

July 9. Even in revolt, Wagner maintains, the sepoy maintained a “shared military identity” that enabled them to continue as “functional military units” (p. 134). Still, within little more than a week, John Nicholson’s Flying Column, supported by heavy cannons and Sikh levies, brutally crushed the Sialkot mutineers.

The suppression of the revolt was accompanied by an orgy of retributive punishment. As Wagner describes it, for the British the struggle was one between “good and evil,” with all those who fought the British “guilty of treason and betrayal,” hence deserving of whatever punishment the British chose to administer. There could be “no question of undue severity” (p. 154). Together with indiscriminate killing and mass executions, one such punishment stood out: blowing from guns. In a chapter evocatively entitled “Sharp and Short as the Cannons Roar,” Wagner uses the execution of Alum Bhag to ask what purpose this spectacular punishment—this “ultimate tool of exemplary deterrence” (p. 177)—served. In the crucible of rebellion, he argues, such executions served “to shore up British self-confidence” (p. 183). But, of course, in so doing these executions simultaneously revealed that in the final analysis “brute force” alone sustained British rule in India (p. 185).

In his concluding chapter, Wagner returns to Alum Bhag’s skull, and asks what the practice of collecting such artifacts tells us about the colonial encounter. Such collecting, Wagner notes, was widespread in the colonial world, and perhaps reached its climax in 1898 with Kitchener’s despoliation of the tomb of the Mahdi and retention of his skull. The eventual fate of Alum Bhag’s skull, Wagner concludes, serves as “a poignant reminder” of the violence implicit in all collecting and exhibiting of remains of indigenous people since the nineteenth century (p. 215).

With its engaging yet authoritative and thoughtful style, and its focus on the “experiences of ordinary people” (p. 7), *The Skull of Alum Bhag* could well interest the general reader and will usefully introduce undergraduate students to the enduring problems of rebellion and violence in the colonial world.

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

By RICHARD K. WOLF. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014. xxiv, 375 pp.

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It is rare that a book offers an original literary experience while extending the boundaries of experimental ethnography. *The Voice in the Drum* is a hybrid work of fictional ethnography that alternately reads like a historical novel, a survey of drumming traditions, a multi-layered cultural analysis, and a fieldwork diary in exploring its core theme: the overlapping relationships of melody, rhythm, and text in Islamic ritual practice. Richard Wolf grounds this text in meticulous fieldwork and erudite social analysis. Based on over twenty years of research with diverse musical communities, this is a landmark publication in the ethnomusicology of South Asia that focuses on Islamic ritual and on “sounds ... seldom taken seriously as music, and practitioners [not] accorded much respect” (p. 7).

Wolf narrates a good portion of this multi-sited ethnography in the voice of a fictional protagonist, Muharram Ali, who first came to him in a dream in which he visited many of the places where Wolf himself had conducted fieldwork. Ali is the son of the raja of Aminabad in 1980s Uttar Pradesh and a journalist who investigates the role of drumming in Islamic rituals in Pakistan and North India. The book uses aspects of Ali's story—his upbringing in a progressive Sunni home with a Shi'i mother; his childhood interactions with a South Indian *ayah*, his journalistic assignments and connections with dispersed family members, his love affair with a cosmopolitan girl from Lahore, etc.—as framing devices for Wolf's wide-ranging ethnographic insights. While the book's emphasis is on the Islamic drumming practices in Pakistan, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi, the author also draws upon fieldwork in Gilgit-Baltistan (Hunza), Uttarakhand (Almora), Andhra Pradesh (Hyderabad), and Tamil Nadu.

In the first four chapters, Wolf deploys a comparative methodology at multiple scales, comparing repertoires and cognitive processes across geo-cultural zones, similarly named drumming patterns performed by different groups, and multiple versions of drumming patterns performed by the same group (pp. 109–10). The first chapter, “Drumming, Language, and the Voice in South Asia,” discusses the interconnectedness of melodic and rhythmic frameworks in much South Asian performance, the hierarchical privileging of voice in Persian and Sanskrit cosmologies, the explicit and implicit role of texts in instrumental ritual performances, and the uneven ways that timbres are connected to syllables across a range of drumming traditions. The second chapter, “Emotional Agents,” examines issues of status and social stratification among drummers in a variety of cultural contexts.

