that they use for the community house in Carbondale.


50 Ibid.


52 Ibid.
foundational because it is a place where the community can provide for itself. Its products are also used in other communal projects. It is also the place for education, for socializing, for religious retreat and practice. Understanding, utilizing, and living with the environment are central to most of these institutions and spaces, as is an alternative economic structure based on local resources.

I spent the evening of my first day at the Dargah Community Center, a building owned by the community and used for worship and community meals. It is the place where the community gathers large groups and holds special events. Other community practices and events are often held in Murshid’s house, which is located on the farm, or in the tekke, the community house. I was given directions to the Dargah Community Center and told to look for a building that looks like an oversized pizza hut with a green roof. The building was unmarked on the outside. Inside, there was a large area with space for praying or for sitting on the floor to listen to talks. There was also a kitchen area, where they prepared communal meals. At the farm, I was told that food was central to the aims of the community. Various community members also stressed the religious benefits of doing things, service or worship, together. The Dargah is important to the community, because it is one of the places they can gather to worship and to eat.

Throughout the rest of the city of Carbondale, the community owns and runs a coffee shop, a general store, a preschool, an alternative medicine clinic, a home school cooperative, a park and garden, and a community house. With all of these businesses,  

53 Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.

54 The community describes satsang as a gathering of spiritual company. It is a word that comes from Sanskrit. (Dayemi Tariqat, Dayemi Tariqat).
the Dayemi Tariqat employs 40 people in the Carbondale community, both Muslim and non-Muslim. Many of these institutions use produce from the farm. The Dayemi Tariqat also has a central office, which includes an office manager, a director of publications, a property manager, and someone to do audiovisual. Members employed in this office are responsible for publications, recording events, and other similar tasks.

The Longbranch Coffeehouse, the Town Square Market, and the Dayemi Health Center are all on the same street and use some products from the farm. The Longbranch Coffeehouse uses various kinds of mint from the farm. They also buy other local products that are grown sustainably.\(^{55}\) The general store will sell some of the leftover produce from the farm, but it primarily stocks other local, organic, and health food items, as well as premade food from the Longbranch Coffeehouse.

The Dayemi Health Center began in the early 2000s, because Murshid envisioned having an alternative health system where community members could provide for their own well-being.\(^{56}\) The farm committee is also growing herbal medicines to provide for member’s health. During my visit, I was given information on six people, five women and one man, who worked in the center. The center offers massage therapy, acupuncture, and Rolfing, “a deep tissues, structural bodywork that focuses on releasing . . . the tissue that runs continuously throughout the body,” by licensed practitioners.\(^{57}\) The center also offers a series of different classes, “Energy First Aid Training,” Feng Shui lessons, “Sustainable Living Coaching,” that fall under the category, “Environmental Harmonies.” The purpose of these courses “is to help others


\(^{56}\) Jamal, interview.

\(^{57}\) Dayemi Tariqat, *Dayemi Health Center: Personal, Spiritual and Environmental Health and Well-Being*. 
help themselves and the planet through improved well-being, saving money on basic
necessities, creating a more peaceful living environment and finding deeper awareness
of one’s impact on the Earth.”

The preschool, the Dayemi Parent/Child Collective, is also on the same street as
these other community institutions. It is for children aged two to six and enrolls 18
children per day. It became a permanent project around 2006. People from outside
the religious community asked if they could send their kids to the preschool, so it
contained a mix of Dayemi Tariqat kids and those from the greater Carbondale
community.

On the grounds of the school there is a garden, and a flier advertising the
collective highlights the fact that the daily program for children includes year-round
gardening. Weiseman, his wife, and Tria, a teacher, created the garden. They first
broke up the pavement. Then they restored the soil by planting white clover. Now it is
a full-fledged garden. The students play in it, take care of it, and eat the produce grown
in the garden. Parents also help with the maintenance. The families of each student
are expected to contribute to the collective, and they can do so by helping to maintain
the garden and yard outside of the school. When I visited, we ate tomatoes and
cucumbers from the garden.

There is also a homeschool collective, the Dayemi Homeschool Collective, in a
building where the community previously had a restaurant. The restaurant was not very

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58 Dayemi Tariqat, *Dayemi Health Center: Personal, Spiritual and Environmental Health and Well-Being.*
59 Dayemi Tariqat, *Dayemi Parent/Child Collective.*
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
popular, because they did not serve alcohol. Some of the mothers in the community started the homeschool collective, because their children were too old for the preschool program. Currently, the group is described in a flier as

a group of families who collectively homeschool our children. Together we strive to provide a loving, supportive, respectful environment in which our students may develop to their fullest potential spiritually, intellectually, physically, socially, and emotionally. The foundation of our day is spiritual practice.62

Part of the education in the homeschool collective takes place weekly at the Dayempur Farm. On the farm students learn how to farm, business skills, and survival skills.

The community owns a communal house, which they call the tekke. It is a spiritual and residential center. There are also various religious programs at the tekke, including daily practices that are mandatory for all residents. There are also sometimes communal meals or events at the house. It is considered to be Murshid’s house, even though he does not live there.63

The community owns a park in Carbondale called Sufi Park. The Sufi Park includes a property, a house, and a big garden, as well as various plants, a jungle gym, and a stage. Some areas are open like a park, and in other areas there are beds that people cultivate. Some of the plots are used by the farm committee to experiment with various plants. Others are used by community members, who want a plot. In 2009, there were 15 people using plots in Sufi park. People can also use the park area for events, such as weddings.64

62 Dayemi Tariqat, Dayemi Homeschool Collective.

63 Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.

64 Ibid.
These institutions, as well as the farm, are part of the community’s broader ideas about spiritual fulfillment and economic reform. The community believes that humans cannot fill their spiritual potential until their basic material needs are met. They also believe that the current economic model and agricultural systems are unsustainable. Finally, all of these institutions are places where community members can engage in spiritual practice.

The Dayempur Farm is located approximately 30 minutes away in Anna, Illinois in an area where five ecosystems come together and there is still plenty of pristine forestland. According to climate data from 1971-2000, Anna has an average growing season of approximately six months, although some perennial plants have longer growing seasons. The average annual precipitation is 48 inches, and May is the rainiest month.

Although distant from Carbondale, one member has explained that the farm “represents our Community’s spiritual heart, and it is a place where the whole of our Vision can become manifest.” The community owns 60 acres and had just bought 35 more acres down the road. The farm serves many purposes for the community.

The farm is intended as “a place to live, meet, hold spiritual and social functions and to develop holistic systems for meeting basic needs – food, shelter, clothing, health

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65 A growing season is measured as the number of days between the last time the temperature drops below 32 degrees Fahrenheit in the spring and the first time that it drops below 32 degrees Fahrenheit in the fall. (Jim Angel, “Illinois Growing Season,” http://www.isws.illinois.edu/atmos/statecli/Frost/growing_season.htm (accessed January 28, 2011).


care, education and security.” It is also described as a “development center for sustainable living practices such as low cost, ecological housing; renewable energy; organic and sustainable agriculture; natural health care; community building; and alternative economic strategies under a framework of spiritual and social cooperation.” Muhammad Dayem is the namesake of the Dayemi Tariqat, however Dayemi also means ancient and pur means place, so Dayempur means most ancient of places. Dayempur Farm has also been called “Place of the Eternal.”

The Cash River, which is lined with Cypress trees, runs by the farm, and the community has a trail along the river that comes into the farmland, as well as a system of trails throughout the areas that have been left wild. Only two and a half acres of the land is cultivated, primarily in two gardens – a one acre garden and a forest garden. Some of the land is pasture land or lawn area, and much of it has been left as forest.

The sheikh’s house, which is also used as a community center, was the first building that I passed when I entered the farm. Just beyond the sheikh’s house is an old farm house and a barn, as well as some other buildings, that were part of the farm before the community bought the land. They still use these buildings, but members of the community built the sheikh’s house. The community began the project around 2005, and it took three and a half years to complete the project. There were usually three or four experienced people working on the project at any given time, and there were many volunteers who helped with non-skilled work.

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68 Dayemi Tariqat. Dayempur Farm: Center for Sustainable Living.
69 Ibid.
70 Koenig, “A promised realized,” 12; Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.
71 Ruperto, “Dayempur,” 35.
Being intentionally built, the sheikh’s house demonstrates the ideals that the community uses in building design and in undertaking communal projects. The community aims to “be as sustainable as possible – low fuel consumption, use of local materials.” The house has a timber frame and many of the other materials are recycled, such as the windows and doors. The community creatively repurposed many items, such as slate blackboards, lab countertops, cabinets, and desks, from a local school that closed, using them for tile and countertops in the house.

The house has a closed loop radiant floor heat system that is run by two reconditioned solar hot water heaters. It is also positioned for passive solar. The eaves and the roof on the front of the house block the summer sun and let in the winter sun. The house is cooled by a huge ceiling fan and vents in the top of the house. It was adamantly explained to me that the community did not want to have air conditioning in the house.

The water for the house comes from an 8,000 gallon cistern that collects water from the roof. As the water leaves the cistern, it is filtered through three fine filters. The water is used for cleaning and drinking.

In 2008, the community began surrounding the house with gardens. They planted herbs, perennials, annuals, and a strip of wildflowers. They were planning to plant fruit trees to make the area more self sufficient.

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72 Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
Past the sheikh’s house are a barn and a hundred year old farmhouse. The barn housed equipment, and the upper-level included a classroom. A member of the community was living in the farmhouse. Although the house needed major renovations, members of the community wanted to keep the house as a relic to how the land had been used. The community also built a root cellar.

The area around the farmhouse and barn was primarily an open grassy area and included a fire pit. The grounds were kept this way, because part of the function of the farm is to serve as a social place. The farm has been planned using “the zone system, which starts at zone zero with the home and radiates out in concentric circles from the most visited farm area to the least (this is the basis for what and where [they] place specific elements in the landscape.)”

Past these buildings were the gardens. In the one acre garden, they had planted many different kinds of mint, such as spearmint and peppermint, which they use at the coffee shop. In raised beds, they also had planted Japanese pears, Bartlett pears, many different kinds of squash, raspberries, sweet potatoes, a relative of gooseberries, lettuce, apples, two kinds of grains, peppers, and beans, including but not limited to green beans. They also had two greenhouses, one small and one big. They were going to use them to grow greens and peppers. The garden was enclosed by a deer fence, and they were planning to grow things all along the fences.

The forest garden contained figs, pecans, gooseberries. Although the garden looks disheveled to an untrained eye, such as my own, Weiseman was able to identify all of the plants. He explained that if he cut something in the garden, he would let the

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77 Weiseman, “Dayempur Farm Strives for Economic, Agricultural, Social and Energy Sustainability.”
clippings fall to the ground to add nutrients to the soil. Often, he would move plants from the wild area of the farm to the forest garden. The farm also included a patch of blackberries that looked wild but were managed.

Further into the property, in a lightly wooded area, were two cabins. These cabins have been used for spiritual retreat and allow people to live more simply and closer to nature. The farm committee may build as many as ten cabins total.78

The first cabin was made in 1999 by modifying an Amish storage cabin. They rebuilt the inside, fixed the loft, put in an extra window, and added a porch, paneling, and a propane heater. It did not have electricity or running water. The other cabin was made of straw. They finished it in 2008, and it took them several summers to complete. One member explained that they aimed “to build as much as we could using local materials on our own ground, on our own land . . . or that we could get locally.”79

The timber for the frame and the clay came from the property. The hay and gravel came from a local farm and quarry. The windows and screen door were reclaimed, and they used materials from the school, just as they did in the sheikh’s house. The cabin has a metal roof, and they collect the rainwater in a 55 gallon drum, so that the water can be used for washing in a sink. There is also a wood stove inside the cabin. Outside they built a cob oven for cooking.

The area surrounding the cabins and down by the river has been used for annual spiritual retreats. They just had a retreat in June. There were over one hundred people in attendance. People brought tents. The community provided a large tent for a masjid.

78 Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.

79 Ibid.
They also provided jugs of water for ablution. Retreats usually last a week. The community sets up outhouses and a kitchen. There are programs for the children, and the adults take part in prayers, meditation, talks by the sheikh and various members of the community.\textsuperscript{80}

\textbf{Practices}

One member explained to me that “as Sufis, as spiritualists, we’ve got two goals . . . God realization and service.”\textsuperscript{81} Within the Dayemi Tariqat, religious practice focused on God, as well as service help achieve God realization. Action leads to spiritual awareness and helps people learn to and be able to contribute more fully to the community. Therefore, members aim to make all of their practices spiritual practices. Having a community and a teacher are an important part of engaging in these practices, as they help promote the mindfulness to make all practice or action religious practice.

According to some members, “the commitment to the practice of being present to all thoughts, words and actions commences the beginning of spiritual work” and “presence is the hallmark of spirituality. The practice of presence converts all of life’s occupations into living spirituality. Then all of life literally becomes a spiritual practice.”\textsuperscript{82}

A brochure describing the Dayemi Tariqat explains that

the practices that are performed for the purpose of spiritual realization include: prayer, meditation, dhikr, wadhiifa, habits of daily living, study of the scriptures, social service, as well as the ways in which we gather

\textsuperscript{80} Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
socially, organize politically and function economically. Our practices are intended to address the whole of the individual and the collective.  

It also explains that “the holy Qur’an teaches that our actions are judged by the quality of the intention in our hearts — niyyat.”

Members explained that work was important, because it could help people overcome their limitations and further themselves in their spiritual development. One member explained that it is the “

sense of individuality that keeps you from God realization. . . You have a limited definition of yourself. The spiritual journey is to get out of yourself. . . . In order to do that, it’s the spiritual work. So whether you’re doing spiritual practices in which you’re holding the whole, the divine in your mind, being present to that reality, or whether you’re doing service, which is basically, you’re serving the divine, you’re serving the whole, you’re serving the one. You’re serving the best interests.”

Both daily activities, including service activities, and religious ritual or reflection are religious practices.

Within the Dayemi Tariqat, there is a focus on seva, which is “selfless service to God” or as another member explained “service, which happens on a daily basis through different projects or whatever is needed.” Seva includes projects involved with the various institutions within the community.

According to members of the Dayemi Tariqat, having a community that works together “is an invaluable vehicle for spiritual progress.” However many people noted

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83 Dayemi Tariqat, Dayemi Tariqat.
84 Ibid.
85 Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.
86 Dayemi Tariqat, Dayemi Tariqat.
87 Ra’fi, interview with the author, August 3, 2009, Anna, IL.
88 Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.
that it took effort to have a successful community. Some members noted the importance of the sheikh and specific practices, such as weekly check-ins with the sheikh, in maintaining common purpose and communication. People also noted that working together could help the community to learn to trust one another. Some of the people involved with the Dayempur Farm told me that they valued being a part of the Dayemi Tariqat because it provided a community that has similar values about how to live a good life. Many also valued the social and material capital associated with the community, as there were already people, institutions, and resources, such as the money to buy farmland, which made it possible to live one’s ideals.

Member of the farm staff said that they thought their task would be impossible without a shared religious vision, a spiritual teacher, and open lines of communication that are an important part of their religious practice. Usually this observation was based on personal experience or knowledge of secular institutions that failed. One person noted while talking about the farm that

the hardest thing in a community is to maintain communication and a common purpose. That’s what makes a community . . . and it’s the hardest thing to put into place. You can get the tools and the technology and the seeds and the knowledge and everything, but the hardest thing is working with people . . . Just bringing a bunch of people together because they like doing it, it doesn’t happen that way.

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89 Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.

90 Jamal, interview; and Ra’fi, interview.

91 Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.
He stressed the need for “common spiritual goals and practices and good communication systems” that were constantly developed, as well as the importance of “a common focus and . . . a leader, if you want to move fast.”\textsuperscript{92}

Many community members value the sheikh and his role in their practices, as well as in shaping the community. One person explained that “having a spiritual leader that understands . . . that your spiritual [practices] aren’t separated or [an] isolated part of your life but are actually the core of your living and what you’re doing is always in remembrance of what your goal is as a human being, it becomes a very powerful way of generating energy and consciousness towards this goal.”\textsuperscript{93}

Members also reflected that the sheikh was important in cultivating mindfulness in people’s personal practices. One member observed, using the seemingly mundane example of leaving on a light overnight at the farm, “he’s impeccable in his behavior and he wants everybody to be impeccable in their behavior. So if you let things slide or you don’t attend to something or you forget about stuff, he’s right there.”\textsuperscript{94} According to one person, the sheikh forces people to really be conscious of everything, because he’s conscious of everything, and he’s noticing and he’s going to let you know. He doesn’t let things drift. With that method, we become more consciousness. But it requires a lot of work too, because . . . you always want to react or make up excuses.\textsuperscript{95}

When asked how people got involved with the various institutions run by the community, one member reflected that “most people . . . are doing things for which they

\textsuperscript{92} Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid.
have little or no formal training.” He explained that this has “been part of the practice, where Murshid has just thrown people into things. Given them the guidance to start this project or you work with this and then the skills develop.” He further explained using the example of the people on the farm “that’s part of the training to be able to give 100 percent to whatever it is, and if you really focus on the intention the desire to complete a task or provide a service then the other things fall into place.” I was told that being present was a good part of the practice, because “being present basically is being aware of what’s going on around you and committing yourself to keeping it working, keeping the flow going, helping the situation out, helping people out.”

“It is a giving discipline,” because as people’s “consciousness becomes more expanded by their spiritual practices and working, their issues start dropping away.” Through this work, people become more aware of the needs of the group, I was told that “people just do more, because they see everybody working, working hard for them and for other people, and you just get into the flow.” People step forward to volunteer to take on tasks, and “everybody knows what it feels like to be able to count on people.” According to some members, this is important “because when you’re doing

96 Jamal, interview.
97 Ibid.
98 Jamal, interview.
99 Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid.
some work you need to be able to count on people and they need to be able to count on you. That’s part of the practice.\textsuperscript{103}

Members of the community practice what they call the five obligatory duties for Muslims or five pillars. These are \textit{shahaada} “Bearing Witness”, \textit{salaat} “Ritual Prayer” five time a day, \textit{sawm} “Fasting,” \textit{hajj} or \textit{'umrah} “Pilgrimage,” and \textit{zakaat} “Alms.”\textsuperscript{104} They also include in this list \textit{jihaad} “To Make Effort, Struggle” as a potential six pillar, and they explain that jihad “is the spiritual fight against injustice and impurity, first and foremost within the individual human being, and, secondly, in the external world or society.”\textsuperscript{105}

There are practices that are specific to the community, and members usually meet at least five times a week. The group meets for meditation and dinner on Monday nights, and on Friday the community gathers for \textit{jumma} prayer. There is a check-in with the sheikh every Saturday morning, except for the last Saturday of the month. During check-in, people go to the sheikh’s house on the farm to meet and talking about things going on in their lives. On Sunday nights, the community gathers for \textit{satsang}.\textsuperscript{106} A yogic word, \textit{satsang} means a spiritual gathering.\textsuperscript{107}

I was invited to and attended \textit{satsang} during my visit, and I also took part in \textit{salat}. The night that I attended, \textit{satsang} began at 6:30pm with the \textit{'asr} prayer. I was not present for the process of members preparing to pray, but the pamphlet on the Dayemi Tariqat describes the steps of affirming the intention to pray and performing ritual

\textsuperscript{103} Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.

\textsuperscript{104} Dayemi Tariqat, \textit{Dayemi Tariqat}.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{106} Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.

\textsuperscript{107} Chuck, interview; Wayne, interview; and Dayemi Tariqat, \textit{Dayemi Tariqat}. 
ablution (wuduu’) with water according to the example of the Prophet. The call to prayer is performed to call everyone together. During prayer everyone lined up shoulder to shoulder with the women lined up behind the men. The prayer was all in Arabic.

Often during satsang, Murshid will give a talk or he will open the floor for discussion on any spiritual topic. The gathering can include a discussion, meditation, or dhikr, which for the members of the tariqat “is the communion and celebration of the Divine through recollecting and remembering God” through the recitation of God’s name or La ilaha illa Llah (there is no God but God). Frequently when engaging in meditation or dhikr, members recite the silsila, which is an account of the chain of transmission of spiritual knowledge within the lineage.

On the night that I attended, Murshid was out of town and there was a talk by a woman. We all sat on pillows on the floor, and she sat in a low chair. She reflected upon the meaning of the laylat al-baraa’ah (the night of emancipation). In her discussion she referenced the poet Rumi, a hadith qudsi, one of Murshid’s lectures, and a prayer attributed to the Prophet Muhammad. Once her talk was finished, I introduced myself to the community and had an opportunity to talk with people. At 8:30 there was a vegetarian meal for everyone. Much of the meal was made with produce from the farm, and extra produce was given away at the end of the satsang.

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108 Dayemi Tariqat, Dayemi Tariqat.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid.
111 A hadith qudsi is a divine saying that was not a part of scripture and that was reported by the Prophet.
I was told that Islam has many important days and that the community gathers together for these days and prayers. During Ramadan, members of the community will fast during the day, and they will get together every night to pray and to break their fast together.\footnote{Chuck, interview; Wayne, interview; and Dayemi Tariqat, Dayemi Tariqat.} They celebrate ‘Eid ul-Fitr, which is the feast that ends Ramadan.\footnote{‘Eid ul-fitr is commonly transliterated ‘id al-fitr.} They also observe the ‘Eid ul-Adha, which marks the end of hajj.\footnote{Dayemi Tariqat, Dayemi Tariqat. ‘Eid ul-Adh-haa is commonly transliterated ‘id al-adha.} Members of the community celebrate the urs of sheikhs in the lineage, including Shah Sufi Sayed Adhmatullah and Baba Dayemullah.\footnote{Hickey, “One Community, One Family,” 14-16.}

There are practices every morning at the tekke, and all residents of the tekke must participate. They include the al-fajr prayer, dhikr, silsila, and silent meditation.\footnote{Dayemi Tariqat, Dayemi Tariqat.} Men and women also belong to the Men of the Prophets (MOPs) and the Women of the Prophets (WOPs) respectively. Formed by Murshid for believers in the United State, Germany, and Bangladesh, these are groups that “provide a place to transcend our gender attachments; lay the ground work for a balanced gender expression; be intimate and heal our wounds and conditioning; improve the communication between men and men, women and women, and men and women; and to repair and reinstate a healthy family structure.”\footnote{Ibid.}

These groups hold meetings and organize activities. Some members participate in the Kattib Committee, which fills some of the sheikh’s roles when he is away, introduces new members to the faith, and is building a curriculum so
that members can learn more about the path and its history.\footnote{Ra’fi, interview.} Members also count conversations with Murshid (sohbet) and being in Murshid’s presence (darshan) as part of their practice.\footnote{Ibid. Calling time in Murshid’s presence darshan, may speak to the Hindu context of Ananda Marga. Darshan is a practice within the Hindu tradition, which means to view the divine.}

Everyone tries to participate in the weekly meetings and to make all their actions spiritual practices, but everyone does not participate in all of the other service work within the community. However, every able-bodied member, approximately 50 to 60 people, of the Dayemi Tariqat has been required to work on the farm for a minimum of one day a month, and everyone contributes to the budget. Members of the farm committee told me that people have increased the amount that they come to the farm over the past years. On the day that I visited, there was a women there volunteering extra time. They also explained that many people would contribute more to the community’s budget if they had made extra in a year.\footnote{Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.}

The purpose of the farm is “to become a working educational model in which spiritual, environmental, social, economic and political realms are addressed in order to awaken spiritual consciousness in all areas of our lives.”\footnote{Weiseman, “Dayempur Farm Strives for Economic, Agricultural, Social and Energy Sustainability.”} There are many different kinds of practices on the farm, including management, agriculture, safety and security, special projects, spirit and community building, education and publication.

