



KARANKAWAS: REEXAMINING TEXAS GULF COAST CANNIBALISM

An Honors Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department

of History

University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Bachelor of Arts with Honors in Major

By

Timothy F. Seiter

May, 2019

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ABSTRACT

In 1688, the Karankawa Peoples abducted and adopted an eight-year-old Jean-Baptiste Talon from a French fort on the Texas Gulf Coast. Talon lived with these Native Americans for roughly two and a half years and related an eye-witness account of their cannibalism. Despite his testimony, some present-day scholars reject the Karankawas' cannibalism. Because of an abundance of farfetched and grisly accounts made by Spanish priests, bellicose Texans, and sensationalist historians, these academics believe the custom of anthropophagy is a colonial fabrication. Facing a sea of outrageously prejudicial sources, these scholars have either drowned in them or found no reason to wade deeper. Underneath the swamp of disinformation, historical truth is discernible: the Karankawas practiced a community-oriented, post-mortem, rare, and ritualistic cannibalism that colonizers embellished and used as a mechanism to destroy the Karankawa Peoples. Although some historians believe that "cannibal" is a term too tainted by colonial rhetoric to hold any semblance of truth, to outright deny or overlook this cultural trait washes away Native American history and agency. Fully treating First Peoples as human means that as historians we must recognize that Indians, like Europeans, had cultural practices that are considered stomach-churning.

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A group of artists contributed to making this thesis far more interactive and lively. Taylor C. Ferguson endured third-degree sunburns, mazes of banana spiders, and my endless

talks on the Karankawas all the while producing the impressive photographs found in this research. I am grateful to know such a resilient and talented artist. Noah D. Cain's incredible mind also bolstered this scholarship. A natural historian and philosophizer, he allowed me to see things in wholly new ways. I gave Michelle Huang portions of my narratives and asked her "to paint whatever most interested her." The subsequent works she created have amazed me and all others who see them.

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translated thousands upon thousands of Spanish colonial documents, deserve great laudation for their efforts.

The scholarship of Robert A. Ricklis, Robert S. Weddle, William C. Foster, and Kelly F. Himmel guides the Karankawas' History and this thesis. I am grateful for these historians' masterful works and feel honored to follow in their footsteps.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Terms	1
“Cannibalism,” “Anthropophagy,” “Exocannibalism,” “Endocannibalism”	1
“History” vs “history”	1
Why “Karankawas”	2
Plurals	3
Who Are The Karankawas?	3
Notes on Images and Public Scholarship	5
Paintings	5
Photographs	5
Karankawas.com	6
Introduction	7
Chapter One: A Series of Abductions: Jean-Baptiste Talon	15
Fort Saint Louis: A French Colony on the Texas Gulf Coast	16
Encountering the Karankawas	21
The Collapse of Fort Saint Louis: The First Abduction and Adoption	23
The Spanish Discover Ft. Saint Louis	26
The Talons’ Second Abduction	28
The Abduction of Jean-Baptiste Talon and Eustache Bréman	31
The French Abduction of Jean-Baptiste Talon, Lucien Jr., and Pierre Talon	37
Jean-Baptiste Talon’s Testimony of the Karankawas’ Cannibalism	38
Critiques Against the Talon Brothers’ Interrogation	40
The Overall Account Demonstrates Veracity	41
Did the Talon Brothers Manipulate their Interrogation?	44
Chapter Two: Characteristics of Gulf Coast Cannibalism	52
Rare and Restricted Cannibalism	52
Cannibalism by Necessity and Cannibalism by Delectability	61

Community-oriented Cannibalism	66
Post-Mortem Cannibalism: Fray Gaspar José de Solís	68
Chapter Three: The Motives behind the Karankawas' Cannibalism: Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca	78
The Narváez Expedition Crash-lands on Follets Island.....	79
Explaining the Karankawas' Cannibalism	84
The Spaniards Damned Their Companions	94
Chapter Four: Neighboring Cannibalism: Simars de Bellisle and the Akokisas.....	102
De Bellisle Narration	103
An Analysis of the Akokisas' Cannibalism	122
Who did the Akokisas Consume: Who are the Toyals?	126
Critiques to de Bellisle's Account	128
Chapter Five: Neighboring Cannibalism: The Tonkawas	140
Accounts of the Tonkawas' Cannibalism	141
Chapter Six: The Most Important Text on Cannibalism.....	155
An Analysis of <i>The Man-Eating Myth</i>	155
The Second Part That Is Usually Forgotten	170
Bibliography	173

Terms

“Cannibalism,” “Anthropophagy,” “Exocannibalism,” “Endocannibalism”

Cannibalism is the act of deliberately consuming human flesh or tissue.¹ Everyday accidental or incidental consumption of small amounts of blood, dead skin cells, fecal matter, fingernails, hair strands, or mucus are excluded from my definition.² The Greek word *anthropophagy* (“eating one’s self”) is used interchangeably with “cannibalism.” I designate people who carry out cannibalism to be *cannibals*.³

Exocannibalism refers to intergroup cannibalization, or the consumption of someone deemed an outsider or enemy. *Endocannibalism* refers to intragroup cannibalization, or the consumption of an accepted member of the community. An individual who practices endocannibalism or exocannibalism is a cannibal.

“History” vs “history”

I am intentional in my use of lowercase “history” and uppercase “History.”⁴ When I write *history* with a lowercase “h,” I refer to everything and anything that has ever occurred

¹ I include this definition of cannibalism in the preface because those who argue against Native American anthropophagy often grapple with what constitutes as “real” cannibalism. My definition is stricter than the commonly-held definition of cannibalism, see “Cannibalism,” *Oxford Dictionary*, accessed April 17, 2019, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/cannibalism>. For an archaeological definition see, Tim White, *Prehistoric Cannibalism at Mancos* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) 9.

² All types of autophagia (the consumption of your own physiological materials) are excluded.

³ On literature discussing the birth of the word “cannibal,” see William Keegan, “Columbus was a Cannibal: Myth and the First Encounters,” in *The Lesser Antilles in the Age of European Expansion* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), pp. 17-32; Neil L. Whitehead, “Carib Cannibalism, the Historical Evidence,” *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 70 (1984): 69-87. For an opposing look at Carib cannibalism, see Robert Myers, “Island Carib Cannibalism,” *New West Indian Guide* 58, n. 3 (1984): 147-184.

⁴ See Andrew Joseph Pegoda, “The Nature of History and the History of History,” *Without Ritual, Autonomous Negotiations*, March 4, 2014, <https://andrewpegoda.com/2014/03/04/the-nature-of-history-and-the-history-of-history/>

anywhere. *History* with a capitalized “H,” on the other hand, refers to how humans make sense of the past.⁵ Uppercase History is intrinsically prone to human biases, flaws, privileges, and social constructions. Lowercase history cannot be flawed because history is exactly what happened in the past. Writing the history of the Karankawas cannot be done; a completely accurate accounting of every action, every thought, and every motivation of the Karankawas is impossible. A History, on the other hand, is achievable. By making the distinction between history and History, I acknowledge that my work—as with every other History—holds conscious and unconscious biases. Being aware of these biases makes for a far better History. Furthermore, distinguishing between history and History allows a greater complexity in our discussion of the past and is clearer and more exact than using the catch-all “history.”

Why “Karankawas”

I prefer “Karankawas” as an overarching label for the Peoples of this study. Although there are numerous name variations for the Karankawas (including Carancaguases, Carancowasos, Carancouas, Carankua, and Karankahaus), “Karankawas” is the most recognizable.⁶ I also refer to the Karankawas as “Peoples” because surrounding Indians

⁵ As an example, a Karankawa shooting a fish with their bow is history. My analysis and description of the Karankawa shooting a fish with their bow is History. Moreover, big “H” History encompasses and expands upon the academically constrained idea of historiography. Historiography studies how historians have made sense of the past, while big “H” History acknowledges how *everyone* makes sense of the past. Dr. Andrew Joseph Pegoda, discussion with author, 2019.

⁶ I have encountered upward of thirty name variations for these Peoples. These variations are listed below to aid future researchers: Carancowasos, Carancouas, Carankawaez, Carancaguases, Carancahuaces, Carancahuaz, Carankuas, Craunkaways, Cujanes, Cocos, Copanes, Carancahuases, Cuxanes, Cuzanes, Carancahuases, Carancaguas, Carancaguaces, Carancahuazes, Guapites, Koienkahe, Korenkake, Karankaways, Clamcoest, Quelanhubeches, Caranhuase, Concosi, Coronks, Kronks, Koronkaway, Toyals, and Tayas. The Spanish, French, Anglo-Americans, Mexicans, and other Native Peoples also refer to the Karankawas as the “coastal people.” The Spanish mark the Karankawas as “Indios Bravos.” The label “Karankawas” has come to represent all groupings of Karankawas because the Carancaguases routinely troubled the Spaniards and therefore their name is featured most prominently in a myriad of primary sources.

nations referred to themselves as “the People.”⁷ There is no writing on what the Karankawas called themselves.

Plurals

I use the plural when discussing the Karankawas.⁸ For example, I employ “the Karankawas” over “the Karankawa.” In doing so, I hope to draw attention to the fact that Karankawa-speakers adhered to different beliefs and had different motivations. Furthermore, I intend to ward off over-generalizations that so easily occur when describing entire peoples.⁹

Who Are The Karankawas?

There are five commonly-held groupings of Karankawas: the Carancaguases (from whom the label of Karankawas is derived), Cocos, Copanes, Cujanes, and Guapites.¹⁰ Their

⁷ A wide array of other First Peoples refer to themselves as “the people.” The Comanches self-identify as the Numunuus which means “The People,” see “About Us,” *Comanche Nation*, accessed April 17, 2019, <https://comanchenation.com/our-nation/about-us>. The Tonkawas self-identify as the Tickanwa-tics which means “Real People,” see “Tonkawa Tribal History,” *Tonkawa Tribe*, accessed April 17, 2019, <http://www.tonkawatribe.com/history.html>. The Atakapas self-identify as the Ishaks which means “The People,” see Kniffen, Gregory, and Stokes, *The Historic Indian Tribes of Louisiana* (Louisiana State University: Baton Rouge, 1987), 45. An issue with using “Peoples” to refer to the Karankawas is that I project other Native American beliefs onto the Karankawas. There is no evidence that the Karankawas referred to themselves as “the People.”

⁸ Inspired by Mark Goldberg, *Conquering Sickness: Race, Health, and Colonization in the Texas Borderlands* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016).

⁹ Regardless of my use of the plural, over-generalizations will inevitably occur. Historian Alan Galloway, in *The Indian Slave Trade*, does “not use a final -s to pluralize the names of southern native groups....[because] this is keeping with the linguistic style of many of these groups.” To my knowledge, this does not apply to the linguistic style of the Karankawas. Alan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), xviii.

¹⁰ Robert Ricklis, *The Karankawa Indians of Texas: The Karankawa Indians of Texas: an ecological study of cultural tradition and change* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 4, 8. Saying that the Karankawas are a tribe is inaccurate—unless you mean the specific grouping of Karankawas known as the Carancaguases. “Karankawas” is an overarching label for a collection of tribes who spoke the same Karankawan language and held similar cultural practices.

borders rested from roughly Matagorda Bay to Baffin Bay.¹¹ A semi-nomadic Peoples, the Karankawas migrated following the availability of food sources. These migrations typically aligned with the changing of the seasons. Buffalo, deer, and fish made up the most calorically-dense items in their diverse diets.¹²

Prior to European contact, the Karankawas likely numbered more than eight thousand.¹³ They thrived.¹⁴ After European contact, the Karankawas' remained in control of their Gulf Coast territories and advantageously played would-be colonizers off each other. Foiled by these Coastal Indians, Europeans depicted the Karankawas as the most savage First Peoples in Texas—a myth that persists to this day.

Over time the Karankawas' population dwindled from appropriation, disease, displacement, and warfare.¹⁵ In the middle of the nineteenth century, after being forcibly removed from their homelands, the Karankawas were either tracked down and killed or compelled to integrate into Mexican and Anglo-American society. Though there is no formal Karankawan entity today, their blood runs through the veins of many who reside on their homeland.

¹¹ The Karankawas' territory is distinguished through the presence of Rockport Focus pottery—the style unique to Karankawa-speakers. There is a popular misconception that the area near Galveston is part of the Karankawas' traditional territory—Rockport pottery is extremely limited in this region. The Akokisa and Atakapa Peoples resided in this area. Ricklis, *The Karankawa Indians of Texas*, 46, 171.

¹² For more on what the Karankawas consumed, see Tim Seiter, “What did the Karankawas Eat?,” *Karankawas*, August 3, 2017, <https://karankawas.com/2017/08/03/what-did-the-karankawa-eat/>.

¹³ The population of eight thousand is given by Ricklis for 1685. Ricklis, however, uses eight thousand as a baseline for the Karankawas before “repeated contact with Europeans.” Ricklis, *The Karankawa Indians of Texas*, 128-131, 139-141. Also see Lawrence E. Aten, *Indians of the Upper Texas Coast* (New York: Academic Press, 1983), 60-70. Ricklis's estimations are more convincing.

¹⁴ Darren Schubert, “Population Dynamics of Prehistoric Foraging Groups Along the Upper Texas Coast” (Master's thesis, University of Houston, 2008).

¹⁵ Ricklis “Tentatively accepting a population of 8,000 in 1685, 2,500 in 1751 reflects a 69 percent decrease in population during the first sixty-six years of repeated contact.” Ricklis, *Karankawa Indians*, 131.

Notes on Images and Public Scholarship

The Cover Image and Other Paintings

In June 2017, I commissioned the talented Michelle Huang to paint a portrait of two Karankawas. She worked from first-hand descriptions made in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries, and from three sources: Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, a marooned Spaniard; Henri Joutel, a trusted captain of Sieur de La Salle's ill-fated undertaking to settle along the Mississippi; and Jean-Baptiste Talon, who the Karankawas abducted and adopted.¹⁶ While Europeans encountered and wrote about the Karankawas during this time period, few discuss their appearances.

What Huang produced is the most accurate depiction of sixteenth- and late seventeenth-century Karankawas available. Her images are a welcome change to those that present the Karankawas as sub-humans. In addition to her main portrait, other original paintings are dispersed throughout my thesis and illustrate scenes in my narratives.

Photographs

During the same summer of 2017 that Huang worked on her paintings, Taylor Ferguson—a skilled photographer and a long-time friend—joined me in driving and kayaking through the Karankawas' lands. The exceptional photographs in my thesis are due to his hard work.¹⁷ These photographs portray the actual setting of historical events that I

¹⁶ To look at exactly what Michelle worked with, see Tim Seiter, "What Did The Karankawas Look Like?," *Karankawas*, August 8, 2017, <https://karankawas.com/2017/08/08/what-did-the-karankawa-look-like/>.

¹⁷ For all the images Taylor captured visit, Tim Seiter, "Photography," *Karankawas*, <https://karankawas.com/karankawa-photography/>. Also see, Taylor Ferguson, "My Portfolio," accessed April 17, 2019, <https://fergusonphotography.myportfolio.com/>.

discuss, or rather, show the best available representation after five hundred years of environmental changes.¹⁸

Karankawas.com

As academics are all too aware, getting the general public to read our work is a monstrous task. The creation of Karankawas.com has partially solved that problem for myself by allowing me to connect with a wide range of interested parties, including Peoples who still claim Karankawan ancestry. The four specific purposes of Karankawas.com are as follows: (1) serve as an accurate and authoritative source of information on the Karankawas; (2) house primary sources for others to utilize; (3) share secondary scholarship; and (4) start conversations and build a community with those who still identify as Karankawan.

The Karankawas' images are tainted by hundreds of years of propaganda. This thesis, this website, these paintings, and these pictures serve as one step in recreating their image.

¹⁸ The paintings, maps, and photographs in this thesis are in the public domain. Visit Karankawas.com for high-quality sources.

Introduction

In 1685, in the Texas Gulf Coast region, the Karankawas encountered approximately three hundred French invaders building an isolated fort on their land.¹⁹ During the next three years, these invaders dwindled to forty-six men, women, and children. Sensing weakness within the French fort, the Karankawas gained entry in the winter of 1688 and annihilated the remaining survivors—save six children who the Karankawas abducted and adopted.²⁰ Jean-Baptiste Talon, a ten-year-old and one of the six adoptees, lived with the Karankawas for two and a half years. His testimony of life among these coastal First Peoples is the best first-hand accounting of the Karankawas known to scholars. In it, Talon relates that,

The only meals that horrified [Jean-Baptiste] were those [the Karankawas] made of human flesh, as they are all cannibals, but toward their savage enemies only. They never ate a single Frenchmen that they had killed because, they said, they do not eat them....[Jean-Baptiste] went three days without eating, because nothing presented itself during that time except some human flesh of the Ayennis whom they had killed on one of the expeditions.²¹

Despite Talon's testimony, historians such as Gary Clayton Anderson, David La Vere, and Robert Lee Maril, reject that the Karankawas practiced cannibalism.²² Maril, in his vignette-packed *Cannibals and Condos*, confidently explains,

¹⁹ Henri Joutel, *The La Salle Expedition to Texas: 1684-1687*, ed. William C. Foster, trans. Johanna S. Warren (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1998).

²⁰ Joutel, *The La Salle Expedition to Texas*, 211-216; Foster, *Spanish Expeditions Into Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 61-63; Foster, *Save The Young: The 1691 Expedition of Captain Martinez to Rescue the Last Survivors of the Massacre at Fort St. Louis, Texas* (Corpus Christi: American Binding and Publishing, 2004), 28; Robert Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi and the Gulf* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1987), 216. For more background on the pillaging of Fort Saint-Louis, see Chapter 1 of this thesis.

²¹ Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi and the Gulf*, 238.

²² David La Vere, *The Texas Indians* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2013), 62; Robert Lee Maril, *Cannibals and Condos: Texans and Texas along the Gulf Coast* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1986), 49-50; Gary Clayton Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas: Ethnic Cleansing in the Promised Land 1820-1875* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 53.

Accusations that the Karankawas ate human flesh are always third-, fourth-, or fifth-hand, never eyewitness accounts. Not a one. Cabeza de Vaca, who lived among the Karankawas for some years, never mentioned cannibalism in his journals. The practice of cannibalism is not found in neighboring coastal tribes to the north or south. To date, no archaeological evidence suggests cannibalism occurred among these Indians...By branding these Indians as cannibals, Europeans who explored and finally settled the Texas Coast justified their policy of extermination.²³

On the surface, the Karankawas' anthropophagy looks entirely like conquest-driven propaganda. The abundance of grisly accounts made by Spanish priests and by bellicose Texans certainly reinforces this notion of falsification. For instance, Fray Gaspar José de Solís describes the Karankawas as "so savage, indolent and lazy, and who are so greedy and gluttonous that they devour meat that is parboiled, almost raw and dripping in blood." And Stephen F. Austin, in his first contact with the Karankawas, exclaims, "The Karanquas may be called universal enemies to man—they killed of all nations that came in their power, and frequently feast on the bodies of their victims...there will be no way of subduing them but extermination."²⁴

Scholars are rightfully skeptical of accounts made from men like Austin and Solís, but late twentieth-century texts including William Arens's *The Man Eating Myth*, which denies "the actual existence of [cannibalism] as an accepted practice for any time or place," have turned these rightful skeptics into overzealous cynics who discount *all* reports of cannibalism, despite any signs of validity.²⁵ In doing so, academics overlook significant

²³ Maril, *Cannibals and Condos*, 49-50.

²⁴ Stephen F. Austin, "Journal of Stephen F. Austin on his first trip to Texas, 1821," *The Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association* 7, no. 4 (April 1904): 305

²⁵ William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 9. For a complete refutation of Aren's theory, see Chapter Six. Also see Chapter Two for an examination of Padre Solís' account. James Axtell and William C. Sturtevant, "The Unkindest Cut, or Who Invented Scalping," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, v. 37, n. 3 (July 1980): 451-472, covers a similar example of scholars and Native Peoples reconstructing unseemly cultural practices

sources such as the Karankawas' neighbors, the Akokisas, who on multiple occasions discuss the Karankawas' cannibalism.²⁶ Or neglect valuable accounts from White men who are perceived to have any bias such as Jean Béranger—who lived among the Karankawas on Aransas Bay and reported on their exocannibalism.²⁷

Faced with a sea of outrageously prejudicial sources, historians have either drowned in them or found no reason to wade deeper. Underneath the swamp of disinformation, a historical truth is discernible. Turning Robert Lee Maril's assertion on its head by using it as a framework, my thesis uses first-hand accounts of the Karankawas and their neighbors to show that these Peoples practiced a community-oriented, post-mortem, rare, and ritualistic cannibalism that colonizers embellished and used as a mechanism to destroy the Karankawa Peoples.

