

GIVING COMFORT, DISPELLING FEAR: SOCIAL WELFARE AT THE SHRINE OF DATA GANJ BUKHSH IN LAHORE, PAKISTAN

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With 4 figures, 1 table and 2 photos

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Summary: Based on the case study of Pakistan's largest Sufi Shrine, Data Darbar, situated in Lahore, this paper explores ways in which sacred places can be used by diverse actors for social welfare. As blessings (*barraka*) from the saint/shrine are connected to much of the social welfare, services are not exclusively used by the poor, taking away any stigmatisation of those relying on these services. Although Data Darbar is one of the most important centres of social welfare in Pakistan, Western development agencies have so far overlooked the groups involved especially the Faith Based Organisations (FBOs). The reason for this lies in the general neglect of Islamic institutions as part of civil society due to their negative image as the example of the Pakistani madrasas shows. Apart from being a centre of social welfare, the shrine has also become a place of risk due to suicide attacks in 2010. However, the shrine continues to be a place of comfort rather than a place of fear, because the belief in the saint gives visitors and those providing social welfare a strong psychological resilience. The paper therefore suggests that sacred places and FBOs be included more often in the debate on security, resilience and development in South Asia.

Zusammenfassung: Anhand des Beispiels von Pakistans größtem Sufi Schrein, Data Darbar in Lahore, wird in diesem Artikel aufgezeigt, wie heilige Orte von verschiedenen Akteuren als Plattform für soziale Wohlfahrt genutzt werden können. Da den Hilfsleistungen neben ihrem materiellen Wert auch ein spiritueller Wert beigemessen wird, werden diese nicht ausschließlich von Bedürftigen angenommen und eine Stigmatisierung derer, die Hilfsleistungen annehmen, unterbunden. Trotzdem werden seitens internationaler Entwicklungsinstitutionen die meisten der im Bereich der sozialen Wohlfahrt arbeitenden religiösen Organisationen, (Faith Based Organisations (FBOs)), ignoriert, bzw. übersehen. Grund hierfür ist das negative Bild Islamischer Institutionen im Westen, wie das Beispiel der Pakistanischen Madrassas zeigt. Der Schrein ist jedoch nicht nur ein Ort der Wohlfahrt, sondern auch ein Ziel von zwei Selbstmordanschlägen im Juli 2010 gewesen. Das soziale Wohlfahrtssystem wurde hierdurch jedoch nur kurz unterbrochen und die Anschläge selbst, trotz über 50 Toten, führten nicht zur Traumatisierung der Überlebenden. Wesentlich für diese psychologische Resilienz verantwortlich ist der Glaube an den Heiligen. Religion sollte daher nicht notwendig als Schwäche, sondern auch als Stärke von FBOs gesehen werden und diese sowie heilige Orte sollten daher stärker in die Debatte um Sicherheit, Resilienz und Entwicklung in Süd-asien einbezogen werden.

Keywords: Geography of religion, developing countries, Pakistan, civil society, social resilience, psychological resilience, suicide attacks, sacred places, Sufism, Islam.

1 Introduction

In recent years “civil society”, (most broadly defined as the *space in between state and household* (cf. GELLNER 2009) has become an important field from which international development agencies and NGOs choose their local partners. Given the fact that local governments are often seen as a hindrance to development rather than a support, this turn is understandable. As a result, so called Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) are also being included in projects more often.

When we turn to South Asia, however, international donor agencies seem reluctant to cooperate

with Faith Based Organisations (CLARKE 2007, 89). In Pakistan this reluctance is particularly evident and often Faith Based Organisations are omitted entirely from concepts of civil society by Western actors (GEISER 2007). The assumption seems to be, that organisations linked to Islam are “fundamental” or at least bound to traditions and values that contradict, rather than support, the goals of the donor agencies.

This assumption is problematic for the following two reasons:

1. Ignoring or even denouncing Islamic institutions such as *madaries* (plural of *madrassa* in Arabic and Urdu), mosques and shrines in the discussion on civil society means to ignore a large part of public

life in Muslim countries. Islamic institutions often fulfil functions which, in a European or Western context are fulfilled by the state. This includes social welfare in the form of healthcare, food provision, education and also the operation of public goods e.g. roads.

2. In countries where a large part of society is vulnerable to food crises, violent conflicts, natural hazards and political instability, a strong belief system can contribute to better resilience towards these crises.

In this regard Faith Based Organisation can provide psychological stability in an unstable environment.

The aim of this paper is to challenge this assumption of an incompatibility of Islam and civil society and to show the potential of Faith Based Organisations and sacred places for securing basic needs for the poor in a South Asian megacity. Beginning with background information on Islamic concepts of religious endowments and philanthropy, a case study in the form of one of Pakistan's most important Sufi shrines, *Data Darbar*, will then be presented. The shrine serves as an example in two ways. First to show how Faith Based Organisations and other civil society actors provide social welfare of considerable outreach and do so in close cooperation with a state agency – this is important because more and more actors in the field of development strive for tripartite cooperations between a foreign donor agency, a local civil society organisation and state agents. Secondly, while the association of social welfare actors with Islam on the one hand renders them invisible to western donor agencies of development programs, the case study will show that the spirituality of the actors involved has on the other hand a strong influence on the resilience of these actors towards crises.

Resilience here is understood as: “[focusing] on people's and/or system's capacities to cope with, recover from and adapt to various risks and adversities, and direct[s] attention to the ways in which the state and the civil society can enhance or erode these capacities.” (OBRIST 2010, 279). When a suicide attack was carried out at the shrine in July 2010, killing more than 50 people, the social welfare system at the shrine faced major problems and many of the volunteers working at the shrine had been killed or injured in the attack. Despite this, the event did not lead to traumatisation and resignation but instead the actors involved quickly made all services available again. The major factor in this resilience was faith in the saint. In addition to the above definition, notions of resilience taken from studies of trauma victims in the field of psychology (PERES et al. 2007) will therefore be included in the discussion.