There are five people paid to work full time on the farm, and they constitute the farm crew. They organize volunteers into teams to address the various projects.
is a general manager, who focuses on office management, personnel, and finances. There are two managers in agriculture. There is someone responsible for land maintenance and another person responsible for equipment maintenance. They all meet every Monday morning to see how the past week went, check-in with each other, reflect on feedback, and set priorities for the upcoming week. Murshid is involved with the farm on occasion, but he primarily leaves the management of it to the farm crew.¹²²

The development of the various practices on the farm has been carefully planned and outcomes have been meticulously recorded. The farm crew has worked on “setting up . . . management systems and information gathering systems and meetings and teams and [on] keeping good records . . . and databases.”¹²³ This is because the farm has two purposes. As one member explained, “we want to meet our own needs and we want be an example to be able to teach people” in any size community how to provide for their own needs.¹²⁴ They have been using the records to improve the productivity and efficiency of the projects on the farm. They have tried to learn each crop’s water, soil, and fertilizer needs, as well as how to manage the pests and blights that attack each plant.

Members of the farm committee strive to cultivate using a little energy as possible and as organically as they can. They have two kinds of gardens, a forest garden and an acre garden. At the beginning of each year, they map the one acre garden noting the number of beds, how many rows, what goes in each row, where each plant will be

¹²² Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.
¹²³ Ibid.
¹²⁴ Ibid.
placed, how many plants they will plant, and the expected yield for the garden. In the areas with larger crops, they plant every sixth row with perennials, using a technique called alley cropping.

They make their soil using verma compost, which is made by worms. They have a seed garden and a seed bank. They are trying to use heirloom seeds as much as they can rather than hybrid seeds. They want to be able to harvest seeds from their plants in order to be more sustainable. They test various heirloom seeds in an heirloom garden. If they work, they plant them in the acre garden.

They plant gardens three times a year in the acre garden. They have a spring garden and a fall garden. They also grow greens in a greenhouse during the winter. When I visited the farm in August, they were planting the fall garden. In the forest garden they have “a hundred of species of medicinal and culinary herbs, food, fruit and utility plants.”

They have been growing approximately 10 to 12 different culinary herbs and 130 kinds of medicinal herbs. They also have a fruit and nut orchard. It is difficult to grow fruit on the farm, because the climate is conducive to fungus. In total, they have been cultivating 35 kinds of vegetables. They have three bee hives and approximately 100...
chickens that are used mostly for eggs and sometimes for meat. They had just recently started free-ranging the chickens, when I visited.\textsuperscript{130}

They do many different things with the produce harvested from the farm. Some of the medicinal herbs are used by Dayempur Herbals. According to a brochure for Dayempur Herbals, the business stresses the way that the herbs were raised and processed, noting that “Dayempur Farm combines methods of organic crop/food production, ecological construction, renewable energy, appropriate technologies, and educational workshops and programs.”\textsuperscript{131} They also note that the herbs are grown without pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides in an organic forest garden that includes culinary herbs, as well as utility and medicinal herbs.\textsuperscript{132}

The pamphlet for Dayempur Herbals lists 13 products – Echinacea root, Elecampane, Elderberry syrup with ginger, lime, and honey, mullein leaf, feverfew, black walnut, red clover, stinging nettle, yellow dock, gravel root, Hawthorn berry, and yarrow, for sale. The pamphlet groups these products according to the conditions that they can help alleviate. Each product includes a description of how to use it and a guide to the body systems that it influences.\textsuperscript{133} Every year a couple of new products are added.\textsuperscript{134}

Some food is used in community meals, distributed to families, and utilized by the Town Square Market and Longbranch Coffee House. Some of it is preserved by the

\textsuperscript{130} Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.
\textsuperscript{131} Dayemi Tariqat, \textit{Dayempur Herbals}.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.
food preservation team, which meets once a week. They also donate some to a local food pantry. Any waste is brought back to the farm and put into the compost pile.

By eating healthy and having natural medicines for when they get sick with common ailments, the community aims to take care of their own health needs. They are also trying to raise enough and the right kinds of food to provide nutritious, organic meals for everyone. Both of these goals are part of their larger vision for society.

Students from the Dayemi Homeschool Collective spend every Wednesday on the farm as part of their coursework. They have planted, weeded, harvested, and learned survival skills. They also have taken care of the chickens and set up an egg business, where they packaged and sold eggs.

These are all regular practices, and there are also special events on the farm. Often special events involve religious retreat. People also come to the farm to take tours to learn about the systems that they have in place. One of the community members was going to teach an eight day permaculture workshop on the grounds of the farm. The farm has also had interns. When I visited the farm, two students who had taken a permaculture class from Weiseman, while in Texas, had come up to Carbondale to intern.

There is also a safety and security aspect to the farm. The farm has operating procedures or is developing procedures for a wide range of disaster situations. In addition to first aid kits and a trauma kit, the farm has plans in place for personal injury to natural disasters. They had also started “setting up standard operating procedures

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135 Weiseman, “Dayempur Farm Strives for Economic, Agricultural, Social and Energy Sustainability.”

136 Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.

137 Ibid.
[such as] what happens if there is no food, what happens if there is no water, what happens if there is no power, what happens if there is no gasoline.” Although on the grid, the farm can also function off the grid and has done so when the power has gone out for several days. The farm has a backup generator, solar panels, and battery storage.

Much of what has been done on the farm and is planned for the farm is driven by the community’s beliefs about the future of the current economic system. One member explained,

we believe that the direction of the economy will require that local people be able to have more control of their basic needs. Globalization has extended itself and now it’s starting to contract, so we want to be able to meet our own needs as a Sufi community, but we also want to be able to contribute to the wellbeing of our local economy, Southern Illinois.

However the farm is also a place where the community can engage in religious rituals and religious service, as well. Community, practice, and the sheikh are central to increasing religious awareness within the Dayemi Tariqat.

**Future Plans**

To improve their ability and efficiency in responding to these changes and to engage religious ideals and practices, there were many plans for the farm. The community had been planning to construct a total of ten retreat cabins by the river and considering adding solar panels so people could have light at night. The community was also considering buying 17 more acres of land to join the two parcels that they already own. They were writing a covenant for residents so that people could build

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138 Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.
139 Ibid.
140 Ibid.
homes on the land. Members of the farm committee expressed a desire to put in a four or five acre lake.  

The farm crew was researching and plotting how to grow grains and legumes on the property, in order to eventually be able to provide nutritious meals to everyone in the community with products from the farm. They were learning how to dry and store herbs, because they were thinking about creating a business that sold fresh and dried culinary herbs. They were also working on plans to introduce bigger livestock to the area later. Finally, they explained that they were working to utilize the entire property as a farm, through methods such as hunting and wildcrafting, which is the practice of foraging for edible and medicinal plants.  

Community

Members of the Dayemi Tariqat have been building relationships with each other, people in other broader Muslim and non-Muslim communities, and the natural world. To become a member of the Dayemi Tariqat requires taking hand (bay’ah) with Murshid. Many members came to Carbondale from cities, such as Boston, Denver, Minneapolis, and New York. Very few members came from rural backgrounds. Only one member of the farm crew had experience on a farm before joining the Dayemi Tariqat.

141 Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.
142 Ibid.
143 Jamal, interview; and “Remember the Word Glossary.” The community also describes bay’ah as “Sufi initiation.” “Remember the Word Glossary.” The term is more generally described as an “oath of allegiance.” (Annemarie Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions of Islam. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 234).
144 Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.
145 Ra’fi, interview; and Jamal, interview.
During my visit, people estimated the membership in the community in Illinois at about 100 people. They explained that every year approximately five to seven people joined the community in Carbondale and that people left every year, keeping the numbers fairly steady. When asked how the community gets new members, I was told that “Murshid is not into promoting it. We’re not into proselytizing. This is an intense practice, and everyone is welcome. We don’t advertise.” In terms of joining the community, I was told that “everybody’s welcome and whether or not [Murshid will] accept students is strictly on a personal basis. People say I can be your student, and he’ll say no. Or he’ll say ‘why don’t you just see how things go for a while.’”

Besides the difficulty of the lifestyle, which has kept the numbers low, some members believed that Murshid has been selective in order to create “something that will last on the ground, build a community that’s a real community” rather than just a group of people.

The Dayemi Tariqat has relationships with the other groups in the United States, Germany, and Bangladesh that are also part of the lineage. The sheikh regularly visits these communities, and members of the Dayemi Tariqat also visit these groups, including the ones in Bangladesh and Germany.

I was told that outreach and communication were a large part of the work in Dayemi Tariqat. One member explained, “we’re pretty outgoing, we’re not an insular

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146 Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.

147 Ibid.

group. We’re very much directed toward community service.”¹⁴⁹ They get together with
an African-American community of Muslims that is also located in Carbondale. They
gather together a couple of times a year for various events, sometimes on the farm.
One member explained that they “don’t have a working relationship with them. It seems
like it’s not intentional like ours is. It’s much more of a spiritual community for them.
[They] get together for prayers, more like a church, but nice people.”¹⁵⁰

Although there is another Muslim community in Carbondale, data from a 2000
study by the Association of Religious Data Archives reports that the majority of people,
35,574 people, in Jackson County are unclaimed by a congregation. Adding together
the number of people claimed by Evangelical Protestants, Mainline Protestants, and
Catholic groups there are 22,236 Christians in Jackson County. Evangelical
Protestants claim the most followers, 12,187 adherents. This research identified two
Muslim congregations, which claimed 1,050 adherents.¹⁵¹

Anna, Illinois is located in Union County, and the numbers are different there.
Evangelical Protestants claim the majority of the population, by identifying 9,526
adherents. In total there were 12,456 Christians who belonged to Evangelical
Protestant, Mainline Protestant, and Catholic congregations. There were no Muslim
congregations reported in Anna, Illinois.

More recent, but less specific data on Illinois as a whole was compiled by the
American Religious Identification Survey in 2008. According to this study, 45 percent of

¹⁴⁹ Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.
¹⁵⁰ Ibid.
the adult population in Illinois identified as Other Christians, 32 percent identified as Catholic, eight percent identified as Nones, three percent identified as Other Religions, and three percent did not know or refused to answer.\textsuperscript{152} According to the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, in 2007 fewer than 0.5 percent of adults in Illinois identified as Muslim.\textsuperscript{153}

Farming also provides a way for members of the Dayemi Tariqat to create relationships with various groups of non-Muslims throughout the United States, as well as in Illinois. Weisman is a recognized permaculture expert, and he teaches workshops all over the United States. Paprocki has been a part of a state taskforce, the Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Taskforce. This group was appointed by the Illinois governor to create local food networks to help increase agricultural revenues and jobs.\textsuperscript{154} They prepared a report to the Illinois General Assembly in March 2009 that has been used to introduce various legislation to the assembly.\textsuperscript{155}

The farm attracts all kind of visitors from a variety of backgrounds and even religious traditions. People come to learn what systems the community is using to be more sustainable. Two members of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm actually came to visit, although the two farms did not keep in touch after that visit. When I came

\textsuperscript{152} Kosmin and Keysar, “American Religious Identification Survey,” 19.


\textsuperscript{154} Chuck, interview; Wayne, interview; and Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force, \textit{Local Food, Farms and Jobs}, 2009.

to visit, there were two students from Austin visiting and a Native American man had also been to visit during the week.\textsuperscript{156}

In attempting to learn more about how to farm in the area, members of the farm crew have been working to contact people engaged in similar projects. They explained that on one of the maps on the wall of the farm office they “put a 200 mile radius around the farm, and [they] are trying to reach out and find people who are doing similar things, whether it’s for farming or for building or renewable energy, things like that, and trying to develop more of a network here in Southern Illinois.”\textsuperscript{157} So far they have only found a few people who are growing organically, and more people are becoming interested, but sometimes dialogue has been limited by the personalities involved. Part of outreach to these groups is going to visit places where they are doing these things. During my visit, Weiseman and the students from Texas were talking about a visit that they made to a house, where the owner used sweet potato to break up the soil and built terraces to maximize the productivity of the land.

The community has made a point to meet all of the people who neighbor the farm. They borrow equipment from them and they trade goods. They also look to them for local knowledge about the place and the climate.

In their business accounts, the community uses the name Dayemi Tariqat and they are open when people ask them what kind of group they are, they explain that they are a Sufi community. If asked more, which I was told usually happens, they explain

\begin{footnotes}
\item[156] Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.
\item[157] Jamal, interview.
\end{footnotes}
that they are Islamic mystics, stressing the word mystics. They have also made relationships with other non-Muslims in Carbondale through the other institutions, such as the schools.

**Conclusion**

The Dayemi Tariqat’s religious and societal ideas and practices, as well as their critique of current social and economic systems, have shaped the Dayempur Farm. The Dayemi Tariqat is an intentional community that strives for an increased measure of sustainability and sufficiency. The vision for the community is to create a form of society where God is central to everything.

The Dayempur Farm has a more central role within the Dayemi Tariqat than the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship. The farm provides some of the material support for this alternative form of community, it is the place where Murshid lives, and farms are places where community members can engage in activities that force them to learn to live in the moment, a practice that is important to spiritual growth within the community. The farm has been foundational in the construction and characteristics of the community, and experiences on the farm are continuing to shape the religious community and practices. Their community is informed by Islamic ideas, the teachings of their sheikh, and ideas from Murshid’s previous religious tradition, Ananda Marga. Member’s actions and commitment to the community are reinforced by their common spiritual goal and religious practices.

Needing to join an intentional community as part of becoming a member of the Dayemi Tariqat has contributed to the small size of the community. Most people have

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158 Chuck, interview; and Wayne, interview.
joined the community, because they are drawn there by the example of the sheikh. Murshid will eventually invite those people who he believes are ready to live as part of the Dayemi Tariqat. Murshid also directs people in the various activities that they undertake within the community, including on the farm.

Members of the community recognized that there are challenges in living and working as part of an intentional community and in living in a poor rural area. Some people are not up to the challenges of community life and end up leaving. Some members believe that having a small community is beneficial, because the community is stronger and able to accomplish things, because people are really invested. Members have found that being part of the Dayemi Tariqat gives them space and support to live their ideals.

Murshid has a very different role in the community than Bawa has in the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship. Bawa’s presence infuses the land of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm with religious significance. Therefore, the specific farmland and things grown on it are important in ways that other plots of land or produce are not. However, the connection to Bawa is not the only reason that people value the farm or cultivation on the farm. For members of the Dayemi Tariqat, the particular farmland of the Dayempur Farm is not important.

Religious and social beliefs and practices, as well as experiences on the farm, have also contributed to human nature relationships within the Dayemi Tariqat. The community draws upon some of the teachings, practices, and experiences outlined in this chapter, as well as particular teachings about God, the environment, and society.
They are especially focused on creating a new economic model and form of society, and Murshid, their *sheikh*, is actively involved in most aspects of the community.
CHAPTER 5:
THE SHADHILIYYA SUFI CENTER EAST AND THE FARM OF PEACE

I followed cheery, hand-pained signs to 1212 Haven Lane along a dirt road in Warfordsburg, Pennsylvania until the road turned right. In front of me were the rolling fields of the Farm of Peace. These fields were dotted with various buildings and barns. The final fork in the road was not marked, but luckily I ran into a woman who pointed me in the direction of the blue farmhouse, my destination.

During my stay on the Farm of Peace, I was quickly included in routine practices that took place on the farm. In addition to conducting interviews, I was also invited to participate in most activities taking place on the farm. I attended a dinner with most of the farm’s residents, took part in a twice-weekly worship practice, and attended the community’s Arabic class. I helped with various chores, such as feeding the sheep, unloading wood used to heat the retreat center, and cleaning the retreat center. I was able to see some of the administrative work that went into organizing a religious community and a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program. I also had free time to roam the grounds of the farm and drive around the surrounding area. My visit to the Farm of Peace and participation in many of the activities on the farm revealed the varied practices on the farm, as well as the diverse meanings ascribed to the farm. Some members worked to maintain the land and buildings, some came to the farm for various religious practices, and others were involved in agriculture to try to make the place a functional farm.

The third farm that I visited, the Farm of Peace has been in existence for the shortest amount of time. The community has only had their farm since the early 2000s. It is also the only farm that raises livestock that is larger than chickens. Because they
raise livestock for food, the community is faced with issues concerning the treatment of animals. Members of the community started the Farm of Peace in order to have a place to gather, as well as to live out their teacher’s ideas about sustainability and self-sufficiency. Since then, it has been a place where they can meet, worship in particular ways, practice healing, perform service, farm, and raise religiously permissible food, as well as live and work according to their sheikh’s teachings. Like members of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship and the Dayemi Tariqat, members of the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East explained that they valued living and working in a community, as it helped them advance spiritually. Members of this community also stressed the healing aspect of their community and the place. Agricultural activities were often presented as only economic activity, however people’s answers to questions about agricultural practices on the farm or the treatment of nature on the farm demonstrated subtle connections between religious ideas and practices and those pertaining to the farm. Often actions were shaped by ideas about God or something more specific like the desire to eat religiously acceptable food. Animals could also teach religious lessons about how to cultivate desirable traits or how to recognize flaws within oneself.

**History – Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East and the Farm of Peace**

The Farm of Peace is the headquarters for the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East. The Sufi Center East is a branch of a larger lineage of Shadhiliyya Sufis who follow the teachings of Sidi Muhammad Sa’id al-Jamal ar-Rifa’i ash-Shadhuli, a spiritual teacher who lives in Jerusalem and who they call Sidi for short. There are many local groups, including the Farm of Peace, that follow Sidi, and the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center is the
mother center for all of these regional groups.\footnote{Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East, “About Us.”} The Farm of Peace is a community of approximately 200 people, and the broader Shadhiliyya community that follows Sidi has a membership of approximately 2000 people.\footnote{Maribel, interview with the author, March 9, 2010, Warfordsburg, PA.}

The Shadhiliyya \textit{tariqa} or path began in the late 12\textsuperscript{th} or the 13\textsuperscript{th} century.\footnote{The website for the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East and the Farm of Peace state that the “Shadhiliyya Sufi tradition dates to the late 12\textsuperscript{th} century.” Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East, “The Sufi Way.” The Shadhiliyya Sufi Center dates the beginning to the 13\textsuperscript{th} century. (Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East, “Biography of Sidi Muhammad Sa'id al-Jamal,” 2010, http://www.suficenter.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=32&Itemid=43 (accessed January 28, 2011).} The history of the \textit{tariqa} began with the figure of Abu-l-Hasan (b. 1196), who was from the village of Ghumara in what is now Morocco. Abu-l-Hasan traveled to train with several renowned sheikhs, including ‘Abd as-Salam ibn Mashish of Fez, who Abu-l-Hasan took as his teacher. Through Ibn Mashish’s training and spiritual retreat, Abu-l-Hasan gained “spiritual sovereignty (wilaya)” from God.\footnote{Shadhiliyya Sufi Center, “History of the Shadhiliyya Tariqa,” 2010, http://suficenter.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=30:history-of-the-shadhiliyya-tariqa&catid=12:tariqa&Itemid=41 (accessed January 28, 2011).} He also received the name ash-Shâdhdh-lî from God. He was told by God that this name meant “one who is set apart (shâdhdhu) for Me (lî).”\footnote{Ibid.} The name Shadhuli was given to the early lineage.

Although Abu-l-Hasan was an important figure, his successor Abu-l-‘Abbas al-Mursi and al-Mursi’s successor Taj ad-din ibn ‘Ata Allah al-Iskandari both helped solidify the existence of the Shadhuli tariqa. Al-Iskandari in particular was the first teacher in the Shadhuli lineage to write books.\footnote{Ibid.} There are many Shadhiliyya branches worldwide.
that arose from this lineage and history, but they do not follow Sidi. Instead, these branches all follow other teachers.

Sidi was born in Tulkum in the area that is now Israel in 1935. He trained with Shaykh ‘Abdu-r-Rahman Abu-r-Risah of Halab and is believed to be a spiritual inheritor of the Shadhili line. In 1959, he moved to live on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. He taught students from the area and from other countries who came to study with him. He also restored a Sufi council in Jerusalem and taught at the Dome of the Rock. In 1993, Sidi felt called to travel to teach, and in 1994 he made his first trip to the United States.\(^7\)

One of the students who came to Jerusalem to study with Sidi was Salima Adelstein, who would be one of the founders of the Farm of Peace, as well as its Community Spiritual Director. Around 1992, Adelstein went to Jerusalem to study with Sidi. She stayed for a month with him in spiritual retreat called zawiyah\(^8\). Due to the transformative experience that she had while studying with Sidi, she wanted to share the Sufi way once she returned home to Maryland. The intention was to share, not to start a community, but a community naturally grew as Salima’s experience was shared. Salima would share with people and these people shared what they heard from Salima, a community naturally developed.\(^9\)

The members of the community have embraced Islamic practices over time. At first, they prayed five times a day, but they did not practice Ramadan.\(^10\) Once they

\(^7\) Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East, “Biography of Sidi Muhammad Sa’id al-Jamal.”

\(^8\) Kalima. Interview with the author, March 8, 2010, Warfordsburg, PA; and Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East, “About Us.”

\(^9\) Maribel, interview.

\(^10\) Ibid.
began fasting for Ramadan, they have started practicing other holidays as well.\textsuperscript{11} The community held spiritual retreats in the farmhouse, until they built a retreat center for healing and spiritual retreat in 2009.

This community was centered in Frederick, Maryland and had a big Victorian house as the headquarters. Several people, including Adelstien lived in the house, and the house held spiritual retreats and Adelstien’s office.\textsuperscript{12} One year when the group was gathered for Ramdan, during \textit{laylat al-qadr} (the Night of Power), a member suggested that it would be nice if the community had a place and some land.\textsuperscript{13} They suggested that it could be a place where they could gather, be together, and even host Sidi. In addition to a desire to have a place for the community, one member recalled that Sidi “always talked about wanting us to be self-sustainable, wanting us to grow our own food, wanting us to care for each other, and wanting us to be together in community.”\textsuperscript{14}

Some members were driving one day and happened upon a sign advertising a farm for sale.\textsuperscript{15} Visiting the land, several members felt Sidi teaching on the farm, and some felt his spirit in the farmhouse.\textsuperscript{16} One member remembers that when she walked onto the land she “just knew that this was the place, that this was right.”\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{11} Beatrice, interview with the author, March 9, 2010, Warfordsburg, PA.

\textsuperscript{12} Beatrice, interview.

\textsuperscript{13} Maribel, interview; and Beatrice, interview. In the interest of remaining consistent, I used the transliteration \textit{laylat}, however community literature uses \textit{lailat}. (Shadhiliyya Sufi Center, “Ramadan: The Month of Feasting,” 2010, \url{http://www.suficenter.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=54:ramadan-the-month-of-fasting&catid=14:practices&Itemid=5} (accessed February 1, 2011.))

\textsuperscript{14} Maribel, interview.

\textsuperscript{15} Beatrice, interview.

\textsuperscript{16} Maribel, interview.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
With these affirmations of Sidi’s presence, three couples from the group went to work pooling resources to make a down payment on the 150 acre farm in Warfordsburg. One member reflected on the experience, explaining that she “didn’t know how they did it or why they did it, because clearly it wasn’t from the financial resources that we had, but when God wants something to happen God makes it happen. So they gave us the mortgage and the loan to buy the farm.” With this, the community began a slow and steady process of “building a farm up from the food production to the grazing halal animals to doing [a] spiritual community.”

Several people resided on the farm in various buildings on the land, including a family that moved to live in the old farmhouse. Two years after buying the land, one of the couples wanted to be removed from the mortgage, so another member gathered up the money to buy them out between 2004 and 2005. She also moved to the farm and began paying one third of the mortgage.