This argument is articulated in five chapters: I devote Chapter One to Jean-Baptiste Talon who furnishes the strongest eye-witness account of the Karankawas' exo-cannibalism. Chapter Two details the characteristics of the Karankawas' cannibalism, most of which are gleaned from Talon's testimony. Chapter Three describes the motivation behind Gulf Coast cannibalism by focusing on the testimony of the shipwrecked Spaniard, Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, who—in contrast to Maril's contention—does speak of cannibalism in the *Joint Report and Relación*.²⁸ Chapter Four and Chapter Five give examples of cannibalism with

²⁶ See Chapter Four and Foster, *Historic Native Peoples of Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 231. First Peoples labeled their enemies as “cannibals” (whether true or not) to dissuade Europeans from making contact with opposing tribes, see Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and the Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 34-35; Amanda Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 56-58.

²⁷ Jean Béranger, *Béranger's Discovery of Aransas Pass: A Translation of Jean Beranger's French Manuscript*, ed. Frank Wagner (Corpus Christi: Friends of the Corpus Christi Museum, 1983), 21.

²⁸ For historians using Cabeza de Vaca's account as a means of disproving the Karankawas' cannibalism see David Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 44; Maril, *Cannibals and Condos*, 49-50; Gerald Ashford, *Spanish Texas: Yesterday and Today* (Austin:

near identical characteristics and motives among the Karankawas' neighbors, the Akokisas and the Tonkawas. And Chapter Six discusses how present-day scholars have attempted to scrub clean the cultural practice of cannibalism from the Historical record. Along the way, I take the opportunity to right Historical wrongs and clarify particularly confusing portions of the Karankawas' History.²⁹

Because no exhaustive research on this subject exists, the readily available but inaccurate and inconclusive sources have allowed for two dehumanizing trends. The first trend is seen among sensationalist historians who aggrandize the Karankawas' anthropophagy as a means to fit the popular stereotypes of these Native Peoples as fierce barbarians. These historians have fallen into the trap of trusting the accounts made by belligerent Whites and by soul-hungry priests as wholly factual. As a consequence, sensationalist scholars find it easy to describe the Karankawas as "the meanest, greediest, laziest, most treacherous, lecherous, vicious, cowardly, insolent aborigines of the Southwest, the scourge of the Frontier."³⁰

The Pemberton Press, 1971), 16; William Newcomb, *The Indians of Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990) 77-78; Newcomb Jr., *Handbook of Native Americans: Southwest* 366; David La Vere, *The Texas Indians* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2013), 62; Himmel, *The Conquest of the Karankawa and the Tonkawas*, 48; Joseph Butler, "The Atakapa Indians: Cannibals of Louisiana." *Louisiana History* 11 (spring 1970), 175-176; Eugenia Reynolds Briscoe, "A Narrative History of Corpus Christi, Texas, 1519-1875" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Denver, 1972), 51-53.

²⁹ I will touch on the prehistoric archaeological findings of anthropophagy amid tribes like the Anasazi, as extensively written about in Turner and Turner's *Man Corn*, and the localized discoveries that George Castor Martin, Pape-Tunnell, and J. E. Pearce made in the early twentieth-century on land traditionally inhabited by the Karankawas, on my blog, Karankawas.com. See J. E. Pearce, "The Archaeology of East Texas American," *American Anthropologist* 34 (1932): 670-687; George Castor Martin, "Notes on Some Texas Coast Campsites," *Texas Archaeological and Paleontological Society Bulletin* 1 (1929): 50-57; John and Jace Tunnel. *Pioneering Archaeology in the Texas Coastal Bend*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2015.

³⁰ Edward Kilman, *Cannibal Coast* (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1959), x.

Opposingly, present-day authors outraged by the sensationalist historians' exaggeration, have set out to revise what they correctly see as lingering colonial propaganda.³¹ These revisionist historians are aware that the label of "cannibal" spurred the ethnic cleansing of the Karankawas, and thus believe the term to be too tainted by colonial myth to hold any semblance of truth. But to outright deny or overlook this cultural facet of the Karankawas, and other Native Americans, washes away their history and agency. Fully treating First Peoples as human means that we must recognize that Indians, like Europeans, had cultural practices that are today considered stomach-churning.

One goal of my honors thesis is to determine whether the Karankawas practiced cannibalism. Another is to show how easily Historical blunders crop-up when perspectives are overly focused.³² For example, the sensationalist historians concentrate a great deal on the Karankawas' savageness, they never question their sources, and never glimpse at the past through Indian eyes. The revisionist historians offer a strong contrast by inhabiting the

³¹ Gary Clayton Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas: Ethnic Cleansing in the Promised Land, 1820-1875* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), 53; La Vere, *The Texas Indians*, 62. For a detailed look at this transition from sensationalist authors to those more sensitive authors, see Vivien Geneser, "Native transgressions," 223-226. For a general look at the rise of New Indian History, see David Baird, "Reflections of a Historian of Native American History," *Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Winter 1999), pp. 441-444; Daniel K. Richter, "Whose Indian History," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 2, Early American History: Its Past and Future (Apr., 1993), pp. 379-393; David Edmunds, "New Voices: American Indian History, 1895-1995," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 100, No. 3 (Jun., 1995), 717-740; Ned Blackhawk, "Look How Far We've Come: How American Indian History Changed the Study of American History in the 1990s," *OAH Magazine of History*, Vol 19, Issue 6, 1 November 2005, Pages 13-17. For Texas New Indian History specifically, see Pekka Hämäläinen, "The Emergence of a New Texas Indian History," in *Beyond Texas Through Time: Breaking Away from Past Interpretations* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2011), 50-85. For the future of New Indian History, see Pekka Hämäläinen, "The Future of Native American History in the United States," *Perspectives on History*, Dec 1, 2012, <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/december-2012/the-futures-of-native-american-history-in-the-united-states>.

³² See Michael Eugene Harkin and David Rich Lewis, *Native Americans and the Environment: Perspectives on the Ecological Indian* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), xxii, on how "debunking is at best a limited goal for a scholarly project."

Native American perspective, but in the process, neglect European sources and deny cultural traits they consider unsightly.

Nuance makes for good History. The Karankawas practiced cannibalism, as the sensationalist historians suggest, and colonizers used the Karankawas' cannibalism as justification for their genocide, as the revisionist historians suggest. Because these scholars do not consider all the perspectives involved, they ignore the nuanced realities of history.³³ This thesis suggests that History should be written with every human and non-human actor in mind.³⁴ Like a pendulum, when perspectives swing too far in one direction, they tend to swing back the other direction nearly as far. History needs to be written from every perspective on the historical pendulum: ranging from the colonizer to the colonized.³⁵

In 2017, I submitted a successful application for a summer fellowship to study the Karankawas with the intention of turning my research into an honors thesis. The first lines of my application read as follows:

As a kid, I was told of eight-foot tall, tattooed, baby eating cannibals who lived on Galveston Island; they were called the Karankawa....The history of the Karankawa is full of misconceptions and inaccuracies. With my research I'd not only like to dispel these myths but bring recognition and new insight regarding this now extinct tribe.

³³ This is reminiscent of the Black and White binary in how peoples of the past are either racialized as White or Black, while ignoring all the shades in between.

³⁴ For examples how the history of the non-human impacts humans, see W. Jeffrey Bolster, *The Mortal Sea: Fishing the Atlantic in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 3; Jennifer Rice, *Flight Maps: Adventures with Nature in Modern America* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 111-166. Mark Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003); Rob Walsh, *Sex, Death, and Oysters: A Half Shell Lover's World Tour* (Berkeley: Counter Point Press, 2009); Sandra Swart, *Riding High: BLANK; Trees of Paradise, A California History*.

³⁵ For stand-out scholarly works already writing across the historical pendulum, see Karl Jacoby, *Shadows at Dawn: An Apache Massacre and the Violence of History* (New York: Penguin, 2008); Joshua Piker, *The Four Deaths of Acorn Whistler: Telling Stories in Colonial America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

I originally planned for this thesis to disprove what I thought to be blatant myths surrounding the Karankawas: their cannibalism and gigantism especially. Then came the hard-nosed research. The sources made challenging perceptions of colossal Karankawas straightforward; the sources made challenging perceptions of cannibalistic Karankawas far more difficult. Finding a host of discrepancies and other historiographical problems, my thesis transformed to concentrate entirely on the Karankawas' cannibalism.

In writing about an entire grouping of Peoples, the first question needs to be, what do these Peoples gain from my research?³⁶ How does the Karankawas' memory benefit from this work? With these questions in mind, the best argument *against* my thesis is that by focusing on the Karankawas' cannibalism, I associate these Peoples with an activity that the vast majority of society deems the pinnacle of taboo. Echoed by anthropologist Laurence Goldman, "The danger posed by books of this kind is that one inadvertently reproduces the very mythical stereotypes craved by the public."³⁷

I do not want the Karankawas to be identified as "the man-eaters." But they already are. The Karankawas image as "baby eating cannibals" is ingrained in the psyche of most Texans because our current History has ineffectively rectified their representations. Instead of hoping that most Texans forget about such unseemly things, instead of focusing on something "more positive," instead of belittling all evidence of anthropophagy as a European

³⁶ The wonderful article by Devon A. Mihesuah, "Voices, Interpretations, and the 'New Indian History': Comment on the 'American Indian Quarterly's Special Issue on Writing about American Indians,'" *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Special Issue: Writing about American Indians (Winter, 1996), pp 91-108, has guided these questions.

³⁷ Laurence Goldman, *The Anthropology of Cannibalism* (Westport: Bergin and Garvey, 1999), 5.

fabrication; this thesis provides a new perspective.³⁸ It recreates the Karankawas image, it confronts colonial propaganda, and most importantly, it preserves and better understands a profoundly meaningful cultural practice.

³⁸ William Arens argues that “we should leave the subject [of cannibalism] alone and concentrate...on something more positive in the history of Native Americans than the possibility that they are actually eating each other.” Arens, in this instance, is discounting Anasazi cannibalism. DocSpot, “Archaeology: Cannibals (Documentary),” YouTube video, 25:00, 22:05-22:21, July 19, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHUI7beK_3M.

Chapter One: A Series of Abductions

The Three Worlds of Jean-Baptiste Talon

In 1688, the Clamcoeh-Karankawas abducted and adopted an eight-year-old Jean-Baptiste Talon from the French Fort Saint-Louis. Three years later, the Spaniards abducted and adopted the eleven-year-old Talon from the Clamcoehs near Matagorda Bay. Six years after that, the French abducted and adopted the seventeen-year-old Talon serving on a Spanish warship. Talon recounted these experiences to an interrogator in 1698 while in Brest, France. Being “tender of age,” three conflicting worlds accepted Jean-Baptiste Talon as an insider. This positionality allowed him to have an unprecedented viewpoint into the lives of the French, Spanish, and the Karankawas.

For the Karankawas’ History, Talon’s interrogation is particularly significant. A scarcity of first-hand ethnographic sources on these Peoples exist and only Talon’s maintains a true insider perspective. It shows. Talon describes the Karankawas unlike other chroniclers who came in contact with these Indians: as humans, capable of extreme acts of kindness and violence.

In his interrogation, Talon discusses the Karankawas’ cannibalism and from the description we can uncover the characteristics of Texas Gulf Coast anthropophagy. Later in the thesis, I compare these characteristics to other accounts of neighboring cannibalism and find that they match—evidence that Natives on the Texas Gulf Coast had well-established forms of cultural cannibalism. Because Jean-Baptiste Talon serves as a foundation to my thesis’s arguments, I devote this chapter to him. First, I build a narrative of Talon’s trek between the worlds of the French, the Karankawas, and the Spaniards. This narrative corrects

past Historical mistakes and clarifies an otherwise confusing sequence of events. Then, I spend the second half of this chapter probing the credibility of Talon's interrogation to make sure my argument is not prone to collapse due to a faulty foundation.

Miserable Savages Who Live on Roots: A French Colony on the Texas Gulf Coast

In early 1684, the Talon family traveled three thousand miles from Canada to France to join Sieur de La Salle's expedition which intended to establish a military settlement on the lower reaches of the Mississippi.¹ Roughly three hundred souls envisioned the prosperity of being the first settled on the new territory, and after two months of preparations, the colonists embarked for Saint Domingue, what is today known as Haiti.²

From a present-day perspective, the expedition began poorly. Illness struck fifty men, with two ultimately dying; tension between the fleet captain and La Salle erupted and created long-lasting rifts between the settlers; and Spanish corsairs captured the colonizers' supply ketch, *Saint-Francois*. Despite these hardships, "the ship's officers said that it had been a

¹ The Talon family of eight being Lucien, Sr., the patriarch; Isabelle Marchand, the matriarch; Marie-Elizabeth; Marie-Madelaine; Pierre Talon; Jean-Baptiste; Lucien; and Robert Talon, who is born on the voyage to the Gulf Coast. For information on how Lucien Talon, Sr., learned of the expedition see Robert Weddle, *The Wreck of the Belle, the Ruin of La Salle* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001), 122-123. For general information on the Talons, see Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi and the Gulf* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1987), 237; Weddle, "La Salle's Survivors," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 75, no. 4 (April 1972), 420; Weddle, *The French Thorn: Rival Explorers in the Spanish Sea, 1682-1762* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991). I use the wordage "military settlement" purposefully. Weddle successfully argues that King Louis XIV of France intended La Salle's mission to be one of colonization *and* a launching point for attacks on Spanish mines. Weddle, *The Wreck of the Belle*, 154.

² Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi and the Gulf*, 225-226. The concept of "envisioning prosperity" and "reaping the benefits" comes from Robert Weddle's article, see Robert Weddle, "La Salle's Survivors," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 75, no. 4 (1972): 420.

long time since they had such a fortuitous crossing,” a testament to the usual hazards of a trans-Atlantic voyage.³

After two months of overseas travel, the colonists temporarily landed at the port town of Petit Goâve in Saint Domingue.⁴ While at Petit Goâve, the locals persuaded six or seven of La Salle’s colonists to desert the expedition by listing the dangers awaiting them: Spanish fleets, keel-crushing reefs, blinding winds, mountains of fog, scant freshwater, and most fearfully, “miserable savages who live on roots.”⁵

All the other settlers pushed onward, prepared to face these dangers. Fifteen-hundred miles of voyaging later, the colonists sighted land near Atchafalaya Bay—one hundred miles west of the Mississippi.⁶ Instead of turning east en route to the Mississippi (as intended), La Salle sailed west.⁷ Growing farther away from his true destination, after three hundred miles of hugging the coast the French cavalier supposed Matagorda Bay to be an outlet of the great

³ Joutel, *The La Salle Expedition to Texas: 1684-1687*, 53.

⁴ Ibid., 49-53.

⁵ Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi and the Gulf*, 89; Weddle, *The Wreck of the Belle*, 143. One of the defectors, Denis Thomas, joined a crew of buccaneers and about ten months later he and hundreds of pirates following Laurens de Graaf and Michel de Grammont pillaged the Spanish town of Campeche. After fifty-seven days of ransackment, de Graaf and the vessel Thomas served on set sail from Campeche to Petit Goâve. On route, the Spanish Windward Armada captured Thomas’s ship. The Spaniards interrogated Thomas and from him discovered La Salle’s mission to colonize on the Mississippi. Fearful of a French foothold within striking distance of their northern provinces, the Spanish urgently began the process of searching for La Salle’s settlement site, see Weddle, *Wilderness Manhunt: The Spanish Search for La Salle* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973), 11-14.

⁶ Joutel, *The La Salle Expedition to Texas*, 52-57.

⁷ See Peter H. Wood, “La Salle: Discovery of a Lost Explorer,” *The American Historical Review*, 89, no. 2 (April 1984), 301-309, for more on the reasons why La Salle turned west such as having the wrong latitude, a broken compass, incorrect maps, and being generally ill-informed.

river and prepared to land. With ten months and nearly ten thousand miles of travelling under their belt, the Talon family stepped onto the shores of Matagorda Island, their new home.⁸

La Salle established a temporary fort on the island and then erected a permanent fort, Fort Saint-Louis, on the mainland near what is today known as Garcitas Creek. La Salle slowly realized his mistake—that Matagorda Bay was not “the mouth of one of the branches of the Mississippi”—and for the next two years searched in vain for the true Mississippi.

The six or seven settlers who deserted the expedition in Saint Domingue, although one ended up hanged for piracy, made a wise decision. The vast majority who now resided in a beautiful country filled with “fields of wildflowers,” an “infinite number of bison,” and “lakes and rivers full of fish,” would not survive.⁹

⁸ The exact times of the Talon family’s first ocean voyage from Canada to La Rochelle, Spain are unknown. I give an estimate of two months. The Talons waited two months in La Rochelle, and it took six months for them to reach the shores of Matagorda Island. I calculated the ten thousand miles through Google maps. The distance is likely larger than ten thousand miles. Putting all this traveling in perspective, the Talons moved thirty-three miles per day.

⁹ Joutel, *The La Salle Expedition to Texas*, 123, 127.



(1.1) Matagorda Island



(1.2) Matagorda Pass



(1.3) Ship Sinking Sandbars



(1.4) Garcitas Creek



(1.5) *Environment of Fort Saint-Louis, “[the French colonists] fought the Indians, the wilderness, and each other. They lost to all three adversaries.”*¹⁰

Encountering the Karankawas: The Smell of Gunpowder

Sieur de La Salle understood the importance of forging cordial relationships with Native Americans from his experience voyaging down the length of the Mississippi River in 1682.¹¹ He initially made good progress with the Clamcoehs, a Karankawa-speaking Peoples, when landing on the shores of Matagorda Island. The trouble began when La Salle’s ship, the

¹⁰ Weddle, *La Salle’s Survivors*, 413.

¹¹ As Peter Wood states, “La Salle’s ability to befriend and mobilize Indians was perhaps his most consistent strength.” Wood, “La Salle: Discovery of a Lost Explorer,” 314. For La Salle’s voyage down the Mississippi, see Nicolas de La Salle, *The La Salle Expedition on the Mississippi River: A Lost Manuscript of Nicolas de La Salle, 1682*, ed. William C. Foster, trans. Johanna S. Warren (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2003); and Patricia Galloway’s chapter in *La Salle and His Legacy* for a list of the other sources on the voyage, Galloway, “Sources for the La Salle Expedition of 1682,” in *La Salle and His Legacy*, ed. Patricia Galloway (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1982), pp 11-40.

Aimable, became grounded and split-up in the Bay. The cargo intended to construct Fort Saint-Louis and maintain its inhabitants—tools, foodstuffs, and clothing—dispersed out into the waves.

Some days after the *Aimable* grounded, La Salle's men saw the Clamcoehs with "bolts of Normandy blankets" and other goods from the shipwreck.¹² A small number of hotheaded Frenchmen (unwisely chosen by La Salle) went to the Karankawas' camp with their weapons on display. The natives promptly fled. In the empty village, the detachment of Europeans reclaimed what the Clamcoehs had salvaged and some additional items more: animal skins, blankets, and canoes.

"These [Frenchmen] had more passion than sense," recalled Henri Joutel, a lieutenant of the expedition, "the Indians returning to their camp and seeing that someone had taken their canoes, skins, and blankets, believed that war had been declared and resolved to take revenge."¹³ The Karankawas frequently collected flotsam on the beaches and although the Clamcoehs knew more likely than-naught that the goods in question were from the wreck of the *Aimable*, a diplomatic approach, one sensitive to cultural mores was needed. Not one that started a war.

Struggling to use their stolen paddleless canoes on the trip back to camp, the Frenchmen stopped for the night and started a fire.¹⁴ Tired from a day of plundering, the cavaliers fell fast asleep—as did the sentry they posted. The party awoke to a rain of arrows.

¹² Joutel, *The La Salle Expedition to Texas*, 93.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹⁴ Because the Texas Gulf Coast bays are shallow—not more than four or five feet in most places—the Karankawas primarily used canes to propel their dugouts.

Shadows in the dark became illuminated as snaps of gunfire thundered. When the arrows ceased, the panicked French unit fled back to La Salle's main party to relay what occurred. The soldiers left two of their own dead amid coastal scrub brush.

Relations between the French-Europeans and their Native American counterparts grew steadily worse. The Karankawas proved adept at ambushing and killing stray Frenchmen. The French proved less adept at ambushing and killing the Clamcoehs. In late 1685, La Salle resolved to make a sweeping attack on the Karankawas to end their hostility once and for all. The French explorer achieved little more than the temporary capture of two women, a young child, and a greater infuriation of the Coastal Peoples.

