

Militarizing the Psyche: Security, Mental Illness and Kinship in Pakistan

During colonial times, British doctors and psychiatrists often viewed symptoms of mental illness among Indian soldiers as signs of malingering. Scientific knowledge played an important role in consolidating the category of the malingering soldier. After independence, various forms of suspicion and doubt toward the soldier as evading service have persisted which has resulted in the denial of trauma. The country's experience of conflicts with neighboring India and its war on terror against militants, has led to an increasing incidence of mental illness among soldiers. Yet, mental illness, in a complex interplay of denial and over-recognition continues to be used to police unrest and to detect sympathy for militants. The first chapter is on how families use a non-medical language to refer to traumas of post-partition conflict and their aspirations to serve in the army during conditions of post-colony. The second chapter is on militarized masculinities and explores how men's aggression within domestic spaces becomes generative of mental illness among women, especially daughters and daughters. The third chapter focuses on management of death on the Siachen Glacier, soldierly intimacies and the denial of mental illness among troops or accusations of malingering by the military authorities. The fourth chapter explores mental illness in the context of the war on terror, especially the use of mental health discourses to screen populations for militancy. This chapter also considers how traumatized populations turn to faith-based healing in the context of the denial of mental illness in the army.

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