

Cannibal Talk: The Man-eating Myth And Human Sacrifice In The South Seas

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Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas. By Gananath Obeyesekere. (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2005. xx + 320 pp. \$55 cloth, \$21.95 paper)

This book will not come as a surprise to those interested in Gananath Obeyesekere's work, since this is mostly a compilation of previously published pieces. In this form, however, it is much more sustained and elaborate, as Obeyesekere has added some significant new passages and attempted to build a more substantial and developed argument.

Obeyesekere's work operates around Peter Hulme's analytic distinction between "cannibalism" and "anthropophagy." This holds that cannibalism is "essentially a fantasy that the Other is going to eat us," while anthropophagy is the "actual consumption of human flesh" (pp. 14–15). Obeyesekere argues that some forms of anthropophagy did occur, but that the complex cannibal discourse and fantasies of Europeans ("cannibal talk") were far more pervasive and influential. Most of Obeyesekere's book is thus directed at discussing and analyzing European cannibalism discourse. Readers who are interested in learning about actual anthropophagy in the Pacific will likely be disappointed. Obeyesekere invests most of his time arguing that certain accounts are false, fiction, fantasy, or simply sailor's yarns.

Obeyesekere calls his critical approach "deconstruction," although in practice it reads more like debunking. Most of the accounts of cannibalism that Obeyesekere chooses to debunk are too conveniently chosen. Others, including Marshall Sahlins, have already criticized Obeyesekere's work on cannibalism in this vein, and such reservations will remain, despite Obeyesekere's elegance. Certain texts and authors are also misunderstood or misrepresented; Edward Tregear, for instance, distrusted at the time and disowned since, becomes "a notable authority . . . and a major source" (p. 105). Accounts are debunked for almost every reason, some for lacking, mistaken, or confusing details, others for too much detail; "extreme accuracy" and "stunning verisimilitude" become suspicious—indications of fiction (pp. 160, 197).

Given Obeyesekere's criticism of others' credulity, what will perhaps surprise anthropologists and historians alike the most is his own use of evidence. At one point, having noted that there "is unfortunately no explicit evidence," he continues "to read between the lines" (p. 233). He often couches his argument in psychoanalytic terms or pulls from a dazzling range of comparisons. The rise of the Maori leader Te Rauparaha is explained as a "nefarious al-

In this radical reexamination of the notion of cannibalism, Gananath *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas*. Gananath. *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas*. Gananath Obeyesekere Berkeley, CA: University of California. Book Review: *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas*. Show all authors. Cynthia T. Cook Cynthia T. Cook. Suny Rockland .Download Citation on ResearchGate *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas* In this radical reexamination of the notion of *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas*. No metrics data to plot. The attempt to load metrics for this article. *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas*. By Gananath Obeyesekere. (Berkeley: University of California Press, *Cannibal talk: the man-eating myth and human sacrifice in the South Seas*. Responsibility: Gananath Obeyesekere. Imprint: Berkeley: University of California. *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas*. Front Cover Gananath Obeyesekere. University of California. *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas*. Front Cover. Gananath Obeyesekere. University of California Press, Jun 6, .APA (6th ed.) Obeyesekere, G. (). *Cannibal talk: The man-eating myth and human sacrifice in the South Seas*. Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press. *Cannibal talk: the man-eating myth and human sacrifice in the South Seas / Introduction: Anthropology and the man-eating myth; "British cannibals": dialogical.* *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas*. Gananath Obeyesekere Berkeley, CA: University of California, Xx + pp .Abstract: Review(s) of: Obeyesekere, Gananath, *Cannibal Talk: The Man-eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas*, Berkeley: University of California. *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas*. In this radical reexamination of the notion of cannibalism, Gananath. Book Review: *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas*. Cynthia Cook. Uploaded by. Cynthia Cook. connect to download.

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