The community began a CSA in the summer of 2006. One member had worked in a CSA for a year, and she led the efforts, urging people to donate their time. The first year the CSA had between five and eight members, and the dues that these members paid were used for seeds and supplies. The women with experience left before the next spring, but two members kept the CSA going. The second year it had between eight and 15 members, and the third year it had about 20 shares. The fourth year there was

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18 Beatrice, interview.
19 Maribel, interview.
20 Ibid.
21 Beatrice, interview.
22 Maribel, interview.
no CSA. Community members had already been planning for the coming season, five years after the project was initially started, when I visited in March 2010.23

Members also began raising chickens for meat. Two members partnered on the project, with one buying the chickens, one doing the care, and both sharing the cost of food. After one year, one partner moved on from the project. The other continued to care for the chickens, pairing with other people for assistance. By the time I came to visit, the project had been abandoned, but a member was planning to restart the project off the farm.24

The community used to have five roosters. I was told how one used to crow for *fajr* and would crow an hour before morning prayer during Ramadan. This story is similar to stories told about the Prophet. Sources report that the Prophet “enjoined respect for the rooster, whose crowing signals the time for morning prayer; elsewhere, he suggests that the rooster’s crowing is a form of prayer.”25

**Space, Place, and Institutions – the Farm of Peace**

The institutions for the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East and the broader Shadhiliyya community demonstrate the centrality of healing and service to the community, as well as some of the value of various pieces of land. These institutions also provide some insight as to the ways that the farm is used by the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East, the kinds of activities done as a community, and some of the ways that the community is attempting to make the farm economically viable.

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23 Beatrice, interview.

24 Ibid.

In California, there is a headquarters, called the Mother Center, for the broader Shadhiliyya Sufi community that follows Sidi. This group was started in the early 1990s, by Dr. Robert Jaffe, who became a Sufi teacher through his studies with Sidi.\textsuperscript{26} The University of Spiritual Healing and Sufism is also located in California and has connections and works with the Mother Center. Many members of the Sufi Center East attend the University of Spiritual Healing and Sufism, which serves the broader Shadhiliyya Sufi community and people outside the community. The purpose of the school is “to train leaders and healers to carry God’s message of peace, love, mercy, justice, and freedom in the world.”\textsuperscript{27}

The university includes a full-time \textit{imam} and a retreat center, which some residents described as more rustic than the one at the Farm of Peace. It is located in a mountainous area next to Napa Valley. One member raved about the beauty of the area, also explaining that “they’ve got a healing spring there. You can just drink the water and bathe in it and stuff. And the energy of the land, it just hums.”\textsuperscript{28}

It is a four year university that involves four weeks per year at the school and the rest of the time is spent in home study and teleclasses. One of the degrees is the Doctor of Divinity (DD). The school has existed for about five years. Class sizes used to be 100-130 people, but are now only average 20-40 students. Sidi will visit the


\textsuperscript{27} Maribel, interview.

\textsuperscript{28} Adam, interview with the author, March 8, 2010, Warfordsburg, PA.
university during the school session if he is in the country.\(^ {29}\) To obtain degrees, people go to the school four times a year for a week each time.

The Farm of Peace is the headquarters of the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East. On the farm, some of the land on the farm had been left wild, most of it was used for pastures, and there was a small garden. When I visited in March, there was not much growing in the garden, but community members were focusing on creating a one or two acre garden.\(^ {30}\) Sidi taught that it was necessary to use the land in the best possible way. Therefore, various areas were used in various ways based on the ecology and on the needs of the community.

Members explained to me that the soil on the farm was “really not that great. It’s this kind of rocky, shale-y, kind of clay.”\(^ {31}\) It is hard to drain and the soil has low organic matter. Because it has low mineral levels, it is most efficiently used as pasture, because that requires fewer inputs or amendments.

Climate also contributes to the use of land. Pennsylvania has a humid continental climate. However Fulton County does have some characteristics of a mountain climate, which shortens the growing season.\(^ {32}\) Fulton County has an average growing season of 121 to 180 days.\(^ {33}\)

\(^ {29}\) Kalima, interview.

\(^ {30}\) Beatrice, interview.

\(^ {31}\) Ibid.


There were several people living on the farm, but most community members reside in surrounding areas. There were seven people living on the farm, and many of those people made their living from doing jobs there. Everyone else has jobs outside of the farm. This has sometimes limited some members’ participation in the farm, making it difficult for them to be as involved as they would like.\textsuperscript{34}

During my visit, I stayed in the old farmhouse, where Beatrice lived. At the time, she was about to move out to provide space for the new CSA director and his family. The entrance opened into a kitchen that was used by some of the people who lived on the farm and to prepare meals for visitors and retreats. Everyone who used the kitchen had their own food in one of the two refrigerators, in cabinets, or on various shelves. On one of the walls there were cupboards and between the cupboards was an enrollment form for the farm’s CSA and a poster announcing the visit of a farm supply representative to the area.

The farmhouse has been used for visitors who stay on the farm through the Pennsylvania Farm Vacation Association. The association aims to help small scale farms increase their income. The association has biannual meetings and provides marketing support and a website with information on all the member farms. The community has been a member of this organization for three years, and only really participated starting in 2009. In some ways, my visit was similar to that which would take place through the Pennsylvania Farm Vacation Association. I paid to stay in the farmhouse and was provided with breakfast during my visit. I was free to bring food and to store it and cook it in the kitchen during my visit.

\textsuperscript{34} Adam, interview.
Past the kitchen was a large room, which was primarily used for meetings. Two of the walls were covered with windows. There was an office area set up with several computers in the front left corner of the room for employees of the Farm of Peace to use. This room also had several couches along the edges. There were also a couple of beds, because people would sometimes stay in this room. The large open space in the middle was used for practices, such as al-wird.

Upstairs from the kitchen was an area for guests, where I stayed and where people on a farm stay vacation often stayed. There were two rooms. The first room was covered in padded floor tiles in primary colors, and there was a mattress on the floor and bookcases. In the bookcases were books for children. There was a lot of calligraphy art on the walls, and each room had art with the name Allah displayed in it. There was similar art in the large meeting room downstairs.

Although the farmhouse is old and inefficient to cool and heat, the community has added more sustainable appliances when new ones were needed, such as a dual flush toilet in the communal bathroom on the ground level. Community members gave several reasons why things should be sustainable. Sidi has instructed his community that practices on the farm should be sustainable. Another person explained the motivation for Sidi’s teachings stating,

what I understand from it is that it’s mainly an ethical responsibility for us as Sufis. If we want to really have the relationship with Allah that we’re wanting to have, to be able to achieve a witnessing of his divine reality, it’s important for us to treat all aspect of his creation with the utmost respect and politeness.\(^{35}\)

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\(^{35}\) Adam, interview.
He further explained that “there’s a very immense and intense responsibility that we have as individuals to understand the effects of our actions and the ramifications,” due to their desire to live according to God’s will. People are also called to care for the environment, because it is given to humanity as a gift from God, and the Islamic tradition explains that people are supposed to care for creation. The farm is also meant to serve as a “model of conservation” for Muslims and non-Muslims.

These ideas influence the decisions about appliances, as well as most of the decisions in the construction and systems of the International Peace Center (IPC). A retreat center for healing and spiritual retreat, the IPC was yellow with a large dome and separated from the farmhouse and surrounding buildings by an expanse of pasture. Sitting atop a hill, the center was built to have minimal impact on the environment and “is a model for sustainable building, sustainable architecture.”

The building was made of straw with a plaster mud covering and designed to radiate heat, saving the community considerably on heating and cooling costs. The building also had a wood boiler for radiant heat floors. A window glass by the entrance to the building showed the straw filling and had the name Allah on the windowpane, a visual cue to some of the important beliefs and practices of the community.

The room with the dome, which sat in the middle of the building, was used for prayer and as an informal gathering place and for various meetings and lessons, including Arabic lessons. I also conducted some of my interviews in this room.

36 Adam, interview.
37 Maribel, interview; and Beatrice, interview.
38 Maribel, interview.
39 Adam, interview.
room contained four sleeper couches, two chairs, a table with a large rock, two big ottomans, a tea closet with an electric kettle and mugs, and a basket of prayer rugs that were used and rearranged for various activities. The room was warmed with mason heat, which involved a fast fire that burned for 45 minutes and then radiated heat throughout the room for the rest of the day. There was an entire wall of windows and glass doors that overlooked the farm land, including down toward the old farm house and then back up to the various barns. The doors opened outside onto a small patio.

The building has also been an important place for people to meet, cook, and eat. The building had a large kitchen with two dishwashers and two refrigerators. The first night of my visit, I was invited for dinner, which was held in the dining room that was next to the kitchen. Before we ate, we said a prayer. The kitchen is also used by other members who live on the farm, and I learned how to make and try kefir in the kitchen.

Corridors radiated to either side of the center of the building, where the kitchen, dining room, and room with the dome were found. The corridor to the right was lined with rooms used for healing. To the left were bedrooms with bathrooms that were used for guests attending the farm for workshops or spiritual retreats. The bedrooms are not usually used for visitors on farm vacations, however the IPC is available to rent.  

Looking back toward the farmhouse from the IPC, the landscape is dotted with buildings. On either side of the farmhouse were two small sheds covered with weathered shingles. The caretaker of the farm and his wife, who was the caretaker of the retreat center, lived in one of them. There was also a yurt near the farmhouse. Previously, it had housed a preschool for community members' children, but the woman

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who ran it had left the area. The current resident of the farmhouse was about to move
into the yurt.

Up the hill past the farmhouse were several barns. Some of them were used to
house equipment, but many of them had functions during the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center
East’s Sufi school, an event held annually at the farm. The Sufi school East is one of
several schools, which take place through the United States, as Sidi travels to teach at
different communities within the lineage.

One barn had showers, which were used during Sufi school. Another barn
became a dining room for the event. There was also a teaching barn were Sidi teaches
during Sufi School. The upstairs served as a dormitory and running along the tops of
the walls on the ground floor were Qur’anic passages. Community members call that
building the mosque, even though it is only really used as a mosque during Sufi
school.  

A description of these institutions provides some of the ways that the community
connects with broader communities, constructs their community, and engages the
environment. Practices are also an important part of their identity as Sufi Muslims.
They also provide some insight as to the roles of the farm in the community.

Practices

Practices on the Farm of Peace are built upon their sheikh’s instructions and a
desire to live a godly life. The community is focused on two types of service – inner
service and service to others. Inner service focuses on “polishing. . . [one’s] heart and

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41 Maribel, interview.
growing in closer proximity to Allah." Service to others involves helping those who are less fortunate. Service practices are rooted in their identity as followers of Sidi and the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center and the Islamic tradition more general, as well as their experiences on the farm. Some of these practices take place on the farm. Sidi’s vision, and sometimes direction, has influenced agricultural practices, as has a desire to make the farm economically viable. Religious beliefs and practices have also, in some ways, helped to shape actions in the environment. Becoming involved with projects and committees within the community can help people learn about their true nature and help them progress in their knowledge of God.

On the second morning of my visit, I attended an important community ritual, *al-wird*. *Al-wird* is a part of the *dhikr* practices of the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center. All Sufi communities practice *dhikr*, which is ritual remembrance of God, however each Sufi order has particular rituals that are part of their *dhikr* practice. The website for the Sufi Center East explains that there are other activities that are incorporated in *dhikr*, which the community also calls Sufi Healing Circle. It explains that “our dhikr evenings generally include a question-and-answer time, a teaching and/or reading from Sidi’s books, chanting al-Wird . . . together, and a standing circle dhikr.” During standing circle *dhikr*, participants stand in a circle with their hands joined and chant “the name of God to evoke His light and allow Him to open and clean the participants’ hearts, minds, and spirits.”

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42 Maribel, interview.


and is done with men and women together. Usually if possible, men hold hands with other men and women with women and a married couple bridges the gap between the men and women.\textsuperscript{45} The community has a rotation of people who lead the \textit{dhikr}.\textsuperscript{46} Members of the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center are advised to observe \textit{al-wird} twice a day. Groups meet to perform \textit{al-wird} throughout the United States, in areas where there are groups of people who belong to the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center. The Shadhiliyya Sufi Center holds regularly scheduled \textit{al-wird} gatherings throughout Pennsylvania and Maryland.\textsuperscript{47} If a person cannot attend a gathering, he or she can participate in \textit{al-wird} through a teleconference or people are expected to engaged in individual practice of \textit{al-wird}.\textsuperscript{48} During individual practice, people can also do these chants 1000 or 2000 times.\textsuperscript{49} At the Farm of Peace, the community holds weekly \textit{al-wird} gatherings in the old farm house. Members usually sit on pillows on the ground, facing the community member who is leading \textit{al-wird}. People are assigned to lead \textit{al-wird} on different days of the week. During spiritual retreats on the farm, participants do \textit{al-wird} twice a day. Often these practices will be open to the rest of the community.

The \textit{fatiha} was recited at the beginning of \textit{al-wird}. Participants then checked their hearts, reflecting within themselves and then sharing their feelings with the group. Then we performed four different chants. These chants are performed anytime \textit{al-wird} is

\textsuperscript{45} Adam, interview.

\textsuperscript{46} Beatrice, interview.

\textsuperscript{47} Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East, “Dhirk Circles.”

\textsuperscript{48} Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East, “Everyone Welcome.”

\textsuperscript{49} Adam, interview.
performed. Some consider the chants to be the core of *al-wird.*

We recited these chants in Arabic. Each chant, except for the last chant, consists of a phrase that is recited 100 times and then a phrase that is said once before moving to the next chant. Participants were given the option of using a card to remember the chants. The cards had the chants transliterated into Arabic, as well as an English translation, as well as the number of times to recite each phrase. Often participants will use prayer bead to count their chants. A string of beads contains 100 beads. Some Sufis explain that these beads represent the 99 names of God and God's one secret name. The chants are intended to open people and to provide healing and blessings. At the Farm of Peace, we concluded al-wird by checking our hearts again.

The first, second, and third chats have two parts. For each of these chants, the first phrase is recited 100 times, and the second phrase is said once at the end. For the first chant, participants recite “ASTAGhFIR ALLÂH AL-‘ADhÎ,” which the community has translated as “Mercy from God” or “I seek forgiveness in Allah the Almighty” 100 times. Then they say “LÂ ILÂHA ILLÂ HÛ AL-HAYY AL-QAYYûM WA ATûBU ILAYH,” which means “There is no God but Him, the Living, the Everlasting, and I turn to Him [in repentance].” One member explained this chant using a story about Rabi’a, a famous female Sufi from the 800th century who emphasized love of God. He explained that this

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51 I have kept the website’s use of capitalization and underlining in the transliterations. Shadhiliyya Sufi Center “Al-Wird (Daily Prayer with Beads).” The first translation comes from the cards handed out at the Farm of Peace. The second is provided on the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center website. (Shadhiliyya Sufi Center “Al-Wird (Daily Prayer with Beads).”)

52 I used the same capitalization in the translation as the website. (Shadhiliyya Sufi Center “Al-Wird (Daily Prayer with Beads).”)

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chant highlights human’s imperfections and the fact that only God can forgive people and then guide them correctly. Therefore, this chant stresses Rabi’a’s teaching, which is also found in the Shadhiliyya tradition, that “God forgives you and then you repent.”

During the second chant, participants first recite 100 times the phrase “ALLÂHUMMA SALLI ‘ALÂ SAYYIDINÂ MUHAMMADIN WA ÂÂLIHI WA SAHBIHI WA SALLIM,” which translates to “Oh Allah send Your revelation upon our Master Muhammad and his family, and Your Peace.” At the end they then said “MUHAMMADUN RASÛL-ULLÂH,” which means “Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.” One member explained that this is “a supplication for prayers and peace on the Prophet Muhammad and his family and friends,” so that people can sanctify their being and emulate those people.

For the third chant, participants first recite “LÂ ILÂHA ILLA-LLÂH,” which means “There is no God but Allah.” This is said 100 times. At the end of the chant they say “MUHAMMADUN RASÛL-ULLÂH,” which means “Muhammad is His messenger.” Together, the two parts are the shahada or declaration of faith within the Islamic tradition.

The fourth chant is the word “ALLÂH,” which is recited 100 times. Allah means God in Arabic, and is considered “the best word” by some community members. One

53 Adam, interview.
54 Shadhiliyya Sufi Center “Al-Wird (Daily Prayer with Beads).”
55 Ibid.
56 Adam, interview.
57 Shadhiliyya Sufi Center “Al-Wird (Daily Prayer with Beads).”
58 Ibid.
member explained “there is a whole phonetic science about Arabic . . . being a sacred
language where the utterance of Arabic words . . . invokes the physiological response of
the meaning of the word.”  

Allah means God in Arabic and is considered “the best word” within this science, making its oration especially beneficial.

During al-wird, I was able to meet and observe more women members of the
Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East. Within Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East, the Bawa
Muhayiaddeen Fellowship, and the Dayemi Tariqat, clothing was a way that women
expressed religious belief and was often part of how they constructed religious identity
or something that was negotiated as part of their identity. In these communities, women
covered themselves to varying extents. Sometimes their clothing and donning of a
headscarf depended on the activity. There was a range of practice, where some would
only cover during prayer but not during other religious practices and others covered
throughout their daily lives.

At the Farm of Peace, many of the women that I interviewed wore clothing that
covered to their wrists and ankles, as well as a headscarf. One woman explained that
she decided to veil due to a deepening relationship with the Prophet Muhammad.

During al-wird, there were several women who did not cover the arms or their heads.
One member explained that some women come to al-wird in immodest clothing,
because they believe that Sufism speaks religious truth that transcends the rule of the
Islamic tradition. In discussions of clothing, as well as the roles of and relations
between the genders during various practices, there seemed to be reflection about the

59 Adam, interview.
60 Ibid.
61 Kamila, interview.
necessity of various rules of conduct for the genders during religious practice. Sometimes these reflections arose as they interacted with Muslims from other communities. Sometimes practices have changed as members have grown in their study of the Sufi path or Islamic tradition.

Members of the community try to pray five times a day. They usually pray in the farmhouse or the IPC.62 A member of the community will perform the call, and I heard a lovely call in the IPC when I was visiting. Women will do the call although one woman told me,

If there are men present then the men are supposed to do it. That is my understanding... It is kind of optional but most of us like doing it... We [women] were basically always doing it but then someone was like ‘oh no. In Islam, women aren’t supposed to do the adhan [call to prayer]’. So we all kind of stopped but then someone was like ‘oh it’s fine.’63

Men and women pray together, but men pray in front of women. If men are present at prayers, they are to lead the prayers. Women will lead prayer among women, and they will lead al-wird and dhikr. Sometimes women will lead prayers, if none of the men know how to lead them. On Fridays at 1:30 pm, members are welcome to gather at the Farm of Peace for jumma prayers, as well as to study teachings from the Qur’an and Sidi’s writings.64

Members also fast Ramadan and pay zakat. Many members have eased into observing all of these practices. Many of the women covered their hair, but most of

62 Maribel, interview.
63 Beatrice, interview.
64 The Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East uses the spelling jumah. Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East, “Everyone Welcome.” The Shadhiliyya Sufi Center uses the spelling jumu’ah. (Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East, “Biography of Sidi Muhammad Sa’id al-Jamal.”)
them had grown into the practice and they covered in different ways. One woman explained,

I’ve worn a hat for a long time, but I’ve just started covering. And that’s sort of through a deepened relationship with the Prophet Muhammad. And it’s interesting because it has nothing to do with men, and I didn’t understand that until I started... That’s what I love about this path. It’s like the deeper understandings you get through doing things that nobody can. Like most of the books are wrong about it, and you have to do it in order to get the experience.65

Many members have additional practices. These practices are not as common within other Muslim communities. After fajr, many listen to Sura Ya Sin, “which is often called the heart of the Qur’an.”66 Some recite the wazifa, the 99 names of God, which was described as a Shadhiliyya practice that began with Shadhuli a teacher from the early days of the lineage. Some also try to practice “nafl salah or un-obligatory worship at night,” which they consider to be “a confirmed sunnah, a regular and unchanging practice of the Prophet.”67 Community members told me about praying in the middle of the night, often for an hour between 2:00 and 5:00 am.68 This practice is a part of the practice of Tahajjud (The Night Vigil Prayer), which is offered after ’isha and before fajr and is best done in the middle or second half of the night.69

65 Kalima, interview.
68 Kalima, interview; Mary, interview with the author, March 8, 2010, Warfordsburg, PA; and Raoul, interview with the author, March 8, 2010, Warfordsburg, PA.
69 Shadhiliyya Sufi Center, “Tahajjud (The Night Vigil Prayer).”
Members try to read the Qur’an when they can. Many are learning classical Arabic to be able to read the Qur’an in Arabic. I attended the Arabic class on my second night at the farm. The Arabic class was taught by an African American woman from another Muslim community. Although from another community, she conducted a workshop on healing and the Qur’an and had brought members of her community to the farm for some of the workshops.\textsuperscript{70} Students in the Arabic class were learning Arabic through the language in the Qur’an.

The community also has a practice, called “reading and writing and remembering,” that focuses on Sidi’s teachings. Sidi has published several books that are “educational books about how to walk in our way.”\textsuperscript{71} Members read a sentence from one of these books, they copy it word for word, then they “sit with the wisdom of it,” and finally they think about in relationship to their experiences with God.\textsuperscript{72}

Members are also asked to refrain from idle talk, to sometimes fast from sleep, and to find ways to be in seclusion. The IPC on the farm offers \textit{zawiyah}, which is a spiritual retreat. A member explained further that \textit{zawiyah} “literally means corner, so you’re turning yourself away from your worldly life and sitting in a corner with just you and Allah contemplating scripture and Sidi’s teachings about how to do Sufism and how to apply all that stuff in your life.”\textsuperscript{73}

There are also healing retreats at the IPC, and members occasionally hold Free Healing Days that are run by students and graduates of the University of Spiritual

\textsuperscript{70} Mary, interview; Raoul, interview; and Kalima, interview.

\textsuperscript{71} Adam, interview.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
Healing and Sufism. They hold these events as a form of outreach. During New Year’s Eve, members of the community have a spiritual retreat, where they pray all night and at midnight everyone shares their spiritual vision for themselves and the community for the upcoming year.

There is a person who cooks for all of the spiritual retreats on the farm, including zawiyah. Currently, the caretaker for the sheep makes her living from cooking, because raising sheep has yet to be profitable. Food for the meals and her salary are paid from registration fees for the each event.

Sufi schools provide an opportunity to members to learn directly from Sidi. Different communities within the lineage will host Sufi schools in their communities throughout the United States. The school at the Farm of Peace is called Sufi School East. Sidi usually stays at each school for two to three days. One member remembered that he used to stay longer, but that he seemed to be making shorter visits more recently. When asked how many places Sidi would go, one woman responded, “golly, Austin, Florida, Boston, here [Warfordsburg], Chicago, Southern California, Northern California, Portland, Oregon, over the years definitely more and more, as communities are developing.” There have been community members who have followed Sidi, as he taught at various schools.

The farm also hosts the Unity Music Festival. Held since 2008, it “is a family-friendly gathering of musicians, artists, vendors and everyone who enjoys celebrating

\[74\] Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East, “Everyone Welcome.”

\[75\] Beatrice, interview.

\[76\] Ibid.

\[77\] Kalima, interview.
great music, fun, camping, caring for the environment and the joy of community." It takes place during a weekend in the summer and is open to anyone. This program is also a form of outreach.

Members engage in various agricultural ventures on the farm. They have a garden and raise sheep and chickens for meat. Members of the community also teach children about the environment by taking them on nature walks on the farmland. They also teach children how to bird.

Various farming activities began due to directives from their spiritual teacher. He taught them that it is a sin not to cultivate land and has advised them on some of the particular agricultural enterprises. Sidi was a farmer himself and has been adamant that the practices on the Farm of Peace be sustainable. The produce raised for the CSA is as organic as possible and animals are raised and slaughtered according to Islamic guidelines. One member explained, “our guide . . . who guides us spiritually, is really adamant about our agricultural practices and the sustainability of our agricultural practices. He’s our oversight committee and he’s very strict.”