The Collapse of Fort Saint Louis: The First Abduction and Adoption

The French colonizers maintained a miserable life on the Texas coast. A sickly environment, Indian attacks, and La Salle's incessant search for the Mississippi racked up an alarming death toll. In 1687, two years after Fort Saint Louis' foundation, La Salle decided to acquire aid by trekking one thousand miles overland to New France. Before doing so, the explorer concluded "it was best to make peace with [the Clamcoehs] so they would have no cause to harass those at the settlement."¹⁵ Joutel angrily recollects that "if these precautions had been taken from the moment we arrived in the country, the natives would not then have killed so many of us."¹⁶

¹⁵ Ibid., 157.

¹⁶ Ibid., 157.

La Salle departed on January 12, 1687. Forty-six of the original two-hundred and eighty colonists remained.¹⁷ Jean-Baptiste's father, "had become lost in the woods" never to reappear.¹⁸ Marie-Elizabeth Talon, the eldest Talon daughter, succumbed to an unknown disease in the winter of 1686.¹⁹ And Pierre Talon, the eldest surviving male at nine years old, was brought by La Salle on the expedition north to live among and learn the language of the Hasinai.²⁰ The remaining Talons endured at Fort Saint Louis.²¹

Around Christmas 1688, without receiving promised assistance and after an outbreak of smallpox, the Clamcoehs sensed weakness within the French military post and annihilated the colonists—save six children who the Karankawas abducted and adopted: Eustache Bréman, Marie-Magdeleine Talon, Jean-Baptiste Talon, Lucien Talon Jr., Robert Talon, and an unknown French girl.²²

¹⁷ Twenty-five men, women, and children were left at Fort Saint-Louis including Jean-Baptiste Talon, his mother, younger brothers, and sister, see Francisco Martinez, *Save the Young: the 1691 expedition of Captain Martinez to rescue the last survivors of the massacre at Fort St. Louis, Texas*, trans. William C. Foster (Corpus Christi: Museum of the Coastal Bend, 2004), 12-13. Seventeen accompanied La Salle's search for aid. Additionally, there were four deserters or men purposefully left by La Salle among Native Americans groups in the surrounding region, three among the Caddo, and one, Jean Henri, among the Coahuiltecans, see Weddle, *The French Thorn*, 36.

¹⁸ Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf*, 237.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 211.

²⁰ Weddle, *The French Thorn*, 119. For more on the importance of children being used as interpreters and diplomats, see Brandon Layton, "Children of Two Fires: Adoption, Diplomacy, and Change among the Choctaws and Chickasaws" (dissertation, University of California, Davis, 2018).

²¹ The remaining Talons being Jean-Baptiste, Lucien, Marie-Madelaine, Robert, and their mother, Isabelle.

²² Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf*, 216; William C. Foster, *Spanish Expeditions Into Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 24-25. Jean-Baptiste reports that the Clamcoehs heard of La Salle's death and gave them another reason for their attack on the settlement, thinking that the colonists were in disunion, see R.T. Huntington and Wayne Franklin, "Expedition to the Mississippi River by Way of the Gulf of Mexico," *The Iowa Review*, vol. 15, no. 2 (Spring-Summer, 1985), 111. The only first-hand account of the Fort Saint-Louis massacre comes from Jean-Baptiste Talon. Two Frenchmen, Jacques Grôlet and Jean L'Archevêque, heard of the attack while living among the Caddo and relay their own version of events. They state that they visited the fort and buried fourteen dead and exploded "nearly a hundred barrels of powder, so that the Indians could not carry it off," see Herbert E. Bolton, *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest: 1542-1706*,

The Karankawas accepted the French children as full members of the tribe and regarded them fondly:

[The Talons] were always treated by these savage people with the greatest kindness in the world, without ever having been maltreated with blows or otherwise. On the contrary, the Indians loved them tenderly and appeared to be very angry when anyone displeased them in any way and took their part on these occasions, even against their own children....[The Talon's] were reared and loved by these Indians, as if they were their own children.²³

When compared to other chroniclers who lived among the Native Americans on the Coastal Bend—like the shipwrecked Spaniards of the Narváez expedition in 1528 or the marooned French officer, Simars de Bellisle in 1719—the Fort Saint-Louis children had an utterly different experience. The children were not too old or too set in their European ways; thus, they were adopted instead of enslaved.²⁴ The Clamcoehs tattooed the young adoptees, taught

(New York: Barnes and Noble Inc., 1908), 403; Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf*, 237. The Clamcoehs do not seem to be the only tribe that attacked or at least pillaged Fort Saint-Louis, see Martinez, *Save the Young*, 18; Foster, *Spanish Expeditions into Texas*, 24. For more on the unnamed French girl and how she has been overlooked by previous historians, see Martinez, *Save the Young*, 19, 38.

Fort Saint Louis was an utter failure for the French. The fort inflamed Spanish paranoia, and for roughly the next three decades expeditions led by men such as Domingo Terán de los Ríos, Fray Espinosa, and Martin de Alarcon, attempted to establish a military, religious, and trade presence in Spanish Texas—and among the Karankawas—to ward off any thoughts the French had of settling it themselves. But “Spanish Texas” is a misnomer. As these entradas made quite clear, the First Peoples held the power in these lands, and these expeditions resulted in little besides a few faltering missions and rocky relations with the Natives the padres so diligently attempted to convert. It would not be until Marques de San Miguel Aguayo’s 1721 expedition, a full thirty-two years after Alonso de León’s, that a Spanish foothold in Texas became semi-permanent

²³ Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf*, 239.

²⁴ The adoption of young children by Texas Native American groups is seen often on the Gulf Coast. For a few other examples in Texas see John Swanton, *Source Material on the History and Ethnology of the Caddo Indians* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996; Herman Lehmann, *Nine Years Among the Indians: 1870-1879, the Story of the Captivity and Life of a Texan Among the Indians* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993); and Frank Buckelew, *Life of F.M. Buckelew: The Indian Captive* (Hunter’s Printing House, 1925). The Spanish Viceroy adopted the Talon children for much the same reasons—“they were still tender of age,” see Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf*, 247.

them to hunt, and even “exposed the said Talons...to make them become tanned like themselves.”²⁵

The Spanish Discover Ft. Saint Louis: Lancing a French Abscess

In 1689, Spanish Governor Alonso De León paraded into Texas after hearing whispers of a French presence on what the Spaniards questionably believed to be their land.²⁶ Eighty-five soldiers followed by a train of Native Americans, missionaries, and hundreds of cattle, horses, and mules, advanced toward Fort Saint Louis.²⁷ They expected a battle. None would be necessary: Fort Saint Louis was already lost.

As one of their guides, the Spanish expedition acquired the striking Jean Henri. Years earlier La Salle left the middle-aged Henri with a Coahuiltecan-speaking groups on the lower Texas Gulf Coast to create lasting trade ties.²⁸ When Alonso de León tracked down Henri in

²⁵ Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf*, 231.

²⁶ Prior to Alonso de León’s 1689 entrada, nine expeditions unsuccessfully searched for La Salle’s rumored fort; De León himself had gone on multiple expeditions before writing the French incursion off as hearsay, see Foster, *Spanish Expeditions Into Texas*, 17; Robert Weddle, *Wilderness Manhunt: The Spanish Search for La Salle* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1973), 1-20.

²⁷ For expedition size, see Herbert E. Bolton, *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest*, 357; Weddle, *The French Thorn*, 72. See also Chapa for a slightly different number, Juan Bautista Chapa, *Texas and Northeastern Mexico, 1630-1690*, ed. William C. Foster, trans. Ned F. Brierley (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 123-124.

²⁸ The expedition did not trust Henri as their sole guide. The Spanish interrogated the wily and purposefully misleading Frenchman on four separate occasions. Each interrogation resulted in compounding confusion and contradictions, see Chapa, *Texas and Northeastern Mexico*, 120-126. Marie Hatcher and Robert Weddle have labeled Henri a deserter even though Henri claims to have been left there to “secure these peoples [the Coahuiltecan] allegiance to the king of France.” Chapa, *Texas and Northeastern Mexico*, 120; Marie Hatcher, “The Expedition of the Don Domingo Terán De Los Rios Into Texas,” *Texas Catholic Historical Society*, v. 2, no. 1 (1932), 12; Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf*, 215; Weddle, *The French Thorn*, 132-148. La Salle has a history of leaving expedition members among Native American groups, but La Salle also faced rampant desertion when establishing Fort Saint Louis on the Texas coast. Therefore, Henri being a deserter is plausible, see also Lola Orellano Norris, *General Alonso de León’s Expeditions into Texas: 1686-1690* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2017), 19.

1688, he “sat on buffalo hides, as if they were a throne [with] two Indians fanning him and others cleaning his face.”²⁹ Henri had performed his duties thoroughly.³⁰ Under De León’s command, he now had to lead the Spanish entrada to the rumored French abscess.³¹

After a month of travel, the Spaniards arrived at Fort Saint-Louis.³² As the accompanying priest Fray Damián Massanet writes, they saw “many dead pigs....[three] unburied bodies....and a great lot of shattered weapons.”³³ Mission accomplished, De León prepared for his return to New Spain, but before his homecoming, De León waited on four Frenchmen: Jacques Grôlet, Jean L’Arcjêvêque, Pierre Meunier, and Pierre Talon. De León heard that these men lived among the Caddos in the area and sent a letter inquiring whether they wished to reside among Indians or Christians. De León said he would wait “three or four days” for their answer.³⁴ Two of the four Frenchmen accepted the offer and joined the

The prominent guides of De Leon’s 1689 expedition were Native Americans from the Pacpul and Quem nations. These two groups resided more than two hundred miles from Fort Saint-Louis. That these First People intimately knew the way to Matagorda Bay, despite the considerable distance, is testament to how well established and traversed Native American trade routes were in Texas.

²⁹ Chapa, *Texas and Northeastern Mexico*, 116-117.

³⁰ Ibid. For more information on Alonso De León’s encounter with Jean Henri, see Lola Orellano Norris, *General Alonso de Leon’s Expeditions into Texas*, 19. Henri claimed that twenty-four tribes were loyal to him. For the complete list, see Chapa, *Texas and Northeastern Mexico*, 135; Bolton, *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest*, 389; Foster, *Spanish Expeditions Into Texas*, 25.

³¹ Chapa, *Texas and Northeastern Mexico*, 135.

³² It took the Spaniards thirty-one days to traverse over two hundred miles. Orellano-Norris, *General Alonso de León’s Expeditions into Texas*, 156, 165.

³³ Damian Manzanet, “Letter of Don Damian Manzanet to Don Carlos de Sigüenza Relative to the Discovery of the Bay of Espíritu Santo,” trans. Lilia M. Casis, *The Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association* vol. 2, No. 4 (April 1899): 289; Bolton, *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest*, 398. De Leon, in looking for more corpses, assumed that “they had been thrown into the creek and eaten by alligators,” see Bolton, *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest*, 398. Chapa inferred that the Native Americans had thrown most of the bodies into Garcitas Creek, Chapa, *Texas and Northeastern Mexico*, 129.

³⁴ Captain Francisco Martinez, who spoke French, wrote the letter, see Bolton, *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest*, 396. Alonso de León offered an enterprising Emet Native American a horse if he took the letter to the Frenchmen living among the Caddos. This individual traversed 440 miles over the course of eight days,

Spanish entrada: Grôlet and L'Arcjevêque.³⁵ Talon and Meunier remained with the Caddos.³⁶

From Grôlet and L'Arcjevêque the Spanish entrada leader learned that the Clamcoehs had taken in Jean-Baptiste Talon and the other French children.

The Talons' Second Abduction

The next year in 1690, the Spanish Viceroy Gaspar de la Cerda, Count de Galve, tasked Governor Alonso de León with another entrada. De León had to destroy the remnants of Fort Saint-Louis, explore the option of founding a permanent mission among the Caddos, and importantly, locate the remaining French interlopers living with Native American groups—including the children among the Karankawas. De León lost his reluctant guide, Jean Henri, who escaped and hid among the First Peoples, but importantly, the Governor still retained the Quem and Pacpul guides that accompanied the 1689 entrada.³⁷

The Spaniards reached Fort Saint Louis after thirty days of travel and burned the dilapidated settlement to the ground.³⁸ Meeting one goal, De León continued north toward the Caddos where the two who had denied his proposition a year earlier (Pierre Talon and Pierre Meunier) resided. The entrada captured the two Frenchmen within a month and the

successfully delivering the letter and reply to the Frenchmen and the Spaniards. For more information on this incredibly long-distance run, see Foster, *Spanish Expeditions Into Texas*, 28-29.

³⁵ Their letter to de Leon can be found in Weddle, *Wilderness Manhunt*, 193 and Chapa, *Texas and Northeastern Mexico*, 132-133.

³⁶ Foster, *Spanish Expeditions Into Texas*, 40-41.

³⁷ Ibid., 36-38. Bolton spells "Quem," as "Quems." I use Foster's spelling. These Native American escorts were decidedly more proficient than Henri in traversing the Texas wilderness, but Henri's value came not in his skill of navigation, but rather the connections, translation, and goodwill he fostered among the Native Peoples of Texas.

³⁸ Chapa, *Texas and Northeastern Mexico*, 160. After burning Fort Saint-Louis to the ground, the Spaniards referred to it as "the Old Fort," see Hatcher, "The Expedition of the Don Domingo Terán De Los Rios Into Texas," 23.

Hasinai warmly authorized the establishment of Mission San Francisco de los Tejas.³⁹ With the second goal completed, there remained one more matter at hand—to capture the French children living with the coastal tribes.

Although the Hasinai articulated that they “were at a feud with the Indians on the coast,” one of their number somehow cultivated a stable relationship with the Karankawas and agreed to accompany the Spaniards on their attempt to acquire the adolescents.⁴⁰ Led well, the Spanish Governor soon encountered the group of Karankawas that held Marie-Madelaine and Robert Talon. Lucien Talon Jr. was retrieved from another band situated elsewhere on the bay. The Spanish party offered horses and clothing in exchange for the children. The Karankawas grudgingly agreed. After the initial exchange, hostilities broke out. There are multiple versions as to why these hostilities ignited. De León, summarizing his experience, writes the following:

We discussed the ransom [of Robert and Marie-Madelaine], and after having given [the Clamcoehs] gifts and the ransom for both, they came with a thousand shameless demands, asking us to give them all our horses and even the clothes we wore on our backs, while they went looking for the other French boy [Lucien Jr.], who was 2 leagues from there within the same nation. And having brought him, they continued further with their shameless demands, bringing bows and arrows’ and a large number of Indians came, prepared with leather shields, demanding exorbitant things, and that if we did not give them to them, they were going to shoot their arrows at us and kill us all. And saying this and starting to shoot arrows happened at the same time. Therefore we fell upon them, and having killed four and injured two of them, they withdrew after injuring two of our horses.⁴¹

Fray Massanet, in the midst of a feud with De León, paints a different picture:

³⁹ The Hasinai accepted the invitation believing it to be a means of establishing trade between the two societies, see F. Todd Smith, *The Caddo Indians: Tribes at the Convergence of Empires, 1542-1854* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1995), 15.

⁴⁰ Bolton, *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest*, 384.

⁴¹ Norris, *General Alonso de León’s Expeditions into Texas*, 201.

The soldiers began to enter the *ranchitos* of the Indians, peering with too much curiosity into their belongings, and committing other acts so that the Indians became resentful against the soldiers and distrustful of them when they found out who was guilty. Later, all being gathered together after the French boys had been delivered over to our men, the Indians commenced to shoot arrows among the soldiers.⁴²

Another member of the expedition, Juan Bautista Chapa, a close friend to the De León family, provides yet another narrative:

The governor, treating the Indians pleasingly and ingratiating himself with them in order to obtain the youths' release, negotiated with the Indians. Since the Indians were given all that they asked for, and as they did not see more than sixteen of our men, they were emboldened to kill our troops. With great daring the Indians began to request, in exchange for the rescue, all the horses our people had and even the clothes they were wearing. They delayed by saying that they were going to look for one of the other French boys, who was two leagues from there, and in fact they brought him. Continuing their audacity—each one bringing many arrows, with his bow and his leather shield—they asked for exorbitant things and threatened to kill all of the troops if their demands were not met. They then immediately attacked, shooting arrows with great vehemence....in this fray the Indians shot two arrows at our governor. They knocked off his hat with one arrow and the other glanced to one side, doubtless because of the good armor he wore.⁴³

Important for my later arguments, Jean-Baptiste Talon, who was around nine years-old at the time, recounts the likeliest and most level-headed version of events to a French interrogator in 1693:

The Spaniards did not want to bring on themselves a war with [the Natives] because they intended to establish themselves in the country. They agreed to give in exchange a horse for each French head. But when it came to the Talons's sister, who was taller and older, being their eldest, the savages wanted two horses for her. Beyond that, there arose a dispute that made them take recourse to arms, so that there were two or three savages killed with musket shots, which made the others flee because they

⁴² Massanet claims he received this information from one of the soldiers present, Bolton, *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest*, 384-385.

⁴³ Chapa, *Texas and Northeastern Mexico*, 153-154. This account is second-hand as well. And Chapa served as Alonso de León's secretary on the expedition, and almost doubtless wrote sections of De León's journal, hence the similarity in their two accounts. For some quick evidence, when the Spaniards discovered Fort Saint Louis De León writes, "We found three dead bodies scattered over the plain. One of these, from the dress that still clung to the bones, appeared to be that of a woman." Chapa writes, "Three corpses were found scattered in the field. One seemed to have been a woman, as she still had her skirt stuck to her bones." The discrepancies are due to English translation. Bolton, *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest*, 398; Chapa, *Texas and Northeastern Mexico*, 128.

greatly feared firearms. Finally, they gave up the girl for one horse as they had done for each of the boys. To appease them the Spaniards gave them some smoking tobacco.”⁴⁴

In spite of the violence, the Spaniards seized or traded Marie-Madelaine, Lucien, and Robert Talon from the Clamcoehs. This was the Talons’ second abduction.⁴⁵ “[The Karankawas] felt so much regret on having to part with the brothers and sister,” recalled Jean-Baptiste, who at this time still remained on the coast with Eustache Bréman, “that they all wept bitterly...and they mourned them for a month afterward, especially the smaller ones, for whom they had greater attachment and tenderness than for the older ones.”⁴⁶ De León, expecting some reprisal, hurried to Christian lands with his three goals accomplished. He reached Monclova on July 15th, 1690.⁴⁷

The Abduction of Jean-Baptiste Talon and Eustache Bréman

The Spanish State felt as if French demons still lurked near Fort Saint Louis despite Alonso de León razing it to dust. The Church, seeing demons of a different sort, was entranced with the Hasinai who seemed receptive to the Christian faith. Therefore, in 1691,

⁴⁴ Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf*, 241.

⁴⁵ Marie-Madelaine, Lucien, and Robert Talon had lived with the Karankawa for more than a year, see Foster, *Spanish Expeditions Into Texas*, 62-63.

⁴⁶ Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf*, 242.

⁴⁷ DeLeón’s entrada went smoother and more successfully than almost all that were to follow. Even so, upon returning to New Spain De León’s reputation fell to the wayside. As Chipman and Joseph write in *Spanish Texas*, “he was blamed for his failure to remove all traces of French presence at Matagorda Bay, for his alleged commission of fraud, for his frank and honest nature, and for his inability to work effectively with Fray Massanet,” see Donald E. Chipman and Harriet Denise Joseph, *Spanish Texas: 1519-1821* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 92. For a wonderful new look at Alonso de León and the republication of his diaries in a single volume, see: Lola Orellano Norris, *General Alonso de León’s Expeditions into Texas: 1686-1690* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2017)

the Spanish Viceroy issued Governor Domingo Téran de los Ríos and Fray Damián Massanet—representatives of state and church—to jointly conduct a third entrada into Texas.⁴⁸ The entrada included numerous veterans of De León’s 1689 and 1690 expeditions, notably Captain Francisco Martinez and the French prisoner turned Native American translator, Pierre Meunier. The Viceroy also tasked Captain Gregorio de Salinas Varona to resupply the entrada by ship at Matagorda Bay. A comprehensive set of instructions listed the objectives of the expedition bluntly: resupply Mission San Francisco de los Tejas among the Hasinai, erect seven more places of worship in the Hasinai’s vicinity, describe and explore the environment, and “ascertain whether the French or any other Europeans lived there, either in large or small numbers.”⁴⁹

Beginning on May 16, 1691, the Téran-Massanet expedition weaved through tremendous herds of buffalo and left crudely built crosses in their wake so that any Native American apostates “might resume their conversion and reduction into the bosom of the church.”⁵⁰ Their ambitious plan to construct seven missions among the Hasinai and their neighbors indicates how susceptible the Christians believed the Caddos to be to their religion. Father Massanet, the brainchild of the entrada, particularly trusted that upon entering Caddo lands he would be welcomed with open arms by a flock of new Native American neophytes. A Native runner dashed these expectations. Disease had festered and spread in Caddos’ lands

⁴⁸ For a complete listing of instructions given to Massanet and Téran, see: Hatcher, “The Expedition of the Don Domingo Terán De Los Ríos Into Texas,” 4-10. The joint command created an interesting power dynamic. A dynamic that inevitably led to tension between Massanet and Téran. Téran held more immediate power than Massanet, but not a complete power, and was still required to report to Massanet. See Hatcher, “The Expedition of the Don Domingo Terán De Los Ríos Into Texas,” 17, 18, 24, 50.

