

The Intoxicated Malangs in Pakistan an Anthropological Study of Folk Religion

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Abstract: It is only recently that the phenomenon of *pirs* (saints) and shrines, in the context of the Indo-Pakistani sub-continent has caught the attention from Western Scholars of Islam. Still it is often considered as a deviation from true Islam, and is usually passed over in silence in the various introductions to Islam, which usually only deals with ‘High Islam’ or the ‘Big Tradition’. Some work has been done, though by scholars from the sub-continent, or by Western Islamists and anthropologists. Even in these studies, little attention has been paid to the malangs, a group of Sufis who are totally devoted to the service to God; but who do not operate under the hierarchies of living *pirs* and their successors. Instead they claim to have direct contact with God or with a dead *pir*. Very often they are not attached to a certain shrine, but wander from shrine to shrine at the direct command of God or the dead *pir*. The following study gives a brief introduction to the system of shrines, and a discussion of the malangs, especially those at the shrine of Bari Iman in the neighbourhood of Islamabad. The study is based on a field study which the author made on the occasion of the annual *Urs* celebration at this shrine.