Sidi “puts people in positions of responsibility,” but that he can be very directive in terms of the types of activities he wants happening within the community. For example, he told community members to raise sheep. A community member explained that “he’ll tell us to do it, he’ll sort of give us the vision of it, and then the mechanics of

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79 Maribel, interview.

80 Adam, interview.

81 Maribel, interview.
the how to he leaves up to us." He did become more involved with the specifics concerning the sheep, because he trained five men within the community how to slaughter in the *halal* way. He also speaks with Salima by telephone every day. For members, “his spirit is very much alive” on the farm.  

Although Sidi provides some directives and oversight, the farm and the various activities on it are primarily run by committees, as well as a few staff members. There is a farm committee, a spiritual retreat center committee, and a housing committee. These committees were also called circles and theses committees were divided into even more specific circles, such as the CSA circle.

These groups are part of a system of government developed by the community. The community had been working to develop “a system called dynamic governance in which the ultimate oversight is Allah” and everyone is trying to align with God. This model of governance was implemented in a circle model, where all aspects of the community were managed by these various circles, and member of these circles had to report to other circles. This model applied to the entire community nationwide. At the top of this system of circles, just below Sidi is the Circle of Trusted Servants. All committees report to this group, which consists of “people who have been on the path for a goodly while and they report directly to Sidi.” Another person described this

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82 Maribel, interview.
83 Ibid.
84 Adam, interview.
85 Kalima, interview.
86 Adam, interview.
group as the board of directors for the community.\textsuperscript{87} One member explained that Sidi is “sort of the pole, and then you have the Circle of Trusted Servants who holds the spiritual vision of the farm, and then off of that circle you have the different committees.”\textsuperscript{88}

The farm committee is a group of people who address operations on the farm. They monitor the operations dealing with the chickens, sheep, CSA, fields, tractors, and all other aspects of the farm. The spiritual retreat committee is responsible for managing the IPC and the events that take place in the building. The housing committee is helping and the people who are building houses on the farmland. People become members of committees based on their \textit{himma}, which is “like a fire inside of you that really drives you.”\textsuperscript{89} One community member provided a more in depth description explaining that “it’s when you’re really excited about something and they say it’s because Allah has lifted a veil between you and the truth of who you are in a sense, and you’re really attracted to” the activity or committee.\textsuperscript{90}

According to residents, Fulton County was one of the poorest counties in Pennsylvania, which makes it “very difficult to get people here, so that we have human power to do all that we want to do.”\textsuperscript{91} Instead, the community is “doing it sort of piece by piece.”\textsuperscript{92} There are people who do specific jobs on the farm. There is a farm manager,
a manager for the CSA, a caretaker for the animals, a caretaker for the farm, and a caretaker for IPC building.

The farm manager is primarily an administrative position that helps organize and direct projects taking place on the farm. However, she does helps with various agricultural practices, especially those that interest her. In setting up my visit to the farm, I corresponded with the farm manager. During my visit they had just hired a manager for the CSA, who was a Sufi and was going to be moving into the farmhouse with his family. The woman who cares for the animals was given free lodging, but she made her living cooking for the retreats. The caretaker for the farm helps with all of the agricultural activities, and the caretaker of the building helps with zawiyah and also manages and cleans the IPC.

The community has a garden, which they support by selling CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) shares primarily to members outside the religious community. They have members who are part of the Sufi community, friends of members of the Sufi community, and some people joined after members went door to door asking if people would like to sign-up. In the spring, they plant broccoli, cauliflower, peas, herb, garlic scapes, kohlrabi, scallions, radishes, early beets, turnips, and various spring greens, including lettuces, spinach, cabbage, and arugula. They plant different crops in the summer, such as watermelon, cantaloupes, cucumbers, peppers, greens, beets, potatoes, onions, carrots, garlic, and herbs, including basil, oregano, cilantro, parsley,

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93 Kalima, interview.
94 Maribel, interview.
95 Mary, interview; and Raoul, interview.
chives, and fennel. They grow various crops as organically as possible, but they are not certified organic. They do not use chemicals in their cultivation.

Sidi has urged them to be sustainable in their practices on the farm, and this has influenced how they grow crops. However, this is not the only reason that members of the community attempt to use organic methods of cultivation. Some noted that there was a value in being able to eat good quality food. Some wanted to engage in methods of cultivation that were counter to monoculture agriculture, which they understood as economically unsustainable.

People also provide some religious motivation for or understanding of their actions on the farm. One member explained that

planting our plants, we’re supplicating to Allah, as al-halim, the clement, to have forbearance with us as we’re messing with these plants and their root structures, as we’re transplanting them or planting a seed. It’s like our inadequacies as a human instrument for the dispersal for these plants be made up for Allah’s generosity and his mercy toward the plants. And with that comes a broader understanding [that] you need to have an agricultural system that’s not going to create erosion and you don’t want to put chemicals into the ground, which will seep into the ground water.

According to his comments, Sufis need to be aware of how their actions affect creation. They also need to recognize human inadequacy, yet strive to be God-like in their agricultural pursuits. God has a relationship with nature, which humans should respect. Further, many members explained in various ways that humans needed to be respectful of the environment, because it was a gift from God. The quote above also alludes to ideas within the tradition about the interconnectedness of creation.

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97 Beatrice, interview; and Kalima, interview.

98 Adam, interview.
The community decides on specific agriculture techniques through research and experience. Some members research on their own and the community has learned a lot from various agricultural specialists and the Pennsylvania Association of Sustainable Agriculture. The Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship also belongs to this organization that holds meetings and field days for member farms to learn. Some of the cultivation has been informed by the philosophy of permaculture, although not to the same extent as at the Dayempur Farm.\(^99\)

Some of the food from the farm is given to the poor as part of the service performed by the community. The community also has other projects to help people. Once a year, they collect items to donate to needy people in Morocco. They also support a kindergarten for orphans in Jerusalem.

The pastures on the farm are used to raise sheep for meat. The community also has two donkeys that it keeps as companion animals. There is one woman who is responsible for raising and caring for the sheep, but she does have help from other members in the community. She also helps with the slaughter, as do other community members, which takes place on the property.\(^100\) The sheep are killed in a *halal* way, which means that they are slaughtered according to the Islamic tradition.

Part of the reason that the community began raising sheep was so that members would have access to *halal* meat, which is meat that is religiously permissible. Meat is permissible if it does not contain any foods that are forbidden and if it was slaughtered according to Islamic guidelines. There was a butcher who claimed to be slaughtering

\(^99\) Mary, interview; and Raoul, interview.

\(^100\) Beatrice, interview.
approximately 300 to 400 animals a day according to halal guidelines. However, members of the community explained to me that the meat was not necessarily halal, because he was being rough with the animals. One member noted that she thought that the animals at the Farm of Peace were being slaughtered correctly because “the people who do it here [the Farm of Peace] have the heart for it and the gentleness and the mercy.”\(^{101}\) She did not think that just any Muslim performing the slaughter made the slaughter halal.\(^{102}\)

Members also raise their sheep in a tayyib way.\(^{103}\) Tayyib generally means good and “is often used to describe objects or people that are pure and clean physically and spiritually.”\(^{104}\) In relationship to food, “tayeb meat comes from animals that were raised properly, fed properly, allowed to graze freely, and permitted to act in the most natural way – the way that God intended.”\(^{105}\) The woman responsible for the sheep explained, “there’s definitely a demand in our community for halal raised meat or to know where it came from and there’s just a value in providing a good product for people that’s really wholesome.”\(^{106}\) Some Sufis are “really in tune with the energetic level of things. . . [and] the energy of meat that comes from an animal that’s raised in a clean pasture and killed in a gentle way with the right prayers and everything is very different than. . . go[ing] to

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\(^{101}\) Kalima, interview.

\(^{102}\) Ibid.

\(^{103}\) Ibid. This term is also transliterated as tayeb. The community only spoke to me about this idea, so I do not know which spelling they use.


\(^{106}\) Beatrice, interview.
the grocery store and... grabb[ing] lamb out of the cooler." Sidi also thinks that there is money to be made in halal meat. However, the project has yet to be profitable.

The community also decided to raise animals, because Sidi showed members passages in the Qur'an where God urged people to eat meat. Some members had formerly been vegetarians and wanted to be involved with raising and killing the animals, if they were going to eat them. Members of the community also explained that there were important lessons to learn through raising sheep and even "every major prophet was a shepherd to teach them patience and how to care for people." According to some of those people involved with the sheep, animals, like people, mirror the self. People also felt that they experienced God's bounty and beauty, as well as the animal's sacrifice, by raising sheep.

During my visit, I helped feed the sheep hay and corn and learned that the pregnant sheep were given frozen molasses to lick. While pregnant it was difficult for them to eat enough, because their stomach was cramped, so the molasses provided extra energy. The sheep are feed twice a day. Members of the community have learned to breed and care for sheep through experience, by attending some classes and workshops, and with the help of a consultant.

In the classes and workshops, they have learned about sheep's reproduction systems and the many parasites that plague sheep. They did learn the hard way to

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107 Beatrice, interview.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid.
111 Maribel, interview.
have the sheep mate once a year when they had to deliver some lambs in the middle of
the night in the winter.\textsuperscript{112} The year that I visited the farm there was one lamb, because
one of the ewes escaped, but the rest of the sheep were pregnant and expected to
deliver around April first. They do not breed the yearlings.

The woman responsible for the sheep explained that a small scale farmer has to
learn to be a veterinary technician to care for the sheep, because they need to give
shots, trim the sheep’s feet, feed the sheep de-wormer, put in ear tags, plus possibly
dock the sheep’s tails or castrate the sheep. She said the key to dealing with the sheep
while doing something unpleasant was to remain cool and calm. Before having their
own flock, the community would buy some sheep and raise them until they would be big
enough to slaughter.\textsuperscript{113}

They had a consultant from a conservation organization come to do an audit of
their farm. He walked through their pastures and fields, recommended areas to be
fenced and areas that needed lime and fertilizer, and suggested a revised grazing plan.
Members of the community learned that they were waiting too long to cut the grass after
the sheep would graze and that they were cutting it too short, so the grass was being
weakened and the sheep were getting poked in the eye. The consultant also provided
information on rotational grazing between sheep and chickens, explaining that it is best
for sheep to graze and then chickens. Sheep graze and just before the grasses’ second
growth spurt, it is best to release the chickens because the grass is short, the chickens

\textsuperscript{112} Maribel, interview.

\textsuperscript{113} Beatrice, interview.
spread manure that has nitrogen that is taken-up by the growing plants, and the chickens eat pests. ¹¹⁴

There are still some chickens on the farm, and they are fed three times a day. Members of the community let the chickens out to feed, but once the chickens were done eating, they were put back in their coop to protect them from predators in the area. They use two different kinds of coops, large ones for chickens that are more aggressive or have more foraging instincts. They used smaller coops for the more docile birds. Members of the community have built the fences around the pastures and the chicken coops. They slaughtered the chickens themselves, and they said that there was a large market for their chickens. ¹¹⁵

Members have developed and changed practices and plans on the farm through researching, reading, and trial and error. ¹¹⁶ Some people have drawn on their experiences. Some people were urban gardeners, one grew up with horses, and another’s parents were gentlemen farmers. Others had no experience with farming or rural living. Community members have also learned a lot about farming by being members of the Pennsylvania Association of Sustainable Agriculture (PASA), which is an organization of farmers who hold workshops and an annual conference where they teach each other. The group also holds field days, where members can get hands on experience. ¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Beatrice, interview.
¹¹⁵ Ibid.
¹¹⁶ Adam, interview; and Maribel, interview.
¹¹⁷ Maribel, interview, and Beatrice, interview.
Members also compost as much as they can. The animal bedding gets spread on the field or put in a compost pile. They compost kitchen scraps and any other odds and ends around the farm, and there is a composting toilet in IPC. The community “need[s] all the nutrients in the soil so we’re pretty much holding on to all that.”\textsuperscript{118} They also recycle at the farm. At first they had to drive their recycling to a center on the way to Frederick, Maryland once a week, but recently a recycling bin had been installed in town.\textsuperscript{119}

The people who lived on the farm said that they did not do many environmental activities outside of the ones that they did on the farm. This was mostly because they were so busy working on the farm. One member explained that “as far as doing any active stuff off the farm, I pretty much don’t have time. So I find that I’m really concentrated on what I’m doing here, because I figure we can at least take care of our own patch of ground.”\textsuperscript{120} Some of them had done things in the past before moving to the farm, such as urban farming and participating in transition culture groups.\textsuperscript{121}

People who lived off the farm were engaged in various environmental activities. Some had pets, which was another way that they felt they connected with nature. Many

\textsuperscript{118} Beatrice, interview.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{121} Mary, interview. Transition culture groups are concerned with finding ways to bring about social and cultural changes that will need to take place due to ecological and economic changes that will be caused by climate change and the depletion of non-renewable natural resources, such as crude oil.
lived in a rural area. Others had herb gardens at their homes where they grew medicinal herbs and other herbs.

**Future Plans**

The community had some plans for the future of some of the buildings, institutions, and land. Members were working on plans to build a mosque. The barn used during Sufi School East and called the mosque does not have heat, insulation, or running water, making it impractical for regular use. Sidi told the community to build a mosque, then to finish the building there. So, the community is going to add an addition to this building or create another building near, which will have a kitchen, childcare, a dining room, and an area for ablution.

Some members of the community want to create a permaculture garden around the IPC. In this garden they would have herbs and medicinal and food crops that they could use in the building. The CSA manager's wife was going to run a school again, because the community had a lot of children between the ages of three and eight.

Members of the community were also planning to build a residential section on the farm to increase the available housing. There was going to be one section to the right of the farmhouse, back behind the garden, for houses. They had already starting laying down a road and putting in some infrastructure for the area during my visit. The

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122 Kalima, interview.
123 Adam, interview.
124 Maribel, interview.
125 Beatrice, interview.
126 Adam, interview.
127 Ibid.
128 Maribel, interview.
caretaker of the farm and his wife, the caretaker of the IPC, wanted to build themselves their own caretakers’ cottage.129

The community has a revised grazing plan and a rehabilitation plan for the pastures that it has been working to enact. Members are working to build fences to increase the fenced area. By adding another large field, the farm can accommodate 60 sheep and each section of a field can have months to recover after being grazed.130 Some members of the community want to raise water buffalo on the property, so that they have a source of red meat. When I visited, members were not eating red meat.131

**Community**

Members of the Farm of Peace attract new members by “just allow[ing] the light and the beauty and the love here at the farm to attract the people who come.”132 The group is open to anyone that wants to join. I was also told that the community was not interested in proselytizing, but that they wanted to be a resource for people who were looking for God.133

As part of the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center, the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East has connections with other centers around the United States. The Sufi Center website lists links to the following local communities: the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East/Farm of Peace, the Sufi Center Northeast in Mt. Tremper, New York, the Sufi Community of Chicago, the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center of Minnesota, the Shadhuli Center of Peace and

129 Mary, interview; and Raoul, interview.
130 Beatrice, interview.
131 Maribel, interview.
132 Ibid.
133 Mary, interview; and Raoul, interview.
Mercy in Michigan, Sufi Healing for the Soul in Georgia, the Sufi Center South Florida, the Sufi Center of Austin, the Central Texas Community, the Los Angeles Shadhiliyya Sufi Center, the Southwest Regional Sufi Center, and Japan.  Although primarily based in the United States, there are also groups in South America, the Philippines, Japan, and Europe. Not all of the teachers from these other communities agree on how all practices should be done.

Members of the Farm of Peace do interact with other Muslims, who are not Sufi. The Arabic teacher sometimes brings members of her community to the Farm of Peace for workshops. The men will sometimes attend mosque in another community. Members also interact with a Muslim community in Hagerstown.

One reason that members of the Farm of Peace do not interact with many other Muslims is because there are not any other Muslim communities nearby. The majority of people in the broader community of Fulton County, Pennsylvania are unclaimed by a congregation. The study reported 9,307 adherents as unclaimed. Christian congregations claimed the next largest group of adherents. Together, Evangelical Protestants, Mainline Protestants, and Catholics claimed 4,577 members, and Mainline Protestants claimed 3,176 of those members. This study did not identify any Muslim congregations and thus no adherents to Islam.


136 Beatrice, interview.

137 Maribel, interview.

The same data from 2007 and 2008 about the religious composition of Pennsylvania that applied to Bawa Muhaïyyaddeen Farm, also applied to the Farm of Peace, because they are both located in Pennsylvania. According to the American Religious Identification survey, 31 percent of the adult population in Pennsylvania identified as Catholic, 46 percent as other Christians, four percent as other Religions, 15 percent as Nones, and four percent as DK/Refused. According to data from 2007, less than 0.5 percent of the adult population of Pennsylvania identified as Muslim. When asked a question about having any difficulties with their neighbors, as part of a series of questions about difficulties in joining the farm community and moving to live by it, a member asked if I wanted to know if there were any difficulties with “being a Muslim out in the Bible Belt.” He did not think that the Christian faith of his neighbors had contributed to any trouble, because “everybody is very nice around here, and if you’re a good Christian you can get along with a good Muslim no problem.”

There were members who thought that their neighbors were generally wary of the Farm of Peace. The farm manager explained, “I think that they are afraid because they hear we are Muslim and Muslims are scary. That’s just what I’ve heard unfortunately.” However, she also added that “I hear these stories, but these people are really nice . . . One of the neighbors is really nice and one day I was driving in and he stopped his truck and he pulled this article out of his pocket about Sufis, and he

141 Adam, interview.
142 Ibid.
143 Kalima, interview.
made me read it." Not only are some of the neighbors nice, but some also want to learn more about Sufism.

Not all of their neighbors are accepting of the Farm of Peace. A member of the community works in the Conservation District’s Office, and he sometimes hears rumors about the Sufi Center East. When he hears these rumors, he corrects them.

Most members assumed that their neighbors knew they were Muslims, but also acknowledged that they were not sure if the neighbors knew. One person noted that members certainly interact with people of other faiths in their daily work or through the CSA. Buying supplies was another way that members of the Farm of Peace interacted with the broader community, and one woman noted that she thought it was likely that people would realize in those situations that she was a Muslim, because she wore a *hijab*. A young male member of the community also reflected about the identification that might take place due to his clothing. He explained “I get looks when I go out in my *kufi*, but that’s just because I’m different, because I look different. But when you get to talking with people, everybody is very nice.”

The community has held activities to try to reach out to the local community, but people expressed a desire to do more. The community has invited church leaders from the area to the farm to learn more about the Sufi Center East. Salima teaches at a local college, and she lectures about Sufism and Islam nationally and internationally.

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144 Kalima, interview.
145 Ibid.
146 Adam, interview.
147 Maribel, interview.
148 Ibid.
The community’s Arabic class is open to anyone who wants to attend. The community also holds some *dhikrs* that are open to everyone.

Due to the community’s focus on healing, members have worked extensively with the broader healing community. One member was planning a healing workshop for veterans that was intended for people outside of the community. The group also holds Free Healing Days and the Unity Music Festival.

Through the Pennsylvania Farm Vacation Association, the community has had all types of visitors – single people, couples, and families. The Farm of Peace’s website for this program mentions that they are a spiritual community, but it does not mention that they are a Sufi community. They only tell visitors they are Sufis if people ask or seem like they might be Muslim. One member explained the unofficial policy this way, “if people seem like they aren’t Sufi or aren’t Muslim we just don’t hold our practices here while they are here. If they seem like they might be, we’ll say ‘are you comfortable having *jumma* prayer, and then we do.’” They do have some people who start asking questions and become interested when they see the decorations and books in the farmhouse. The community decided that this program would let people still experience the spirit of the farm, even if they were not interested in doing a retreat.

**Conclusion**

The sheikh and the community have influenced the shape and characteristics of the farm, just as they did at the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm and Dayempur

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149 Mary, interview; and Raoul, interview.

150 Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East, “Everyone Welcome.”

151 Beatrice, interview.

152 Ibid.
Farm. There are also religious and environmental lessons to be learned on the Farm of Peace.

The Farm of Peace is an important part of the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East. It fulfills important roles within the community and within the individual experiences of members involved with the farm. It is a place to gather, worship, serve, and live beliefs about God, food, and agriculture.

For some members of the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East, the specific land of the Farm of Peace is important, because Sidi's spirit can be found in the land, even if he has yet to pass and is not physically present on the land. Therefore, within the Farm of Peace, the relationship between the sheikh and the land is different than those found within the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm and the Dayempur Farm.

Like Murshid, Sidi is involved with the agricultural practices on the Farm of Peace. He provides general directions for projects on the farm and often leaves people to figure out how to best run these projects. Members of the community have worked hard to establish a system of governance that allows them to work together.

Many people living by the Farm of Peace and heavily involved with projects on the Farm of Peace have been drawn to the idea of living and working in community. Some are drawn to the institution of the farm and the possibilities for intentional living and new models of agriculture. People are meant to follow their passion when becoming involved with specific circles of the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East. This passion is thought to be God revealing a piece of a person's nature. Not many people live on or by the farm. One of the biggest difficulties for people who reside on or near the Farm of Peace is trying to make a living.
Many people explained that the agricultural practices on the farm had nothing to do with religion. Instead they were undertaken to try to create a new stream of revenue for members living on the farm or because of beliefs about food or the environment, such as Sidi’s instructions to make the community and its practices as sustainable as possible. Members have even sometimes made connections between religious beliefs and environmental practices due to the reflective nature of their path and their experiences on the farm.

Having rural institutions has also allowed these Muslims to construct particular communities and identities. They have created unique institutions that can also been seen as similar to pre-existing types of communities. Sufi communal meeting places have played a role in the historic development of Sufism in the United States. According to Marcia Hermansen, intentional Sufi communities in the U.S.

provide a context for the spiritual development of individuals through interaction with other seekers, as well as a forum for visiting spiritual teachers. In terms of teachers who came, it provided an opportunity for exposure to the American context (in the case of foreigners) and the opportunity to expand networks and recruit more followers.\(^{153}\)

All the farms provide opportunities for members to interact with other believers. They can be a place for them to invite members of other Muslim or non-Muslim communities. For the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East and the Dayemi Tariqat, their farms are also places where members can interact with their sheikhs. At the Dayempur Farm, members interact with Murshid on a weekly basis, unless he is traveling. Members of the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East meet with Sidi on the Farm of Peace less often, as he lives in Jerusalem. However, some members feel Sidi’s presence in the land. Members

of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship, as well as other Muslim communities, do come to the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship to visit Bawa. However, they visit the farm to experience Bawa's spirits and the characteristics and benefits associated with a shrine and pilgrimage.

Farms attract some people who become members of some of these communities, because these individuals are drawn to the idea of creating an intentional community or being more closely involved with nature or the production of food or other goods. However, there is little recruiting that is done through these three farms. These farms or farming practices do provide a way for these communities to form connections and relationships with their neighbors. Buying goods can form trust and sharing equipment or projects can create goodwill among neighbors, plus events can be hosted on farms.

Some members of the Dayemi Tariqat and the Farm of Peace were not Sufi or were struggling with understanding the significance of being part of Muslim community. The caretaker of the Farm of Peace was not Sufi. Instead, he described himself as a perennialist. Although it was made clear to me that he did not speak for the group, since he was not a Muslim, he was allowed to be a member, to participate in rituals, and to share his opinions about the farm. Some asserted that Sufism spoke to a broader religious truth that could be found in many religions rather than within the specific language of Islam. Not only have non-Muslims joined some of these communities, but connections are being built between different articulations of American Sufi identity.

Hermansen’s description of Sufi communes does not speak to some other aspects of these farms. These farms have also provide a place for people to live ideas
about the environment, and in some instances farms provide an opportunity to earn money. These communities are similar in form to other attempts at agrarian communities throughout American history.