⁴⁹ Hatcher, “The Expedition of the Don Domingo Terán De Los Ríos Into Texas,” 4.

⁵⁰ Ibid., unknown page number.

and the First Peoples had grown angry at the domineering Padres. A larger Spanish presence seemed necessary for the priests and soldiers' safety at San Francisco de los Tejas.⁵¹

Before the Spanish expedition could directly aid the nervous missionaries, it was obligated to meet with the supply ship commanded by Captain Gregorio de Salinas Varona sailing to Matagorda Bay. Captain Martinez took twenty soldiers, fifty-six mules, and two-hundred and fifty horses and marched to the Bay.⁵² Martinez was also ordered to retrieve the three remaining French children among the Karankawas: Jean-Baptiste Talon, Eustache Brahman, and an unknown French girl. The Spaniards had no intention of leaving Christian children with Native Peoples, especially not French children who could aid any further attempts at French settlement in Texas.

Instead of bushwhacking in search of the Karankawas, Martinez sent up smoke signals announcing his presence.⁵³ After half a day of floating smoke, the party captured a Karankawa-speaker in a prairie. With this individual's guidance the Spaniards made contact with a homestead of Karankawas who knew where the two French boys—Jean-Baptiste and

⁵¹ Hatcher, "The Expedition of the Don Domingo Terán De Los Rios Into Texas," 57. For an account of life among the Hasinai and the experience of an outbreak of smallpox, Hatcher, "Descriptions of the Tejas or Asinai Indians, 1691-1722, I," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (1927): 206-218; Hatcher, "Descriptions of the Tejas or Asinai Indians, 1691-1722, II," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (1927): 283-304; Hatcher, "Descriptions of the Tejas or Asinai Indians, 1691-1722, III," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (1927): 50-62; Hatcher, "Descriptions of the Tejas or Asinai Indians, 1691-1722, IV," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (1927): 150-180.

⁵² The disproportionately large number of stock animals struck me first as odd, but the large number makes sense considering that Martinez set out to bring back supplies and "at least forty" men from Salinas' ship.

⁵³ The Karankawas, including an abundance of Texas Native American groups, used elaborate smoke-signals to send messages between familial-based groups. Martinez, who had made multiple trips to the Matagorda Bay, assuredly had seen these smoke signals and understood their importance in communication.

Eustache Brahman—were living. Induced by “firm yet kind insistence,” in other words, a threat, these Karankawas informed the French children’s keepers of the Spaniards’ arrival.⁵⁴

The Clamcoehs reluctantly brought both French boys, but regarding the girl, the First Peoples said she “had been taken away by other Indians living farther inland from the coast.”⁵⁵ Martinez gave up collecting her and she disappears from the historical record entirely.⁵⁶

The Karankawas lamented that they had to give up the children, but they understood the underlying ultimatum from their last encounter with the Spaniards. Jean Baptiste recalls that the Clamcoehs “urged [him] to desert the Spaniards and return to them as soon as possible, with a number of horses.” Jean Baptiste agreed, but “without intending to keep his word.”⁵⁷ The two boys traveled with the Téran entrada for nine months, and after Téran passed his command to Captain Martinez in 1692, Téran and the boys sailed from Matagorda Bay to Veracruz.⁵⁸ Upon landing at Veracruz, Téran took the boys to Mexico City to meet

⁵⁴ “I ordered the interpreter to tell them to bring me two French boys and a French woman, who, I had information, were in their control with a threat that if they did not turn them over to me, we would become enemies. But if they bring the three captives, I will present them with some horses,” see Martinez, *Save the Young*, 28.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 30-33.

⁵⁶ William C. Foster believes the Karankawas traded the French girl to the Coroa who resided in present-day Southwestern Mississippi, see Nicolas de La Salle, *The La Salle Expedition on the Mississippi River*, ed. William C. Foster, trans. Johanna S. Warren (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2003), 109 f. 48.

Before beginning the trek to Matagorda Bay, the Spanish entrada and Captain Martinez learned from another Native American messenger that a small party of Frenchmen had treated with the Caddos. Furthermore, the entire entrada was to wait for Captain Martinez’s timely return before continuing towards the Hasinai and the anxious missionaries. Needless to say, Martinez was in a hurry. This is one explanation as to why Captain Martinez did not pursue the acquisition of the mysterious French girl. See Hatcher, “The Expedition of the Don Domingo Terán De Los Rios Into Texas,” 16.

⁵⁷ Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf*, 242.

⁵⁸ Teran used Captain Salinas’s vessel anchored in Matagorda Bay.

with the most powerful official in New Spain—Gaspar de la Cerda Silva Sandoval y Mendoza, Count de Galve, the viceroy.

Cerda Sandoval struck gold. Jean-Baptiste and Eustache were invaluable informants holding a treasure trove of knowledge on the maze-like Texas coast, the First Peoples of the region, and the ultimate designs of the French. But instead of mining them for information, he reunited the boys with the surviving Talons and adopted the lot as “household servants and naturalized citizens.”⁵⁹ With this act of kindness, Cerda Sandoval catapulted the Talons into the strata of Spanish aristocracy.



(1.6) *The T ran-Massanet expedition weaved through tremendous herds of buffalo and left crudely built crosses in their wake so that any Native American apostates “might resume their conversion and reduction into the bosom of the church.”*

⁵⁹ Weddle, *The French Thorn*, 119; Weddle, “La Salle’s Survivors,” 421; Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf*, 218, 247.

The French Abduction of Jean-Baptiste Talon, Lucien Jr., and Pierre Talon

The Talons lived in Mexico City for about half a decade until Cerda Sandoval officially retired from his position as Viceroy in 1696.⁶⁰ Before sailing for Spain, he sent Jean-Baptiste, Lucien Jr., and Pierre Talon to the Veracruz Marine Academy, where the trio served on the *Santo Cristo de Maracaibo*, a vessel in the *Armada de Barlovento* that prowled the Gulf Coast protecting Spanish settlements and shipping lines.⁶¹ The youngest Talon, Robert, and the last surviving daughter, Marie-Magdelaine, joined the Viceroy and his wife as attendants on their return journey to Spain.⁶²

On January 7, 1697, *Le Bon*, a French ship of war, captured the *Santo Cristo de Maracaibo* on which Jean-Baptiste, Lucien Jr., and Pierre Talon served. Rather than feeling relieved to be back in the clutches of their countrymen, the brothers were irate. The Talons knew that their abduction by Spain's imperial rival made a reunion with their siblings, Robert and Marie-Magdelaine, problematic.

The French took the Talon brothers to Saint-Domingue to be questioned and then realized the critical information they held, and sent the brothers to Brest, France for a formal interrogation. When Jean-Baptiste and his brothers landed in Brest, France, they had traveled more than seventeen thousand miles over the span of thirteen years between three vastly conflicting worlds: one French, one Indian, and one Spanish.

⁶⁰ Weddle claims the Conde de Galvez died in office, see Weddle, *The French Thorn*, 253. Weddle is mistaken here. The ailing Cerda Sandoval died in Spain a year later.

⁶¹ This is the same armada that captured one of the French deserters on Saint Domingue eleven years earlier who revealed La Salle's plans to settle the Mississippi.

⁶² Eustache Bréman remained in Mexico City. Jean-Baptiste and Pierre Talon describe that the Viceroy put them on this fleet prior to his replacement. Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf*, 247.

The extraordinary value of Jean-Baptiste as a source is hence revealed. Being “tender of age,” all three worlds accepted Jean-Baptiste Talon as a complete insider, giving him an unprecedented perspective.

Jean-Baptiste Talon’s Testimony of the Karankawas’ Cannibalism

On September 24th, 1698, almost a decade after the massacre at Fort Saint-Louis, the French extensively interrogated Pierre and Jean-Baptiste Talon in Brest, France. The interview totaled 56-pages and within it, Jean-Baptiste describes living among the Clamcoehs and his experience with their exocannibalism.

Jean-Baptiste recalls that after the slayings at Fort St. Louis in 1688, Clamcoeh warriors stirred by a successful attack on the colonists and their acquisition of weaponry, set out to raid their “ancient enemies,” the Hasinai. The warriors took the children and the elderly to a secluded spot on the coast for protection and then moved northward. Six-weeks passed before the warriors returned parading their spoils: “several horses, fifty to sixty scalps, and thirty to forty slaves.”⁶³

Instead of encountering the Hasinai, the Clamcoehs engaged with the Ayennis, the Hasinai’s neighbors. An Ayenni, in telling of the skirmish, related that “several gunshots had been fired at them,” and believing that the French and Karankawas were jointly assaulting them, the entire tribe fled in fear.⁶⁴ Upon the close of the skirmish, “[Karankawa women] carried away from the battlefield the enemy corpses to make a feast, all together, upon their

⁶³ Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf*, 249.

⁶⁴ One of the Ayenny women captured by the Karankawas escaped and relayed the details to Pierre’s caretaker, see Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf*, 249.

return.”⁶⁵ A three day long ceremonial dance then ensued. The French interrogator, hearing this experience from Jean-Baptiste, writes:

The only meals that horrified [the Talon children] were those [the Clamcoehs] made of human flesh, as they are all cannibals, but toward their savage enemies only. They never ate a single Frenchman that they had killed because, they said they do not eat them. And the said Jean-Baptiste Talon vouches that he once went three days without eating, because nothing presented itself during that time except some human flesh of the Ayennis whom [the Clamcoehs] had killed on one of the expeditions.⁶⁶

Scholars who discount the Karankawas’ cannibalism complain that there are no first-hand accounts or that all the accounts come from colonizers’ perspectives.⁶⁷ Jean-Baptiste’s interrogation thoroughly counters these assertions. It is both first-hand and from an individual with an insider relationship with the Karankawas. The question is, can we trust him?

⁶⁵ Ibid. Women accompanying men to war seems par for the course in Texas, see Brian DeLay, “The Politics of Vengeance,” in *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 121.

⁶⁶ Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf*, 238. Two sets of scholars discovered the Talons’ interrogation around the same period. Therefore, there are two translations of this document from 1980s. Both translations vary minimally and neither translation strays on Jean-Baptiste Talon’s report of cannibalism. R. T. Huntington and Wayne Franklin published the first translation, see R. T. Huntington and Wayne Franklin, “Expedition to the Mississippi River by Way of the Gulf of Mexico,” *The Iowa Review*, v. 15, n. 2 (Spring-Summer, 1985), pp. 100-139. The second published translation is in Robert Weddle’s *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf*. Sister Morkovsky discovered the Talons’ interrogation and sent it to Sister Ann Linda Bell to be translated. Robert Weddle says that Sister Ann Linda Bell’s version is “more literal.” Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf*, ix, 1. Prior to this time, scholars relied on, as explained by historian R.T. Huntington, “[a] fragmentary report [that] contained less than a quarter of the complete 56-page manuscript.” R. T. Huntington, “The Interrogation of the Talon Brothers, 1698,” *The Iowa Review*, v. 15, no. 2 (Spring-Summer, 1985), 99-100.

⁶⁷ For a direct example, see Robert Lee Maril, *Cannibals and Condos: Texans and Texas along the Gulf Coast* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1986), 49; “Accusations that the Karankawas ate human flesh are always third-, fourth-, or fifth-hand, never eyewitness accounts. Not a one.” Also see, Gary Clayton Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas: Ethnic Cleansing in the Promised Land, 1820-1875* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), 52-53; “This general Spanish failure had led to a myriad of mythological perceptions of these Indians, including the belief that they were cannibals. Conquering societies, when faced with rejection of assimilation programs, often condemned Native groups as cannibals. It was a practice repeated time and again in South America. Regardless of the truth--and the evidence does not support cannibalism--the Texans believed it and justified their attack[s].”

For the rest of the chapter, I burrow into that question. The quick answer is “yes,” Talon proves to be a trustworthy source, but his account *does* hold flaws. These flaws, however, do little to affect his testimony of cannibalism.

Jean-Baptiste’s account requires this validation because all the small details laid out in the preceding narrative—such as the dispersion of the Talon children living among different Karankawas around the Bay, the back-and-forth fighting between La Salle and the Clamcoehs, and the reluctance of the Clamcoehs to surrender their adopted children—give us clues as to how and why the Karankawas’ cannibalism functioned. And once the characteristics of the Karankawas’ cannibalism are recognized, we can move to other eye-witness testimonies of anthropophagy along the Gulf Coast and see if there are any patterns. Do these features repeatedly show up? Are the motivations for cannibalism identical? Before diving into those questions, I show why Jean-Baptiste’s testimony of cannibalism is legitimate.

Critiques Against the Talon Brothers’ Interrogation

Because of this thesis’s reliance on Jean-Baptiste’s testimony, discussing any critiques is of the utmost importance. The best and only known critique against the Talons comes from the prolific and deservedly acclaimed Robert Weddle, who is one of the first to revitalize and publish the interrogation. The “Dean of Spanish Colonial Historians” raises the following issues:

There are several factors, aside from the radically different version of La Salle’s death, that may raise doubts as to the complete credibility of this record: (1) being quite young, they [Jean-Baptiste and Pierre Talon] may not have understood all that they saw and heard, and their memories may have become confused; (2) their entry into Indian life was traumatic, especially that of Jean-Baptiste, who witnessed his mother’s death in the Fort Saint-Louis massacre; (3) having lived almost a decade among Indians and Spaniards, their facility in French may have been impaired; (4) the

answers were given orally and written down by someone else, possibly with some distortion in the process. Questions inevitably arise, therefore, as to how much of what is recorded in the interrogations actually reflects what the Talon's intended.⁶⁸

Before moving on to Chapter Two, I examine Weddle's four points of critique and identify whether they lessen the substance of Jean-Baptiste's testimony of the Clamcoehs' cannibalism.

The Overall Account Demonstrates Veracity

In 1689, the Spanish proceeded cautiously when they captured Jacques Grôlet and Jean L'Arcjevêque—two members of La Salle's colonization attempt.⁶⁹ General Alonso de León immediately and intensively interrogated these infiltrators, so too did authorities in Mexico City, and then the Viceroy sent them to Madrid for another round of questioning.⁷⁰ While in Madrid, Grôlet and L'Arcjevêque languished in prison for roughly two and a half years.⁷¹ The Spanish authorities kept them in virtual isolation for fear that they might slip sensitive information on Spain's New World holdings to other prisoners. When the Crown thought that their measures were not extreme enough and that the French Monarchy might learn about Grôlet's and L'Arcjevêque's imprisonment, the authorities sent the duo back to

⁶⁸ Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi and the Gulf*, 214.

⁶⁹ "They [The Spaniards] feared that they [Grôlet and L'Arcjevêque] would bring back to France too much knowledge of this particular country, which they dreaded greatly; and there is nothing they would not do to prevent this."Ibid., 247.

⁷⁰ Weddle, *Wilderness Manhunt: The Spanish Search for La Salle* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 195, 200.

⁷¹ Captured in April of 1689, sent to Spain later in the year, and languished in Prison until July 1692.

New Spain to settle on the New Mexican frontier—a location as far removed from France as possible.⁷²

The dire circumstances that befell Grôlet and L'Arcjevêque exemplify the paranoid nature of the Spanish Empire. The Spaniards proceeded antithetical to their nature when capturing the Talon children in 1690 and 1691. The Viceroy adopted the children, improved their status, and gave them direct access to the inner-workings of Spanish bureaucracy.⁷³ The Talons knew the same, if not more, critical information than Grôlet and L'Arcjevêque, but when Grôlet and L'Arcjevêque wallowed in jail, the Talons ate well in the viceregal palace.

The Spanish paid dearly for underestimating the capabilities of the Talon children. When examined by the French in 1698, the brothers' remarkable memory of events was a most welcome surprise to the French interrogator. The brothers recalled Spanish fortifications and towns, population sizes, agriculture dependencies, and military routines.⁷⁴ Even mundane details—including coach requirements in New Spain's capital—did not escape their memory.⁷⁵

Yet the French, who once more planned to settle along the Mississippi under Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville, also required information on the Gulf Coasts' environment and Peoples. Again, both brothers easily described a wide array of flora and fauna; recounted a multitude of cultural traits of the Hasinai and the Karankawas that later chroniclers verify;

⁷² A few insecure spots for the Spanish being the under-garrisoned presidios, the locations of precious mines, the strained relations with the Indians, and the explosions of unrest across their empire.

⁷³ Because of their “tender age,” the Viceroy believed he could erase the French and Karankawa influences from the Talons and replace it with “superior” Spanish traditions. But just as the Spaniards tried to scrub away the childrens' tattoos, their “marks still showed, despite a hundred remedies that the Spaniards applied to try to erase them.” Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi and the Gulf*, 238.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 240-243.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 244.

and depicted the volatile coastal landscape. For an illustration of the specificity of content that the Talons produced, see their exceptionally detailed description of buffalo:

Their flesh is very good to eat, but they are quite different from those [cattle] of Europe, being much larger and having a big hump on the neck, their head and their eyes bigger in proportion to their body, and instead of fur, [they have] a kind of wool which could be spun. This wool is much longer on the head than elsewhere so that it gives them the appearance of having a head of hair that almost covers their eyes. Their horns are smaller [than those of European cattle] and very sharp, and they have only a very small tail. All of them, male as well as female, are of reddish-black color....[These animals] are very wild and habitually avoid the inhabited places so that they are found no nearer the villages than 15 or 20 leagues. These buffalo have such a sensitive sense of smell that they can scent hunters from far off, when they approach from upwind, and run away. So it is necessary, if one wants to catch them, to approach them from downwind. But once one succeeds in killing one in a herd, either with arrows or with gunshots, all the others surround it and stand looking at it, so that one can easily kill several more of them before they run away.”⁷⁶

Considering that bison ranged only as far as Lower Chihuahua, the Talon brothers presumably saw their last buffalo around the time they lived with the Karankawas and the Hasinias: a passage of six or seven years.⁷⁷ Their description remains exact.

Of course this is not to say that the Talons preserved a perfect memory.⁷⁸ Time dilation, time inflation, misremembering the size of expeditions, and attributing the wrong name to rivers are examples of mistakes made throughout the interrogation. Yet the overall accuracy makes it hard to believe that Jean-Baptiste might misremember something as striking as the

⁷⁶ Ibid., 228.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 230, 247. This is with the assumption that the Talons did not encounter any buffalo in Mexico City during more than half a decade of living there.

⁷⁸ Mistakes caught by Weddle in the Talon interrogation: forgetting name (234), reducing time-span (227), La Salle inconsistencies (235-236), doubled the years lived with the Karankawas (238), wrong size of entrada (240-241), confused fleet itinerary (246), reducing time-span of L’Arcjêvêque and Grollet’s imprisonment (247), inflated time-span living with the Viceroy (247), confused description of a river (249).

Karankawas' cannibalism. Anthropologist Mardith Schuetz-Miller makes a similar point: this was the "sort of spectacle to which a youngster would pay particular attention."⁷⁹

Did the Talon Brothers Manipulate their Interrogation?

With the Talons' memory shown to be accurate—and in many cases, impressively so—I turn to how the Talons manipulated matters within their testimony to serve their personal interests. Reviewing these examples allows us to address two critiques Weddle has with the Talons' interrogations: (1) that a traumatic entry to Indian life might distort their opinion of the Clamcoeh Peoples, and (2) that the Talons may not have understood all that they saw and heard. Rather, Jean-Baptiste generally sides with the Karankawas and both brothers understood a great deal—and with more nuance—than other chroniclers because of the three worlds they inhabited.

In reading Jean-Baptiste and Pierre Talon's account, we need to keep in mind that their loyalty hardly belonged to their French countrymen. Neither did it fully extend to the Karankawas. Their main objective was to be reunited with their surviving family members, Robert and Marie-Magdelaine. The brothers saw giving this information as a means of achieving their goal—albeit they had little choice. As is the case, there are moments when the Talons manipulate their testimony to fit their own needs.