In the last section of this paper, the question is addressed, why Western agencies have so far failed to acknowledge sacred sites as centres of civil society and social welfare. Part of the explanation is based on the work by URS GEISER focussing on ‘visible’ and ‘invisible’ civil society in Pakistan that he sees connected to the Western dichotomy of modernity as opposed to tradition. Using EISENSTADT'S (2000) understanding of ‘multiple modernities’ this dichotomy should be overcome in order to integrate FBOs and sacred places into the debate on civil society and the provision of social welfare in Pakistan and South Asia. The paper ends with a brief discussion of how far the case study is representative of Pakistani shrines and more generally of South Asian sacred sites.

2 Islamic welfare and “waqf”

Before we turn to the case study it is necessary to give a very short overview of social welfare within an Islamic context and to look at the legal status most shrines have being religious endowments (called *waqf* in Arabic, the plural *auqaf*).

Social welfare in the form of *zakat* (obligatory alms) is one of the five pillars of Islam. Apart from this there is the voluntary charity, *sadakah*, which is also an integral part of Islam, mentioned in a number of suras, e.g.: “And they give food in spite of love for it to the needy, the orphan, and the captive, [Saying], We feed you only for the countenance of Allah. We wish not from you reward or gratitude.” (Quran, 76:8-9). The key concept of philanthropy in Islam can be described as such: “In essence, because Muslims believe that they are merely trustees of the wealth and property which they may ultimately be given by God, [t]hey are thus accountable for the ways they use their resources and wealth, and they earn religious merit by utilizing them in a socially beneficial way.” (WHITE 2006, 14 citing NANJI 2005). For a Muslim to “utilize” wealth “in a socially beneficial way” can have various forms. One that reaches beyond one's own death is the institution of *waqf* that evolved early in Muslim history (cf. WINKELHANE 1990, 231–234). A *waqf* is perceived as an inalienable religious endowment, typically a piece of land with or without buildings. It differs only slightly from the English concept of a trust, which evolved in England after the return of the crusaders and likely was inspired by the *waqf* present in the Middle East (cf. GAUDIOSI 1988).

A *waqf* has specific requirements regarding the founder, the beneficiaries and its administration and is supposed to “last forever”. However, under certain circumstances a *waqf* can be terminated, e.g. when the goods of the *waqf* are not used in the manner intended by the founder or if the *waqf* is used for purposes forbidden by the Quran. This has provided various governments in Muslim countries justification for nationalising *auqaf* as was the case in Pakistan (cf. SHATZMILLER 2001).

Historically *auqaf* have played an important role in providing public goods. Besides mosques and shrines, also roads, hospitals and educational institutions often had the legal status of a *waqf*. Therefore some (KURAN 2001; WHITE 2006) see the *waqf* as the paramount institution of civil society in Muslim history.

For the argument of this paper it is important to acknowledge that social welfare and philanthropy are essential parts of Islam and therefore an integral part of many Faith Based Organisations in Pakistan. Due to the historical importance *auqaf* have played in providing common goods, it is surprising that various groups making use of them have been overlooked when searching for local civil society organisations. This issue will be dealt with later in this paper.

Today many *auqaf* are under state control and thus per definition cannot constitute a part of civil society. We will see in section 3.3, however, that many of the non-state actors at the shrine of *Data Ganj Bukhsh* fall into the category of civil society, and that despite it being state-run, the shrine remains an important centre for actors from civil society.

3 The case study

3.1 Methods

The material presented here is part of a PhD project concerned with the shrine of *Data Ganj Bukhsh*. Research for the study was conducted in several field trips to Lahore between February 2009 and September 2012, the longest of which was eight months. Findings are based largely on participant observation and more than 150 interviews in Urdu and English with local experts, the administration of the shrine, actors in the field of social welfare, visitors to the shrine, beggars, drug addicts and people working in the formal and informal labour market around the shrine. Interviews were conducted with the help of a translator in some cases and were recorded when possible (often this was not allowed).

In addition mappings were carried out. After the suicide attack in July 2010 the video footage of the attack was analysed with the help of the management of the shrine.

3.2 The shrine of *Data Ganj Bukhsh* and the ‘Department for Religious Affairs and Auqaf’

The shrine of *Data Ganj Bukhsh* is situated in Pakistan’s second largest city, Lahore, and is today the country’s largest shrine both in size and in numbers of visitors. *Data Ganj Bukhsh* meaning ‘great’ or ‘generous giver of treasures’, is what the saint is most often called, although he can also simply be referred to as *Data*. The shrine is called *Data Darbar*, *Darbar* being the term normally used for a king’s court. He was one of the first Muslim saints to spread Islam in the region and is today regarded as the spiritual patron of the city.

The shrine was established shortly after the saint, then known as *Ali Hujwiri*, died in 1073. Situated just outside the Walled City of Lahore, the shrine became part of the city in the 1920s–40s when Lahore grew rapidly. In 1947 the shrine consisted of an octagonal tomb with a green dome and a small courtyard and a mosque built in the mid 19th century (Fig. 1).

With independence a mostly British-educated elite came to power, a large part of which was critical of many of the practices in and around the shrines (cf. MALIK 1996; EWING 1997). Following arguments put forward by his father (national poet Muhammad Iqbal), Javid IQBAL (1958) suggested to military dictator Ayub Khan to nationalise the shrines. By 1960 a *Department for Religious Affairs and Auqaf* was established (MALIK 1996, 59–60). It is today a provincial department with the right to take over any religious endowment. *Data Darbar* was among the first shrines (and *auqaf*) to be nationalised and has been enlarged and architecturally altered drastically between 1982 and 1999 (Fig. 2a, 2b).

