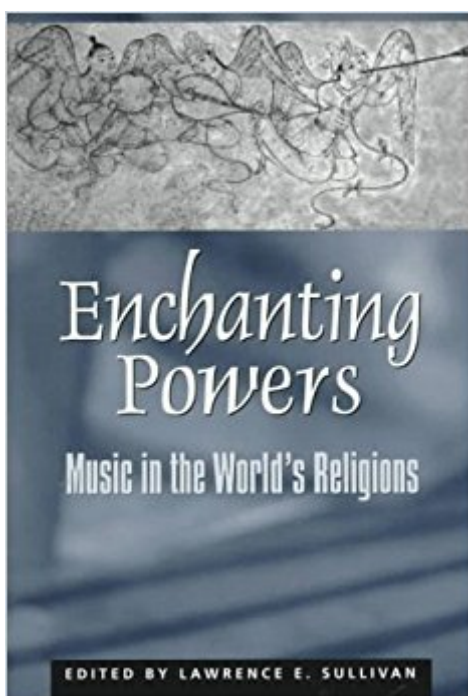


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Enchanting Powers: Music In The World's Religions (Religions Of The World (Harvard))



Synopsis

The Confucian Sacrificial Ceremony, the Choctaw ball game, and the drum history of the Dagbamba, are some of the topics addressed in this collection of essays, which consider the intersection and interconnection of musics and religions in different world cultures.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Combined, the contributions to this volume offer new insight into the role of music in the history of religions, especially through what Sullivan calls the 'power of music's affinity--its mimetic capacity to attune itself to other realities or to provoke other realities into resonating in tune with it.' Each in a different way, the articles collected in this book demonstrate the modes by which the felt enhancement of music can combine with systems of meaning, while describing subsequent intellectual attempts to understand this experience on the part of religious people. The ethnomusicological and music-centered perspective that the contributors bring to these and other questions invites scholars of religion better to apprehend the human phenomenon of music and thus more finely 'tune' their analyses of the mythic, ritual, and intellectual dynamics of religious traditions. (Anna M. Gade *Journal of Religion*)

Lawrence E. Sullivan is Professor of the History of Religions, Harvard Divinity School, and Director of the Center for the Study of World Religions. Kay Kaufman Shelemay is G. Gordon Watts

Professor of Music and Professor of African and African American Studies at Harvard University.

This is a collection of papers that are related in some way to the topics of religion and music. I approached this book with several questions: What is the role of music in the religions of the world? What is the attitude of world religions towards music? However, very few essays in this book address these questions directly. In most similar books of edited papers, the introduction contains an overview of all the papers and how they fit together. Instead, Sullivan writes in his introduction a very philosophical piece on the meaning of music in general. A number of other essays are highly philosophical and rather hard to approach. Others are anthropological and highly descriptive, answering questions such as "What music is played during religious ceremonies of lesser known cultures and who plays the music? (Wakuenai-Hill; Choctaw-Levine; China-Pian)", or "Who was Major Jealous Divine, a reportedly musical pastor in early 20th century America?" (Harris), or "Where did the music of the Jewish people as an ethnic group originate?" (Shelemay). However, I found the 2 articles on music in Islam extremely illuminating, especially the one by Nasr, in which he lays out a typology of musical sounds in Islam from the religious, through the halal (permitted), to the contentious, to the haram (forbidden). Perhaps the questions I had in mind when I picked up this book are actually only interesting in an Islamic context. The other papers in the book are well written and will no doubt be of interest to someone, but they weren't what I was looking for.

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