A manipulation that requires addressing at length is Pierre Talon's "radically different version of La Salle's death."⁸⁰ When La Salle and sixteen men headed north to acquire aid

⁷⁹ Ibid., 272.

⁸⁰ Jean-Baptiste Talon could not contribute unique information to this testimony because he lived at Fort Saint Louis when the murders occurred.

for the floundering Fort Saint Louis, a malcontent group of five men snapped at the mistreatment by La Salle's nephew, Crevel de Morenger.⁸¹ While out in a small hunting party the malcontents waited for Morenger and two Indians faithful to La Salle—Saget and Nika—to fall asleep. When they did, the expedition's surgeon, Liotot, bludgeoned the three sleeping men with an axe. Having no means of explaining the trio's death, the malcontents decided to return to the main camp and assassinate La Salle and his trusted lieutenant, Henri Joutel. A high river foiled their return and saved Henri Joutel's life.

Meanwhile, La Salle wondering why the hunting party delayed, left the main camp to seek out the hunters with Father Anastase Douay. La Salle and Douay saw vultures circling in the distance, figured that they located the hunting party, and fired a shot announcing his presence. The shot alerted the malcontents, who then hashed together a quick plan to assassinate the expedition leader. Jean L'Arcjêvêque lured La Salle into an ambush and Pierre Duhaut, a merchant of the expedition who blamed La Salle for his brother's death and the expedition's failure, shot La Salle in the head.⁸²

Four men documented La Salle's murder: Henri Joutel, Pierre Talon, Father Anastasius Douay, and Jean L'Arcjêvêque.⁸³ L'Arcjêvêque is the only person who witnessed all the aforementioned events unfold. Soon after the murder, he told Henri Joutel that Liotot

⁸¹ The malcontents being Jean L'Arcjêvêque, Pierre Duhaut, James Hiems, Tessier, and the surgeon, Liotot, see Joutel, *The La Salle Expedition to Texas*, 93, 198. Morenger is the same man who caused the initial conflict with the Karankawas by stealing their canoes and other goods.

⁸² Ibid., 199. Although La Salle had a premonition of "some evil plot," the assassination of La Salle does not seem to be a long-time plan, but rather a spur of the moment ordeal that spiraled out of control, Ibid., 194.

⁸³ Abbé Jean Cavelier, La Salle's brother, wrote an account of the expedition to Canada, but his narrative ends abruptly before his brother's death, see Isaac Joslin Cox, *Father Douay, The Journeys of Rene Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle as related by his faithful Lieutenant, Henri de Tonty; his missionary colleagues, Fathers...*, ed. Isaac Joslin Cox (New York: Allerton Book Co., 1922), 298.

killed the three sleeping men, and that Duhaut killed La Salle. Two years later L'Arcjevêque changed his tune while under an official interrogation with Alonso de León. L'Arcjevêque claimed that the "freebooter," James Hiems, killed La Salle. In understanding this change of heart, L'Arcjevêque acted as Duhaut's servant and the pirate Heims later murdered Duhaut and would have murdered L'Arcjevêque had not Father Anastasius Douay and Abbé Jean Cavelier (La Salle's brother) stepped in on his behalf. L'Arcjevêque's first confession to Joutel is the more authentic.

Father Douay only witnessed La Salle's murder. He declared that Duhaut assassinated La Salle and that Liotot murdered the sleeping trio.⁸⁴ Pierre Talon and Henri Joutel saw nothing of the murders and acquired all of their information second-hand from various members of the malcontents and from Father Douay. Both single out Duhaut as La Salle's killer.

There is not a "radically different version of La Salle's death" in Pierre Talon's testimony as Weddle implies. Talon correctly claimed that a Duhaut shot La Salle in the head.⁸⁵ The major variance is the total exclusion of L'Arcjevêque and Liotot from the band of malcontents. Why did Pierre censor these two men from his record?

This exclusion becomes clear when realizing that Pierre Talon seems to have had a close connection with both Liotot and L'Arcjevêque. A strong clue for the relationship

⁸⁴ Cox, *Father Douay, The Journeys of Rene Robert Cavelier*, 241-247. Of note, Father Douay's account is heavily laden with religious imagery. Weddle points out that Douay claims that he "could not leave the spot where he [La Salle] had expired without having him buried as well as I could, after which I raised a cross over his grave." Talon and Joutel both mention that La Salle's body was left in the brush. Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi and the Gulf*, 214.

⁸⁵ "Duhau, having shot first, killed him [La Salle] outright with one shot in the forehead." Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi and the Gulf*, 235. Pierre does mix up the ages of the Duhaut brothers, saying that the "younger" and deceased Duhaut killed La Salle when it was really the elder Duhaut brother. Also, Pierre seems to have misremembered the number of sleeping men—there were three, not four.

between Pierre and Liotot is that the surgeon gave the young Talon a horse so “that he might be better able to shoot a gun,” before a raid on the Caddos’ enemies. In this raid, Liotot perished and Pierre claims he would have too “had he not mounted a horse that belonged to the aforementioned surgeon.”⁸⁶ It has also been suggested that Pierre’s connection with Liotot existed because of his assistance in the birth of the youngest Talon, Robert.

Regarding L’Arcjevêque, he and Pierre lived in close proximity among the Caddos for multiple years and there is another incident in the interrogation where Pierre and Jean-Baptiste seemed willing to lie for L’Arcjevêque’s benefit. Pierre told the French questioner that the Spanish entrada that “forcibly seized” Grollet and L’Arcjevêque had “five-hundred men on horseback, armed with muskets or small harquebuses, pistols, and swords and all wearing coats of mail or iron wire.” In reality, De León’s force had eighty-five ill-equipped soldiers, and L’Arcjevêque and Grollet decided on their own accord to accompany the Spaniards to Mexico City. The Talon brothers intimately knew of Spanish military capabilities. Pierre accompanied De León’s 1690 expedition of ninety soldiers for a month; and Jean-Baptiste followed Térán’s 1691 entrada of around sixty soldiers for nine months. But, L’Arcjevêque and Grollet being abducted by five hundred Spaniards in full armor certainly sounds better than the duo leaving on their accord with the Spanish enemy.

This dive into Spanish troop numbers and La Salle’s assassination tells us that the Talons willingly manipulated their interrogation for their friends, for their loved ones, and for their own advantage. We then must ask, does Jean-Baptiste Talon have any motivation that would lead him to manipulate the depiction of the Clamcoehs into cannibals? As Weddle brings up, “[The Talons’] entry into Indian life was traumatic, especially that of Jean-

⁸⁶ Ibid., 236.

Baptiste, who witnessed his mother's death in the Fort Saint-Louis massacre." Could Jean-Baptiste have sought to malign the Karankawas by describing them as man-eaters?

Contrary to vilifying the Karankawas, Jean-Baptiste describes these Peoples in an unusually positive light. He expresses that he was "reared and loved [by the Clamcoehs]...as if they were their own children," that "nothing is easier than winning their friendship," and although Talon disparages the Karankawas' means of retaliation on the defenseless Fort Saint Louis, he repeatedly blames La Salle for provoking the conflict between the two groups: "M. de la Salle would never have had war with the Clamcoehs if on arriving he had not high-handedly taken their canoes and refused them some little article of use that they asked him in return for them and for other services that they were ready to render to him."⁸⁷

Herein lies the importance of Jean-Baptiste as a source. A first-hand ethnographic source of the Karankawas is exceptionally sparse. A first-hand ethnographic source of the Karankawas coming from within their own society is literally one-of-a-kind.

Two other Europeans came close, Alvar Nunez Cabeza, a shipwrecked Spaniard, and Simars de Bellisle, a stranded Frenchman. Works by both are examined extensively in this thesis and both describe Gulf Coast cannibalism. All three sources approach their description of anthropophagy in the same manner—offhand. Instead of dwelling on the instance, they treat it as another cultural practice. In contrast, a disgruntled Fray Gaspar de Solís's "viewing" of cannibalism is extensive and spares no gruesome detail, as discussed more in Chapter Two. This informs us that these authors had little intention in using their accounts of cannibalism to malign these Indians.

⁸⁷ Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf*, 238, 251.

Now I need to address one more point of concern. If the Talons manipulated their testimony, could the interviewer also have distorted the Talons' oral answers?



(1.7) Immortalized for vilifying the Karankawas



(1.8) *La Salle Monument, Indianola*

Manipulation from the Interrogator

The French Secretary of State, comte de Pontchartrain, demanded the Talon brothers interrogation because Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville needed accurate information on the Gulf Coast territory. Therefore, French authorities questioned the brothers seeking reliable first-hand information—not information to satiate the public's urge for stories of the New World. As a consequence, Weddle explains that, "The Talon report has a remarkably cool and objective tone—reflecting the official nature of the interrogations."⁸⁸

Overall, this is accurate. In terms of self-interest, the interrogator had little motivation to inject his own view. Nevertheless, it still worked its way in. We get plentiful offhand opinions, such as the remark that "all the savages are of such a great simplicity, so credulous

⁸⁸ Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf*, 12.

and so sensitive to friendship that is offered to them, that is nothing is easier to impose on them.” These sort of comments—calling the Indians “idiots” and “the most savage” — infiltrate the testimony, but they are that, comments and opinions, not information that renders the information completely distorted.

In sum, the Talons’ interrogation is the best extant source on the Karankawas. The detailed, generally accurate, and informative interrogation provides an inside perspective corroborated by other first-hand testimonies of the Karankawas.⁸⁹ Still, Weddle’s points of pause are valid to an extent. Weddle is right that after living “almost a decade among Indians and Spaniards, their [the Talons’] facility in French may have been impaired.” We see this in some of the interrogator’s responses, “From what the Talon brothers report, *though somewhat confusedly*, one can infer that salt is available;” but this impairment seems to have not been significant enough to hinder the Talons’ ability to manipulate the events that transpired, as I have shown. Weddle is also right that the Talons had a traumatic entry into Indian life, but Jean-Baptiste integrated within the Karankawas society and depicts them as human—a truly novel idea at that time. Lastly, the interrogator did influence the testimony, but by interjecting his own opinion atop the testimony, not by changing the Talons’ information. These critiques have little bearing on the validity of Jean-Baptiste Talon’s sighting of anthropophagy. This examination of Jean-Baptiste’s testimony is critical because I rely on the Talons’ account to establish a set of Gulf Coast characteristics, which are discussed next.

⁸⁹ As Weddle so aptly puts, “[the Talons] saw the natives among whom they lived as no other European did,” Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf*, 2.

Chapter Two: Characteristics of Gulf Coast Cannibalism:

Community-oriented, Post-mortem, Rare, Restricted, and Ritualistic Exocannibalism

Jean-Baptiste Talon's memory of cannibalism among the Clamcoehs sheds light on four significant characteristics of the Karankawas' anthropophagy: (1) the Karankawas were restrictive and ritualistic on who they chose to consume; (2) sustenance did not drive the Karankawas' cannibalism; (3) the community participated in the act of anthropophagy; and (4) the cannibalization occurred on deceased bodies. A community-oriented, post-mortem, restricted, and ritualized cannibalism is what this thesis proposes, and these characteristics exist in tandem with nearly-all other credible eye-witness accounts of anthropophagy on the Texas Coastal Bend. Each characteristic will be discussed in detail and will provide a schema for viewing other recorded acts of anthropophagy in subsequent chapters.

Restricted and Ritualistic Cannibalism

In Jean-Baptiste's 1698 interrogation he asserts that the Karankawas "are all cannibals, but toward their savage enemies only, [and] they never ate a single Frenchman that they had killed because, they said they do not eat them." Unfortunately, Jean-Baptiste neglects to lay out why the Clamcoehs' refused to consume Frenchmen. This section infers what those reasons might have been, and moreover, displays that the Karankawas' cannibalism followed strict ritualistic guidelines.

A year into La Salle's 1686 colonization mission, the French explorer sent "the six best men of the company" to check the depth of an inlet. La Salle wanted to see how far his

vessel, *La Belle*, could sail before being grounded.¹ Night sprung upon the men as they finished their measurements. The sailors decided against venturing back to the main camp and instead built a fire, ate a meager dinner, and slept on the water's edge. The Clamcoehs murdered the six sailors during the night.

"They must not have defended themselves, nor even taken out their arms," Henri Joutel speculates, "because the corpses, scattered here and there, were by that time stripped of flesh, eaten some by wolves and some by wild dogs."² The Karankawas evidently had plenty of time with the bodies, yet the Frenchmen remained undigested by humans.

Nearly three years later in 1688, the Karankawas stormed Fort Saint Louis after the outbreak of smallpox. Although numerous acts of butchery are recorded in the massacre, cannibalism is not. As with the murdered sailors, the Karankawas had time to ingest the bodies but left the corpses for the alligators of Garcitas Creek.

In these two cases, why did the Karankawas refuse to eat the dead Europeans? They had every opportunity, and these revenge killings—one to revenge the theft of the Karankawas' property, and the other to revenge past transgressions and what seems to be a spreading of smallpox—appear to meet the cultural criteria of consumption that I establish in Chapter Three.

An initial and Eurocentric answer is that the First Peoples saw the Frenchmen as mystical beings. But any preconceptions of French mysticism quickly wore off. "If the French had made more of a mystery...about firearms...if they had squandered their lives less, and if they had taken greater precautions to preserve themselves as the Spaniards shrewdly

¹ Joutel, *The La Salle Expedition to Texas*, 120.

² Ibid.

do, [the Clamcoehs] would have regarded the French themselves as prodigies and invincible men.”³ The rampant death that badgered the Europeans, be it by plague or projectile, made the newcomers’ mortality unambiguous.

A second answer is that the Clamcoehs saw the Europeans as being associated with noxious spirits.⁴ The Karankawas bathed each day, ate plenty, and knew the land intimately.⁵ The French lived in squalid conditions, scared away game, and ignored customs of the land.⁶

A third answer is that the Karankawas saw the French as outsiders who held differing cultural beliefs. With such cultural-illiteracy, the French could not fully comprehend the damning spiritual implications of exocannibalism.

Yet, the most convincing reason why the failed colonizers remained uneaten is that the Clamcoehs did not consider them “ancient enemies.” The machinations of war on the Gulf Coast consisted of opportunistic hit and run attacks to acquire social capital: captives, horses, and human flesh (primarily scalps). Because of the semi-frequency of these attacks, relationships between separate Peoples danced precariously between hostility and harmony.

³ Robert Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi and the Gulf* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1987), 216.

⁴ The Karankawas likely attributed the outbreak of smallpox to the French settlers, and in later years, associated missionaries and missions as sources of disease. Ricklis summarizes this idea fantastically, “It may not be coincidence, for instance, that the attack on Fort Saint Louis followed shortly after the outbreak of smallpox in the colony; if the sickness spread to the Indians, the settlers could conceivably have been held accountable. Perhaps relevant is the fact that Cabeza de Vaca and his fellow Spaniards were immediately held accountable for the outbreak of illness on Isla de Malhado and the ensuing death of half the Indians there; certainly, the Indians seem to have had no difficulty in identifying the human vector of their misfortune.” Robert Ricklis, *The Karankawa Indians of Texas: The Karankawa Indians of Texas: an ecological study of cultural tradition and change* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 147.

⁵ “All these nations have the custom of going every morning at daybreak to throw themselves into the nearest river, almost never neglecting to do so, no matter what season, even when the water is frozen.” Robert Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi and the Gulf* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1987), 230.

⁶ Because of the Karankawas’ perception of the French as unclean and akin to pigs, the Karankawas refused to eat European pigs, as they were “the dogs of the French.” Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi and the Gulf*, 258.

With the consumption of flesh damning an enemy for eternity, this act was reasonably reserved for longtime foes and as the greatest sign of disrespect. Not practiced on temporary enemies. The Karankawas—residing on their land for centuries—had plenty of time to develop “ancient enemies.”⁷ The French—residing on the land for roughly four years—constituted another fickle and clearly inexperienced dance partner.

In the late seventeenth century, the men and women of La Salle’s expedition were off limits as targets for exocannibalism, but over the course of a century and a half could the Spaniards, Anglo-Americans, Tejanos, or Mexicans meet the strict cultural criterion for consumption? Could Whites become “ancient enemies”?

Anglo-American colonists certainly thought so. John Lawrence, a Scottish settler, routinely told of an incident in which “a band of Karankawas...captured him [and] immediately began preparations to eat him, declaring, with evident sincerity, that he was, ‘A nice fat man—good.’”⁸ John Fenn writes of the Karankawas carrying off an unnamed “little girl captive...and after proceeding some distance, they [the Karankawas] camped, killed the child, and proceeded to eat her.”⁹ James Power recalled that “a [Karankawa] chief by the

⁷ With cannibalism requiring deep-seated animosity, the rarity of the action is further explained. Coincidentally, the weapons and confidence obtained by the Clamcoehs after the successful attack on the French, allowed an assault on the People who they *did* consider to be their eternal enemies.

Joseph Osterman Dyer, a doctor and an ardent journalist of the Galveston Daily had his own explanation as to why the Texas coastal Native Americans did not eat White flesh: “In 1810, at a time of hunger the bodies of shipwrecked sailors washed ashore near the mouth of the Calcasieu and the bodies were roasted by the Atakapa with the intention of eating them as food. They deliberated about whether to do this and finally the shaman gave his opinion. ‘That if the Atakapa where to eat the flesh of the White men, their skin would become spotty.’ As a result, they did not eat the bodies.” Lawrence E. Aten, *Indians of the Upper Texas Coast* (New York: Academic Press, 1983), 73. Dyer is a deeply problematic source whose information on coastal Native Peoples is brimming with contradictions and inaccuracies.

⁸ To continue the story, “The fire, which was to roast or broil him, was beginning to burn and, being securely tied, Lawrence was already anticipating the excitement and novelty of such a death, when he was rescued by a party of white men.” John Holland Jenkins, *Recollections of Early Texas: The Memoirs of John Holland Jenkins* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958), 159.

⁹ A. J. Sowell, *History of Fort Bend County: Containing Biographical Sketches of Many Noted Characters* (Houston: W.H. Coyle & Co., Stationers and Printers, 1904), 91.

name of ‘Captain Francisco’ told him that ‘a white man’s heart was the sweetest meat he had ever eaten.’”¹⁰

Of note, all these sources are second-hand and said by those in the process of exterminating the Karankawas. They therefore carry far less weight.¹¹ Anglo-Americans being consumed by the Karankawas seems unlikely for multiple reasons. As I already mentioned, these fair-skinned newcomers had spiritual beliefs that were incongruous with the concept of exocannibalism. But perhaps most importantly, the Karankawas did not consider Whites ancient, constant, or mortal foes.

Because coastal Peoples incorporating Whites’ as a resource in their seasonal migrations (and vice versa) peaceful relations (albeit temporary) were required. As a young adult during the late 1830s and throughout the 1840s, Alice Oliver lived along on the shores of Matagorda Bay and describes “parties of Indians encamped each summer near her dwelling.”¹² These Karankawas visited Matagorda to trade with the colonists and while in the area, Oliver learned the basics of the Karankawas’ language and fragments of their culture. Annie Harris, another young woman settled in Texas, describes how her father “being anxious for Annie to learn [how to swim], entrusted her to them [the Karankawas].”¹³ There

¹⁰ William Bollaert, *William Bollaert's Texas*, ed. W. Eugene Hollon and Ruth Lapham Butler (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), 41. For other second-hand accounts or mentions of cannibalism in the nineteenth-century, see J.W. Wilbarger, *Indian Depredations In Texas* (Austin: The Pemberton Press, 1967), 199; David B. Gracy II, “Jean Lafitte and the Karankawa Indians,” *East Texas Historical Journal*, v. 2, n. 1 (1964): 44; Stephen F. Austin, “Journal of Stephen F. Austin on his first trip to Texas, 1821,” *The Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association* 7, n. 4 (April 1904): 305.

¹¹ See the section on Gaspar de Solís in this chapter.

¹² Gatschet, *The Karankawa Indians* (Cambridge: Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, 1891), viii.

¹³ Annie P. Harris and Ethel Mary Franklin, “Memoirs of Mrs. Annie P. Harris,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (1937): 238.

is a misconception that the Karankawas had an inbred hatred of Anglo-Americans. That a young White girl could “become a great favorite” of the Indians, and that a father would entrust his daughter to these Gulf Peoples to learn to swim, is telling that the relationship between the Karankawas and the Anglo-American settlers was not one of everlasting hate.