Some of these Muslims have been able to worship in ways that other Muslim groups do not, because they have their own spaces. For example, some members of the Farm of Peace allow women to lead prayers in situations where the men present do not know how to lead prayers. Communities also worship in areas other than traditional mosques when practicing on the farms. These communities have been able to create positions of leadership that do not exist in other Muslim communities. These positions, along with having the space to worship without the involvement of other Muslims, has been part of the way that they have negotiated gender roles on the farms. Often the lead farmers in these communities are women. At the Farm of Peace, women have been fulfilling ritual roles usually reserved for men. Experiences on farms are also contributing to unique understandings of Islamic figures or concepts.

The following chapters will explore the complicated relationships between experience and tradition in environmental attitudes and actions, as well as religious identity and community construction and negotiation. The example of these farms indicates a need to look beyond, but not past, religious worldviews to understand the relationships between the Islamic tradition and ecology. Experience plays a role in environmental beliefs and actions and sometimes helps community members develop new or deeper understandings about concepts in the tradition. However, religious beliefs and practices are not just reinterpreted based on experience. Instead, religious beliefs and practices, as well as communities and institutions, also inform Muslims’
ideas about and actions in the environment. This can sometimes lead to a tension between ideas, experiences, and actions. Farms and the negotiation of experience and tradition by Muslims involved with these farms are part of the construction of religious identity and community for these individuals.
CHAPTER 6
VALUES AND PRACTICES FROM EXPERIENCE

Members of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm, the Dayempur Farm, and the Farm of Peace are creating religious meaning and ideas about the environment through negotiations with everyday life. On the farms, these Muslims have had experiences that have influenced some of their religious beliefs and practices and their ideas and actions related to the environment. Not all members of these very different communities have had the same experiences or believe the same things. Members have developed religious ideas through careful observation, cultivation, restoration, conservation, rearing animals, slaughtering animals, working together, or some combination of these experiences.

A lived religion approach to studying Islam and ecology takes into account these types of religious beliefs and ideas, while also taking into account the other ways that Islamic ideas, practices, and institutions are involved in these farms or in these Muslims’ approaches to the environment. Ideas from experiences on the farms were just some of the ways that these Muslims negotiated and defined their relationship with non-human nature. Members also provided examples of religious and non-religious teachings and ideas by which they tried to live their lives. I focus this chapter on the influence of farming and experiences in nature on religious ideas and practices, because this information has often been overlooked in studies of Islam and ecology.

According to some ethicists, the knowledge or values that arise from experience in nature are particularly important, because they are paramount in crafting environmental ethics that people will enact. Although concerned with finding resources and interpretations of the Islamic tradition that could be used to create ethics that would
ameliorate the environmental crisis, scholars of Islam and ecology have often overlooked religious ideas or practices shaped by experiences with nature. An approach that focuses on experiences in nature provides innovative perspectives from Muslims who are interacting with nature on farms that are part of their religious communities.

Religious farms provide these Muslims with many kinds of experiences. Prolonged observation, conservation, and cultivation contributed to members having experiences of fragility, interconnectedness, community, beauty, and the sacred. These types of experiences shaped understandings about God, humanity's relation to God, the nature of the environment, and the definition of religious practice.

**Lived Religion**

A lived religion approach to studying religion is based on the assumption that "religion comes into being in an on-going, dynamic relationship with the realities of everyday life." Edward Curtis, a scholar who has used a lived religion approach when studying the Nation of Islam, has stressed the importance of analyzing "religious expression not 'as abstracted windows into belief or as essential statements of religious truth,' but as 'specific events of speaking, commenting, and reflecting.'" Lived religion emphasizes the importance of context and daily life to religious expression and identity. It also focuses on the seemingly mundane – the daily negotiations with the realities of life. In fact, religion “cannot be separated from the other practices of everyday life,

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2 Ibid, 6.
[such as] the ways that human beings work on the landscape. The role of experiences is central to understanding a religious believer or a religious tradition. With this approach, understanding what particular Muslims do, how they live their religious ideas, and how everyday life shapes their ideas and practices becomes an important part of understanding the Islamic tradition.

**Values to Practices – The field of Islam and ecology**

From the outset, studies of Islam and ecology have focused on finding an Islamic response to the environmental crisis. Scholars have looked to see what values could be found within the Islamic tradition and then applied to create an Islamic environmental ethic that would change the way that Muslims act in the environment. Usually, scholars have turned to the textual tradition to look for these Islamic resources. Some scholars have looked more concretely at the practices of Muslims. However, most of these studies have focused on applying ethics to see if they were enacted or could be applied in a particular situation. There has been little work looking at the role of experiences or everyday life in shaping values or practices. This is a critique that also exists of the broader field of religion and ecology and environmental ethics, where a similar assumption about the relationship between values and practices has dominated studies.

There are several reasons why scholars have focused on values and an Islamic worldview, when studying Islam and ecology. Muslims themselves have often explained the environmental crisis as a problem caused by the influx of industrialization and Western culture and values. Some works on Islam and ecology were influenced by Lynn White’s thesis, which argued that a Western Christian worldview led to the

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environmental crisis. According to White, “what people do in their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them,” and these ideas are shaped by religion, which is humanity’s “beliefs about our nature and destiny.” Therefore, to address the environmental crisis, people need a religious solution, one that addresses ideas about humanity and our place and purpose in the world.

Other works were often undertaken as part of the field of religion and ecology and were shaped by concerns and presumptions within this field of study. Within early scholarship, most scholars of religion and ecology have assumed that there is a connection between values and practices, even if only spurred by a crisis. Religion is important in attempting to change people’s attitudes about the environment, because religions are “key shapers of people’s worldviews and the formulat thes of their most cherished values.” The work of this field is often tied to activism or has a normative aim, because most scholars of religion and ecology believe that there is an unprecedented environmental crisis caused by humanity that needs to be addressed.

Not only have scholars of Islam and ecology focused on belief, they have often looked to the textual tradition to articulate an Islamic worldview or ethic. Sometimes a textual study is undertaken, because it is thought that it might provide universal Islamic ideas about the environment that would resonate with all Muslims. The Qur’an, hadith (the recorded sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad), and schools of law carry authority among Muslims. There are sometimes political reasons to focus on values derived from the Qur’an or hadith because local practices are often considered un-

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Islamic by Islamists. In fact, some Muslim environmental activists have often avoided constructing Islamic environmental ethics on anything other than the Qu’ran, *hadith*, and other sources of Islamic law and have not been “overly forthcoming in divulging all the sources of inspiration which have led them to adopt non-mainstream positions.”

The idea that Islamic texts can provide a single ethic that Muslims have understood or applied universally is misleading. Even some scholars who have argued that the Muslim world is diverse and that it is impossible to talk about a monolithic Islamic view on anything unless focusing on common sources of meaning, which would be the textual tradition, have noted limitations to this assumption. In an article focused on Islamic rules related to environmental issues, Ammar argues “it is only justifiable to discuss the Islamic world as a homogenous community insofar as Muslims adhere to a defined textual literature.” She never defines which texts would be part of this literature, but she focuses on the Qur’an, *hadith*, and Islamic law in her article. She also notes that “it is not possible to attempt a comprehensive/mainstream description of the Muslim environmental tradition. . . [because of] the changing historical condition of Muslim communities. . . [and] the Muslim communities’ conscience is a changing one.”

She also discusses various interpretations of these texts.

Foltz states that “for any idea to achieve anything approaching universal acceptance by Muslims as ‘Islamic,’ it must be convincingly demonstrated that it derives

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7 Foltz, *Animals in Islamic Traditions and Muslim Cultures*, 146.


9 Ibid, 124
from the Qur’an or, failing that, from the example of the prophet Muhammad.”\[^{10}\] He does note that Sunnis and Shi’ites do not agree on all hadiths, but he does state that “historically, the one indisputable source of authority which all Muslims have agreed upon is the will of Allah as expressed in the revealed scripture of the Qur’an.”\[^{11}\] However, he never makes clear if there is an agreed upon interpretation of the Qur’an.

There is debate among scholars of Islam as to the universal meaning of the Qur’an. Some scholars, who are concerned with definitions of Islam and the contours of the Islamic tradition, maintain that even the textual parts of the tradition, including the Qur’an, can only be understood through the filter of believers and their experiences.\[^{12}\] In discussing the role of texts in the Islamic tradition, Amina Wadud has explained that “every ‘reading’ reflects, in part, the intensions of the text, as well as the ‘prior’ text of the one who makes the ‘reading.’”\[^{13}\] Some scholars argue that it is important to recognize that there is no Islamic tradition outside the actions, texts, and readings of believers, so that certain interpretations are not valued over others.

The examples of the role of experience in the ideas of Muslims involved with the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm, the Dayempur Farm, and the Farm of Peace demonstrate the importance of the textual tradition, especially Qur’anic ideas, in their ideas about and practices involving the nature. However, experiences and the

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\[^{11}\] Ibid, 252.
particular religious and ecological context of a community also influence the development of religious ideas about the environment, including readings of texts. Further, according to environmental ethicists, an ethic, such as a Qur'anic ethic, that does not speak to the local situation, both religiously and ecologically may not be as compelling in shaping the behaviors of Muslim communities. Studies of Islam and ecology that present textual resources removed from contexts as a source for developing Islamic environmental ethics are also limiting the diversity of the Islamic tradition and the rich meanings of these texts.

There have been works published that acknowledge that Muslims are motivated by more than their religious texts and some that look beyond beliefs and identity. These include a number of scholarly articles that analyze the lived experience of Muslims as it pertains to the environment. These articles still primarily focus on the implementation or application of an Islamic worldview or Islamic ideas on a particular project, policy, or environmental issue. Some look for resources from these Muslim contexts that can be used to create an Islamic response to environmental problems. These works focus on issues such as environmental activism, the treatment of animals, water use, family planning, and development. These articles demonstrate the ways in which economic, political, and social realities, as well as scientific ideas and religious institutions particular to specific areas, have influenced Muslims’ ideas about human-nature relationships. They highlight specific communities with particular historical, geographical, and cultural contexts.

Local, national, or international political systems and ideologies often influence ideas or programs that address environmental issues. Homa Hoodfar’s article “The
Politics of Population Policy in the Islamic Republic of Iran,” and Nancy Jabbra and Joseph G. Jabbra’s article “Islam, the Environment, and Family Planning” provide examples of how political institutions and ideas can support or block the implementation of family planning programs. The edited volume Environmentalism in the Muslim World presents overviews of environmental activism in Malaysia, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt, Nigeria, highlighting the context that has shaped these movements. However, there is little connection between experiencing ecological realities and religious beliefs. Foltz explains that

    this is a book about Muslims and how, in varying contexts, they are attempting to find their own solutions to the environmental crisis. . .  It is not a book about Islam per se, although the worldview and value system of anyone living in a Muslim society will inevitably be shaped and influenced by Islamic principles and norms.

Articles in this compilation demonstrate how activism in these countries is often influenced by politics and ecological realities. Within the volume Islam and Ecology, Foltz argues in his article, “Islamic Environmentalism: A Matter of Interpretation,” that Iran’s government has been instrumental in enacting Islamic environmental ethics and that “the Islamic Republic of Iran may offer the strongest evidence of an applied Islamic environmental ethic in the world today.”

Many of these articles on Islam and ecology have been written by scholars who have areas of specialization that do not include the study of religion and nature.


Cultural ideas can also shape actions in the environment. In *Environmentalism in the Muslim World*, Foltz argues that there have been two dominate models for initiatives – Western, secular initiatives and indigenous initiatives. Examples from some of the articles in this book demonstrate how these ideas about the West have shaped some Muslim responses to the environment, including those of some religious leaders. Foltz argues that Muslims need to find ways to address environmental issues and live in a global society “that are compatible with the value system their cultural heritage provides.”¹⁷ Foltz makes a similar point in his article “Iran’s Water Crisis: Cultural, Political, and Ethical Dimensions.” According to Foltz, water management based on modern industrial values has imperiled Iranians, because it has been imported and does not reflect cultural or ecological realities. He argues that the Iranian government cannot fully return to water management systems based on Islamic or Iranian values, but that these systems will be able to help craft new ways of management that reflect the cultural and environmental realities of Iran.

Using the example of an Egyptian woman, Nawal Ammar explains how cultural norms, such as childcare practices, gender norms and the treatment of men and women, influence women’s reproductive choices. She also demonstrates how economic realities and societal norms, such as infant mortality and quality of education, also influence women’s reproductive practices. She argues that policy makers must take into account these diverse influences, rather than addressing population as an issue that can be solved with just technology or access to education.¹⁸


In “Fertility, Contraceptive Use and Family Planning Program Activity in the Islamic Republic of Iran,” Akbar Aghajanian and Amir H. Mehryar argue that Ayatollah Khomeini’s *fatwa* supporting family planning played an important role in getting other religious leaders on board, demonstrating the importance of this specifically Iranian religious institution.\(^{19}\) Richard Foltz’s *Animals in the Islamic Tradition and Muslim Cultures* looks to resources from the Islamic tradition and Muslim cultures, including religious texts, legal texts, philosophy, science, literature, art, and contemporary activism, to find the foundations for Islamic ethics toward animals. He finds that “the Islamic tradition possesses ample resources by which to develop and apply a meaningful contemporary critique of how humans today treat other animals” and also highlights specific interpretations from within particular Muslim contexts.\(^{20}\) Tazim R. Kassam provides an overview of the work of a non-governmental organization, the Aga Khan Development Network, which is based around the ideals and leader of the Isma’ili Muslim community. She highlights the ideas, institutions, and figures that are unique to this Shia Muslim group.\(^{21}\)

James L. Westcoat’s article, “From the Gardens of the Qur’an to the ‘Gardens’ of Lahore” is one of the few articles that attempts to directly compare beliefs presented in texts to the practices and institutions of Muslims. Westcoat looks to see if Qur’anic ideas about gardens were being embodied in Mughal gardens of Lahore. He found that

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\(^{19}\) Aghajanian and Merhyar, “Fertility, Contraception Use and Family Planning Program Activity in the Islamic Republic of Iran.”

\(^{20}\) Foltz, *Animals in Islamic Tradition and Muslim Cultures*, 7-8.

different types of gardens evoked or embodied religious and political ideas. He found that temple gardens looked like descriptions of gardens found in the Qur’an, but that Sufi shrines embodied the meaning but not depiction of gardens described in the Qur’an.

Mohammad Yusuf Siddiq’s “An Ecological Journey in Muslim Bengal” does highlight the influence of Bengal’s ecosystem on the development of religious and cultural ideas and practices. He traces the historic impact of wildlife, plants, and climate, as well as local religious forms and culture, on the development of a Bengali form of Islam. Bengali culture’s “symbiotic relationship” with the natural environment influenced the type of Islam developed and practiced in Bengal. However, the colonial system which was imposed in the eighteenth century led to exploitation of natural resources that still has ramifications today. Siddiq proposes solutions to these ecological problems through Islamic institutions, such as mosques and religious leaders.

These examples are helpful for this work on Islam and the environment because of the focus on context. They also highlight things other than religion, such as cultural practices and social norms, that influence Muslims’ attitudes toward and action in the environment. The cultural, social, political, ecological, and economic contexts of particular communities of Muslims are central to a lived religion approach to studying Islam and ecology, as are the particular forms of Islam practiced in specific

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communities. These authors demonstrate how these factors can influence environmental practices or the success of particular programs or policies.

The contexts of these studies are very different than on farms in the United States, in part because of the motivation for actions among these Muslims. Muslims involved with the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm, the Dayempur Farm, and the Farm of Peace did not necessarily become involved with the farm to address environmental or development issues or to even engage the environment. Members of the farms are influenced by different cultural and social norms. Further, there are few connections made between experiences in the environment and religious beliefs and practice.

Foltz has argued that

we need not be overly concerned with which of the many existing interpretations (e.g., eco-friendly or not, patriarchal or not, etc.) of Islam or any other religion is historically or originally ‘the correct one,’ but rather, we should acknowledge that among all possible interpretations available to us, it is the eco-friendly, nonhierarchical ones that we desperately need to articulate and put into practice today.  

The lack of any single interpretation of Islamic texts makes it important for scholars to find all of the interpretations that they can among Muslim communities. One type of interpretation that has been missing from studies on Islam and ecology are religious ideas and beliefs that arise from experience with nature. This is potentially a major oversight, as some environmental ethicists have argued that the knowledge or the values that arise from experiences in nature are paramount in crafting environmental ethics that people will enact. Further, scholars have been missing particular interpretations that Muslims have been making based on their experiences in nature.

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23 Foltz, "Islamic Environmentalism," 249.
Practice to Values – Environmental ethicists’ critiques of traditional ethics

Ideas from experience and practice are additionally important due to their role in the creation of environmental ethics. Concerned with limitations of conventional environmental ethics, some scholars have begun exploring the role of experience or practice in ethics. They argue that people gain values or knowledge through experience and that these values and knowledge are vital to creating environmental ethics that influence people. Their arguments point to the necessity of including studies of practices or values that arise from experience and highlight some of the complicated connections between ideas and experience.

William Jordan, a restoration ecologist, focuses on a particular kind of practice that he believes will create values that can be used in the articulation of environmental ethics. Jordan argues that restoration ecology is a ritual act that can be used to create and enact environmental ethics, by bringing humans into communion with nature. Jordan defines “restoration as everything we do to a landscape or an ecosystem in an ongoing attempt to compensate for novel or ‘outside’ influences on it in such a way that it can continue to behave or can resume behaving as if these were not present,” noting that restoration is distinctive, because of its “commitment. . . to bringing the whole system back to a former condition whatever that might happen to be – not just those features we find beautiful, interesting, or useful but also those that we consider uninteresting, useless, ugly, repulsive, or even dangerous.”

For Jordan, the best natural - . . . ecosystems will not be those that have been ‘preserved’ from human influences but those that have been subject to management

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aimed at identifying those influences that do exist and then compensating for them in an ecologically effective way, which stresses the importance of human involvement in maintaining restoration projects.\textsuperscript{25}

Rituals, according to Jordan, are the "means by which humans generate, recreate, and renew transcendental values such as community, meaning, beauty, love, and the sacred, on which ethics and morality depend."\textsuperscript{26} Restoration is a ritual where humans engage in a reciprocal relationship with nature, creating and reinforcing values with nature. The values that arise out of restoration can be used to create and enact environmental ethics that benefits both humans and their surrounding environment. It is through restoration that people learn “to live graciously in this planet” and in community with the rest of nature.\textsuperscript{27}

Jordan argues that restoration ecology is the best way for humans to engage the environment, because it

combine[s] the best elements of two forms of environmentalism – the conservationist’s willingness to participate in the ecology of a natural landscape, and the environmentalists’ insistence on the inherent value of a landscape, independent of its value to humans – into a single act that linked engagement with total respect.\textsuperscript{28}

Unlike other ways of engaging nature, restoration ecology creates community and is not consumptive or intrusive. It also creates ethics built on the desire to live well rather than

\textsuperscript{25} Jordan, 14.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid, 5.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid, 6.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid, 3.
as a response to an unprecedented environmental crisis. This creates ethics that are more persuasive and creative in their response to the environment.

Anna Peterson builds on these earlier works. In her critique of environmental ethics, she states that “in order to have better ethics, we need to have better experiences.” Peterson is concerned that ethicists have done little to actually change people’s behaviors, because the field is dominated by ideas or value systems and little attention is paid to whether or not the right ideas lead to the correct actions. Even ethicists concerned with applied ethics focus on implementing ethics in particular situations. There is a demonstrated gap between values and practices that needs to be addressed by ethicists, if they hope to have a practical influence.

Peterson explains that much of our ethical action is influenced by implicit values, such as uncritical anthropocentrism, individualism, and human exceptionalism that contribute to an attitude of privilege. To overcome these values, Peterson believes that we need to have experiences that speak to the true nature of our position in the environment, experiences such as vulnerability, weakness, interdependence, and humility. She argues that theology and ethics should be developed after an active and open engagement of nature through practice. She also notes that “conditions of life make certain narratives, worldviews, and values possible, but these forms of thought and discourse, in turn, shape the world, and seeing judging, and acting continually transform each other.”

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She argues for a practice-based ethic, in order to avoid idealism. This approach to ethics would create studies where ethicists “would begin by looking at economic and political institutions and everyday practices and ask which values and ways of moral reasoning these embody and legitimize.” By doing this, ethicists will be able to at least figure out where people are, before working with them to develop better ethics.

Her argument about the role of practice as the foundation for environmental ethics illustrates the importance of experience, especially particular experiences that lead to feelings of humility or interconnectedness, in creating ethics that influence how people live and help us to overcome the implicit values of society that keep us from caring for the earth. She observes that “living differently changes how the world looks and what we value in it.” However, she is also careful to note that beliefs, narratives, and frames also shape experiences, highlighting the reciprocal relationships between values and practices. According to Peterson, ethicists need to study and built upon these relationships if they want to create change, and she offers lived religion as an approach for such study.

These authors point to the need to cultivate particular values or knowledge through experience. Jordan argues that by becoming involved with restoration ecology, people will be able to have these experiences. Peterson does not provide one type of practice that will create new values, instead focusing on the need for better scholarship on the relationships between values and practices.

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31 Peterson, “Toward a Materialist Environmental Ethic,” 388.
32 Ibid, 391.
Values and Practices from Experiences on Farms

On the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm, the Dayempur Farm, and the Farm of Peace, various experiences and practices on the farms have influenced religious beliefs and practices. Diverse experiences, such as raising animals, tending grasslands, working with others, growing food, and regular observation of nature have affected religious and environmental beliefs and practices. Embodied experience in nature has influenced ideas about God, creation, the Prophet Muhammad, humanity, and religious practices. Some members also gained insights about themselves that could help them progress spiritually. Most members also explained how their primary way of learning about nature was through their senses, and many learned about farming through trial and error. Everyday experiences and practices on the farms are influencing religious ideas and practices, as well as knowledge about the environment and farming.

There are beliefs and practices within the Islamic tradition and specifically among Sufi communities that highlight the importance of experience and everyday practice. According to Scott Kugle, who has studied the physical body within Sufism, “Sufis stress the immediacy of religious experience with, through, and in the body (dhawq, or tasting intuitively).”

Sufis also focused on how to embody the Prophet Muhammad’s legacy and mission. Tariqa, which is used to refer to lineages of teachers that trace back to the Prophet Muhammad, literally translates to mean “way.” Kugle explains that “In its function, the tariqa offers a distinct method of initiation, recitation, and religious

33 Kugle, Sufis and Saints’ Bodies, 7.
34 Ibid, 21.
exercises designed to bring the dedicated practitioner into a state of holiness compatible with everyday life.”

Within the Islamic tradition, nature, like the Qur’an, is a book of signs. Both contain revelation about the nature of God, life, and humanity. Both can be studied to learn religious truth. Members of these farms explained that there were several ways that nature could provide lessons, besides providing concrete examples of lessons.

Members of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm explained that nature could be used as an analogy in teaching spiritual lessons and remembered how one of Bawa’s gifts was his ability to use metaphors from nature to explain things that were practically unexplainable. Members of all the farms recounted how nature could directly contain lessons as well. When asked if farming or being a member of the farm community had influenced his religious ideas or practices, Philip replied “I don’t think so, except for that personal involvement of our own awareness, taking illustrations from nature and applying them to what we are learning spiritually.” Bawa taught members of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen that everything contained a lesson. Bawa also often told them to teach children about God by bringing them into nature.