The expansion of the shrine turned it into a more complex institution in terms of its functions. This was done to facilitate increasing numbers of pilgrims, but also to diminish the influence of the traditional caretakers: “In the context of nationalization of religious endowments, an attempt was made, both under Ayub and later under Bhutto, to reduce the traditional religious authority of the shrineholders, by formally propagating an emancipation of the pilgrims to the shrines. [...] From now on every citizen, provided only that he was a “good Muslim”, was supposed to be able to enter directly into dialogue

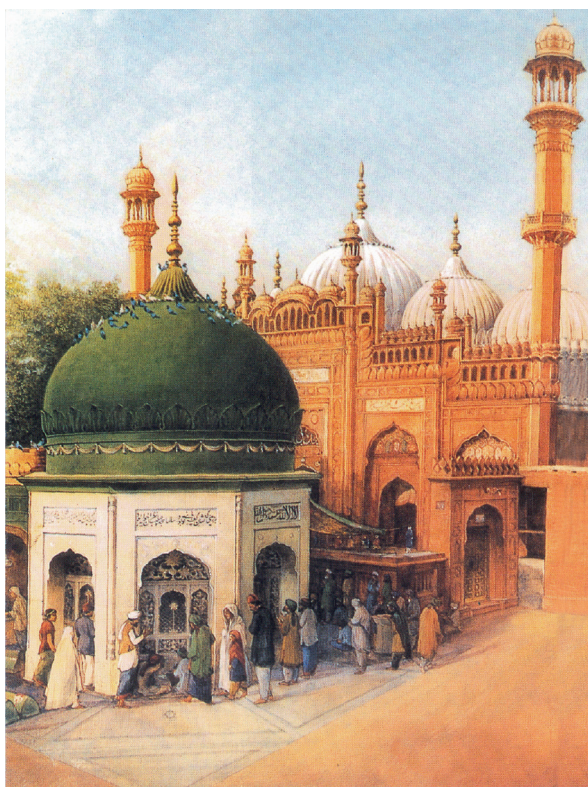


Fig. 1: *Data Darbar* in an idealised painting from 1944 (SHAHZAD 2004)

with God. [...] The miraculous healing power of the saints was replaced by the building of hospitals in the endowments” (MALIK 1996, 61).

Today one of the department’s propagated aims (stated on its official website) is: “To make the holy places centres of social, cultural and spiritual regeneration of Muslims in accordance with the dictates of Islam” (GOP 2011).

3.3 Giving comfort – *Data Darbar* as a centre of social welfare and civil society

3.3.1 Distribution of food by private persons

Sacred places, be they Muslim Shrines or Hindu and Sikh Temples – to name the ones most common in the subcontinent – are often closely associated with social welfare. The service that reaches most people is the communal kitchen. Food distributed in the name of a saint is called *langar* (Punjabi for ‘communal food’). The religious importance and meaning of giving and receiving *langar* is complex (cf. WERBNER and BASU 1998; WERBNER 1998, 2005). For our purposes, it is sufficient to know that distribut-

ing *langar* is at once a tribute to the saint as well as being considered a gift to the people *from the saint* (and ultimately God). Distributing *langar* is very common after a wish that was expressed at the shrine has been fulfilled, e.g. when a child is born.

Although some visitors bring *langar* prepared in their own kitchens, many travel far to venerate the saint. To cater for these, 61 shops sell *langar* 24 hours, every day of the year, in the markets surrounding the shrine (see Fig. 2b). On the basis of interviews with shopkeepers and on counting it can be estimated that around 300 to 700 *degs* (large metal pots, (Photo 1) are sold on a normal day, and twice as much on Thursdays, Fridays and Islamic holidays. A *deg* is enough food for around thirty servings. Thus between 10–80,000 people can be served a full meal a day from the *langar* which is bought in the shops, and a similar amount from *langar* brought by visitors from home. As the food is widely believed to be imbued with blessings (*barraka*), it is an honour, rather than a shame to accept it and is therefore consumed by both rich and poor.

3.3.2 Social welfare by the ‘Department of Religious Affairs and Auqaf’

A large part of donations made by visitors at the shrine is spent on forms of social welfare directly or indirectly. All the income of the shrine goes to the *Department of Religious Affairs and Auqaf* first. The shrine’s administration has its own budget, making up only about twenty percent of the income it generates. From this amount about ten percent is used on social welfare. Additionally the department runs a hospital close to the shrine which has a budget approximately half of the shrine’s income. If the two institutions were considered one, approximately 60 percent of the income is spent on social welfare (Tab. 1).¹⁾

The administration’s social welfare includes an industrial school for young women where they learn stitching and a fund given to young women for their marriage expenses. The grants are 10,000 Rs (approx. 100 US Dollars) and considerably lighten the burden of the families’ marriage costs.

By far the largest social welfare institution is the *Data Darbar Hospital*, around a hundred meters to the west of the shrine. Started as a one room dispensary inside the shrine in 1960, today the hospital has all

¹⁾ This is a very high percentage of social welfare expenditure for a waqf. GEORG STÖBER mentions rates as low as 3% for pre-independence Morocco (STÖBER 1986, 122–123).