In spite of that, both sides *did* hold an impenetrable fear and suspicion of the other. While compiling a book on Indian depredation in the nineteenth-century, J. W. Wilbarger admits that “it is true they [the Karankawas] sometimes professed to be friendly to the whites who had settled near the coast,” but then adds “no one had any faith in their sincerity, as it was well known that they always took a white man’s scalp whenever they thought they could do so with impunity.”¹⁴ Noah Smithwick mirrors the assertion, noting that “the Krons...becoming hemmed in by the whites and their numbers constantly diminishing, were obliged to maintain a semblance of docility; but their unnatural savagery asserted itself whenever an opportunity offered and a ghoulish feast made up for the enforced abstinence.”¹⁵ John Jenkins, adds yet another example of this attitude toward the Karankawas, “They frequently came to Matagorda and other interior points, and generally assumed a friendly attitude toward the Americans,” but then “they began to show a spirit of hostility toward Texas.”¹⁶ This pattern of semi-friendly interactions and trade turning into “a spirit of hostility,” occurred when one of the preconceived “sides” succumbed to fear, suspicion, rage, cultural misunderstandings, or some other deadly concoction of emotions.

¹⁴ Wilbarger, *Indian Depredations In Texas*, 198.

¹⁵ Noah Smithwick, *The Evolution of a State* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 179.

¹⁶ John Holland Jenkins, *Recollections of Early Texas: Memoirs of John Holland Jenkins* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958), 159-160.

Empresario Martin de Leon, “the richest man in Texas,” has a particularly memorable case of capitulating to such emotions. “Becoming exasperated at the constant depredations of the Cronks, [he] determined to take matters into his own hands.”¹⁷ The Mexican hacendado armed his rancheros, mounted “a four-pounder swivel gun” on the back of a mule, and then marched to a nearby campsite of Karankawas to “annihilate the tribe.”¹⁸ The sounds of gun blasts and whizzing of bullets caught the Karankawas unaware and herded them into a thicket. The ranchers locked onto the fleeing Karankawas’ position with the four-pound cannon and fired. When the smoke cleared, the Karankawas remained unscathed by the cannon shot. The ass on which the cannon was mounted, on the other hand, had not expected the cannon’s recoil, and in the middle of the shot “flew into a somersault, landing on top of the gun with his feet in the air, a position from which he was unable to extricate himself.”¹⁹ De Leon’s attempted annihilation alters into an absurd anecdote, but despite his failure, other colonizers were far more successful with their own attempts at extermination.²⁰

¹⁷ For richest man in Texas, see A.B.J. Hammett, *The Empresario: Don Martin De Leon* (Kerville: Braswell Printing Co., 1971).

¹⁸ Smithwick, *The Evolution of a State*, 10.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ A specifically grisly example occurred after a group of Karankawas attacked the Charles Cavanaugh homestead and killed his wife and three daughters: “As soon as they [The Anglo-Americans] caught sight of the enemy they made a charge upon them. The Indians had their squaws and papooses [children] with them, and some of them were killed by the promiscuous firing that ensued. The fire of the Texans was so rapid and deadly that many of the Indians endeavored to escape it by plunging in the river; but even after they had succeeded in reaching the opposite shore many were shot and fell back into the stream...the river was literally red with blood. Between forty and fifty of this band of savages were killed, a just retribution for the atrocious crimes they had committed J.W. Wilbarger, *Indian Depredations in Texas* (Austin: Pemberton Press, 1967), 209-210. For similar instances, see Wilbarger, *Indian Depredations*, 200-220; Malcolm D. McLean, ed. *Papers Concerning Robertson’s Colony in Texas* (Arlington, Texas: University of Texas at Arlington Press, 1975), 2:525; Eugene C. Barker, ed. *The Austin Papers* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1924–27) vol. 1, part 1: 768, 803; Henderson K. Yoakum, *History of Texas: From its First Settlement in 1685 to its Annexation to the United States in 1846* (Austin: Steck, 1953), 224-226.

It may seem paradoxical, but the Karankawas held serviceable relations with Whites while simultaneously coming into genocidal conflict with, quite literally, the same people.²¹ This bipolar relationship aligns somewhat with the Karankawas' raiding experience among their old Native neighbors, but the power dynamic, the scale, and the significance were vastly magnified; and more importantly the Anglo-Americans sought not to acquire social capital (captives, horses, and scalps), as did the Karankawas' old enemies, but to totally eliminate those they saw as sub-human.

There's one last reason why the Karankawas likely did not practice cannibalism on White settlers, and to examine it, we must go back multiple decades to the Spanish mission system and focus on the eradication of the buffalo. "In times of good climate," writes Ecologist Dan Flores, "[Bison] reached 25-30 million and could fill the prairies to the horizons for days on end. By 1886 a few more than 1,000 remained."²² With the Karankawas' summer staple continuing to disappear year after year, the First Peoples turned to Spanish missions as source of semi-reliable food with the added benefit of trade and gifts. The repeated contact with the Spaniards catalyzed "a significant degree of acculturation to the previously resisted Christian ideology, as well as to behavioral patterns derived from European culture."²³ In short, the Karankawas began to adopt the Europeans culture.

²¹ Such an oscillating relationship did not first occur among the Austin's Old Three Hundred. The Karankawas' process of incorporating White settlements into their lifeways and having to contend with genocidal European compulsions began with the Spanish mission system around a century before. The Spanish, however, lacked the numbers to make good on their intentions and thus, adopted a more peaceful policy.

²² Dan Flores, *American Serengeti: The Last Big Game Animals of The Great Plains* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2016), 6.

²³ Robert Ricklis, *The Karankawa Indians of Texas: The Karankawa Indians of Texas : an ecological study of cultural tradition and change* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 155-157.

The Karankawas' acculturation to Western culture explains why credible first-hand reports of their cannibalism recede when coming into the nineteenth-century. Ironically, the number of Anglo-American reports on the Karankawas' cannibalism in general shoot up in the nineteenth-century, yet none are comparable to Jean-Baptiste's: being first-hand, having an insider perspective, and matching the characteristics established in this chapter.

For an apt global comparison, I turn to the Wari' of the western Brazilian rainforest, who experienced the same lapse of cannibalism when incorporating within a Western society:

Within two or three years of contact, approximately 60 percent of the precontact population was dead. Chronically ill, psychologically traumatized, and unable to hunt or plant crops, the survivors became extremely dependent on outsiders for food and medical care. Missionaries and government agents manipulated this dependency to put an end to cannibalism by threatening to withhold food and medicines from those who continued to eat the dead.²⁴

The Wari' represent an expedited example of the expulsion of cannibalism, but the process of invading missionaries, environmental change, ethnogenesis, population destruction, and nutritional reliance on outsiders, is eerily similar to the Karankawas as forces responsible for removing "undesirable" cultural traits.²⁵

The Tonkawas contribute a contradiction to my point. Our most reliable sources on their cannibalism come from the nineteenth-century, and they are written by Anglo-Americans. As I explain in detail in Chapter Five, this is due to their connection with Whites as military allies and their marked resiliency to acculturation. Even still, cannibalism among

²⁴ Beth Conklin, "Thus Are Our Bodies, Thus Was Our Custom: Mortuary Cannibalism in an Amazonian Society," *American Ethnologist*, 22, no. 1 (1995), 79.

²⁵ See Benedict Leutenegger, *Guidelines for a Texas Mission: instructions for the missionary of Mission Concepción in San Antonio, ca. 1760* (San Antonio: Old Spanish Missions Historical Research Library at San José Mission, 1976), for an inside look at the missionaries' process at culling undesired cultural traits and the constant challenges the priests faced in attempted to do so.

the Tonkawas in the nineteenth-century is limited to a few groups—their interaction with Anglo-Americans, Mexicans, Tejanos, Spanish, and French also mutated their long-established cultural practices.

Anglo-American colonizers espoused the notion that the “treacherous” Karankawas devoured any intruder reckless enough to stray within their borders. As this section makes clear, the Karankawas practiced a restricted cannibalism on anciently hated Peoples who fully understood the ramifications of such an act; and although Anglo-Americans claim that the Karankawas feasted on Whites in high frequency, by the time of the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century, the practice of cannibalism had drastically reduced.

Cannibalism by Necessity and Cannibalism by Delectability: Drinking Ash

Neither a lack of sustenance, nor a relish for human flesh drove the Karankawas’ anthropophagy. In the words of anthropologist Peggy Sanaday, “Cannibalism is never *just* about eating.”²⁶ However, the Karankawas did utilize human meat as a resource of opportunity.²⁷ Jean-Baptiste recalled that “he once went three days without eating, because nothing presented itself during that time except some human flesh of the Ayennis whom [the Clamcoehs] had killed on one of the expeditions.”²⁸ What better way to disgrace your enemies than to treat their flesh like any other animal? The surrounding Peoples in the region

²⁶ Peggy Reeves Sanday, *Divine Hunger: Cannibalism as a Cultural System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3, emphasis added.

²⁷ Not all acts of cannibalism included a nutritional benefit or acted as a resource of opportunity. The endocannibalism that Cabeza de Vaca encountered—the Capoques drinking the pulverized bones of a shaman—is one such example, see Álgvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition*, trans. Fanny Bandelier (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 43. Although, sustenance did not factor into all acts of anthropophagy, to say that it *never* factored into acts of anthropophagy is inaccurate.

²⁸ Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi and the Gulf*, 238.

analogously used their foes' flesh as a resource of convenience. The Tonkawas are recorded as mixing human flesh with corn and potatoes, parceling out the subsequent stew to the entire tribe; and among Lower Mississippi Native Americans, French explorers discovered smoke-dried human meat in baskets of smoke-dried alligator and fish.²⁹ Although these Peoples used human flesh as a temporary resource, a relish for human-flesh or a need for nourishment did not motivate them to attack and cannibalize their foes. The Karankawas targeted the Ayennis because they acquired advantageous French weaponry and they intended to obtain social capital—captives, horses, and human flesh.³⁰ The Karankawas did not attack the Ayennis because they lacked protein.

Living amid estuaries, “among the most fertile waters in the world,” and the Coastal Prairies, which teemed with buffalo, birds, and berries, the Karankawas could select from a wealth of resources. Making best use of this abundance, the Karankawas' population held a steady upward growth prior to European contact—a growth that earlier archaeologists Eurocentrically thought impossible for hunting and gathering Peoples.³¹ As Jean-Baptiste

²⁹ For more on the Tonkawas' cannibalism, see Chapter Five, “Neighboring Cannibalism.” For more on the incident of smoke-dried human flesh on the Lower Mississippi, see William C. Foster, *The La Salle Expedition on the Mississippi River*, trans. Johanna J. Warren (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2003), 112-113.

³⁰ Horses and captives to act as a means of conveying wealth and prominence. Scalps to show prowess in battle. And the flesh of enemies to allow the community a means of obtaining revenge for any past transgressions. As Sanday reveals in her own work, these cannibalistic rituals “fulfilled the socioemotional function of mortuary feasts, providing a social occasion for relieving the melancholia of loss.” Sanday, *Divine Hunger*, 126. As for European weaponry, in the words of Jean-Baptiste Talon “They [the Indians] believe themselves unconquerable when they unite with Europeans and spread terror and fright everywhere among their enemies by the noise and the effects of firearms.” Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi and the Gulf*, 251.

³¹ Darren Schubert, “Population Dynamics of Prehistoric Foraging Groups Along the Upper Texas Coast” (Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Houston, 2008), 50. For more on the Karankawas diverse diet, see Tim Seiter, “What did the Karankawas Eat?,” *Karankawas*, June 10, 2018, <https://karankawas.com/2017/08/03/what-did-the-karankawa-eat/>. Ricklis describes, that “Powell (1988) found evidence of markedly greater stress pathologies, possibly related to dietary deficiencies, in Late Prehistoric skeletal materials from interior Texas than in samples from the coastal zone.” Robert Ricklis, *The Karankawa Indians of Texas: The Karankawa Indians of Texas : an ecological study of cultural tradition and change* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 9-10.

remarked, the Karankawas “generally live to be very old and nearly always possess perfect health.”³²

Nevertheless, present-day scholars continue to exclaim that these Indians spent “most of their waking hours committed to the quest for basic survival in a harsh climate.”³³ Such connotative images of the Karankawas struggling to survive on the Gulf Coast are grossly inaccurate and feed into false notions of Karankawas who *needed* to practice cannibalism to glean some source of sustenance.³⁴ “To these simple Indians,” writes Gerald Ashford in *Spanish Texas, Yesterday and Today*, “hunger was a normal state, and they would no more have thought of eating their companions than of devouring their own arms and legs.”³⁵ “I learned that Karankawa coastal Indians were cannibals in school,” writes a friend on one of my blog posts, “The reason I remember for this habit was that the areas the Indians hunted and gathered in were devoid of proteins, and any form of meat was a desirable supplement.”³⁶

This claim about the Karankawas consuming humans because they lacked food is particularly ironic because of concurrent claims that the Karankawas were giants. Although

³² Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi and the Gulf*, 228-229. “They also have a marvelous knowledge of the different properties of the medicinal herbs that abound in the whole country and can easily heal themselves of illnesses and wounds that befall them, since there was no professional physician among them....During all the time they [the Talons] stayed among them, they saw no one die of illness.”

³³ Vivien Geneser, “Native transgressions: a look at the portrayal of Karankawa natives in Texas history textbooks and trade books,” *American Educational History Journal* 38, no. 1-2 (2011): 221.

³⁴ Stating that a lack of sustenance or a relish for human flesh drove the Karankawas’ to cannibalism implies that the Karankawas were like children who could hardly provide for themselves. This sort of argument isn’t isolated to the Karankawas. See Chapter Six for my discussion of anthropologist Michael Harner’s article on the Aztec “cannibal empire.”

³⁵ Gerald Ashford, *Spanish Texas: Yesterday and Today* (Austin: The Pemberton Press, 1971), 16.

³⁶ The comment was left on a blog that I have since deleted: SeiterMexicanAmericanHistory.wordpress.com, for Dr. Andrew Pegoda’s Mexican American History course.

not seven or eight feet tall as is propagated, the Karankawas were taller than average for the time period: 5'11" from my estimation.³⁷ An important factor in their height? Their diverse and rich diet. So paradoxically we have Anglo-American settlers and sensationalist historians claiming that the Karankawas practiced cannibalism for a want of food while simultaneously describing the Karankawas' physicality as "superior to any of the Native tribes of Texas," and that they "never suffered for want of food."³⁸

Another insidious argument similar to "cannibalism by necessity" is "cannibalism by delectability." In other words, the assertion that Karankawas carried out anthropophagy because they revered the taste of human meat. Historian Mildred Mayhall alleges that "there are many accounts of Karankawa cannibalism, only part of which seems to be ritualistic, the major part due to a genuine relish for human flesh."³⁹ Gary Cartwright in *Galveston* forwards that "some tribes ate human flesh just because they enjoyed it, and the Karankawas appear to have been among them."⁴⁰ Enjoying human-flesh to the degree that the Karankawas "devoured" it with a "beast-like relish" erases all higher meanings behind the practices and characterizes these Peoples as excessively animalistic.⁴¹

³⁷ Seiter, "Sizing-up the Karankawas: Were the Karankawas giants?," *Karankawas*, June 10, 2018, <https://karankawas.com/2018/06/10/sizing-up-the-karankawa-were-the-karankawa-giants/>. My rough estimation is flawed because of its reliance on White colonizers' testimony. The Karankawas on average likely matched the height of the average American today, 5'9" or 5'10". The one osteological study done supports that, see George Woodbury and Edna Woodbury, *Prehistoric skeletal remains from the Texas coast* (Globe: The Medallion, 1935).

³⁸ J.W. Wilbarger, *Indian Depredations in Texas*, 198.

³⁹ Mildred P. Mayhall, "The Indians of Texas: the Atákapa, the Karankawa, the Tonkawa" (dissertation, University of Texas, 1939), 210.

⁴⁰ Gary Cartwright, *Galveston: A History of the Island* (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 1991), 18.

⁴¹ Edward Kilman, *Cannibal Coast* (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1959), 173.

The “cannibalism by necessity” and the “cannibalism by delectibility” arguments are reminiscent of time-worn justifications Whites used (and still use) to extort land from Native Americans. As Thomas Jefferson propounded,

When the white people first came to this land, they were few, and you [Indians] were many; now we are many, and you few; and why? because, by cultivating the earth, we produced plenty to raise our children, while yours...suffer for want of food, *are forced to eat unwholesome things*, are exposed to the weather in your hunting camps, get diseases and die.⁴²

In other words, the Karankawas refusal of “civilization” explained why they perished at an alarming rate and resorted to depraved activities like cannibalism.

But who did the Spanish, French, Mexicans, and Anglo-Americans rely on when they first settled in Texas and their “superior” lifestyles crumbled? Who did the Spanish friars turn to when their missions spiraled into starvation? Who did Stephen F. Austin’s Old Three Hundred rely on during their colony’s inception and nadir? The Native Peoples of Texas and their productive lifeways.

To summarize, acquisition of sustenance never precipitated cannibalism. The Karankawas had much easier and safer means of acquiring calories. Archaeologist Robert Ricklis puts this best: “Hunting down a buffalo is much less dangerous than hunting a human.”⁴³

⁴² Ronald Takaki, *Race and Culture in 19th-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 56, 60-65, emphasis mine.

⁴³ Robert Ricklis, personal conversation, recorded.



(2.2) *Tuna*

Community-oriented Cannibalism

When Alonso de Leon seized Marie-Madelaine, Lucien, and Robert Talon from the Clamcoehs in 1690, the Spanish Captain waited for the Indians to fetch the children from different familial-based homesteads around San Antonio Bay. When Captain Francisco Martinez threatened the Clamcoehs for Jean-Baptiste Talon and Eustache Bréman the next year, the boys also had to be acquired from different Karankawan homesteads around the Bay. Although it seems unimportant, acknowledging the French children's dispersement along the Gulf Coast is one key in understanding that the Karankawas' practiced a community-oriented cannibalism.

Jean-Baptiste makes a few off-hand statements suggesting that the Karankawas' anthropophagic rituals occurred in a community setting: that "[the Karankawas] are all cannibals," and that they feast on enemy corpses "all together." But the piece of evidence for

community-oriented cannibalism that I concentrate on in this section is when Jean-Baptiste Talon testifies that “the only meals that horrified *them* [the Talon children] were those [The Clamcoehs] made of human flesh.”⁴⁴ In this instance, Jean-Baptiste is referring to the three-day long anthropophagic ritual that occurred after the Clamcoehs attacked the Ayennis. If all the children were there, then that means they had yet to separate into different familial-based homesteads around San Antonio Bay, which shows that the Karankawas gathered together into a larger group to prepare for the raid on Fort Saint Louis and on the Ayennis, and then celebrated as an extended community.

The gathering of smaller Karankawan homesteads into larger “macrobands” is well recorded archaeologically and historically.⁴⁵ During the spring and summer, the Karankawas migrated inland to hunt larger game (primarily buffalo and deer) and split into groups of roughly fifty or sixty individuals.⁴⁶ During the fall and winter, the Karankawas migrated to estuaries and barrier islands to capitalize on the larger and more concentrated pool of resources (primarily fish, oysters, birds eggs, and numerous fibrous plants). In this rich coastal setting, the Karankawas joined into groups of around five hundred individuals.⁴⁷ Robert Ricklis labels these larger groups as “macrobands.” When in macrobands, the Karankawas traded, performed social rituals, and organized large raids on their enemies.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Emphasis my own.

⁴⁵ Ricklis, *The Karankawa Indians of Texas*, 138; For quick Historical example, see Jean Béranger, *Béranger's Discovery of Aransas Pass: A Translation of Jean Beranger's French Manuscript*, ed. Frank Wagner (Corpus Christi: Friends of the Corpus Christi Museum, 1983), 22, who describes visiting the Karankawas' and seeing “a large market town...[with] five hundred persons, at least, well sheltered.”

⁴⁶ Ricklis, *The Karankawa Indians of Texas*, 138.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 137-142.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 141. “These macrobands,” as archaeologist Robert Ricklis explains, “perform a crucial social function, insofar as they provide a context for viable mating networks, exchanges of information, and the performance of ritual activities that serve to link together the smaller socioeconomic units of their constituent

The Clamcoehs more than likely organized the attack on Fort Saint-Louis and the Ayennis in a macroband setting. Considering that the Clamcoehs' customary cannibalism occurred directly after the attack on the Ayennis then this tells us that multiple Karankawa-speaking families participated in this ritual.