The idea that everything contains lessons about God is part of a concept in Sufism, called wahdat al-shuhūd, which means unity of appearance. According to interpretations of this concept by scholars of Islam and ecology a true believer... constantly finds testimony of divine presence everywhere in the universe. For a believer, every element of time and space reminds one of the greatness of Allah, which evokes a great sense of awe and

35 Kugle, Sufis and Saints’ Bodies, 5-6.
36 Philip, interview.
37 Ibid.
excitement deep within the heart that leads the believer to a peak spiritual experience and to communion with the Creator.\textsuperscript{38}

For members of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship, the lessons from the farm could be spiritual or practical. Bawa encouraged members of the community to farm, because they would learn how to work together or how to grow a tomato from the experience.

Sometimes people need to approach nature in a particular manner to access the lessons present within it. Philip, a member of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm, explained that there were particular practices from their lineage that allowed them to experience lessons from nature. He recalled how Bawa taught that “if you walk with the \textit{dhikr}, then it raises your awareness and sensitivity to a level that everything in nature teaches you something. Everything teaches you something, even the birds, the animals, the leaves.”\textsuperscript{39}

Members of all the farms provide examples of specific ideas or practices that arose from their various types of experiences with nature on the farms. They formed particular ideas about the nature of creation, its relation to God, the nature of existence, the figure of the Prophet, and humanity’s place in nature. Some religious ideas about nature seem to be particular to certain individuals and sometimes seem to be influenced by cultural ideas as well.

During an interview, I was told that my questions had led a member to reconsider his ideas about the connections between actions in the environment and religion. When he first looked at my interview questions, he thought that there would be little to say about the relationship between farming or conservation and religion. However, upon

\textsuperscript{38} Siddiq, “An Ecological Journey in Muslim Bengal,” 451.

\textsuperscript{39} Philip, interview.
reflecting on my questions, he found a subtle connection between them. In many ways these subtle connections are present in the following examples. These experiences can inform, support, or shape foundational religious ideas about God and the unity of existence, but they can also shape smaller ideas.

**Signs of God**

As part of what is often described as the mystical branch of Islam, Sufis aim to grow in their knowledge of God, to live according to God’s will, and to experience God. Some members of these farms explained how they grew in their understanding of God since having different experiences on the farms. Frequently, they had insights as to the relationship between God and nature or God, nature, and humanity.

For Jamal, a member of the farm crew at the Dayempur Farm, being on the farm provided an environment that made religious reflection easier. For Jamal, the farm was a place where he was better able to rehearse the signs, which the Dayemi Tariqat describes as the practice of finding God’s guidance in the created world. He explained “it’s more self-evident. In the Qur’an it’s always saying rehearse the signs. For me it’s easier to rehearse the signs out here than in the office, because you see the bounty of what is provided and the force.” He reflected, “we come out here, and we have extreme winds and floods and ice storms. Things in the past couple of years have just hammered us. It’s simpler to be reminded that it’s not about me when you’re outside in nature.”

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41 Jamal, interview.

42 Ibid.
relationship to humans and the use of the environment in mediating this relationship. Jamal also has learned about some of the characteristics of God and God's role in creation. His comments also reflect an acknowledgement of the humble position of humans in relationship to God.

A member of the Farm of Peace, the only community that raises animals larger than chickens for food, reflected on the lessons that she saw while raising animals for consumption. She learned about the animals and also about God. She explained that there was a beauty in the process and that she “got to see the real sacrifice that the animal goes through.”  She also saw lessons about “what God is making [by] providing animals for us and the care that goes along with that.” Farming practices led her to experience some of God’s characteristics and to learn more about the role of animals in life. Many of the other experiences in nature also provided some insight about God.

Environment as Perfect

When asked how being part of the farm had influenced her religious ideas or practices, Kamila, the farm manager at the Farm of Peace, generally answered that she had “had more insights about the natural world since being here and working here that [she] couldn’t have had if [she] weren’t walking through the sheep fields at the particular time and experiencing what [she] experienced.” She also reflected on the nature of the farm, explaining that “the many distractions of the world aren’t here so it makes it easier to have an experience with the natural world.”

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43 Maribel, interview.
44 Beatrice, interview.
45 Kamila, interview.
46 Ibid.
Other people found that religious farms helped them to overcome aspects of American culture and society that might prevent them from having a particular relationship with the environment or with God. Beatrice, another member of the Farm of Peace, explained that she had become less materialistic since moving to the farm, because she was removed from pop culture and did not want to buy as many things. There also was nowhere to buy things, even if she had wanted them. Jamal, from the Dayempur Farm, found that he was forced to redefine success in less material terms, since joining the Dayemi Tariqat. He reflected on how his life was defined by different measures than many of his friends outside of the community.

Kamila provided an example of an insight that she had on the farm while she was answering a question about the role that humans should play in the natural world. Her experiences led her to believe that humans should attempt to live in harmony with nature and to attempt to leave nature alone. She described how, “snow geese were flying over my house early in the morning this morning” led her to the insight that “everything is so perfect in the natural world.” She explained further how “everything has its rhythm, and it follows its direction. It’s perfection, and man comes in and sort of screws it up, basically.” Not only is nature perfect, but it is what God created and provided. Therefore, Kamila believed “the more in harmony we can be with the cycles . . . and the less we can do the better.”

Parts of her reflection seemed to echo American ideals about wilderness, because many members of the Farm of Peace, as well as the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship

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47 Kalima, interview.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
Farm, and the Farm of Peace, stressed the idea that there was a religious imperative to use resources in nature. For many members of these communities, there has been a tension between ideas about the role of nature in human life and about human’s use or engagement of nature. These tensions become particularly noticeable when looking at the ideas that influence actions on these farms.

**Nature as Muslims**

Philip provided an example of a time when Bawa taught with an analogy from nature. He told me that he “had a beautiful picture once where all the trees during an ice storm right next to the mazar, all the tips of them had turned toward the qibla,” the niche in the mosque that indicates the direction for prayer. These trees were all in a row together bent toward Mecca. Although Philip did not fully explain the image, these trees were photographed in a position that Muslims assume while praying. Philip and anyone else who saw the picture experienced nature in a position that echoed these lessons about nature worshipping God. Bawa explained the picture to Philip saying “look at the grasses, they sway. Do you know why it’s swaying like this? It’s doing dhikr.” According to Bawa, the grasses were performing ritual remembrance of God, a practice associated with Sufi communities.

Some scholars and activists have pointed out Qur’anic passages that explain how all of the components of nature are muslim. Nature can be categorized as muslim, because it submits to God. There are several Qur’anic passages that explain how nature praises God. According to the Qur’an, “the seven heavens and the earth, and all

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50 Philip, interview.

51 Ibid.
being therein, declare His glory; there is not a thing but celebrates His praise” (17:44).  

Muslims are encouraged to:

“seest thou not that it is Allah Whose praise all beings in the heaves and on earth do celebrate, and the birds (of the air) with wings outspread? Each one knows its own (mode of) prayer and praise. And Allah knows well all that they do.” (24:41)  

This may be interpreted as a lesson about the equality of nature, however some Muslims have argued that it demonstrates the unity of God and of creation. There are also teachings about the differences between humans and nature, and these differences are often, although not always, used to articulate human superiority.  

Nature has to submit to God, but humans have free will and must choose to submit. Some Muslims have argued that nature submits to God as part of tawhid, unity.  

Philip did not use this example to talk about the value of nature. Instead, he used it to describe the powerful analogies that Bawa used from nature. For Philip, this experience was less about nature and more about making broader religious ideas accessible.

**Tawhid and Interconnectedness**

Environmental ethicists have stressed the idea that feelings of interconnectedness are important to the creation of environmental ethics. Humans need to understand that they are part of a community that includes human and non-human nature. Some members of these farms felt that experiences on these farms were helping them to realize the interconnected nature of creation.  

Some scholars and activists point to the concept of tawhid, unity, as an Islamic idea of interconnectedness that can be used to craft an ecological understanding of

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nature or an Islamic environmental ethic.\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Tawhid} refers to the unity of God but also applies to all aspects of life and is expressed in many ways throughout life. It invokes the all-encompassing knowledge of God and the all-ruling will of God.\textsuperscript{54} Many have understood \textit{tawhid} “to mean that there is no reality outside of the Absolute Reality.”\textsuperscript{55} There are also some who argue that all forces in the cosmos are acting in accordance with the divine order.\textsuperscript{56} Scholars and activists focused on the potential for environmentalism within the Islamic tradition have stressed the interrelatedness of humanity and nature, as well as the subsequent dependence of both aspects of creation on God, found within this concept of unity.\textsuperscript{57}

Only one member of a farm mentioned \textit{tawhid} directly while explaining her ideas about the role that human beings should play in the natural world. According to Sally, a member of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm, “the idea for Muslims is the \textit{tawhid}, unity [that] is made up of this incredible interplay of all creation.”\textsuperscript{58} For Sally, being on the farm helped her experience \textit{tawhid}. She described how “the more I’m out


\textsuperscript{54} Izzi Dien, \textit{Environmental Dimensions of Islam}, 72 and 76.


\textsuperscript{56} Izzi Dien, \textit{Environmental Dimensions of Islam}, 72.


\textsuperscript{58} Sally, interview.
there and actually observe, I realize how interdependent all life is." These connections have been important to Sally’s understanding of the role humans should play in the natural world. She explained how humans should “be very careful and respectful of the natural world. . . [because] we have no idea how subtle these interconnections are.”

Others also mentioned experiencing the interconnectedness of nature on the farms without mentioning *tawhid*. When directly asked about how his religious ideas had changed since becoming involved with the farm, Muhammad Abdullah, the caretaker of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm, explained “I’m much more aware of my interconnectedness with plants and animals.”

Although he claimed to be careful before his experiences on the farm, he explained how some of his practices had developed on the farm, due to his growing understanding of the connection between nature and God. He told me that if “a bird flies into one of the door windows at the *mazar*, our house, our whatever and breaks its neck, I end up as best I can to give it a proper burial, saying prayers and so on and so forth.” He does this because “it is one of God’s creations.”

It is not just his understanding of the relationship between nature and God that influences his actions toward the bird. He also explained the relevance of God’s relation to humanity using a Sufi story about a *sheikh* and the *sheikh’s* followers. In the

59 Sally, interview.

60 Ibid.

61 Muhammad A., interview.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.
story, there was debate among the sheikh’s followers as to who was the better disciple. To settle this argument, the sheikh gathered the arguing students together and gave each of them a pigeon. He told them “to kill it, cut its throat in a proper way, where no one can see it.” They disciples returned and all but one had killed their pigeons.

Although the disciples were all questioning this one person, he explained to the sheikh that “you told me to take it someplace where no one could see it. . . but wherever I went, God could see me.” With that answer, the sheikh turned to the rest of the followers, asking them if they understood.

Muhammad Abdulla elaborated how this story illustrated what had changed. He explained, “It’s kind of like that. You just try. You have to be respectful you know.” He treated the environment with respect because it was a place, as were all places, to live a relationship with God. This was an idea repeated by members of the other farms too. Using the example of Jains who cover their mouths, He further explained that it was important not to interpret this story in an extreme way. He described Sufism as a way of moderation or a middle way. Muhammad Abdullah felt that his experiences on the farm helped him to reflect on what kind of relationship God has with humans and with nature, leading him to use this story from the Sufi tradition to explain it.

Maribel, who helped with projects such as raising sheep on the Farm of Peace, also mentioned interconnectedness when explaining the role of religion in her ideas about human-nature relationships. Although she was originally asked about how religion influences her ideas, she mentioned how working with domestic animals helped

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64 Muhammad A., interview.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
her to “see the unity in all existence.” She found that by “really caring for the animal from its birth until when it’s sacrificed and really expressing a lot of gratitude to the animal for what it’s providing, what it’s giving us,” she and other people involved with the animal formed a relationship, a bond with the animal. She reflected on how the animals would follow them around like pets and how sad some people would get when they had to kill the animals. Forming these bonds and relationships, as well as becoming so intimately involved with the animal’s sacrifice, helped her to “really feel [her] interconnectedness with all of God’s creation.”

**Ideas about the Prophet Muhammad**

Within the Islamic tradition, the Prophet Muhammad is the model human. His sayings and actions, many of which are recorded in *hadith* literature, are the guide for people’s lives. Through projects involving the farms, some members of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm and the Dayempur Farm are developing new understandings or awareness about aspects of the Prophet’s life.

The account of the Prophet provided by members of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship demonstrates some of the complicated connections between conservation activities and religious belief. Although there were members who claimed that religion had little to do with their actions in the environment, they used the example of the Prophet to more fully describe their work on the farm as an environmental activity. A member also provided an explanation of Islamic institutions that were shaped by her experiences with the farm in the conservation program.

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67 Maribel, interview.

68 Ibid.
These ideas about the Prophet were discussed in the other communities. However, a member of the Dayemi Tariqat did refer to other aspects of the Prophet’s life as inspiring for the projects involving the farm. His reading of the life of the Prophet focused on the Prophet’s work creating a new kind of society. Members of these groups provided accounts of the Prophet that reflected their work with their farm communities.

Environmental concerns were the driving principle behind the decision to put most of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Farm farmland into the government sponsored conservation program. Upon deeper reflection about the reasons for enrolling in the program, Sally mentioned that she “was just reading the other day about the concept [of] hima.” Translated to literally mean “guarded” or “forbidden,” hima is a concept with a long history. It is also closely related to the terms harim and haram, which are sometimes used interchangeably. Although Richard Foltz argues that these Islamic institutions have been used to preserve resources for human use, he and other scholars of Islam and ecology believe that the concepts of hima, as well as haram and harim, could be used for environmental conservation or to create public preserves. In pre-Islamic Arabia, hima was a name given to the land set aside by landowners for grazing animals. Often this land was protected by a tribal god, and animals could forage safely, because

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69 Sally, interview.

no one was allowed to kill or steal them. This system was often abused by powerful rulers.

During the Prophet’s time, the hima system only existed in Mecca and Medina and was land for grazing animals. It was during caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab’s rule that the hima system became an ethical issue linked to social and economic justice. In the articulation of Islamic law by jurists, the hima system was influenced by ideas in the Qur’an and hadith about the sovereignty of God and God’s order that animals need to be allowed to graze. Due to these influences, as well as the physical proximity of some of these institutions, the hima system became similar to harim and haram zones. Today scholars define hima as a protected area or sanctuary.

A harim is best understood as a greenbelt or easement, although it is also defined more generally as a protected zone or sanctuary. It is a forbidden area usually found around vital natural resources, such as a river or well. The haram refers to the areas surrounding Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem, which God sanctified directly. According to hadith literature, these areas were established as sacred territories where trees should not be cut down and animals are not to be hunted or disturbed.

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72 Ibid.
74 This term is also spelt haram.
Sally brought up the institution of *hima* to illustrate her belief that the Prophet Muhammad “was like one of the first environmentalists.” She explained that approximately 12 miles outside of Medina there was a piece of land, a *hima* zone where the Prophet “forbade any kind of cutting of trees or poaching or killing of animals.” She furthered her theory about the Prophet as an environmentalist, by recounting how the Prophet “said if you cut down a tree, plant a tree.” She concluded by observing how the work on the farm was in the same spirit as the Prophet’s environmentalism, stating “I would think that we were definitely really in that tradition with Bawa.”

There are plenty of stories about the Prophet and trees. *Hadith* literature recounts that Muhammad said whoever grows a plant or tree that feeds a human or an animal would have a good deed recorded. The Prophet also said “some trees are as blessed as the Muslim himself, especially the palm” and “when dooms day comes if someone has a palm shoot in his hand, then he should plant it.” He also is said to have banned the destruction of vegetation.

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78 Sally, interview.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.


83 Foltz, “Islamic Environmentalism: A Matter of Interpretation,” 254. There is another telling of this *hadith* in Siddiq, Mohammad Yusuf, “An Ecological Journey in Muslim Bengal,” 455. Some scholars argue that the *hadith* about the palm shoot is to warn people that they cannot and should not be preparing for Judgment Day, instead they should be living their lives, rather than a *hadith* encouraging people to plant trees.

84 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “Islam, the Contemporary Islamic World, and the Environmental Crisis,” in *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*, ed. Richard C. Foltz, Frederick M. Denny, and Azizan Baharuddin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Divinity School, Center for the Study of World Religions, 2003), 97. To illustrate the Prophet’s desire for people to plant trees, scholars and activists point to the hadith where the Prophet told his followers that even if it is doomsday, if they have a palm date seed in their hand, they
Philip supported Sally’s theory by noting that the Prophet had specific rules for warring nomadic tribes that reflected the Prophet’s recognition of the dependency of human survival on the environment. According to Philip, “one of the first rules of engagement was you cannot destroy anything that grows, and any water you cannot touch or poison. You have that natural respect for those things,” because of their role in survival.\footnote{Philip, interview.}

The decision to put the land into a conservation program and to plant trees, which was a required part of the program, was not driven by the example of the Prophet Muhammad. However, after making the decision about the land and caring for it as part of the restoration process, Sally found particular aspects of the Prophet Muhammad’s life, which serves as a model for all Muslims, to be meaningful for her work on the farm. She also had particular interpretations of these aspects of his life, the example of her teacher, and Islamic institutions, such as \textit{hima}. These were influenced by her experiences, as well as her ideas about environmentalism. Experience with the land in a restoration program led to new religious understandings, which Sally used to then explain the significance and ethos of projects on the farm.

\textbf{Ideas about Religious Practices}

Some members provided examples of how their understanding of their practices changed since being involved with the farm. When asked if being involved with the farm influenced his religious ideas or practices, Ra’fi, one of the members of the Dayempur Farm’s farm committee, explained how his definition of a spiritual practice has

\footnote{85 Philip, interview.}
expanded since he started working on the farm. For Ra’fi, the example of the Prophet inspired his work on the farm. In particular, he was inspired by what the Prophet built right during the Medina period of his work. When we study that, what we find is this person through his wisdom was able to change the course of history and create an amazing society structure that was never really seen before, definitely not in that part of the world.86

Studying this example, Ra’fi began “to see the work of the farm or creating a land based [community] as something that is not separate from your daily life.”87 He also began to recognize the work of the farm as a spiritual practice, because “spiritual practice isn’t exclusive to prayer or meditation but that you can be in communion with God, the spirit, or whatever you want to call it through your very action that you undertake and making the conscious decision to keep that in mind and remembering that in every aspect of our work.”88 He now recognized that prayer, meditation, and reading scripture are expressions of spirituality, “but to have the expression of your whole – every single thought, every single word, every single action –be your prayer, your mediation, it sets up a different relationship.”89

Experience coupled with a closer reading of the Prophet’s life, “drastically changed,” to use his words, his understanding of spiritual practices.90 He described how all aspects of their community, such as their politics, the organization of their community, the way that they feed themselves, and the way they educate their children, are all part of each person’s spiritual life. He also explained that “you can’t have those

86 Ra’fi, interview.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
90 Ibid.
things without in the center having an outlook that involves God and unity in it.”91 His work on the farm and studies brought him to an understanding of the community’s foundational ideas about society.

Members of the Dayempur Farm and Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm gave examples of how their experiences in nature affirmed some of their religious practices. Before meeting Murshid and joining the Dayemi Tariqat, Wayne led wilderness survival trips, was trained in permaculture, and participated in urban gardening. He explained, “I worked for years out all over the place in the woods, doing 30 days no equipment courses in Southern Utah and Idaho. That’ll clean you out, and it’ll make you be aware of your environment. Everything that we made had to come from our environment.”92 On these trips, “you had to figure out how to get fire and then to track animals.”93 According to Wayne, these survival skills were exercises in observation, which “Murshid talked about all the time: observe, observe, observe. Be present in the moment and stay in it.”94 Wayne found his experience in nature helpful for understanding Murshid’s teachings about being present. Murshid teaches that “being present is basically being aware of what’s going on around you and committing yourself to keeping it working, keeping the flow going, helping the situation out, helping people out.”95 Being present is

91 Ra’fi, interview.
92 Wayne, interview.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
95 Philip, interview.
important, because consciously performing work helps people gain knowledge of God and God’s role in people’s lives.  

**Farm Infused with the Blessing of the Sheikh**

Sheikhs are seen as part of a chain of transmission of wisdom that traces back to the Prophet Muhammad and are key figures within the Sufi tradition. Members of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm and the Farm of Peace experienced connections between their spiritual teachers and their specific farms. On the Fellowship Farm, which includes Bawa's *mazar*, there is a connection between the *sheikh* and the properties of the farmland. For some, this connection then informs their ideas about how to act on the farm or about the importance of the farm.

Part of the reason that members of the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East bought the Farm of Peace was that they felt the presence of their sheikh teaching on the land. A member of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship remembers an experience where she “was just looking around, and...just felt Bawa saying that this is a life preserve. This is a place to be nourished and find peace.” While alive, Bawa would take away people’s agitation, as being calm was vital to spiritual progress. This experience also inspired her to make her work to reflect the nature of the place and Bawa, who she described as a model steward, who was humble but also gave everyone and everything what they needed. After Bawa’s death, the *mazar* also had a calming effect on people.

Some Muslims see the farmland as an extension of the *mazar*, infused with some of the same blessing as Bawa. Sally explained that after Bawa’s death she “felt very

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96 Dayemi Tariqat, *Dayemi Tariqat*.

97 Sally, interview.
strongly that with his body being there, it became sanctified ground. And I just felt a very strong personal calling, to be there and be part of the effort to protect the area.”

One of the reasons that members of the Bawa Muhibiyaddeen Fellowship Farm became discouraged from cultivating personal plots on the farm was that pilgrims, who came to receive the blessing of the sheikh, would take produce from the land as a way to take some of the blessing home. In some ways, the farmland is an extension of the sheikh who is an extension of the knowledge found in the Prophet. Another person recalled how an emotionally distraught person “went in the mazar for a little bit of time and then they came out and just they laid down in the garden, you know just right there on the ground . . . [so that] the negative energy [could] be absorbed,” because “the natural part of the farm is almost like an outer component of the mazar right around there.”

Lessons about the self

Members of all of the farm communities mentioned how they were able to learn about themselves through their work on the farms. Often this awareness was developed through working with others. Farms are places where people work, practice, and sometimes live together. Over and over again, members explained the importance of community. Members of these farms stressed the importance of community in providing support for projects on the farms and while attempting to practice as a Sufi. They also reflected on the kinds of spiritual growth and insight that developed while working with others. These lessons could also come from working with animals. People or animals act as mirrors to oneself, helping a person open oneself to God’s will.

98 Sally, interview.

99 Chuck, interview; and Sally, interview.
Learning about oneself and working with others are important to advancing along the spiritual path.

Bawa Muhaiyaddeen taught that you cannot understand good qualities, unless you experience their opposites. Members of the farm recall, for example, that “he said you can’t understand love until you understand anger when it comes up in you.” Once people had these experiences, Bawa would lead them to understand the subtle form of the quality, helping them advance in their knowledge of God. Other people could serve as a mirror to the self, helping one to calm oneself or understand one’s emotions better. Sally recalled, “Bawa’s big thing was separate away from yourself that which separates you from others,” because in a group “you have an opportunity to be exposed to all different kinds of thoughts and understandings and ways of doing things. If things come up in you in perceiving someone else, then you see that’s the block you have to cut away” in yourself. Muhammad Abdullah explained that this turn to find the block in oneself was a practice of the Prophet Muhammad. He explained “The holy Prophet Muhammad, he said that the faults you see in others are in yourself.” He then reflected on how “it’s hard to live up to that, but that’s the bottom line. There are a lot of problems working with other people, so there are a lot of chances to learn.”