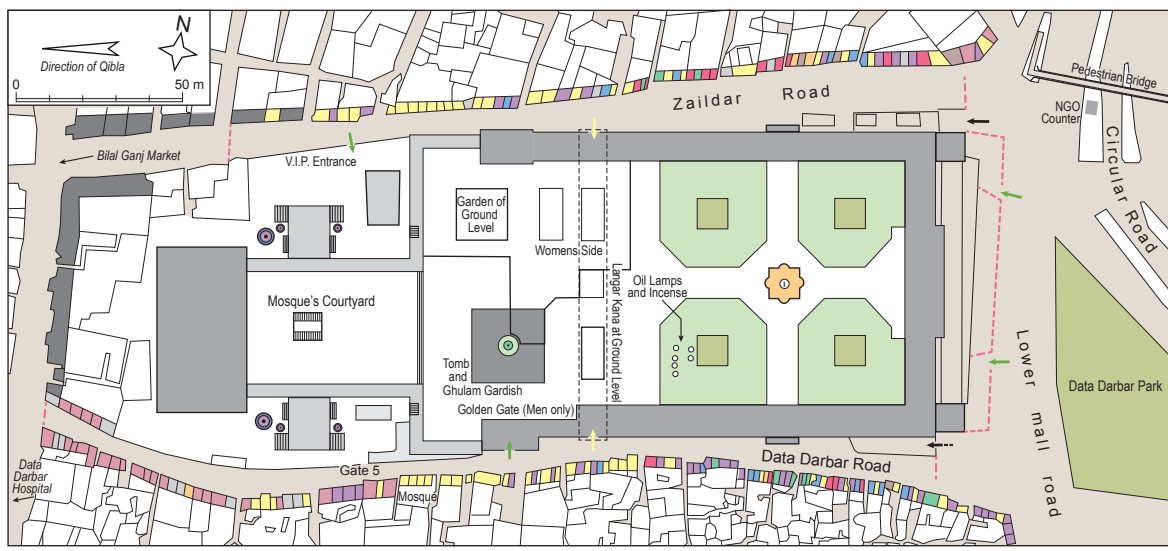
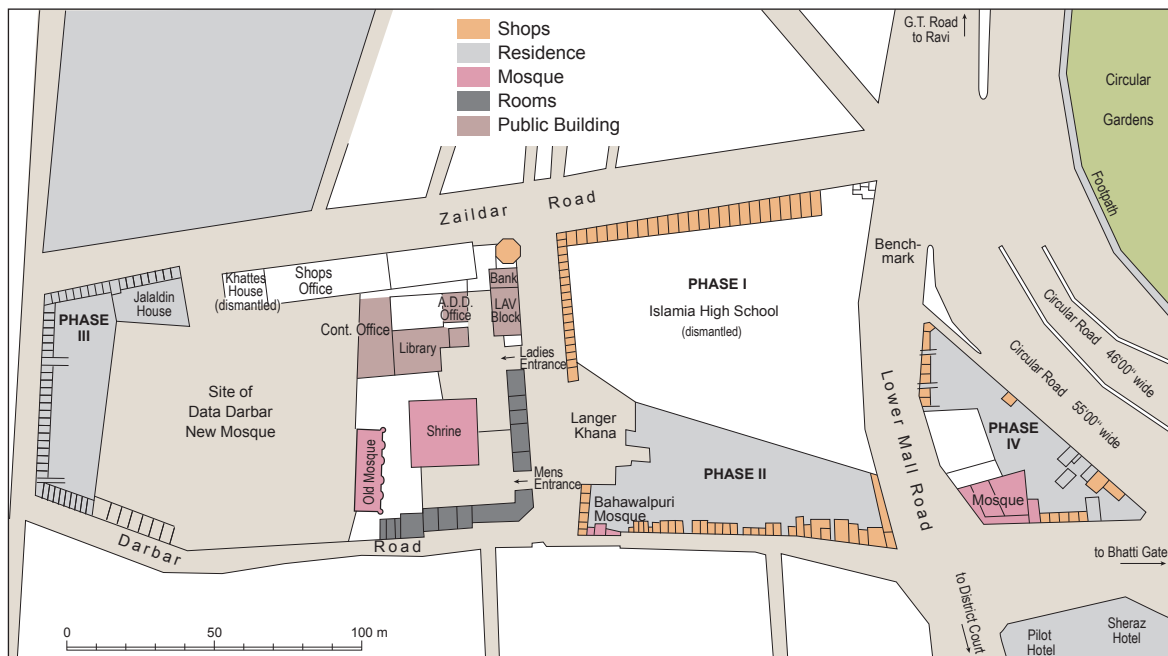


Fig. 2a: Data Darbar and its surroundings in the 1960s, after the shrine was nationalised (SHAHZAD 2004). Fig. 2b: Data Darbar and its surroundings in 2009, including the numbers and assortment of shops around the shrine

the facilities of a government hospital. Treatment is free and the quality of treatment is comparable to some of the private clinics in the city. Most officials inside the department and the administration of the shrine see these activities as a continuation of the saint’s effort in making life better for the com-

munity. As the medical superintendent of the *Data Darbar Hospital* puts it: “... when there is a surplus of money and the teaching of the saint is to look after the community, so how can you look after the community? By giving them health, medical facility, by giving them the teaching of Islam and by look-



Photo 1: *Langar* (from a *Deg*) being distributed at the male side of the distribution lot of *Data Darbar*

ing after their daily needs.” (Lahore, Nov. 2009). To give people “the teaching of Islam” is considered the most important task inside the department. In 2002 a madrasa opened in one of the basements of the shrine. More than 150 students study here for up to eight years, many of whom get a scholarship for their daily expenses and free accommodation from the department.

3.3.3 Social welfare by actors of civil society

Apart from the *Department of Religious Affairs and Auqaf* there are other parts of society active in providing social welfare at the shrine. Among these are groups of regular visitors to the shrine that organise *langar*. There are also a large number of groups that follow a particular Sufi order and meet at the shrine on Thursday nights. Most of these also provide food and some concentrate on spiritual services like “cleaning the heart”, a ritual rinsing the soul of sins. Another example is a local NGO run by a former government social worker, picking up runaway children at the shrine and taking them back to

their families. Many children, mostly male, who run away from home, know that there is food and shelter to be found at the shrine and in many cases it is the only place they know in Lahore. The NGO workers sit in a counter (Fig. 2b) waiting for children to be brought to them by visitors of the shrine or the police. The workers collect donations for the NGO during the day and looking for sleeping children during the night. On average 5 children are picked up per day. They are brought to the NGO’s headquarter and their relatives are tracked down and informed.