Distinguishing the Karankawas' cannibalism as a community-oriented activity—one that typically took place within a macroband—demonstrates that the Karankawas' collectively understood the meaning behind cannibalism, that it was an established social practice, and that the community played a role in how it was carried out. Establishing this characteristic is important because it tells us that the instance of cannibalism that Jean-Baptiste viewed wasn't a one-off event, but a repeated practice that held cultural significance.

Post-Mortem Cannibalism: Fray Gaspar José de Solís

To explain this last characteristic of Gulf Coast cannibalism, I sway away from Jean-Baptiste Talon and focus on Fray Gaspar José de Solís and the late Spanish colonial period in Texas. In 1767, Fray Gaspar José de Solís toured the faltering missions of Texas and is responsible for recounting a particularly gruesome instance of the Karankawas' anthropophagy. "Dancing and leaping and with sharp knives in their hands, [the Karankawas] draw near to the victim, cut off a piece of their flesh, come to the fire and half roast it, and, within sight of the victim himself devour it most ravenously."⁴⁹ Despite captivating readers

bands." The same macroband sites are identified as repeatedly being inhabited for centuries. Therefore, the Karankawas should be referred to as a semi-nomadic Peoples—they had clear ancestral homelands.

⁴⁹ Gaspar Jose de Solis, "The Solis Diary of 1767," *Sons of Dewitt Colony Texas*, accessed Feb 13, 2018, <http://www.sonsofdewittcolony.org/alarconex5.htm>.

for generations, Padre Solís's account of the Karankawas' cannibalism has a major problem—it is almost certainly fictitious.

From February 26th to March 4th, 1767, Father Solís visited the mission built to reduce the Karankawas to Christianity, Nuestra Señora del Rosario.⁵⁰ He encountered a healthy drove of stock animals, a devout and loyal minister, and an “extremely neat” place of worship.⁵¹ “As far as its temporal goods are concerned,” Solís recalls, “[Mission Rosario] is in a flourishing condition.”⁵² But not all was well, Mission Rosario lacked spiritual goods—Indian neophytes. The majority of Karankawa-speaking families had abandoned the immaculate mission and fled to the impenetrable coast. What purpose does a mission serve without heathens to convert?

To explain the mission's failure, Solís blamed the Karankawas' innate barbarisms:

All of these Indians, who are savage, indolent and lazy, and who are so greedy and gluttonous that they devour meat that is parboiled, almost raw and dripping in blood, prefer to suffer hunger, nakedness and the inclemencies of the weather provided they be left free to live indolent in the wilds or along the seashore, where they give themselves over to all kinds of excesses, especially to lust, theft and dancing.⁵³

Continuing his tirade, Solís describes the Karankawas' music as “emit[ting] a mournful, inharmonious sound,” the Karankawas' ceremonial dances as accompanied by “horrible grimaces” and demonic appearances, and the Karankawas' marriages as sacrilegious, in which husbands “traded their wives for those of other men.”⁵⁴ Yet the practice Solís really

⁵⁰ Solís resided at Rosario for eleven days total: Feb 26-29, March 1-4, and March 12-14.

⁵¹ Solís, “The Solís Diary of 1767,” Feb 26.

⁵² *Ibid.*, March 4.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

used to solidify the Karankawas' savageness—and in turn provide a scapegoat for their reluctance to become “civilized”—was cannibalism:

In their tribal wars they are cruel, inhuman and ferocious toward the conquered....The children are carried off and eaten, the little boys and girls are sold, and the fighting-men, the grown-up women and the larger girls are taken off and made to serve the victors. The dance is carried on in this fashion. They drive a stake into the ground at the place where they are going to hold the mitote. They then kindle a huge fire and bind to the stake the victim whom they are to make dance or whom they are going to sacrifice. All of them gather together, and as soon as the discordant notes of the caymán are heard they begin to dance and to jump about the fire, making a great number of gestures and terrible grimaces and uttering sad, unnatural cries. Dancing and leaping and with sharp knives in their hands, they draw near to the victim, cut off a piece of his flesh, come to the fire and half roast it, and, within sight of the victim himself devour it most ravenously. Thus they continue cutting him to pieces and dismembering him, until, finally, they have cut away all of the flesh and he dies. They cut off the skull and, with the hair still clinging to it, place it on a stick so as to carry it in triumph during the dance. They do not throw away the bones, but pass them around, and whoever happens to get one sucks it until nothing of it is left. They act in like manner toward the religious and toward the Spaniards whenever they capture them. Sometimes they hang the victim by the feet and beneath them start a fire, and after the body is roasted they devour it. Other times they cut stakes, about an inch in thickness, from the pitch-pine, which grows so plentifully in these parts; they stick these stakes to the victim and then set fire to him, and as soon as he is half roasted they eat him. Some, instead of using knives to cut up their victim, tear him apart with their teeth and devour him.⁵⁵

The most gruesome depiction of the Karankawas' cannibalism known, Solís does not acknowledge where he acquired this information. Considering that he never went out into “the wilds” to meet with First Peoples, there is an extreme doubt that Solís witnessed this act in-person—unless, that is, it occurred in the middle of the mission or presidio.

Nonetheless, historians have taken Solís's “eyewitness account” of cannibalism as trustworthy because of its first-person perspective. In all likelihood, Solís heard of the

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Karankawas' cannibalism from either Fray Joseph Escovar, Rosario's chief priest; from Captain Francisco Tovar, the captain of the Bahía del Espíritu Santo mission; or from some other presidial or missionary.⁵⁶ I am hesitant to assume that the Karankawas told Solís about their anthropophagy: these Peoples recognized him as an authority figure because of all the pomp surrounding his arrival, and The Karankawas knew feigning interest and leaving a good impression could lead to further gifts and diplomatic connections. They had little reason to broach cannibalism which they knew the Spaniards looked at with disgust.⁵⁷

But setting all those factors aside, Solís's "eye witness account" is fundamentally misaligned with all other first-hand reports of Texas Gulf Coast cannibalism. His description is chalk full of Christian imagery (a man bound to a stake "whom they are going to sacrifice"); embellishment ("Some, instead of using knives to cut up their victim, tear him apart with their teeth and devour him"); scare tactics ("They act in like manner toward the religious and toward the Spaniards whenever they capture them"); and as I will now discuss, Texas Gulf Coast anthropophagy occurs post-mortem, or in other words, after an enemy's death—not "within sight of the [still living] victim."

Eighty years before Solís's testimony, Jean-Baptiste Talon describes the Clamcoehs attacking the Ayennis and that the women who accompanied the war party "carried away from the battlefield *the enemy corpses* to make a feast, all together, upon their return."⁵⁸ This

⁵⁶ I say third-hand because the missionaries and presidials are also in an unlikely position to view the Karankawas' community-centric activity of cannibalism. These men are not accepted by the Karankawas as part of their society.

⁵⁷ Proof of this is seen when thirty-three apostate Karankawa families revisited the mission wanting to test out Padre Solís's temperament, see March 3rd: "I continued the Visit. On this day the captain called on me and remained for dinner. At night thirty-three of the Indian families that had fled off from the mission came to see me, and I received them gladly and kindly." Ibid., March 3. Also, Solís had an armed escort from his first arrival to mission Rosario and Fray Escovar ordered the mission Indians to welcome Solís "all covered with paint and in festive attire." See, Feb 23-25.

⁵⁸ Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf*, 249.

offhand sentence in the Talon testimony is the first clue in a long line proving that Gulf Coast cannibalism occurred post-mortem. Around the same time that the Clamcoehs attacked the Ayennis, Henri Joutel, a trusted lieutenant of La Salle, saw the Hasinais torturing a Cannohatinno captive.⁵⁹ Although the torture included a beating, a scalping, and the removal of fingers, only when the captive perished by a “swift blow to the head” did her flesh become force fed to the other captives. The Hasinais had the power to parcel out the human flesh as the Cannohatinno victim looked on in horror, but the Hasinias seemed to believe that doing so after her death was more perverse.

Thirty years after Jean-Baptiste’s testimony, François Simars de Bellisle in 1719 describes a similar incident when a party of the Akokisas surrounded a foe “who was up in a tree to knock walnuts down.”⁶⁰ The Akokisas were in a position to capture this enemy and flay him alive as Father Solís depicts. Instead they shot him with arrows, killed him after he fell out of the tree, and then “devoured him completely.”⁶¹ No stakes, no raging fire, no ripping of the flesh with teeth as he watched.

For an additional example I turn to a Texas settler by the name of John Holland Jenkins who murdered a Waco Indian who tried to steal his horses. The Tonkawas heard of the killing and sought out this body for revenge because “a band of Wacoes [sic] had killed five of them [the Tonkawas] while out hunting.”⁶² When the Tonkawas discovered the

⁵⁹ Cecile Elkins Carter, *Caddo Indians: Where We Come From* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 39.

⁶⁰ Henri Folmer, “De Bellisle on the Texas Coast,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (1940): 219-220.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 220.

⁶² John Holland Jenkins, *Recollections of Early Texas: The Memoirs of John Holland Jenkins* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964), 77.

Waco's body "they sprang upon the body, scalped him, cut off both legs at the knees, both hands at the wrists, pulled out his fingernails and toenails, strung them around their necks, and then motioned for [Jenkins] to move aside." When Jenkins obliged, the Tonkawas shot the Waco in the face, commenced a scalp dance, and ingested pieces of the Waco's flesh.

Exocannibalism in this region demeaned an enemy of an afterlife (as is explained in greater detail in Chapter Two). The Tonkawas tracked down the dead Waco because they believed that even though he had perished, they could still enact harm and dishonor him by scalping, by disfiguration, and by cannibalization. Desecrating a tombstone is a sign of flagrant dishonor on the deceased in European culture. Desecrating a corpse by consuming its flesh served a similar purpose in Gulf Coast Native American culture.⁶³

Devouring the flesh of a squirming victim epitomizes monstrosity—which is why Gaspar de Solís's characterizes these First Peoples as eating their victims alive. In reality, Gulf Coast cannibalism was post-mortem, ingested only after a target's death.

Two-Hundred and Fifty-Year-Old Propaganda That Still Lives

In Texas, children grow up with stories of giant, cannibalistic, baby-eating Karankawas. "Ask any school-aged child in a Texas public school what they know about the Karankawa," writes Vivien Geneser, "and you will, most likely, receive a testimony about their despicable savagery, gruesome cannibalism, and general lack of civility and appeal."⁶⁴ In large regard this is because Padre Solís's journal is the most accessible and pervasive

⁶³ Of note, this is regarding exocannibalism. Endocannibalism serves a different function as I explain in Chapter 3.

⁶⁴ Vivien Geneser, "Native transgressions: a look at the portrayal of Karankawa natives in Texas history textbooks and trade books," *American Educational History Journal* 38, no. 1-2 (2011): 219.

primary source on the Karankawa-speaking Peoples. For centuries their image has remained in his hands, and for centuries their image has been repeatedly tarnished.⁶⁵ This begs the question, how could a source with a myriad of problems and an all too obvious bias become so popular?

The most worrisome answer is that Solís writes about the Karankawas in a way that we all want to hear. Cannibalistic warriors captivate students. Hedonistic brutes reassure Spanish Padres. The savage Indian is a comfortable stereotype.⁶⁶

Whatever the reason, as soon as Solís finished his tour of the missions, his writings on the Karankawas exploded into the Historical record. Father Juan Agustín Morfi in the 1780s, known as “Texas’ first historian,” copied Solís almost word for word in the *Historia* while adding his own personal flourishes:

The Carancaguases are a vile nation, pusillanimous, treacherous and extremely cruel....When they surprise their enemies in any way, they unpardonably take the lives of the old of both sexes, whom the capture, eat the children, sell the boys, and keep the warriors for the dance and sacrifice to their false divinities. At the place where they hold the mitote they drive a big strong stake deep into the ground; to this they securely tie the unhappy prisoner; they build a big fire all around him; all of the rancheria, the tribe or the confederation arrive, and when they sound the funeral instrument called cayman, all begin to dance in a circle carrying in their hands well sharpened knives of iron or flint, or a piece of shell. When they see fit they go up to the patient, cut off a piece of his flesh, pass it over the fire and dripping in blood, they eat it in sight of the victim, accompanying this by horrible gestures and incomparable voices. In this way they go on tearing the victim to pieces until he dies. Some do not

⁶⁵ This is an example of the power History holds—a Spaniard who wrote derogatory things in his journal two hundred and fifty years ago has totally taken over what we think about the Karankawas today.

⁶⁶ It has come to my attention after reading Devon Mihesuah’s Special Issue on Writing about American Indians that Vine Deloria has a similar concept, “comfortable fictions.” Devon A. Mihesuah, “Voices, Interpretations, and the ‘New Indian History’: Comment on the ‘American Indian Quarterly’s Special Issue on Writing about American Indians,” *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Special Issue: Writing about American Indians (Winter, 1996), pp 91-108; Vine Deloria, Jr., “Comfortable Fictions and the Struggle for Turf,” review of *The Invented Indian: Cultural Fictions and Government Policies* by James A. Clifton, *American Indian Quarterly* 16, n. 3 (Summer, 1992): 397-410.

put this flesh near the fire but eat it raw, making themselves festive, by spotting their faces with blood.⁶⁷

Presently the tradition continues. “They were fierce warriors and cruel cannibals,” writes Joseph Clark in his textbook on Texas History, “early Spaniards in Texas recorded that in their cannibalistic feasts these Indians tied the captive to a post, and circling the victim in their frenzied feast dance, each would clip from his body a piece of flesh and devour it.”⁶⁸ “According to the diary of a Spanish priest,” writes Gary Cartwright in the widely sold *Galveston: A History of the Island*, “the tribe had a taste for young children.”⁶⁹ Edward Kilman, the author of a narrative history of the Karankawas, calls Solís’s writings “[a] classic description of these and other coastal tribes’ character, mores, and practices,” and then goes on to quote the near-entirety of Solís’s account for the next seven pages.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Juan Agustín Morfi, *Excerpts from the Memorias for the history of the province of Texas : being a translation of those parts of the Memorias which particularly concern the various Indians of the province of Texas ; their tribal divisions, characteristics, customs, traditions, superstitions, and all else of interest concerning them*, Revised and trans. Carlos E. Castañeda and Frederick C Chabot (San Antonio: Naylor Publishing, 1932), 1, 51; Morfi, *History of Texas, 1673-1779*, trans. Carlos Eduardo Castañeda (Albuquerque: The Quivira Society, 1935), 79-80. Morfi almost undoubtedly used Solís journals as his source of information on the Karankawas. First, Morfi says he acquired his information from various Padres, and Morfi copies other information found in Solís’s journal, such as the two divinities that the Karankawas worship, their governmental structure, their looseness with women, see Morfi, *History of Texas*, 21, 48, 45. Newcomb also points this out in W. W. Newcomb, *The Indians of Texas: From Prehistoric to Modern Times* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 64; and José Antonio Pichardo probably has the best refutation of Solís and Morfi, regardless of his treatise being written in the early nineteenth century, see José Antonio Pichardo, *Pichardo's treatise on the limits of Louisiana and Texas; an argumentative historical treatise with reference to the verification of the true limits of the provinces of Louisiana and Texas ... to disprove the claim of the United States that Texas was included in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803*, trans. Charles W. Hackett (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1971). Despite Morfi’s account being almost word for word copied from Solís I have seen historians counting Solís and Morfi’s accounts as separate and unique testimonies of cannibalism.

⁶⁸ Joseph L. Clark, *A History of Texas: Land of Promise* (New York: Heath and Company, 1939), 16-17.

⁶⁹ Gary Cartwright, *Galveston: A History of the Island* (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 1991), 18-19.

⁷⁰ Edward Kilman, *Cannibal Coast* (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1959), 119-125. For more corresponding comments, see Eugenia Reynolds Briscoe, “A Narrative History of Corpus Christi, Texas—1519-1875” (Dissertation, University of Denver, 1972), 19-20; Mildred Mayhall “The Indians of Texas: the Atákapa, the Karankawa, the Tonkawa” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1939), 210; Vernon Smylie, *Conquistadores and cannibals : the early history of Padre Island, 1519-1845* (Texas News Syndicate Press, 1964), 14; A.B.J. Hammet, *The empresario Don Martín de León* (San Antonio: Texian Press, 1973), 62-65.

With Solís's journal the pinnacle of prejudice, a trap has been laid for revisionists historians who deny ritualistic cannibalism. It is tempting to label the entirety of his testimony untrustworthy and completely disregard it. But although *dangerously* inaccurate in instances, Solís's diary still holds great value. As this thesis explicates, historians need to understand all viewpoints in the History they study and excavate, and Solís allows us to delve deep into the mentality of Spanish missionaries.

The frontier friars saw missions as a place to cleanse the "unhealthy" attributes of Native Peoples and replace them with "cleaner" and "healthier" European attributes.⁷¹ Through his journal, we see that Solís ultimately intends to save the Karankawas by wiping clean their culture and inserting one deemed superior. But these damn First Peoples abandon the missions and, in the process, damn themselves. You can feel the frustration.

But more than giving us a look into the zealous mind of a Spanish missionary, Solís's journal contains corroborated and unique ethnographic information on the Karankawas such as their governmental structures, religious deities, and marriage customs that no other source possesses. Padre Solís clearly spoke with someone who knew the Karankawas well, likely Reverend Joseph Escovar, the head attendant of Mission Rosario, because most of the unique information pertains to religious matters.⁷² And although Padre Solís never visited the Karankawas' campsites, Father Escovar had fewer qualms.⁷³ Doing so allowed the Spanish to

⁷¹ "While Spaniards were working hard to develop healthy missions and convert Indians into healthy subjects, Spanish colonialism simultaneously unleashed a violent conquest that made Indians vulnerable and harmed Native health....high rates of acute and epidemic disease struck the missions even though health took a center stage in the conversion process, Mark Goldberg, *Conquering Sickness: Race, Health, and Colonization in the Texas Borderlands* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016) 53, 55.

⁷² For some shared cultural traits between Solís's account and Jean-Baptiste Talons', see marriage customs, scarring with a comb, and the scalp pole, Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf*, 253-254.

⁷³ Cabello to Croix, "Explaining delay to San Luis Potosí, and reporting murder of the captain and crew of Spanish vessel by Aranama and Karankawa Indians," (Bexar Archives, 2C32, March 14, 1779);

keep tabs on the apostate Peoples, to build deeper connections, and to diversify their diet with fresh fruits, herbs, and game that the Karankawas provided.⁷⁴ Fray Escovar *may* have found himself in the position to view the Karankawas' anthropophagy, and he at least seems to have been aware of their practice of cannibalism to tell Solís.

When confronted with plainly biased sources like Solís's, it is easy to avoid the source entirely. But ignoring such European sources puts us in the same predicament as when we ignored Native sources mere decades ago. The History becomes half-blind. Solís's accounting of the Karankawas' cannibalism is not wholly reliable, it is not first-hand, and it has unfairly caricatured the Karankawas for nearly the past two-hundred and fifty years. As a consequence, Solís diary is dangerous and needs to be recognized and treated as such. But dangerous sources are never worthless. Beyond giving us a glimpse into the mind of a frustrated missionary meaning to do good as he paradoxically did bad, Solís journal contains rare ethnographic material on the Karankawas and helps scholars piece together their culture, lifeways, and History.

Now that I have established the characteristics of the Karankawas' cannibalism, we move to Chapter Three to learn *why* these Peoples practiced anthropophagy. At this point I jump away from Jean-Baptiste Talon's testimony, and focus on other integral sources compiled by Álgvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca in the early sixteenth-century.

Weddle, *Changing Tides: Twilight and Dawn in the Spanish Sea, 1763-1803* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1995), 155.

⁷⁴ Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 143.

Chapter Three: The Motives behind the Karankawas' Cannibalism:

Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, the Red Herring

In 1528, the Karankawas learned of survival-cannibalism among the shipwrecked men of the Narváez expedition. In the words of one of the marooned Spaniards, “The Indians were so startled at this and there was such uproar among them that I truly believe if they had seen this at the beginning they would have killed them [the men], and we all would have been in great danger.”¹ Historians use this incident of Native American outrage at the Europeans’ anthropophagy as a springboard to discount the Karankawas’ cannibalism. As anthropologist R. Edward Moore asks, “Why would so-called cannibals be shocked if they really were cannibals?”² This chapter answers that question by showing that the Karankawas’ cannibalism acted as a mechanism to dishonor an enemy—similar to how scalping functioned culturally—and as a means of absorbing the power of either a foe or a relative. The Karankawas were outraged at European survival cannibalism, not because cannibalism was foreign to them, but rather over the shock that the Christians committed an act meant as the highest level of disrespect on their own companions.

