



The Voice in the Drum: Music, Language, and Emotion in Islamate South Asia

By Richard K. Wolf

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Based on extensive research in India and Pakistan, this new study examines the ways drumming and voices interconnect over vast areas of South Asia and considers what it means for instruments to be voice-like and carry textual messages in particular contexts. Richard K. Wolf employs a hybrid, novelistic form of presentation in which the fictional protagonist Muharram Ali, a man obsessed with finding music he believes will dissolve religious and political barriers, interacts with Wolf's field consultants, to communicate ethnographic and historical realities that transcend the local details of any one person's life. The result is a daring narrative that follows Muharram Ali on a journey that explores how the themes of South Asian Muslims and their neighbors coming together, moving apart, and relating to God and spiritual intermediaries resonate across ritual and expressive forms such as drumming and dancing.

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Editorial Review

Review

"As can be expected from Richard K. Wolf, *The Voice in the Drum* is an erudite and masterful contribution to South Asian ethnomusicology. But it is more: a deep contribution to experimental writing, full of nuanced engagement with why the poetics and politics of representation is critical to contemporary music ethnography."

--Steven Feld, Distinguished Professor of Anthropology and Music, University of New Mexico

"*The Voice in the Drum*, by Richard Wolf, Professor of Music and South Asian Studies at Harvard, is a completely unique development in ethnomusicology. By skillfully drawing out his research interests through the character of Muharram Ali, Wolf manages to draw the reader into a historical drama of idealism and naivete falling apart." --*Leonardo Reviews*

"Emerging afresh from numerous fields of cultural anthropology, including ethnology, ethnomusicology, humanistic anthropology, linguistics, the anthropology of religion, visual anthropology, and others, *The Voice in the Drum* contributes new insights and creates innovative methodologies much needed in today's growing anthropological and empathic understandings of the performance of emotion in South Asian Islam." --*American Anthropologist*

"Innovative and richly detailed." --*American Ethnologist*

About the Author

Richard K. Wolf is Professor of Music and South Asian Studies at Harvard University and editor of *Theorizing the Local: Music, Practice, and Experience in South Asia and Beyond*.

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