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The victims then either disappear or “die of anemia a few days later” (74). Wachtel examines the sixteenth-century Conquest-era origins of this myth, as well as its reinvention over time as it sporadically appears in historical archives and even early-twentieth-century Spanish popular literature.

In colonial times, Andean peoples believed that white and mestizo *kharisiris* sold body fat to Spaniards for medicinal purposes. *Kharisiris* now include indigenous community members, and possible uses of purloined human fat have come to include paying off the national debt, as well as greasing computers and airplanes in the United States. Commerce in components of the human body is now believed to include flesh for exclusive restaurants in Lima; and the organs, especially the eyes and also the hearts and kidneys of schoolchildren, are sold for profit to “gringos.” Although fantastic, the resurgence of this myth is deadly serious. Wachtel’s respectful analysis helps us understand a string of recent incidents, including reported lynchings and attempted lynchings in poor suburbs of Lima, as well as in rural areas. Although the victims of this fear are overwhelmingly Andean, the list of near lynching victims includes three young French tourists.

In its current incarnations, this terrifying myth testifies to the wrenching transitions currently under way throughout the rural and urban Andean world. In tracing its historical evolution and contemporary re-visioning, Nathan Wachtel has provided us with a real gem that combines ethnographic sensitivity, historical depth, and literary flair.

**Keepers of the Sacred Chants: The Poetics of Ritual Power in an Amazonian Society.** By Jonathan D. Hill. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993. xix + 245 pp., acknowledgments, introduction, illustrations, glossary, notes, references, index. \$40.00 cloth.)

Greg Urban, *University of Pennsylvania*

Deep in the Northwest Amazon, in Venezuela, not far from the Brazilian and Colombian borders, live the *Wakuénai*, an Arawakan-speaking people among whom Jonathan Hill lived in 1980–81, and again in the summers of 1984 and 1985. Hill recognized early on the prominence, and “ritual power,” of chanting in this community, and he made tape recordings of numerous instances, which he later transcribed and analyzed, studying both musical properties and semantic content. This book is the first major statement of his results, though he has published numerous articles. It is also, I believe, the first monograph-length examination of the role of chanting in a lowland South American society. And a fascinating book it is.

Hill isolated a continuum of chanting styles, ranging between two

analytic poles, or tendencies, which he dubs “mythification” and “musicalization.” The latter means more musiclike, that is, greater variation in pitch, tempo, volume, with possible instrumental accompaniment. Mythification, in contrast, means that the chant is more monotonic, with relatively unchanging volume and tempo, as well as pitch.

In chapter 1, after narratively drawing you into his field situation, Hill contextualizes the Wakuénai within the Northwest Amazon and then maps out his theoretical orientation. He wishes to describe the forms of chanting and to link them to their semantic contents. But he also wants to show that you can fully understand chanting—and its role within childbirth, initiation, and curing rituals—only if you first look at the world through the lens of Wakuénai myths.

Chapter 3 explores the meaningfulness of the world, as conveyed in Wakuénai origin myths. Hill reasonably interprets the semantic content of these myths to be about the power of musical sound. The world was created when the mythical ancestor, Kuwái, flew through the sky, humming and singing the names of natural species and objects, thereby bringing them into being. The humming and singing, Hill insightfully argues, demonstrate Wakuénai concern with the creative and transformative power of musical sound. After the creation, Kuwái taught men how to perform the initiation rites. Discernible here, therefore, is a link between musical sound, creative power, and ritual. The second half of the origin myth deals with a familiar Amazonian theme. Women steal the sacred trumpets and flutes associated with initiation. Men go in hot pursuit, the myth tracing the geographical displacements.

Hill’s analysis is complex, and I cannot fully summarize it here. However, it is important to understand that the two parts of this myth are linked by metaphorical and iconic relationships to two types of naming process in the chants. These are in turn linked to musicalization and mythification. The two naming processes are called “we search for the names” and “we heap up the names.” In the latter, the chanter chants a series of names, which tend to be bunched into what a Saussurean might call “paradigmatic slots.” The names within a sequential group tend to come from a single noun class, marked off by a “generic classifier.” Chants like this are more mythlike.

The other type of chant—“searching for names”—involves a similar series of names. However, the names unfold such that different noun classes are juxtaposed, with only a single representative per class being articulated. Names are thus linked into syntagmatic chains. This process of syntagmatic chaining is metaphorically and iconically related to the second half of the origin myth, in which the search for the sacred instruments proceeds

from place to place. Correspondingly, the “heaping up of names” is related metaphorically and iconically to the processes of creation involved in the original naming.

You will have to read for yourself how mythification and musicalization, the “heaping up of names” and the “searching for names,” play themselves out in childbirth, initiation, and curing rituals. These are the themes, respectively, of chapters 4, 5, and 6. But you can already appreciate the theory at work. A vision articulated in myths—in both their semantic content and pragmatic unfolding—is reflected in and illuminates the principal ritual processes in which chanting is involved. Ritual chanting brings mythic power into the world—did not Mircea Eliade, Joseph Campbell, and Lawrence Sullivan tell us this? And the Wakuénai worldview seamlessly articulates present and past, here and there, the sensible and the intelligible.

**Crowns of Glory, Tears of Blood: The Demerara Slave Rebellion of 1823.** By Emilia Viotti da Costa. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. xix + 378 pp., acknowledgments, introduction, illustrations, notes, index. \$35.00 cloth.)

Alida C. Metcalf, *Trinity University*

In this vividly and beautifully written book, Emilia Viotti da Costa tells the compelling story of the slave rebellion in the British colony of Demerara (Guyana) in 1823, when ten thousand slaves rose up, took planters hostage, and demanded freedom. Viotti da Costa is particularly interested in how the rebellion revealed the underlying social tensions of a slave society during a time of tremendous change.

Viotti da Costa describes early-nineteenth-century Guyana as an expanding and prosperous colony in an empire that increasingly questioned its colony’s very foundation: slavery. Guyanese planters found themselves on the defensive not only from their slaves but from their compatriots in the mother country whose culture they revered. First came Parliament’s abolition of the slave trade in 1808, which radically affected the ability of planters to control their labor forces. Next came Parliamentary discussions of free trade, which, if enacted, would deprive Guyanese planters of their privileged access to metropolitan markets. Then, debates in Parliament over the abolition of slavery threatened their very way of life. But what irked the planters most was the arrival of missionaries, such as John Wray and John Smith, who came to Demerara to minister to slaves living on their plantations.

Viotti da Costa captures the role of missionaries in Demerara from the