Members of the Dayempur Farm have a similar attitude about the importance of working with others. A brochure for the community explains,

the Community provides the medium through which this work is possible. In Community, we practice serving Allah’s creation and this provides the means by which we come to know our True selves. Living in community

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100 Philip, interview.
101 Sally, interview.
102 Muhammad A., interview.
stretches us beyond the limitations of our individualistic tendencies and gives us the opportunity to practice being human.\textsuperscript{103}

The farm is a place to work and to work with others. The farm is a place to get past one’s ego and other things preventing God realization.\textsuperscript{104} Wayne also explained how observing and working with nature prior to joining the farm, helped him learn how to work with people. He noted “when I lived in New York, I lived by the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens, and I used to go there every week and just watch where they were at and what their stages were and what they do throughout the year. With people it’s the same way.”\textsuperscript{105}

At the Farm of Peace, people not only learned from the mirroring that took place as they worked with other people, but they also learned about themselves from animals. Beatrice explained how working with animals taught patience and how someone else recalled that “something in one of Sidi’s books . . . said like every major prophet was a shepherd to teach them patience and how to take care of people.”\textsuperscript{106} Not only did the experience of raising animals help teach patience, but it also influenced the aspects of religious figures’ lives that were highlighted by members of the community.

For Beatrice, animals served as a mirror to herself. She provided examples of how various characteristics among her cats and the sheep, such as jealousy and shyness, were traits that were also a part of her personality. Becoming conscious of one’s feelings is an important part of the spiritual process at the Farm of Peace,

\textsuperscript{103} Dayemi Tariqat, \textit{Dayemi Tariqat}.
\textsuperscript{104} Chuck, interview.
\textsuperscript{105} Wayne, interview.
\textsuperscript{106} Beatrice, interview.
because it is one of the first steps to opening oneself to God’s will in any given situation. Another person explained, “I think a sort of central understanding of this particular path is taking self-responsibility. So anything that I see out there is a reflection of myself, and um the purification of the heart so and surrendering to the will of God – all those things.”

**Changing Practices**

Besides instances where changes in one’s understandings of oneself influenced religious practice, there were other examples where experiences on the farms led to a change in practices. Sometimes an individual’s practices changed, others gained new religious positions within the community, and sometimes activities on the farms encouraged others to be active in other parts of the community. Umar, who had been trained as a horticulturalist, recalled how he found five times prayer “much more integrating because of [his] tendency toward plant growth.” For him, there were “a lot of explanations . . . as far as the different prayers and the different times of day and the different positions of the sun in the sky.” He was also attracted to the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship, because of the work on the farm. Through his work with people on the farm, he progressed to looking for more than the ritualistic practice of five times a day prayer or the activities on the farm. He first tried 51 times a day prayer and was currently moving to doing inner prayer.

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107 Adam, interview.
108 Kalima, interview.
109 Umar, interview.
110 Ibid.
Due to the changing nature of the farm, Muhammad Abdhullah has become the *imam* of the farm community. Within the Sunni tradition, *imam* is the title given to the prayer leader. Muhammad Abdullah leads all of the prayers at the *mazar* and takes care of the cemetery. In many ways he is a leader for the community, because of the visits from pilgrims. He did not identify himself as an imam, but Umar explained “Muhammad Abdullah is really the imam out at the farm... He maintains Bawa’s five times prayer and... people come from all over the world and when Muhammad Abdullah does the call for prayer, then they line up behind him... And people when they come and they’ve been there before, they greet him with respect” due to his position.\(^{111}\)

Umar and Muhammad Abdullah remembered that projects on the farm had a way of invigorating the entire Fellowship. Not everyone would become involved with a project on the farm, but they would remember they had something to do. If they did not have anything to do, they would go to find a project to join.

**Secular Ideas about and Practices in Nature**

When asked what influenced their ideas about nature, members of each of the farms responded that experience or their senses were the primary way that they learned about nature. Many also explained that trial and error was one of the main ways that they learned how to farm and about the difficulties of farming. Involvement with nature taught them the dependence that farmers have on the environment. Practical experience on their particular farm, including raising specific crops or animals, greatly influenced the types of activities and methods used on these farms. Being involved with

\(^{111}\) Umar, interview.
the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm gave some members a direction for their careers.\textsuperscript{112}

Experiences on these farms have influenced some of the religious beliefs and practices of members of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm, the Dayempur Farm, and the Farm of Peace. Members have had different kinds of experiences on these farms. Sometimes insight came through observing nature, sometimes through engaging nature, and sometimes through working with others. Some of these religious ideas and practices impacted their understandings of the environment.

Nature has many meanings and lessons, both literal and figurative. On farms, people gained experience of the characteristics of the environment, such as how creation remembers and submits to God and the perfect balance of nature. They learned about the connections between God, nature, and humanity, often highlighting the interconnectedness of creation. Working on farms helped them advance along the Sufi path, by teaching them how to work with others and about themselves. Some gained new understandings about the life of the Prophet or certain Islamic institutions, such as the\textit{ hima} system. Finally, some people’s ideas about and actual practices changed, due to their experiences on farms.

**Conclusions**

On these farms, members are having experiences of fragility, interconnectedness, community, beauty, and the sacred. Usually these experiences are connected to ideas about God and humanity’s relation to God. Through these experiences, these Muslims are creating or focusing on religious ideas and practices that speak to their experiences

\textsuperscript{112} Umar, interview.
on the farms and that highlight aspects of the tradition that are meaningful to their particular community and farm.

On the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm, Dayempur Farm, and Farm of Peace, members are learning through more than one kind of practice or experience. They gave examples of ideas or practices that were shaped by prolonged observation, conservation, and/or cultivation. Involved with cultivation on some scale, members of these farms are faced with issues not present in other types of situations in the environment. This highlights the limitations of Jordan’s focus on restoration as the ideal ritual for human communion with nature. Further, restoration does not necessarily evoke a sense of dependency or fragility. Restoration projects that focus on reviving classical landscapes, which is Jordan’s goal, leave little space for people to live in the restored environment, because classical landscapes are usually associated with little to no human influence on the landscape.

Agricultural ethicists have noted the unique experiences and ethical issues that arise on farms, making a case that agricultural ethics have unique contributions to make to environmental ethics. Cultivation of plants or animals for sustenance allows for important experiences of dependency that may not as readily exist within other types of actions and experiences. Agriculture brings people into community with nature, while also making them dependent on nature. Agriculture also raises issues and tensions concerning the balance of stewardship and cultivation that takes place on farms. Although members of these farms are not completely reliant on them for sustenance, the act of cultivation helps them experience their dependency on nature and on God.
On these farms, experience and practice influenced the creation of values, however these ideas were often shaped by existing beliefs or practices. Also concerned with creating environmental ethics that inspire actions, Jim Cheney and Anthony Weston propose a new ethical model, where the purpose of ethics is to allow for experiences or practices that open new ethical possibilities. They call this an ethics-based epistemology. Ethics helps people to openly approach nature. From this position, people can build relationships with nature and begin to learn. Facts are no longer the starting point for the application of ethical ideas to particular situations. It is no longer assumed that ethicists completely know everything about nature. Instead, people are to strive for “an open-ended, nonexclusive consideration of everything.”

This allows people to create knowledge. Rather than assuming that all ethical relationships are known, this system allows for innovation and change in ethical understandings, changes that do not need to happen incrementally.

Due to their openness to the lessons of nature, members of these farms are engaging nature in a manner that is close to this ethical model. However, these Muslims have inherited particular ideas about the environment or creation. There were some instances where experience led to values or ideas present in the Islamic tradition and sometimes experiences produced innovative interpretations.

A focus on experience illustrates the subtle and changing connections between experience, values, and practices. Members of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm used religious language and examples to explain the decision to put some of the land into a conservation program, even though these members did not recall joining that

program due to the example of the Prophet. They used the example of the Prophet in attempting to explain if the farm was an environmental activity. The experience of conservation led them to rethink the relationship between their religious beliefs and their practices on the farm. The next chapter will provide examples of how ideas or values created through experience with nature or other ideas about nature can sometimes be in tension with inherited religious ideas.

A lived religion approach takes into account the fact that “religion’ cannot be separated from the other practices of everyday life,” making necessary the study of religious ideas and practices that arise from experience or practice. 114 However, lived religion is also a “study of how particular people, in particular places and times, live in, with, through, and against the religious idioms available to them in culture – all the idioms, including (often enough) those not explicitly their own.” 115 The following chapter will explore the roles of Islamic beliefs, practices, and institutions on their environmental practices and ideas, as well as the role of other religious, cultural, and scientific ideas.

115 Ibid, 7.
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION: IDEAS AND INSTITUTIONS

Religious communities and worldviews can provide alternatives to dominant paradigms in American society.¹ A number of scholars argue that religious beliefs, practices, and institutions can usher in a new paradigm concerning the value of things by providing new discourses, creation stories, and ideal communities, as well as providing social capital and new practices.² In this concluding chapter, I analyze the influence of Muslim agrarians' beliefs, practices, and institutions with regards to members' relationships with the natural environment.

Members of these communities draw upon particular religious institutions, practices, and beliefs in their decisions about the treatment of the environment. They use ideas from the Qur'an, the example of the Prophet, Islamic legal ideas, and beliefs specific to their particular Sufi group to inform their practices on their farms. They are also influenced by scientific ideas, economic theories, countercultural experiences, beliefs from other religions, and ideas about food and agriculture. These ideas can exist in tension with each other or with experiences from the farms. For many of these Muslims, one set of values or ideas need not replace another. They can complement or coexists, sometimes in tension, with other beliefs.

Religious discourse also plays a role in the creation, interpretation, and execution of religious ideas about the environment. The development, explanation, and implementation of religious ideas about the environment provide specific examples of

how these Muslims are negotiating and constructing identities. Farms allow for particular types of experiences with nature and forms of embodiment of values and practices, which open members to new interpretations within the Islamic tradition and also illustrate resources among Muslim communities that could be used to construct an Islamic environmental ethic. The particular context of each of these communities also contributes to other ways that these communities construct and negotiate their many identities.

**The Potential Importance of Religion**

According to Max Oelschaleger, the dominant paradigm or social matrix in the United States is utopian capitalism, which “expresses itself through language of utilitarian individualism.”

This paradigm is harmful to the environment, because society does not value the preservation of species or ecosystems.

Within democratic societies, according to Oelschaleger, religious narrative provides the only solution to the dominant social paradigm. Oelschaleger argues that people need a cultural context for policy and technology changes.

Religion is part of a larger process of change, but is involved with many steps that aid in the larger change. Religion provides discourse and can change daily practices and the political landscape. Religion provides social capital that can influence the ways in which people vote. Accord to Oelschaleger, people need to become reinvested and involved again in local governance to address the environmental crisis. This was an

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idea echoed in studies of religious intentional communities undertaken by Anna Peterson and Rebecca Kneale Gould.

In discussing the social capital of religion, Oelschlaeger focuses on the institution of the church. He argues that the church is an important institution for several reasons. It mediates between individuals and other institutions, it provides a community, it is usually involved in politics, and it provides education or ritual practice, as well as moral discussion about various moral issues within society.

Within the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship, the Dayemi Tariqat, and the Farm of Peace, these religious groups provide a community, moral discussion, mediation between institutions, and involvement with governance. These groups also provide farms, where members are able to act in particular ways or develop specific ideas through experience. These ideas, practices, and institutions often provide alternatives to the dominate paradigm in American culture. The farms and the practices on the farms are also part of the way that these Muslims negotiate their identities within Muslim and American culture, providing them with connections to these two communities, not just differences.

**Institutions**

The previous chapter described one way that the institutions of farms were important. Farms were places where members of these communities could have experiences that shaped their religious and environmental beliefs and practices. The institutions of these various agrarian communities have also been important, because many, but not all, members of each of these communities reflected that they would not have become involved with a farm or the environment in the same way, if they did not join a community with a farm. They did not seek out or join their particular community
because of the farm. Instead, they joined the farms for other reasons. For many members they were drawn to their particular teacher. Jamal, a member of the Dayemi Tariqat, reflected that he was drawn to the community because of love. The example of their sheikh or the ethos of the community then influenced their involvement with or focus on the farm.

For members of the Farm of Peace and the Dayempur Farm, the religious community provided communal support that made it more comfortable, less risky, and economically possible to create or be involved with an intentional religious community. Two of the people involved with the Dayempur Farm told me that they valued being a part of the Dayemi Tariqat because it provided an instant community that has similar values about how to live a good life and there were already people and institutions in place to help them attempt to live these ideals. The group also provided the material support necessary to purchase a farm and to engage in various projects on the farms.

Religious groups have only been able to provide some of the necessary material support for these communities. All of these farm communities have benefitted from contributions from larger networks of support. These networks include non-Muslim groups and programs, as well as people from their religious community (both broadly and narrowly conceived). For example, all of these farms have been involved in government or nongovernmental programs aimed at helping small scale farms. In fact, these communities often use their farms as a way to make connections with their neighbors and have become involved in other programs since becoming involved with their farm. Through the practices of farming and the exchange of knowledge and
technology are some of the way that these Muslims are negotiating their place as Americans and as Muslims.

**Practices**

The institutions of the farms have also provided practices that make an intentional religious community that critiques the dominant social paradigm possible. Every member of the farm staff for the Dayempur Farm, whether drawn to the farm for intentional living or because they see it as a way to become better Muslims, said that they thought their task would be impossible without a shared religious vision, a spiritual teacher, and open lines of communication that are an important part of their religious practice. Other groups mentioned that their groups had developed methods of self-governance, sometimes built on religious examples, that made it possible to work together in community.

Farms have also been places where members can live out alternatives to American cultural ideas. For Jamal, the Dayempur Farm and community are a place to struggle with the:

process of letting go of, of kind of the standards or measurements of, of success or personal identity that, that I’ve grown up with and that are reinforced by a larger culture and coming to adopt, or not really coming to adopt, it’s more a process you would say of remembering what are, you know as Native Americans would talk about original instructions as Sufis would talk about or among Muslims the *deen al fitr*, or the natural way of coming to remember how it is we’re, we’re truly meant to be.5

Beatrice found that being on the farm she was less materialistic, because there was nothing to buy in the area.

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5 Jamal, interview.
Beliefs

There are many instances on these farms where members of the community are engaging nature, through their decision to cultivate or not, as well as in their particular practices. The farms have overall guiding value systems, which provide a context for members’ decisions pertaining to specific practices. Islamic ideas play an important role in both the overall ethos and the decision about specific practices. To get a more complete picture of the role of Islamic ideas or practices on environmental beliefs, I asked members of these farm communities about human’s role within nature, as well as what influences their ideas about nature and what role religion has played in their ideas about religion. Because there were people who became involved with nature through their involvement with the farms, I also asked about the role of religion in their involvement with the farms.

Their comments highlight diverse sources used to shape interactions with and ideas about nature. For many members, both religious and secular ideas fueled their work on the farm and their ideas about the environment. Their projects on the farms are motivated by ideas about God, nature, their community’s role in society, food, and socioeconomic systems.

Importance of Work

Members of both the Dayempur Farm and the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm mentioned that the farms were important to them as places to live out their religious values and beliefs. Jamal, a member of the farm committee, explained how he enjoyed working on the farm, because “it fits for me to have actual physical work as . . .
an expression of interests and values and beliefs.” Jamal “And I think that so that’s very circumstantial, but like a deeper thing that keeps me interested or engaged in it is because this is a very concrete expression of that core value about how to live or how to spend energy and feel like it’s important and relevant” Other members reflected on how it was necessary to undertake practice with the correct aims. Wayne explained that practice is about “always staying present and becoming a witness and just being in it all the time. It doesn’t matter what you do.” Members of the Dayemi Tariqat are to undertake actions in a mindful way, and the farm is place where they can do that.

Within the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship, work is an important part of how people calm their souls and how they become more engaged in their Sufi community. Bawa taught that there must be balance between the spiritual and the worldly. This meant that people were to have jobs and that there were practical activities that took place within the Fellowship. Containing the steps for members of the community, the pamphlet “25 Duties: True Meaning of Fellowship” describes the importance of work. According to the pamphlet, the second step, after joining the community, is to choose and perform a job. Umar further explained that work was important within the Fellowship, because “it’s that duty and that involvement that draws a person in.” According to Sally, “it’s only through making the intention and endeavoring to do some

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6 Jamal, interview.  
7 Ibid.  
8 Wayne, interview.  
9 Umar, interview.
kind of service that you really learn about yourself. You can’t just do it passively, you have to engage.”

Cultivation on the farm was meant to be a project where people could find part of their practical niche within the community. Although no one has made their living from farming, the Bawa Muhaïyaddeen Fellowship Farm did provide people with their vocation. Some children whose parents were involved with cultivation on the farm are now working in jobs related to things like local food and small scale agriculture. The farm was also a place for some members of the community to become more deeply engaged with the Fellowship.

Creation as Part of God

Members of the Farm of Peace and the Dayempur Farm explained the importance of nature due to its connection to God. Experiencing God and living according to God’s will are important goals of Sufism. The natural world can be a place where believers can gain insight into the nature of God. Some members of these farm communities went so far as to explain nature as part of God. This idea has been contested in Muslim thought, including among some Sufi thinkers.

Maryam explained, “it feels like you can’t really separate the way we practice Sufism in Islam from the natural world, because it’s God’s creation manifested to us, and it’s really God’s goodness manifested to us.” According to Maryam, nature is an intrinsic part of understanding God and engaging in Sufi practice. Nature also demonstrates some of the characteristics of God.

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10 Sally, interview.
11 Mary, interview.
In explaining the projects and actions on the Dayempur Farm, Chuck described how everything is affecting everything else. We’re not just for human beings. We have to be for all of life, even those things that look like they don’t have life in them, they still have life in them. They are life. To us, it’s like we’re walking around in the mind of God. That’s what this is like, it’s all consciousness.  

The belief within the Dayemi Tariqat that nature is God’s consciousness provides a reason to protect or care for all of nature. This belief also describes all of the aspects of the natural world as connected to each other.

Many environmental ethicists, such as William Jordan and Aldo Leopold, have stressed the necessity of understanding nature as a connected system. Jordan argued that people could develop an understanding of the interconnectedness of the aspects of the natural world through the practice of restoration ecology. Within the Dayemi Tariqat these ideas are present within their religious beliefs.

There is support for these ideas within the Qur’an. The Qur’an states “But to God belongs all things in the heavens and on the earth; and He it is who encompasseth all things” (4:126). There are also two divine attributes that speak to the presence of God in all things. God is the All-Encompassing (al-Muhit) and the ever present (al-Mawjud).  

Beliefs that God is manifest in or part of nature or that a person can experience God through nature exists in tension with Islamic teachings about nature distracting believers from God. Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj (d. 922) believed that there was a

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12 Chuck, interview.

tension between created and uncreated things but that “the uncreated Divine Spirit can overcome the created human spirit in rare moments of ecstasy. . ., [but] the eternal and that which is created in time are essentially incompatible.”

Abu Yazid (Bayazid) Bistami (d.874) was concerned with the physical world’s tendency to obscure, or keep, the truth from seekers.

These thinkers were influenced by Neoplatonic thought, a cosmology that also influenced Christian thinkers at the time. In Neoplatonic thought, God/Mind is separated from the material world by layers or veils. These layers are created as God reflects upon God’s self creating another layer. This layer then reflects upon itself and its origin creating another layer. All things created in the corporeal world have perfect forms found in a sphere separated from but closer to God than to our world. The ideas of veils that separate believers from God has continued to be an important idea within Sufi communities.

**Human Relationships with God**

For some members of some of these farms, their actions in the environment were informed by religious ideas about humanity’s relationship with God. At the Farm of Peace, Adam explained that the community’s practices were sustainable because of their desire to live a particular relationship with God. Sustainable practices are “mainly an ethical responsibility for us as Sufis. If we really want to have the relationship with Allah that we’re wanting to have, to be able to achieve a witnessing of his divine reality,

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it’s important for us to treat all aspects of his creation with the utmost respect and politeness.”\(^{16}\)

Not only are Sufis required to treat nature with respect, according to Adam, but they also “have a very immense and intense responsibility . . . as individuals to understand the effects of [their] actions and the ramifications.”\(^{17}\) Adam further illustrated his point with the story of the Prophet Solomon. He explained how Solomon was warned by ants of danger, and how this demonstrated the importance of being aware of all aspects of the environment and the effect that one has on all of those parts. The environment becomes important, because it is a stage where these Sufis can enact a particular relationship to God. Their treatment of nature is an outcome of their attempts to live mindfully in relationship to God.

According to members of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm and the Farm of Peace, humility is central to acknowledging one’s relationship with God and in one’s approach to the natural world. Adam further explained that

as we’re planting our plants, we’re supplicating to Allah, as al-halem, the clement, to have forbearance with us as we’re messing with these plants and their root structures, as we’re transplanting them or planting a seed, so that our inadequacies as a human instrument for the dispersal of these plants be made up for by Allah’s generosity and his mercy toward the plant.\(^{18}\)

People need to be humble, because only God’s grace can insure the proper treatment of the environment. God also values nature and provides it with generosity and mercy.

\(^{16}\) Adam, interview.

\(^{17}\) Adam, interview.

\(^{18}\) Ibid.
These ideas have ramifications for agricultural practices. The practice of planting becomes a form of submission to God. There are also practical impacts on agricultural practices. According to Adam, these ideas about God necessitate the “need to have an agricultural system that’s not going to create erosion” or the desire to not use chemicals that will contaminate the ground water.  

Needs or Rights of Nature

Ideas about nature’s needs often inform activities on the farm. On the Dayempur Farm and the Farm of Peace, some agricultural activities are shaped by these beliefs. These ideas can limit the use of nature or encourage it. Nature has a right to achieve spiritual fulfillment, and it can also desire to be cultivated.

Members of the Dayempur Farm also described that nature had spiritual rights that needed to be honored. They believe that nature has birthrights and should be allowed the possibility to realize spiritual unity with God. Nature has rights, which are similar to those of humans and linked to the Divine for their authority. These ideas inform practices that involve cultivating land, as one of their tenants is that resources should be fully utilized. The hadith tradition and legal traditions also establish rights for animals and plants.

Emulate Example of Religious Figures

Often times in their actions, members of these farms are attempting to emulate the example of various religious figures, especially their teachers or the Prophet Muhammad. Bawa himself taught the importance of humility. He was an example of a steward, providing people with what they needed, but he also was humble in his

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19 Adam, interview.
stewardship. Sally recalled, “I saw him as a steward of creation. He was constantly looking out for the welfare of people, animals, plants.” He even taught that one has to “bow to conquer.” Philip explained “there’s a certain humility you have to have in order to have that unity and the unity to move forward.” Humility has been an important aspect of being able to work together in a group and to advancing spiritually.

Members of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm have also attempted to emulate Bawa in other activities. According to Webb, Bawa demonstrated the characteristics of a sheikh both “as transmitter of wisdom, protector, caretaker, cultivator of ‘good qualities’” as well as practices, such as cooking, that have been “understood to be the duties (‘ibadat). . . seen as metaphors for ‘inner work’ that has an externalized social dimension, whose ‘doing’ leads to the ‘unity of Islam.’” Through farming and the farm, members are also continuing such practices. Many members reflected that they learned how to cook and eat from Bawa, and the community raised some of these vegetables on the farm.

On the Dayempur Farm, members of the Dayemi Tariqat also view their farm as a place where they could attempt to live the example provided by their sheikh and the Prophet Muhammad. Many valued “having a teacher and having a community . . . having a spiritual practice and a path, a teacher, a community, having all of these things act as a reminder of what I really want and give me the venue for trying to live into it.”

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20 Sally, interview.
21 Chuck, interview.
22 Philip, interview.
23 Webb, “Tradition and Innovation,” 95
24 Jamal, interview.
Some members made connections between the example of their sheikh and the Prophet Muhammad, a connection commonly made between Sufi teachers and the Prophet, as Sufi teachers are usually understood as part of a lineage of divine wisdom that connects back to the Prophet. Wayne explained how the farm was part of an attempt to be an example like the Prophet and like their sheikh. He explained, “seeing the way that the sheikhs operate with their followers and seeing the way the Prophet operated. . . So you wonder how somebody, a realized being can come, one person, and woosh send out a ripple that a few hundred years later a billion people call themselves Muslims, or a billion people call themselves Christians or Buddhists. You know it just comes out of that sea of pure consciousness, so we’re just trying to keep that flame alive and be models of it.”

