Nile Green. *The Faqir and the Subalterns: Mapping the Holy Man in Colonial South Asia*

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Nile Green. « The Faqir and the Subalterns: Mapping the Holy Man in Colonial South Asia ». *Journal of Asian History*, vol. 41, n° 1, 2007, p. 57-84.

- 1 To refer to the figure of the *faqīr*, typically characterized as a renunciatory, mendicant with anticonformist behavior, the author introduces the word “polivestiar” for “those holy men and saints whose various groups of followers symbolically ‘clothe’ them in ways reflecting the group’s own religious tradition” (p. 59). This article criticizes the dualistic Hindu/Muslim model that ignores the variety of the religious ideas held by these holy men’s followers. By claiming that the polivestiar holy man is an alternative to existing labels, such as “cross-cultural”, “hybrid” or “syncretic”, which imply a process of amalgamation between monolithic traditions, the author seeks to explain the multiple identities often acquired by these holy men. Drawing on written sources (hagiographies and official documents) and oral history, this article reconstructs the life of a one such *faqīr* so as to illustrate the social and cultural norms that shaped his personality and cult. This *faqīr*, popularly known as Bane Miyān, who died in Awrangabad ca. 1921, is compared to similar figures from colonial India. The article concludes that the form of religiosity shared by Bane Miyān’s Hindu and Muslim followers and described in hagiographies was based more on unwavering devotion to the saint than on formalities and prescriptions. Bane Miyān’s tradition was an important expression of customary cultural practices during a time of religious nationalism and reform.

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