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Made-from-Bone: Trickster Myths, Music, and History from the Amazon

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BOOK REVIEWS

Made-from-Bone: Trickster Myths, Music, and History from the Amazon. Jonathan D.Hill. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press. 2009. 224 pp., 17 figures, 6 maps, bibliography, index \$65.00 (Cloth), \$22.00 (Paper). ISBN 978-0-252-07570-4. [www.press.uillinois.edu].

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The telling of stories and myths is a central aspect of life for many Amazonian peoples and they have long been included in ethnographies and writings on the region. In such publications, however, myths are often given individually or even in fragmented forms that fit with the authors' arguments rather than in their full cultural context. For this reason Jonathan Hill's new work is a valuable resource offering as it does 'a complete set of English translations of Wakuénai narratives about the mythic past and its transformation' (p. xi). The work is the fruition of Hill's long relationship with the family of Horacio López Pequeira and his son Félix López Oliveiros, Wakuénai men who live in the Río Negro region of Venezuela. Hill portrays the underlying project as 'a collaborative process of cultural recovery' (p. xv) and this approach has been effective in producing comprehensive texts that capture both the poetic and philosophical aspects of Wakuénai myths. The project is particularly impressive if readers take the book as but one part of a whole that includes many more Wakuénai texts in Curripaco and Spanish as well as original sound recordings available from the Archive of Indigenous Languages of Latin America (www.ailla.utexas.org).

After a brief historical, geographic and ethnographic introduction the book is split into three parts, each focusing on different periods of Wakuénai mythic time: 'Primordial Times', 'The World Begins' and 'The World Opens Up.' Each section contains a number of individual stories that together form a complete cycle. Hill suggests that it is through such 'complete' documentation that the manner in which the Wakuénai use myths to interpret and engage with the contemporary world can be fully understood (p. xix) and he mostly leaves readers to consider and analyse the texts for themselves. This approach, while laudable for its emphasis on the indigenous texts, perhaps expects too much from readers who are not steeped in the culture and history of the Wakuénai. The usefulness of the anthropologist's own analysis is emphasized by the interesting points that Hill does raise in the 'interlude' sections of the book where

his own voice is heard. For example, in considering the myth of Made-from-Bone and Anaconda-Person Hill notes how the Arapaço, a neighboring group in Brazil, tell a version of the same mythic narrative told from the Anaconda-Person's point of view. From this and other evidence he suggests that the myth can be understood as 'a historical metaphor for the initially hostile interethnic relations between Arawakan and Tukanoan peoples during the colonial period' (page 68). While a reader might have considered the myth to be concerned with interethnic relations such wider knowledge is of particular use in gaining a fuller appreciation of its meaning and import. As such, this reader was left wanting to hear more of Hill's own voice.

Overall, however, the book's highly accessible style as well as its emphasis on letting the indigenous myths speak for themselves means that it will be a useful resource for both teachers and researchers alike, valuable both as an introductory text to Wakuénai culture and Amazonian mythology and as a resource for deeper comparative analysis.

Kaptëlo: L'origine du ciel de case et du roseau à flèches chez les Wayana (Guyanes). Mataliwa Kulijaman and Eliane Camargo. French Guyana: GADEPAM. 2007. 111pp, 25 euros (paper) ISBN 978-2-7355-0646-0.

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'Kaptëlo' is comprised of two Wayana stories recounted by a young man (Mataliwa Kulijaman), with translation and ethnographic interpretation by Eliane Camargo, an ethnolinguist. A Wayana version is provided alongside the French for the purpose of documenting an oral language, which the authors claim is the beginning of a 'Wayana literature,' although it is unlikely to be read in Wayana by a wide audience. Nonetheless ethnographic interpretation is minimal and does not interrupt the flow of the text, and the result is a clear and personal portrayal of the commercialization of objects that Kulijaman values as cultural patrimony.

'Kaptëlo' consists of four chapters. The first introduces the Wayana, placing them in relation to their geographic, historical and linguistic neighbors, the Apalai. Chapter Two forms the bulk of the text and is the recitation of two stories in the title. In the stories the origins of two sets of objects, painted wooden discs (*maluwanas*), and reed-arrows, are related to spiritual beings. Chapter Three, 'Période moderne,' is where Kulijaman describes sociocultural changes that have occurred in Wayana society because of the selling of these objects. Chapter Four is comprised of Wayana drawings of colorful spiritual beings that are painted on *maluwanas*. In the annex, a detailed linguistic description is given, revealing Camargo's comprehensive understanding of Wayana lexicology and grammar.