During the time of ‘*urs*’ (Photo 2), the annual festival held in remembrance of the saint’s day of death in the Islamic calendar, up to a million people visit the shrine and a number of religious groups and private donors distribute food. Additionally this is a time when donors from the industrial elite donate large amounts of money, food or the decorations for the shrine.

Whenever the shrine is crowded, the administration of the shrine relies on volunteers to help organise the flow of people. The volunteers are organised under three different associations all established by private persons with a personal devotion to the shrine. Together they have more than 3000 members registered, most of whom work for three hours a week to upkeep their membership. Work tasks include cleaning the shrine (additionally to a private contractor working for the department), operating an information counter for visitors of the shrine, body checking visitors at the entry gates (although this is the responsibility of the police), and organising people to line up for the prayer at the tomb of the saint.

In 2004, another social welfare institution opened an office inside the shrine complex. The Pakistani NGO *Akhuwat* (a term derived from the word *manakhat* meaning “brotherhood” in Arabic) gives out micro credits from 10,000 to 50,000

Tab. 1: Income and expenditure for institutions at *Data Darbar* (based on CHAUDHRY 2009)

Institution	Income 2007–2008 (in thousand Rs)	Expenditure 2007–2008 (in thousand Rs)
Data Darbar	169,130	30,623
Data Darbar Social Welfare		2,925
Data Darbar Hospital	2,705	70,798
Library, Madrasa, Research Center		6,023
Total: Data Darbar and adjoining Institutions	171,835	107,444
Dep. of R.A. & A.	657,551	472,580



Photo 2: The shrine of *Data Ganj Bukhsh* illuminated during 'urs in February 2010

Pakistani Rupees. The NGO has a well established network of offices around the country, many of which are based at religious buildings. The choice of the shrine as a location for the office is a good example that social welfare actors not directly associated with the shrine or the saint acknowledge the potential of the space in regards to making contact with their target group. The NGO also benefits from the general perception, that the saint helps poor people in their daily life. People using the welfare offered, interpret the help within their belief system, as help coming from the saint.

3.3.4 The potential for development cooperation

As we have seen, the shrine of *Data Ganj Bukhsh* offers social welfare services not only through its administration, but also by offering a platform for a variety of actors, ranging from private to civil society and state actors to offer their respective services or help. There are several reasons why the shrine is used in this way, most of which apply to sacred places in South Asia in general:

- Sacred places are well-known in their surroundings and often beyond. People go there for relief because they see saints as '*Friends of God*' at whose graves prayers will be heard. Thus many of the groups in need of help are already present (e.g. prostitutes, drug victims, street children etc.).
- Attracting people from various social strata, who otherwise inhabit segregated areas of the city, sacred places are a rare platform for interaction between rich and poor.
- The food (and potentially other services) is not simply seen as a source for physical nutrition but

has a spiritual, and to a very large extent, a psychological effect as well.

- The infrastructure for the distribution of food and other services is well established, with many shrines possessing enough space and human resources to quickly disperse anything from a truckload of food to a large sum of money.
- No one is stigmatised for making use of the facilities and services at the shrine, as seen with the above examples of both rich and poor utilising the facilities

For foreign NGOs and development agencies the shrine thus offers not only a number of potential partners for cooperation but also an arena for their own social welfare programs. As services offered at the shrine are interpreted as part of the saint's generosity, the acceptance of help is higher than in other contexts. The general problem faced by many development projects, namely that the people targeted do not believe the project will bring about positive change, could also be overcome because of the high efficacy given to the shrine and saint by the visitors. Additionally the respect given to local belief could foster mutual trust often missing between local communities and development organisations (cf. BRADLEY 2008).

3.4 Dispelling fear – suicide attacks, resilience and faith

When South Asian temples, shrines and other such places find their way into the Western news it is mostly because of violent conflicts and not because of the provision of social welfare. Tragic acmes were the incidents in the *Golden Temple* in 1984 and the *Babri Mosque* in 1992/1993. Unfortunately violent conflicts seem to be almost a ubiquity when it comes to sacred sites (HASSNER 2006). The question how civil society reacts to such risks is therefore important.

For several reasons the shrine of *Data Ganj Bukhsh* has appeared on a list of threatened places in Lahore in recent years. First, attacks have become more frequent in the city after the Pakistani army started an offensive in the border region to Afghanistan in 2009. Second, in 2009 an attack was carried out on an Islamic cleric inside his madrasa and mosque complex in Lahore. And third, recent attacks have been targeting large crowds of people found in markets, at sport events or in religious processions. *Data Darbar* is among the most crowded places in Lahore, especially after the Friday prayer, a time when most attacks are carried out. Apart from this, one of the

clerics, who in 2009 strongly condemned suicide attacks and declared them *haram* (forbidden by Islamic law), has an office inside the shrine complex.

3.4.1 Suicide attacks

On the 1st of July 2010, a Thursday night, two suicide bombers killed more than 50 people at the shrine. Days before the incident a security warning was given out for the shrine and in order to minimise the threat of explosives being brought into the shrine, the ‘Golden Gate’ which is situated closest to the tomb and central part of the shrine was closed. Another gate (Nr. 5, see Fig. 3) was opened to compensate for this. The available video footage (more than 90 cameras are installed at the shrine) shows the chain of events that led to this disaster: As is always the case on Thursday nights, volunteers were helping the police with body checking visitors at the entrances. One of the volunteers stopped a man carrying a small bag. When he asked the man to show him the bag, he started running towards the steps that lead into the complex. The volunteer turned to the police officer in charge, sitting in a chair next to the entrance, who took a brief look and then turned away. The volunteer ran after the man, stopping him just in front of the ablution area under the mosque’s courtyard. When he grabbed the man from behind, the explosives were detonated. In this incident four people died, including the suicide bomber and the volunteer.