Chuck also explained that “if there’s a model for the community, it would be the initial community that surrounded the Prophet.” However, he also reflected that Sheikh Dayemullah and his projects in Bangladesh have also been an inspiration for the Dayemi Tariqat.

On the Farm of Peace, members are trying to emulate Sidi in their work. However, their actions are also very much informed by his guidance about farming practices. One of the reasons that the practices on the farm have a low environmental impact is because he has told them that he wants them to be sustainable. He also told them to engage in particular practices, such as raising sheep. Sometimes there are spiritual reasons for these particular practices, sometimes there are practical reasons, and other times there is a combination of motivations.

25 Wayne, interview.
26 Chuck, interview.
Members of the Farm of Peace also referred to the example of the Prophet. Beatrice mentioned that “there are also very specific stories from the tradition of the prophet about how he was with animals and nature.” Although she did not tell specific stories, she summarized the lessons she had learned from them, explaining to me, it’s to use it but to be very respectful. Like with the animals we do eat them but we want to them be happy and healthy the whole time they are alive and definitely with ah the land, to take care of the land and not pollute it. To rebuild the soil, to grow our own food, know where our food comes from.

Need to Use God’s Gifts

It is not only the needs of nature that call for Muslims to cultivate resources for human use or consumption. Often Muslims are expected to use nature in a particular way, because it has been given as a gift from God. For many members of these communities, this idea has been dramatically different from their original understandings about human-nature relationships. According to Beatrice, a member of the Farm of Peace, nature is “really a gift from God, so you don’t want to just throw it away. But [it is] also not that place of scarcity, that oh we can’t eat anything, we can’t use anything.” She explained her previous ideas further stating, “some environmentalist kind of go to the opposite extreme. It’s like we should never plow another field. You know and I used to feel like that, it’s like land, the whole world would be better off if people would just quit and leave it alone.” Her ideas began to change when

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27 Beatrice, interview.
28 Beatrice, interview.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
Sidi made a comment about going to some valley somewhere and he said the land was crying out to be used. And I’m like you’d think that the highest value would be to just leave it alone the way God created it, but he’s like no, it’s like he made it to be used, but just to be used in the right way.\(^{31}\)

She readily acknowledged that this new understanding of God’s desires for nature “was a real shift for me.”\(^{32}\) Even Kalima, who described how people should not interfere with nature because it was perfect, explained “there’s something important about being productive with what’s been given to us and producing healthy food for people and animals that are well cared for, love, and slaughtered in a loving halal fashion.”\(^{33}\)

Other Muslims involved with the Farm of Peace also mentioned the necessity of cultivating land. One woman explained that Sidi “talked about making the land productive. You know, really, you, It’s almost like a sin not to use land. And in the Middle East you can lose land if you have and don’t use it and somebody comes and starts makes it productive you can actually lose it to them.” Another woman from the Farm of Peace used the examples of the Prophet, as well as Sidi’s teachings to explain the importance of cultivating land. Adam explained that Sidi was focused on using land, because of Sidi’s experiences living in Jerusalem. Adam explained that Sidi is sad “to see so much land and natural soil and so little use of it,” in part because many Palestinians do not have their own land.\(^{34}\)

Bawa stressed the practical aspect of using some of the resources on the Bawa farm, and people involved with the farm mentioned using land “in the noblest way.”

\(^{31}\) Ibid.

\(^{32}\) Ibid.

\(^{33}\) Kalima, interview.

\(^{34}\) Adam, interview.
Some land is intended for cultivation, some for woodland, and so forth. Within the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship, Bawa encouraged his followers to cultivate to areas that were being cultivated, such as the garden at the Fellowship House, to the fullest.

Members of the Farm of Peace raise meat for consumption, because of Qur’anic teachings. Sidi provided passages from the Qur’an to convince community members who were previously vegetarians to eat meat. In these passages, according to Sidi’s followers, God instructs people to eat meat that God has provided. These ideas have encouraged the community to raise animals for meat.

The previous commitment to vegetarianism by some members has influenced the ways in which members raise the animals. Maribel explained how she realized that if she “was going to eat meat, then I needed to raise the meat and also be part of it is slaughter, be a part of how it’s killed.”35 Another explained “I figure if I’m going to eat an animal, probably I should be there for the process rather than just pretending that it came in a package wrapped in saran wrap.”36 Member of the Farm of Peace not only raise animals in accordance with Islamic food rules, they also care for the quality of the life of the animal.

Food

Religious and practical concerns come together within the category of food. Often these farms are place where community members can grow particular kinds of foods that are important for religious, social, or environmental reasons.

35 Maribel, interview.

36 Beatrice, interview.
There are various guidelines within the Islamic tradition pertaining to the rearing and slaughter of animals. At the Farm of Peace, the animals are slaughtered according to Islamic guidelines. Besides the necessity of eating meat, member of the Farm of Peace began raising their own animals, because they were unable to have access to food slaughtered according to *halal* rules. There was a provider in Hagerstown, but some members of the community did not feel that the animals were being treated properly at the time of slaughter. Members have also gone one step further and are raising food according to *tayyib* guidelines. They are concerned with the quality of the animal’s life prior to slaughter, as well as during the slaughter. Members of the community are using Islamic guidelines about permissible food and good acts to justify the ethical treatment of animals throughout the animal’s lives.

Besides being able to eat religiously permissible food, many members of the Farm of Peace mentioned how they valued knowing the source of their food and how it was raised. There was a value in knowing how it was raised and killed. They did not have to worry about the quality, because the animals had been raised on their farm and they had been directly involved with the animals. Other members of the Farm of Peace mentioned their concern with food politics, issues such as “accessibility to clean organic wholesome food for all people” not just oneself or one’s community. Adam explained that he was drawn to the farm, in part, due to his interest in food and eating. According to Adam, “sort of my passion is how we are in relationship to the world, and that’s basically at the most basic level is how we eat and how we obtain that food.”

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37 Mary, interview.
38 Adam, interview.
Members of the Bawa Muhaïyaddeen Fellowship are vegetarian and the community asks that no one bring any meat to the Fellowship Farm. There are several reasons why members of the community are vegetarians. According to Bawa, there were no animals slaughtered according to Islamic rules in the United States. Meat that is not slaughtered correctly is not good to eat.

Some Fellowship members also explained that there was a practical aspect to these Islamic rules. Slaughtering the animal with compassion, without stress, and while looking the animal in the eyes prevents stress hormones from entering into its flesh. Slaughtering animals according to these guidelines protects people from eating these harmful hormones.

In his early teachings, Bawa gave a second reason for his followers to be vegetarian. Members were to avoid meat due to qualities associated with the inner spirit of each type of animal. By eating the animal, a person ingests the quality of the animal. This is detrimental, because Bawa’s followers are attempting to stay spiritually neutral.

Some members of the Farm of Peace expressed a similar idea. They noted that some Sufis, usually those who had been progression along a spiritual path for longer, were sensitive to the energy present in food. This energy differs depending on the source of the food. Beatrice explained,

Sufis, are really, especially the ones that have been in it a long time, they really are in tune with the energetic level of things. So that the difference in the energy of the meat that comes from an animal that’s raised in a clean pasture and killed in a gentle way with the right prayers and everything, is very different than like you go to the grocery store and you just grab lamb out of the cooler. Sidi can feel it . . . other people can feel it, and I’m getting you know to where I can tell sometimes. So it just feels better, it feels you know, like eating food relatively without guilt, you know.
Some members of the Fellowship explained that they were vegetarian due to their compassion for animals. They found it unnecessary to eat meat, because they could consume complete proteins without eating meat. Members of the farm committee for the Dayempur Farm explained how they were focusing on a vegetarian diet for the community. The committee was looking to cultivate grains and legumes, such as beans. However, this was not due to ideas about animals. Instead, Chuck explained “we figure that nutritionally, we could feed everybody a healthy diet – the basic vegetables that we grow, some grains and beans and some nuts and some fruits. . . We know that we could grow an organic nutritional diet.” With a diet based on legumes and grains on the Dayempur Farm, the community could provide a nutritional diet for each of the members of the committee. The focus on a vegetarian diet is based on a desire to be self-sufficient and the skills and potential of the farm. Members of the farm committee also hoped to raise larger animals for food in the future.

**Medicinal Quality of Nature**

Members of these three communities also stressed the significance of nature, because of the importance of medicines grown in nature. These natural remedies are not the only method of healing within these communities, however they are an important part. Members of the Farm of Peace and Dayempur Farm have been against the use of pharmaceuticals. Members of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Farm explained the centrality of spices and other natural remedies in Bawa’s teachings and service to his community. Bawa had a collection of spices that he used to neutralize herbicides, poisons, and other bad things in food. Bawa taught that God provided a cure for everything. The

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39 Chuck, interview.
Dayemi Tariqat is attempting to provide for all of its members’ healthcare needs through growing healthy food and creating medicines from herbs grown on the farm. The Dayemi Tariqat’s focus on natural herbs is part of a larger desire to reconfigure society based on resources provided by nature.

Ideas about Agriculture

Some members of these farms engaged in particular methods of cultivation, because of their ideas about the costs of agricultural production. Adam, a member of the Farm of Peace, provided a critique about the monoculture agriculture. He was critical of monoculture agriculture, because it used fossil fuels and made the food susceptible to disease. He was optimistic that science would find technological or methodological fixes, however he also believed that food production had to become localized once again. Sidi has also focused on natural remedies. According to Mary, Sidi was trained in the art of herbal medicines by his grandfather and “All of the medicines that he prescribes for us . . . he has written in his books [and] are plant based remedies or nature based remedies.”40 She also explained that “he doesn’t think chemical drugs are good for the body . . . He really believes that everything that we need for our own healing comes from nature, comes through God through the natural world. . . . He doesn’t say don’t go to traditional medicine . . . but he’s into plant based medicines.”41 Again, these ideas about the healing properties of nature are often related to understandings about God and God’s gifts to humanity. However, members

40 Mary, interview.

41 Ibid.
of the Dayemi Tariqat are more focused on nature as a way to create a society that is self-sustaining.

**Alternative ideas about society**

Murshid, Chuck, and Wayne were influenced by their involvement countercultural movements of the sixties, such as the back to the land movement. This led them to be involved in communal living or to venture out into nature. Some members of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship were also influenced by countercultural movements of the 1960s. They desired, like many other people at the time, to learn from a guru. Mary, a member of the Farm of Peace, explained that “for many years, I had a fixation with being able to live sustainably off the land, like homesteading. I always saw myself as wanting to end up on a homestead or a farm.” While living in Kentucky, she owned 60 acres of land, where she would live off the power grid for half of each week. She also became involved with transition culture groups, which are groups that meet in order to learn how to transition society after the societal collapse that will take place due to the extinction of various species and resources at the hands of humans. These ideas critique society or the current systems of production and valuation of nature in American culture.

Members of the Farm of Peace and Dayemi Tariqat have explained how there need to be new economic or agricultural systems in place and how this necessity is influencing their practices within their communities and on their farms. Adam, a member of the Farm of Peace explained that one of the reasons he got involved with agriculture on the farm of peace was due to his belief that monoculture agriculture is too

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42 Ibid.
expensive to be sustainable. He criticized monoculture agriculture for being susceptible to disease and being too dependent on fossil fuels, based on his own research. He believed that agricultural systems were going to need to become more local and involve more varied crops. He also advocated for the use of polyface farming and synergistic methods of growing crops and raising livestock. These particular critiques are primarily informed by ecological ideas about the state of the environment.

**Necessity of Being Self-sufficient**

All of these farms are inspired in part by the idea that there will be a time when these communities need to be self-sufficient. Bawa and Sidi have taught that there is a time that members of the farms will need to sustain themselves using their land. The Dayemi Tariqat has developed extensive programs on the farm to become more self-sufficient. They have scenarios for various situations where basic services, such as electricity, are no longer provided. There is a desire to achieve food security through these farms. However none of these farms produces on such a level as to make these farms self-sustaining. Some members of the Farm of Peace believe that Sidi is adamant that the practices on the farm be sustainable, because Sidi believes that there will be a time when the community will have to be self-reliant. Adam, a member of the Farm of Peace, believed “that it was evolutionarily advantageous to produce food in a sustainable way.” There are practical reasons pertaining to the continuation of the society that influences practices on the farms. Agriculture is not just a metaphor or an opportunity to learn about working together.

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43 Adam, interview.

44 Adam, interview.
Ecological theories

Ecological theories have influenced particular practices on these farms. Members of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship talked extensively about the research done by an entomologist at the University of Delaware, who argues that gardens are going to be on the forefront of saving the planet. This scholar’s talk inspired members of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship to plant native species, such as paw-was and persimmons, during the second tree planting that was part of the governmental conservation program.

Being involved with the farm has provided the opportunity for Fellowship members to observe declines and increases in native species as the community changes its practices on the farm. These observations have contributed to their understanding of ecological theories, such as the necessity of wildlife corridors. Community members recognize that animals, plants, and places are interdependent. By learning about ecological theories and observing specific species on their land, they have also grown in their understanding and appreciation of the interdependency of nature.45

Tensions

The previous chapter provided examples of environmental ethicists who argued for the importance of experience or practice in crafting values or knowledge that could be used to create environmental ethics. The foundation for much of the scholarship on Islam and ecology and religion and ecology is the assumption that religious ideas inform actions. Examples from the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm demonstrate how, in some instances, both experience and ideas can contribute to environmental actions and

45 Philip, interview; and Sally, interview.
understandings, even when these ideas and experiences may conflict. Members of the Fellowship do Ideas about and actions in the environment do not just come from one source. They come from multiple sources, although these ideas or values need not concur.

On the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm, members are practicing conservation. This experience has led to particular interpretations of the example of the Prophet. However, these ideas are not replacing ideas taught within the religious tradition. Nevertheless, religious ideas are not the only thing fueling actions on the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm. Sometimes ideas from experience and inherited ideas exist in tension.

At the Bawa Farm, the land is in a conservation program that aims to restore the state of the soil. When members of the Fellowship planted trees for a second time as part of the program, they chose to plant native trees in an attempt to bring back native animals. Furthermore, as they build on the land, they are looking to use green building techniques and renewable sources of energy. All of these activities demonstrate concern for the state of the environment.

People involved with the conservation program value it, and even provided examples of how the project was similar to the Prophet’s creation of a hima. However, they also believe that these practices are in some ways conflicting with teachings about the material world and the goals of Sufism. These ideas have not prevented them from conserving their farmland and creating a conservation trust. The practice of conservation did not create new ideas or values that replaced those taught within the
religious tradition. However, religious ideas are not the sole force fueling environmental practice. These ideas and experiences can coexist, even when in tension.

I asked people involved with the development of the Fellowship Farm if they found that attempts at conservation had a spiritual side as well as practical. They both responded yes, and one argued that there is a subtle connection between the two. He explained “in one aspect, you’re supposed to be you know separate from that. This is a temporary world on the journey of the soul, but you’re a steward of it.”

In the same thought he went onto explain, “but if you kill a butterfly, you’re not going to, you know, be sitting there on Judgment Day and then God will say ten butterflies. . . It’s not like that.” Instead, he told me that “it’s part of the whole system of your being aware of what your actions can do, whether they do harm or they do good.” He made the distinction that your actions in nature “can’t rule your direction of your spiritual life, but it’s a subtlety that you can make that judgment.” The person explaining this subtlety to me has been one of the people pushing to insure that the development on the Bawa Farm using green building techniques and renewable sources of energy.

These farms provide several possible lessons for those scholars and activists are concerned with the potential for environmental awareness and activism among practitioners of religions that focus on transcending the material world. These farms often provide opportunities or ways for members to negate or attempt to overcome the distractions of this world. As Jamal explained

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46 Philip, interview.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Philip, interview.
Islam is a path of surrender. That’s the kind of whole shtick; that’s the whole deal. So if you talk about what surrender means, at its core it’s giving up all of your attachments, and our attachments are very tenacious, because they’re attachments. I’m attached to thinking I’m a certain this or that. Or, we talk about these five modes of attachment, of being the controller or being the doer or being the owner, being the recipient of the fruits of my actions . . . you get the idea.⁵⁰

These farmers also may be able to negotiate or live with ambiguity about the role of the natural world, because there is a tradition both within Sufism and within the broader Islamic tradition of nature having multiple characteristics and relationships with God and humans. Seyyed Hossein Nasr has argued that the entire Islamic tradition understands nature, as a while, to be important for several reasons. It is considered a book of signs, like the Qur’an, that can help Muslims to know God. Further, nature worships God, and a wise sage is able to hear nature’s prayer and pray with them. Treatment of nature is part of God’s test of humanity, and nature is considered part of the transcendent realm and the Divine is manifest in it. However, Nasr, and others, have also noted that nature can also veil God from believers. So there are dueling ideas that nature helps people in their religious awareness and practice, as well as provides a test and a distraction from religious pursuits.⁵¹

Sufism includes examples of these ideas. Scott Kugle argues, in his discussion of the importance of bodies in the Sufi tradition, that “Sufis denied the deferral of ‘the next world’ (al-Ākhira) promised by the Qur’an to some later time.”⁵² According to Kugle, many Sufis stressed the idea

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⁵⁰ Jamal, interview.


⁵² Kugle, Sufis and Saints’ Bodies, 4.
that ‘the next world’ is immanent in this world. Judgment day is this moment and none other. God’s presence is here and not elsewhere. God’s presence permeates the world, behind or within or despite its appearance . . . [because] anything less than this was admitting that the phenomenal world has an independent autonomy in separation from God, which limits God’s nature a ‘the One real,’ \textit{al-Haqq}.\textsuperscript{53} 

Kugle argues that Sufis have believed that “Insisting on God’s transcendence to the point of denying immanence is a limitation of God and a denial of God’s attributes that are decidedly immanent in the Qur’an and the Prophet’s teachings.”\textsuperscript{54} 

Other scholars have found greater tension within the thinking of particular Sufi writers. The writings of Ibn al-‘Arabi have been interpreted as against and in defense of the natural environment. Scholars working to help Muslims recognize the importance of the environment in the quest to know and serve God have been especially taken with ideas about the environment that they can contribute to Ibn al-‘Arabi, a mystic whose work is wholly concerned with helping people realize God. The ideas most commonly credited to Ibn al-‘Arabi are those of the unity of being (\textit{wahdat al-wujud}), the breath of the compassionate (\textit{nafs al-rahman}), and that parts of the natural world serve as model believers. 

Other environmentalists, less optimistic about the possibility of finding a heritage of environmental concern within Islam, do not see Ibn al-‘Arabi as a champion of the environment.\textsuperscript{55} They use Ibn al-‘Arabi’s work and focus on his negative statements about the corporeal world. The cite Ibn ‘Arabi’s charge that nature serves as a prison or

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid, 4.

\textsuperscript{55} Afrasiabi’s “Towards an Islamic Ecotheology” is an example of an article where this argument is made.
as a “place of forgetfulness.” These views concentrate on the negative aspect of nature serving as a veil, distracting seekers from knowing God. Using again only part of Ibn 'Arabi’s thoughts on creation, these readings attempt to establish views of nature from the classical Islamic tradition as negative and part of a long heritage of desiring to detach oneself from this distracting material world.

Within the field of religion and ecology, there has been concern that world religions may not be able to adequately address the environmental crisis “because many of these religions have traditionally been concerned with the path of personal salvation, which frequently emphasized otherworldly goals and rejected this world as corrupting.” At these Sufi farms, the experience of engaging nature, as well as the need to avoid the corruption of the surrounding environment, is leading them to strive to be in correct communion with nature, which has led many of these farmers to try to become more environmentally sound in their practices. It also seems to have led to involvement in other forms of environmentalism as well. Concern with God and the otherworldly realm does not lead to a rejection of nature, but instead inspires being in meaningful relationship with nature. Desire to break attachments and the practice of striving to make these breaks, may also make it easier to engage in alternative ways of living and engaging nature.

56 Afrasiabi, “Towards an Islamic Ecotheology,” 286.

Conclusion

Beliefs, practices, experiences, and institutions all come together to contribute to the construction of religious ideas about the environment and ultimately to these Muslims' negotiation of their religious identity and place within American culture. Members of these three communities draw upon diverse sources for the values that they apply to their actions on the farms. As Muslims, ideas from the textual tradition continue to be important in how they construct religious meaning in everyday life. As Sufis, the figures of *sheikhs* play a particular role in the linking of the textual and lived traditions.

Each *sheikh* has a slightly different role in the community, leading to a different valuation of environment among each group. Particular land is important to members of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship Farm, members of the Dayemi Tariqat are not concerned with a specific plot of land, and members of the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East have experience a connection between their farmland and Sidi. With the Farm of Peace, however the community was primarily interested in finding a place to meet. Members of the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center East have farmed for practical reasons, but have tried to be sustainable because of the example of their *sheikh*.

Members of these communities are not using fixed Islamic ideas or values when deciding how to engage with nature ethically. Instead, through the negotiation of religious ideas and daily experiences and the embodiment of religious and environmental ideals, these Muslims are developing religious ideas about human-nature relationships. Farms provide different opportunities and ways to engage nature. Members of these communities work with land, other people, animals, and plants, developing ideas about these aspects of nature and entire ecosystems.
By working with the land and plants on these farms, these Sufis have developed new environmental awareness and practices that they were unlikely to have found without the constant engagement with the natural world that farming required. And these experiences have affected them in ways that even they did not expect, pushing them to find points of contact between their otherworldly spiritual teachings and their very this-worldly farming practices.

Members of these communities are not only motivated by religious ideas and religious ideas do not confine the extent of their involvement with nature. Farms allow them to live ideas about society, food production, and the environment. The concerns and practices of some of the Muslims involved with these communities reflect trends in subsections of American culture, such as agrarianism, bioregionalism, and local food movements. Motivation for particular projects, such as placing land in a conservation project, can be practical, economic, or religious.

These Muslims' actions can be informed by more than one idea or valuation of nature. Although studies of religion and ecology have been concerned with finding the resources that will lead people to treat nature ethically, these resources may not fully replace ideas already present within a community. In fact, if environmental ethicists are right about the persuasiveness of ideas based in experience, it may be more important to look to the interpretations of texts and traditions that arise from the lived experiences of particular communities. There will still be a legitimacy attached to interpretations that have textual foundation. However, groups may not be ready to engage these discourses without the experiences within the natural world.
APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW LIST

All interviewees were given the option to allow me to use their real name. If they did not initial and date an extra line on the informed consent, interviewees were interviewed in confidentiality. These names have been withheld. I also withheld some names that I had permission to use, if I felt that these names might have allowed another interviewee to be identified.

Chuck. Interview by author, August 2, 2009, Anna, IL. Recorded.
Mark. Interview by author, August 15, 2009, Coatesville, PA. Field notes.
Ra’fi. Interview by author, August, 3, 2009, Anna, IL. Recorded.
Sally. Interview by author, August 15, 2009, Coatesville, PA. Recorded.
Wayne. Interview by author, August, 2, 2009, Anna, IL. Recorded.
APPENDIX B
LIST OF PAMPHLETS

Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship. *What is the Fellowship?*

---. *Visitor Protocols.*


---. *Dayemi Homeschool Collective.*

---. *Dayemi Parent/Child Collective.*


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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Eleanor Finnegan received an undergraduate degree in religious studies from Colgate University and a Master of Theological Studies from Vanderbilt University with a focus on Islamic studies. The recipient of several Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships for Modern Standard Arabic, her research interests include American Islam and Muslims and the relations between Muslims' religious and environmental ideas and practices. She is currently a lecturer of religious studies at Coastal Carolina University.