Among the book's most innovative contributions is its attention to the melodic qualities of rhythm. Wolf emphasizes this point by distinguishing the “stroke-melodies” of drums from the “tone-melodies” of other instruments. Chapter 3, “Tone and Stroke,” explores the ways that “stroke melodies” are labeled, as well as the ways that “tone-melodies” and “stroke-melodies” vie for importance in a wide variety of musical repertoires. The list of terminology for rhythmic patterns (pp. 63–64) reveals a diverse number of interconnected cultural ideas expressed through drumming. The strength of this and other chapters lies in Wolf's expansive sweep and his carefully considered insights. He concludes that in many traditions beyond the margins of Hindustani and Karnatak systems, the identity of many pieces on the basis of their percussion patterns subverts the typical hierarchy of “melody” over the “rhythm” of the percussion (p. 80).

Chapter 4, “Beyond the *Mātra*,” interrogates the cognitive processes behind the naming and performance of “stroke melodies” in various drumming repertoires. Wolf delineates the limits of metric theory in the “classical” music systems and offers evidence of extremely sophisticated and dynamic theories in many so-called “folk” systems (e.g., p. 89). An important contribution of this text is the evidence for linguistic and musical interactions across regional systems of ritual practice that predate more recent modernization and standardization efforts.

In the final five chapters, the narrative of Ali takes central stage, and Wolf's analytic insights are welded into the experiences of his protagonist. These chapters are more ethnographic, evoking details of the architecture, the visual and sonic arts, and the interactions of communities of professional and amateur musicians involved in ritual practices (primarily weddings, funerals, Muharram *majlis*, and Sufi *'urs*) in Multan, Lahore, Hyderabad (Sindh), Karachi, and Delhi. Wolf is particularly sensitive to the political and social contexts of drumming during Islamic rituals, and questions of religious sectarianism, gender identity, and emotional range of participants are dealt with sensitively. These chapters succeed in portraying the often frustrating dead or loose ends of the fieldwork process; they would be ideal to discuss in a course on fieldwork techniques and ethnographic methods.

There is a useful glossary, but the sheer number of indigenous terms was at times dizzying, even for this specialist in North Indian music. Many of the examples discussed in the text are accompanied by excellent audio-video resources on the University of Illinois Press website. To facilitate switching between the text and online examples, it would have been helpful to list page numbers on the website and in a table of media examples at the front of the book. On many pages, the multiple agendas and scales of analysis require flipping between the text, appendices, glossary, notes, and online examples. A number of figures discussed in chapters 3 and 4 have inexplicably been included in the notes, requiring frequent flipping of pages to follow the argument.

*The Voice in the Drum* is a challenging book to read, but it will reward those who make the effort. Despite Wolf's literary talents, the alternation between ethnography and fiction, between diverse geographic settings, and between the voices of Wolf and Ali can feel a bit forced in the early chapters. As the narrative proceeds and the perspective becomes more fused, however, the hybrid approach ultimately proves more engaging and entertaining than a conventional ethnography. Grounded in impeccable scholarship, this book illuminates under-studied performance traditions in Islamic South Asia, with particular attention to embodied ritual practice and the interactions of *naqqarah*, *dhol-tasha*, double-reed, and vocal repertoires (including *soz*, *nauhah*, *kafi*, *marsiyah*, *qasidah*, *salam*, and *qawwali*). It is a must-read for scholars of South Asia and Islam, as well as those with an interest in experimental approaches to ethnography.

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## SOUTHEAST ASIA

*Censorship in Vietnam: Brave New World*. By THOMAS A. BASS. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2017. ix, 228 pp. ISBN: 9781625342959 (paper, also available in cloth and as e-book).  
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The concept for Thomas Bass's *Censorship in Vietnam: Brave New World* is refreshingly creative. Bass, the author of a well-regarded biography of Phạm Xuân Ẩn, the famous wartime double agent, takes advantage of the pending publication of that book in Vietnamese to travel to Vietnam and interrogate his censors. Through these interactions, Bass promises to dissect how censorship in Vietnam works through the window of a publication that he knows intimately. This is an important mission. Censorship is pervasive in Vietnam, and Bass is correct to argue that it impedes innovation and development. He imaginatively describes his research plan in the preface: "I decided to conduct an experiment. I would wire the book like a literary seismometer. I would mine the publishing contract with trip switches guaranteeing that I was notified at every move of the censor's pen" (p. ix).

Unfortunately, the book disappoints dramatically on its significant promise. While Bass does visit Vietnam to explore censorship, he never actually meets with official