The blast shattered the building and people immediately started rushing out of the shrine and in the course pushed an otherwise closed door open, giving a much shorter passage out of the shrine. At the same time all security and police officers abandoned their posts at the entrances and a second suicide bomber was able to enter the complex and thereafter the courtyard of the mosque through the door that had been crushed. When he tried to enter the *Ghulam Gardish*, the roofed area around the tomb (see Figs. 2b, 3), he was stopped by two volunteers and told to line up like all the other visitors. Instead he triggered his explosives causing the death of at least 47 people.

3.4.2 Resilience and faith

In the time since the attacks much has changed at the shrine. Following the clean-up of the scene by volunteers, police forces and paramedics, the shrine was closed. During the night people started spontaneous demonstrations in front of the shrine, blaming the Government of the Punjab for not having adequately secured the place. By the time of Friday-prayer the next afternoon, parts of the shrine were reopened and several thousand people came to pray in and outside the shrine. There were only two gates open for entry, making it difficult for people to access the shrine. It was prohibited to take anything inside the complex including bags, cameras and even *langar*. This posed a problem for the many groups

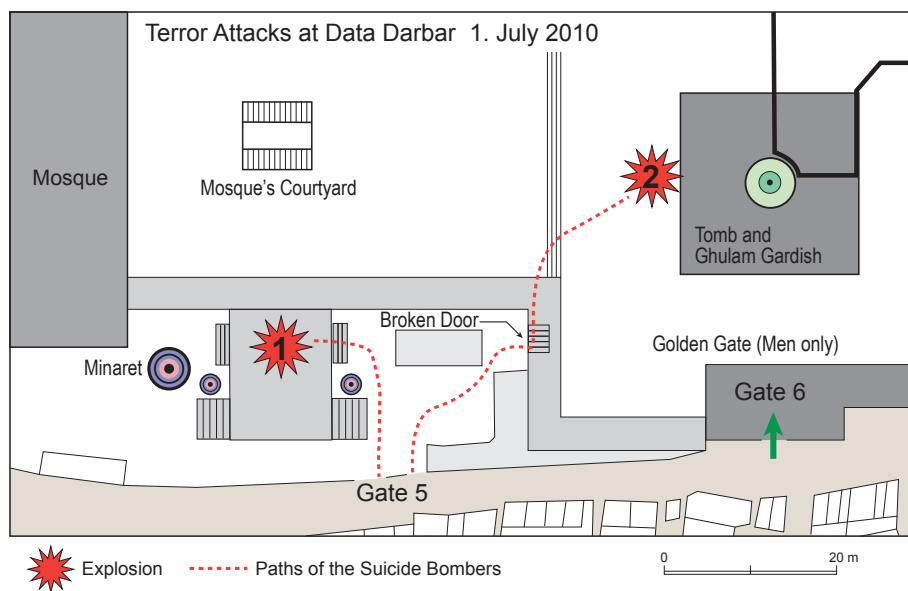


Fig. 3: Passage of the suicide bombers and the location of the bomb blasts at *Data Darbar* 1. July 2010

distributing *langar* inside the shrine and they temporarily shifted the distribution to a street behind the complex. However, strong pressure by the groups and donors to reopen the shrine for *langar* forced the *Department of Religious Affairs and Auqaf* to make arrangements for *langar* in large plastic containers to be checked with metal detectors. In the aftermath of this dispute the shrine's administrator had to leave his post.

In other domains changes remained. Most importantly, many gates remained closed. The effect was that the number of visitors declined slightly. However, those visitors with a strong relation to the place have continued to come and this includes those who benefit from the social welfare, but, and this is an important fact, also those providing it.

The reason why many have continued their activities at the shrine with the same, sometimes even stronger conviction, can be found in their belief in the saint. It is understandable that the police officer decided not to chase the first suicide bomber, it would most likely have cost his life. Only the strong conviction of the volunteer made him choose death over life in order to save others. As interviews with many volunteers showed, this was regarded an obvious choice and for many, one without alternative.

Belief in the saint also made the otherwise traumatic experience of the bomb blast comprehensible for many of the visitors. The interpretation most common was that the suicide bombers in fact did not succeed in the way they had planned, entering the *Ghulam Gardish* and triggering the explosives just in front of the grave. This would have caused the death of hundreds if not thousands of people. As several informants pointed out, no persons had been hit and no damage to the building had occurred *inside* the *Ghulam Gardish* even though the second explosion happened just a few feet from it. This interpretation strengthened their belief in the saint as their protector and the shrine's unbroken sacrality. A similar effect has been described in detail by ROBERT ROZEHNAL (2007) for a stampede at another major Pakistani Sufi shrine (Baba Farid, Pakpattan). There is widespread evidence that a strong religious belief can significantly reduce the chances of a trauma after events like the ones mentioned here (cf. PERES et al. 2007).

For the topic of this paper there are two important lessons to learn from the attacks:

- Despite the large number of police officers, the installation of a video surveillance system and metal detectors, none of these measures prevented the suicide bombers from entering the complex and

triggering the explosives. The fact that all officers abandoned their posts after the first blast, made it possible for the second suicide bomber to enter the shrine unhindered through an exit point. We thus see a complete failure of the security offered by the police. At the same time the volunteers significantly reduced the impact of the attacks. The first volunteer, knowingly, gave his life to stop the first attacker from getting further into the shrine and possibly killing hundreds of people. After this incident it is remarkable that when the second suicide bomber approached the tomb, the volunteers at this point were still holding their positions in order to help manage the crowds. Furthermore, had they left, the casualties of the second blast would have been much higher.

- Although the attacks significantly confined activities related to social welfare at the shrine, the groups and actors continued their work in and around the shrine and in the mid-term forced the administration to make concessions in security in order to re-establish the distribution of *langar* within the complex. Even with a decline in the number of visitors, the shrine's social welfare system has proven to be very resilient towards the attacks.

In short, the FBOs involved in social welfare at the shrine have firstly reduced the impact of the attacks themselves, and secondly re-established the social welfare within a very short period of time. This constitutes the essence of the term resilience as “[focusing] on people's and/or system's capacities to cope with, recover from and adapt to various risks and adversities, and direct[s] attention to the ways in which the state and the civil society can enhance or erode these capacities” (OBRIST 2010, 279). Additionally the belief in the saint offers a framework in which to interpret the events, an important factor in resilience as identified by psychological studies: “A decisive factor in developing resilience may be the way individuals perceive and process an experience. People who develop interpretative patterns of coping and attempt to modify the present positively may find it easier to overcome psychological traumas” (PERES et al. 2007, 346) or in short: “A structured narrative seems to be a key factor in resilience to traumatic events” (ibid., 349).

As religion plays such a vital role both in the provision of social welfare as well as in the resilience towards crises, it is a paradox that it is this same religiosity that makes FBOs ‘fall under the radar’ of international development agencies and foreign NGOs.

4 “Civil society need not speak English” – The need to acknowledge FBOs as part of Pakistan’s civil society

Why do many Western or Western-educated actors in the field of development not see religious organisations, or groups loosely organised within a religious context, as part of civil society?²⁾

According to URS GEISER (2006, 2007), who has dealt with this phenomenon in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (formerly NWFP) of Pakistan, a simple answer is, that they lack English names, including the buzzwords of international development discourse and do not use “catchy acronyms”. In the case of Data Darbar the social welfare actors nor the *Department of Religious Affairs and Auqaf* have ever been approached by western development agencies or NGOs, even though there would be good reasons to do so. GEISER therefore distinguishes between “visible” and “invisible” parts of civil society: “By subscribing to the basic principles of the modern nation state, the ‘visible’ civil society groups accept the paradigm of modernisation as it develops specifically in Europe. The ‘invisible’ [sic] part of civil society also struggles for a modern state, however, its frame of reference is not the same, as it is mainly informed by critical experiences with the performance of the modern state.” (GEISER 2007, 1183 (English abstract)) In the case of *Data Darbar* one such critical experience were the suicide attacks that showed a failure on the part of the nation state, represented by the police, to protect the shrine. While one would assume that those subscribing to another kind of Islam attacked the shrine as a symbol for a different form of Islam, there is no evidence to prove this. No one took responsibility for the attacks and the Pakistani Taleban also denied responsibility (PERLEZ 2010). Instead, it is more likely that the shrine was attacked as a symbol of the state, showing its inability to protect its citizens. Thus the nation state has little to offer in regard to the resilience of the shrine in comparison to the ‘invisible’ civil society in form of the volunteers who gave their lives to protect others.

All but one of the groups at *Data Darbar* providing social welfare fall into the category of the ‘invisi-

ble’ part of civil society, since their frame of reference is the belief in the saint or concepts of philanthropy based on Islamic principles (Fig. 4). The only exception is the NGO working with run-away children. As the initiator of the NGO pointed out in an interview (Lahore, Dec. 2009), establishing the NGO had nothing to do with the shrine in particular. It was simply the place where most of the children go who run away from home.

We could assume that the dichotomy between modernity and secularism on one side and tradition and religion on the other, leads to a general avoidance of Faith Based Organisations by western agencies. While this might have been the case up until the 1990s, CLARKE (2006, 2007) argues that in recent years development agencies have in fact changed their attitude towards Faith Based Organisations, but mostly in regard to Christian churches (CLARKE 2006, 837). The problem therefore does not lie in a general avoidance of religious groups and organisations but to a large extent in a specific attitude towards or perception of Islamic ones. One specific example is the madaris (or madrasas), where CLARKE sees this apparent blind spot in his study of DFID’s³⁾ interaction with Faith Based Organisations, due to their image as “breeding ground for political extremism” (CLARKE 2007, 89). Contrary to this popular view he argues: “Most madrasas, however, play an important role in educating children in countries where the state lacks the resources to fund universal primary education and where parents lack a choice of schools. The better-resourced madrasas often provide free food and accommodation for the children of the poor, and employment for a significant minority who go on to work in madrasas or mosques. Where they combine secular and religious education, Islamic schools can play a potentially important role in providing poor children with a basic primary school education, and as a significant social safety net” (ibid., 90). Considering that education has evolved in the discourse on development as *the solution* to overcome almost every shortcoming of so called developing countries, there is a remarkable neglect of a major social welfare institution on the grounds of prejudice and Islamophobia.⁴⁾

²⁾ There are of course remarkable exceptions, e.g. The Aga Khan Foundation. But as GEISER also points out, the exceptions are often well established international institutions with strong links to the West (GEISER 2007, 4). Recently the question of faith-based social welfare in general has been discussed by a number of publications (e.g. CLARKE 2007, CLARKE and JENNINGS 2008, and for Pakistan, WHITE 2006).

³⁾ DFID – Department for International Development, the UK- Government department responsible for international development.

⁴⁾ To strengthen his point, CLARKE cites LAMB (2005) who estimates that out of more than 13,000 Pakistani madaris only about 1 percent can be considered as radical. For a detailed discussion of the role of madaris in Pakistan see e.g. the volume “Madrasas in South Asia” edited by JAMAL MALIK (2008)

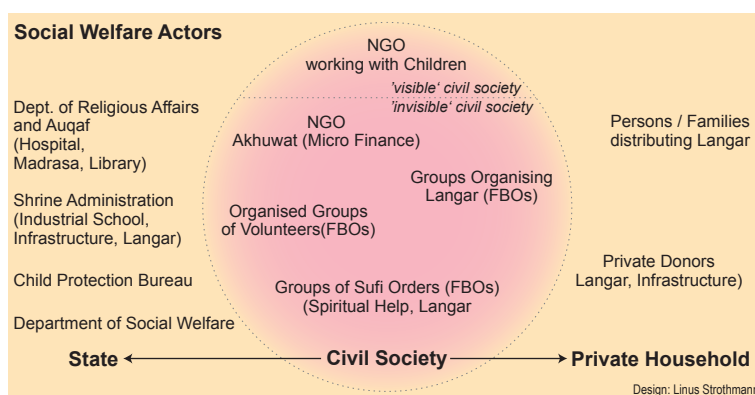


Fig. 4: *The tip of the iceberg*: Social welfare actors including visible and invisible civil society at the shrine of Data Darbar

The reasoning behind this neglect is, that Islam is in its very essence incompatible with modernity, a secular state and civil society (EICKELMAN 2000, 119–120). However, as ANDREW WHITE points out, “... much of the argument of incompatibility between Islam and civil society [also] appears not only to be a product of the relatively limited scholarship in this area but also relatively limited understanding of Islam as a powerfully public (as opposed to a purely private, inward-looking) religion. Indeed, Islam is a religion which incentivizes literally every aspect of its adherents’ lives, ranging from purely spiritual matters to legal and social relationships. [...] It is important to realize that Islam has a very **rich and extensive heritage of civil society**, particularly through various philanthropic and charitable institutions. **These institutions have been a fundamental part of Islam since its very inception**” (WHITE 2006, 12, emphasis added).

It seems that the only way for a larger part of civil society in Pakistan to be included in the Western understanding of civil society is by expanding the concept of modernity to comprise more than the European process of enlightenment and secularism. One such expansion is the concept of *multiple modernities* (EISENSTADT 2000). Within these modernities tradition does no longer have to be the antipode. Instead tradition should be understood as “clusters of cultural concepts, shared understandings, and practices that make political and social life possible. Such pervasive cultural understandings play a crucial element in constituting what we now recognise as “multiple modernities”. They coexist with and shape the experience of modernity. In this sense, ethnicity, caste, and clientelism can be as distinctly modern as the

and here in particular the contributions by TARIQ RAHMAN and CHRISTOPHER CANDLAND.

idea of individual choice.” (EICKELMAN 2000, 123). Giving religion a possibly vital role within concepts of modernities in Pakistan would ultimately change the generally accepted image that only few partners are available for cooperation with international donors. It would instead show the heterogeneity of civil society including the many FBOs working for their own ideals of a better society.

5 Conclusion

We have seen that social welfare at the shrine of Data Ganj Bukhsh, a) is framed by principles of philanthropy in Islam, b) has a large outreach in various fields (health, food, education, micro finance and spiritual guidance), c) has a strong resilience towards crises and d) is a result of a lively civil society closely cooperating but at times also contesting state agencies. The question that remains is whether the given example is representative of Pakistan or even the larger region i.e. South Asia.⁵⁾

While *Data Darbar* is exceptional in its size, much of the social welfare can in fact be found at other shrines as well. The distribution of food as the most important service is well documented for almost all large shrines in the subcontinent (cf. WERBNER and BASU 1998 and TROLL 2005). Unfortunately until now little attention has been given to the various medical dispensaries and their effects attached to rural shrines in Pakistan. Here lies an opportunity to evaluate the effect of the presence of a sacred place on the accept-

⁵⁾ Since this paper is part of a special issue focussing mainly on South Asia I have decided to omit a discussion of how far the case study is comparable to other Muslim countries, e.g. Morocco or Iran, where sacred sites also play important parts in religious and social life.

ance of such a service. We can also only assume that other shrines attract civil society actors in the way *Data Darbar* does. There is little to indicate that they should not, however, further research is also needed here.

With regard to South Asia in general, provision of food, accommodation and other services is well documented for almost all large sacred sites be they Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh or Muslim. The provision of basic needs at sacred sites thus constitutes almost a ubiquity, especially where pilgrims are accommodated, that is all such places with more than just a local importance. Some attention has been given to NGOs making use of sacred sites by TAMSIN BRADLEY (2006, 2008). She sees the largest benefits in the development of trust between NGOs and the local community that evolved when rituals were carried out together. CHRISTOPHER CANDLAND (2000) has looked at “Faith as Social Capital” in southern Asia, mainly Pakistan, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Indonesia and concludes that: “NGOs that are rooted in religiously articulated programs for social reform can be particularly effective at community development and build social capital, especially in political environments in which the state does not promote a civic religion” (CANDLAND 2000, 145). Other authors deal only in part with the impact of Faith Based Organisations or sacred sites (including their festivals and pilgrimage) on development and development projects (e.g. KUMAR 2003; RAKODI 2007; SHINDE 2011; NARESH 2012). It becomes clear that the connection between development, with its complex net of actors from various sectors and Faith Based Organisations, as well as sacred sites could benefit from more academic attention.

The aim of this paper was to show the lively civil society in form of mostly Faith Based Organisations at a major Pakistani shrine and the resulting potential places like the shrine of *Data Ganj Bukhsb* have for providing a platform of social welfare. What this example illustrates is that various agents, from state departments to regular citizens are active in providing services for the poor and needy, be it food, medical services or to some extent even security. A major difference to other places providing social welfare is the spiritual quality attached to it, making it possible to accept help without stigmatisation, and, as has been shown, giving the place a strong resilience to disasters.

In South Asia sacred places form central foci of social life, often including people from various castes, classes, sometimes even faiths. Although yet to be studied in detail, many have long been used by local groups to facilitate the poor. Including them in the debate on development, food security and resilience

could become a vital step in securing basic needs at the community level. The association with religious practices, saints and deities should be seen as an advantage rather than an obstacle. It helps to interpret the help from outside within the local belief system and makes it more acceptable. This asks for a rethinking of categories of modernity vs. tradition/religion as has been shown in regard to civil society associated with Islam in Pakistan, until now invisible to Western development agencies.

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