Lastly in this chapter, I correct two inaccurate claims about the Karankawas: (1) that the Karankawas learned cannibalism from the Spaniards and (2) that the *Joint Report* and the *Relación*—two documents compiled by Spanish survivors of the Narváez expedition—do not contain evidence of the Karankawas’ cannibalism.³

¹ Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition*, trans. Fanny Bandelier (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 43.

² R. Edward Moore, “The Karankawa Indians,” *Texas Indians*, Aug 15, 2012, <http://www.texasindians.com/karank.htm>.

³ In 1536, three survivors of the Narváez expedition—Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, Alonso del Castillo Maldonado, and Andrés Dorantes de Carranza—detailed their experiences travelling across North

The Narváez Expedition Crash-lands on Follets Island

During the frigid winter of 1528, a makeshift raft of the abortive Pánfilo de Narváez expedition made landfall on Follets Island off the coast of Texas.⁴ Jolted to their senses after a wave “hurled [them] a horseshoes throw out of the water,” forty ailing conquistadors crawled out of the Gulf of Mexico to a rocky spot where they built a fire, ate the last of their corn, and drank some standing rainwater.⁵

The party deemed Lope de Oviedo the strongest of the surviving Spaniards and sent him to examine the unfamiliar surroundings. Oviedo nervously returned clutching dried mullet, a small dog, and a pot meant to cook both. To the shock of his shipmates, Oviedo also brought with him a procession of one-hundred Indian archers. These Native Americans—called the Capoques by the Spaniards—are thought to be the ancestors of the Karankawas.⁶

America in an account compiled in Mexico City known as the *Joint Report*. The original copy of the *Joint Report* has been lost, but a reproduction exists in the Spanish historian Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés’ *Historia general y natural de las Indias*. In 1542, Cabeza de Vaca wrote an independent and longer version of the expedition. This is widely referred to as the *Relación* (Account). For more information, see Robin Varnum, *Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca: America Trailblazer* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), xii-xiii, 187-189, 192-193.

⁴ Scholars have been in dispute on Cabeza de Vaca’s exact landing site for the past century. Most twenty-first-century-scholars agree on the position being either Galveston or Follets Island. Follets Island seems the likelier candidate. For more information on why historians believe Cabeza de Vaca’s shipwreck site to have been Follets Island, see Tim Seiter, “Cabeza de Vaca Galveston or Follets Island,” *Karankawas*, June 25, 2017, <https://karankawas.com/2017/06/25/cabezadevacagalvestonfollets/>; David Carson, “Identifying the Isla de Malhado,” *Texas Counties*, November 17, 2017, <http://www.texascounties.net/articles/discovery-of-texas/islademalhado.htm>. Donald E. Chipman also conducts a great study of the historiographical grappling surrounding Cabeza de Vaca’s landing site and overland trek, see Chipman, “In Search of Cabeza de Vaca’s Route across Texas: An Historiographical Survey,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 91, no. 2 (1987): 127-148.

⁵ Cabeza de Vaca, *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition*, 30, 37.

⁶ Kelly Himmel, *The Conquest of the Karankawa and the Tonkawas, 1821-1859* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 14. The reason why historians, including myself, believe the Capoques to have been the ancestors of the Karankawas is because the two bands that lived on Follets Island—the Han and Capoques—like the Karankawas and Akokisas, spoke different languages. Furthermore, as Cabeza de Vaca moved southwest, into land that was doubtlessly inhabited by Karankawa-cultured groups, he makes no mention of a significant language changes and treats the new tribes he encounters as part of a similar cultural group. Another, albeit precarious, strand of evidence is that the tribal name of “Capoques” looks and sounds familiar to a group of Karankawas later referred to as the “Coco.” There are clear issues with this line of linguistic-based reasoning as a sole piece of evidence. I discuss these issues in relation to de Bellisle’s “Caux” in Chapter Two

The Capoque warriors surrounded the shipwrecked Spaniards. “Our fear was so great,” writes Álgvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, the royal treasurer of the expedition, “that, whether they were tall or short, they seemed like giants to us.”⁷ Frightened, Cabeza de Vaca offered beads and bells to the Native archers and turned a precarious encounter into one of peace. Each of the assembled Capoques, appreciative of their newly-acquired effects, bestowed Cabeza de Vaca with an arrow as a token of goodwill. This act of kindness bucks myths of the Karankawas as an innately hostile people. As Jean-Baptiste Talon remembered more than a century later, “nothing is easier than winning their friendship.”⁸

of this thesis. William W. Newcomb theorizes that the Han, the other Native American group on Follets Island, were the ancestors of the Karankawas, not the Capoques. Newcomb reasons that “Han” sounds similar to the Karankawa-speaking people known as the “Cujane,” see Newcomb, “Karankawa,” in *The Handbook of North American Indians: Southwest, Vol. 10* (Smithsonian Institution, 1983), 359-360. Newcomb’s views shift from his earlier writing where he believes the Capoques to be the Karankawas, see Newcomb, *The Indians of Texas: From Prehistoric to Modern Times* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1961), 59-60. In discussing the identification of the Capoques, the archaeologist and historian Robert Ricklis raises the question, “How can we ever nail that down?” Ricklis does comment that when he worked on the Mitchell Ridge archaeological site in Galveston, it “produced 25,000 pieces of pottery, and out of that there were four pieces of Rockport pottery [pottery specific to the Karankawa-speaking people]. That’s really not impressive as a cultural representation. Of the other 24,996 pieces, they were San Jacinto incised, Goose Creek incised, Goose Creek plain, and Baytown plain. Those are all upper-coast types, those are Akokisa.” Ricklis (archaeologist and author of *The Karankawa Indians*) interview with the author, August 2018. I go into greater detail on the archaeological means of determining the Karankawas territory in the introduction of this thesis. With the identification of the Capoques and Hans still in dispute, Andrés Reséndez says it best: “It is important not to toss out the baby with the bathwater by being too focused on the cultural identification of the different bands. As Cabeza de Vaca also makes clear, groups like the Capoques and Hans, although linguistically and culturally unrelated, led practically identical lifestyles,” see Reséndez, *A Land So Strange: The Epic Journey of Cabeza de Vaca* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 279.

⁷ Alex Krieger, *We Came Naked and Barefoot: The Journey of Cabeza de Vaca Across North America*, ed. Margery Krieger (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 179. There is a ubiquitous myth that the Karankawas reached heights upward of seven-feet tall. For a comprehensive debunking of the “giant Karankawas,” see Seiter, “Sizing-up the Karankawas: Were the Karankawas giants?,” *Karankawas*, June 10, 2018, <https://karankawas.com/2018/06/10/sizing-up-the-karankawa-were-the-karankawa-giants/>. Mildred Mayhall and Ricklis also touch on this subject, see Mayhall “The Indians of Texas: the Atákapa, the Karankawa, the Tonkawa” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1939), 175-179; Robert Ricklis, *The Karankawa Indians of Texas: The Karankawa Indians of Texas : an ecological study of cultural tradition and change* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 9-10. For information on the duties of a “royal treasurer,” see Reséndez, *A Land So Strange*, 48-50, 261.

⁸ Robert Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi and the Gulf* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1987), 251.

Using sign language, the Capoques relayed their intention to revisit the beach at sunrise with food. Making good on their promise (and then some), each following morning and evening the Karankawas reappeared providing nourishment to the marooned men. After a few days of recovery, the Spaniards set out for the province of Pánuco not knowing that it lay over five-hundred miles away.

“We lifted the boat out of the sand into which it had sunk,” Cabeza de Vaca recalls, “which required us to take off our clothes, and we had to expend a great deal of effort to set her afloat....Two crossbow shots from shore [around 100 yards] a wave swept over us.”⁹ Naked and hypothermic, the survivors once again crawled out of the Gulf of Mexico. Three of their number had drowned in the attempt to launch their raft. On the beach, the survivors located leftover wood, made a large fire, and wept. The Capoques returned at sunset, and in Cabeza de Vaca’s words, “upon seeing the disaster we suffered, our misery and misfortune, the Indians sat down with us and began to weep out of compassion....to see beings so devoid of reason, uneducated, so brutish, yet so deeply moved by pity for us, increased my feelings and those of others in my company for our own misfortune.”¹⁰

Realizing the severity of the situation, Cabeza de Vaca beseeched the Karankawas to shelter his companions and himself. Excited at the prospect, the First People agreed readily. Some among the Royal Treasurer’s party were much less enthusiastic, expecting to be sacrificed. No such fate awaited the rescued shipwrecks.¹¹ After a night of revelry, the “beings so devoid of reason” kept the marooned men warm and well-fed.

⁹ Cabeza de Vaca, *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition*, 32.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

Roughly a week after the rescue, the weather became so violent and cold that as Cabeza de Vaca matter-of-factly puts, “people began to die.”¹² After the storm passed, those on the island learned of five starving Spaniards who fell into such an extreme state of hunger that “they ate each other, until but one remained, who, being left alone, had no one to eat him.”¹³ Cabeza de Vaca, in describing the incident and the subsequent outrage of the Capoques, writes “the Indians were so startled at this and there was such uproar among them that I truly believe if they had seen this at the beginning they would have killed them, and we all would have been in great danger.”¹⁴

¹² Ibid., 43. The Little Ice Age, at its epoch in the mid sixteenth-century, caused the temperatures on the Coastal Bend to be much lower than is accustomed since, see Brian Fagan, *The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History 1300-1850* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); William C. Foster, *Climate and Culture Change in North America AD 900 to 1600* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012). Foul weather and intermittent periods of resource deprivation were part of life for Coastal Bend societies. Later chroniclers specifically commented on the impressive ability of the Karankawas to withstand oppressive temperatures and go days without food. Father Gaspar José de Solís, a man who considered these people “savage, indolent, and lazy,” had to admit that the Karankawas held a robust constitution. “When the sun is scorching hot,” Solís recollects, “they go about without any clothing whatsoever and without even seeking the shade. In winter-time, when the ground is covered with snow and when it freezes so hard that rivers, ponds, lakes and brooks are frozen over, at early morning they go off to bathe, and break the ice with their bodies,” see Gaspar Jose de Solis, “The Solis Diary of 1767,” *Sons of Dewitt Colony Texas*, accessed Feb 13, 2018, <http://www.sonsofdewittcolony.org/alarconex5.htm>.

¹³ Precisely where and how the Karankawas discovered the Europeans’ survival-cannibalism is unknown, see Paul Schnieder, *Brutal Journey: The Epic Story of the First Crossing of North America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006), 223.

¹⁴ Cabeza de Vaca, *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition*, 43; Krieger, *We Came Naked and Barefoot*, 257.



(3.1) Cabeza de Vaca's possible landing site on Follet's Island



(3.2) Follets Island

Explaining the Karankawas' Cannibalism: Fire for the Afterlife

For this thesis, the Capoques' reaction of disgust at the Spaniards' survival cannibalism is particularly important to discuss. Numerous historians use this event as a trusty piece of contradiction loosely holstered and ready to be twirled out at any mention of the Karankawas' cannibalism. For example, anthropologist R. Edward Moore writes, "When Cabeza de Vaca told the Karankawas his starving companions had eaten the bodies of other expedition members, the Karankawas were shocked. Why would so-called cannibals be shocked if they really were cannibals?"¹⁵ Moore's rhetorical question is sensible when the Karankawas' cannibalism is misunderstood. Upon grasping *why* the Karankawas consumed human-flesh—to damn an enemy and absorb their power—their shock at learning of the Europeans' survival-cannibalism becomes plain.

Sufficient evidence exists in first-hand accounts inferring that the Karankawas consumed flesh to prohibit their enemies from a complete afterlife and to acquire a relative's or adversary's power; however, I have encountered no scholarship that presents this evidence. In its place are flimsy citations to historians who rely on their own flimsy citations.

The information historians have on the Karankawas' culture primarily comes from the accounts of zealous missionaries, of bellicose Texans, and of marooned Europeans. Because the Spanish mission system aimed to indoctrinate, and the Texans attempted to annihilate, the shipwrecked and marooned—forced happily or unhappily into the Karankawas' society—are typically responsible for the most accurate and trustworthy

¹⁵ Before making these comments, Moore contradicts himself by stating that, "yes, [the Karankawas] sometimes ate the captured enemy warriors and leaders after a battle or war." R. Edward Moore, "The Karankawa Indians," <http://www.texasindians.com/karank.htm>.

ethnographic information on this Peoples. From the accounts of the marooned does the reason for the Karankawas' anthropophagy first start to become clear. An offhand remark on the Karankawas' burial practices in the Jean-Baptiste Talon interview is particularly insightful:

One could only infer that [the Karankawas] have some confused impression of the immortality of their souls by the ceremonies that they observe in the burial of their dead (and the resurrection of the dead). After having wrapped the corpse in a well-prepared buffalo hide, the same one that he had used in life to cover himself, they bury him with his club, his bow, and his arrows, a quantity of smoked meat, some corn and vegetables, and two pieces of a certain wood that they use instead of gun flint to make fire and all that in order that he may use them (so they say) when he wakes up.¹⁶

Burying the deceased with an instrument to obtain fire, with meat and vegetables, and with weapons indicates that the Karankawas had some notion of a hereafter where these items are needed. Therefore, if a body lacked offerings, or in some way was unwhole, the deceased would be disadvantaged during their passage to the Second World.

The funeral tradition of burying food and tools with the dead is not isolated to Jean-Baptiste's Karankawas. The archaeological and historical record verifies that a great number of Native American groups in the proximity of the Texas Gulf Coast prepared an assortment of offerings to be utilized by the departed in the afterlife. Father Casañas, an overbearingly devout priest who witnessed hundreds of burials due to rampant disease while living among the Hasinai, makes note of this in 1691:

[The Hasinai] bury their dead with all the arms and utensils which each possesses and for several days they carry something to eat to the place they have buried a person. These Indians are such barbarians that on several occasions they tried to make me

¹⁶ Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi and the Gulf*, 253.

believe that they had seen the dead eat what they had carried and that they heard them cry.”¹⁷

Fray Francisco Hidalgo, who lived among the Hasinai two years subsequent to Casañas, provides a near identical account:

[The Hasinai] bury their dead, after bathing them, interring with them the trophies they have captured, with the deer skins they possess, and with all the gifts their relatives supply. They place there something of everything they have to eat as well as buffalo hides. They bury the scalps so that their enemies may go along to serve them in the other life. They place there provisions for the journey and other possessions to serve for clothing.¹⁸

Whether or not Friar Casañas or Francisco Hidalgo believed in such things, the Caddos accepted that upon death the soul lingered for a time and mortuary offerings provided aid for the tumultuous voyage to the Other World.¹⁹

To the east of the Caddos, when a figure of importance died among the Natchez of Mississippi, the Natchez sacrificed those close to the authority figure to act as attendants in

¹⁷ Casañas estimates that “three thousand persons among all the friendly tribes of the *Tejas* must have died during the epidemic which the Lord sent,” see Mattie Austin Hatcher, “Descriptions of the Tejas or Asinai Indians, 1691-1722, II,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (1927): 294, 303. For many more quotations related to mortuary practice of the Caddo, see Mattie Austin Hatcher, “Descriptions of the Tejas or Asinai Indians, 1691-1722, II,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (1927): 294-298; Mattie Austin Hatcher, “Descriptions of the Tejas or Asinai Indians, 1691-1722, III,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (1927): 56-57; John R. Swanton, *Source Material on the History and Ethnology of the Caddo Indians* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 204-207.

¹⁸ Hatcher, “Descriptions of the Tejas or Asinai Indians, 1691-1722, III,” 57.

¹⁹ Further explaining the Hasinai's spiritual voyage, historian Cecile Elkins Carter writes, “the Hasinai, believed that when a person died, his or her soul went to another house where a man guarded everyone who came until all were gathered together. Once all the souls were together they would enter another world, where life would begin anew....because a person needed strength to reach this house and was weak from hunger at death, they [the Hasinai] buried all the person's arms and utensils with the body and for several days carried something to eat to the grave,” see Cecile Elkins Carter, *Caddo Indians: Where We Come From* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 87.

the “country of spirits.”²⁰ Le Page du Pratz gives an iconic description of this event when witnessing Tattooed-serpent’s burial:

He (the Tattooed-serpent) was on his bed of state, dressed in his finest clothing, his face painted with vermilion, moccasined as if to go on a journey....His [weapons] had been tied to his bed. These consisted of a double-barreled gun, a pistol, a bow, a quiver full of arrows, and a war club....Food was served to him at his accustomed hours, as if he had been living....the company in the cabin [those to be sacrificed] was composed of the favorite wife of the defunct, [his] second wife, whom he kept in another village, to visit when his favorite wife was pregnant, his chancellor, his doctor, his head servant, his pipe-bearer, and some old women....The body of the Tattooed-Serpent was placed in a great trench to the right of the temple in the interior. His two wives were buried in the same trench. La Glorieuse was buried in front of the temple to the right and the chancellor on the left.²¹

As shared with ethnographer James Mooney in 1898 by Chief Sentali, the Tonkawas had an analogous burial tradition, but instead of sacrificing humans, they sacrificed animals:

They told me of their burial methods—how the body was put into a deep grave, with all the small property of the dead man laid above it, and how, when the earth had been filled in, his horse and dog were shot upon the grave mound, and after that his name must never be mentioned.²²

²⁰ John R. Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley and Adjacent Coast of the Gulf of Mexico* (San Francisco: Dover Publications, 2013), 143-149.

²¹ Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi*, 143-149; Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country* (London: Harvard University Press, 2010), 1-5.

²² James Mooney, “Our Last Cannibal Tribe,” *Harper’s Magazine*, September 1901, 555. <https://harpers.org/archive/1901/09/our-last-cannibal-tribe/>. The Lipan-Apache shared the burial practice of sacrificing horses atop the graves of their deceased. As William Bollaert, an Englishman with his fingers dipped in a multitude of eclectic fields (one being history) describes, “On the death of a warrior there is great lamentation; he is wrapt in his buffalo robe, some of his arms and other property are broken up and buried with him, and at times his favorite horses are killed,” see Bollaert, “Observations on the Indian Tribes in Texas,” *Journal of the Ethnological Society of London* 2, (1850), 277-278. Noah Smithwick, an early settler of Texas, bitterly witnessed a horse he sought to buy from the “Empirico Indians, led up beside the grave [of the former owner] and shot, the remains being cremated.” Smithwick believed the Empirico “were determined their unlucky comrade should make a good appearance when he rode into the happy hunting grounds.” Smithwick, *The Evolution of a State*, 35-36. The Apache, in addition to having all their “property” buried with them, also believed that “[a deceased’s] name must never be mentioned [after death].” Presumably, by saying the dead’s name, the deceased would be drawn to it, and lose their way to the Second World. Anthropologist Albert Gatschet describes a similar practice among the Karankawas, see Gatschet, *The Karankawa Indians* (Cambridge: Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, 1891), 69.

With the process of passing into the afterlife requiring items, intendants, and other invertebrates, it makes sense why Texas First People desecrated their foes' bodies. It jeopardized their enemies' passage to the Second World. As nineteenth-century-settler John Holland Jenkins supports, "[It was] a superstition that an Indian could never enter the Happy Hunting Ground if he lost his scalp, or for that matter, any part of his body. He must be whole—no limb or member missing."²³ Echoing Jenkins, historian Andree F. Sjoberg explains that the Tonkawas, fearful of such vengeance, "removed all evidence of a burial" and that "their enemies would scalp the Tonkawa dead whenever these were found."²⁴ Noah Smithwick makes a parallel comment about the Comanches, the enemies of the Tonkawas: "[The Comanches] would fight desperately to rescue the body of a fallen comrade so long as his scalp was intact, the moment he lost it, he was abandoned, they would not touch the body, even to bury it."²⁵

Henri Joutel, a lieutenant of La Salle's failed colonization attempt on the Texas Gulf Coast, writes about a distinct incident which emphasizes that befouling a body served to condemn an adversary. In the late seventeenth-century, the Hasinai raided their enemies, the Cannohatinnos. Assisted by a small party of Frenchmen, the war party returned rife with

²³ John Holland Jenkins, *Recollections of Early Texas: Memoirs of John Holland Jenkins* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958), 76-77.

²⁴ Andree Sjoberg, "The Culture of the Tonkawa: A Texas Indian Tribe," *Texas Journal of Science* 5, no. 3 (1953): 292-293.

²⁵ Smithwick, *The Evolution of a State*, 130. Historian Brian DeLay comments that "Comanches and Kiowas put the highest priority on recovering the bodies of their slain warriors and carrying them off the field before a retreat. They thought the fulfillment of this duty one of the most laudable and honored deeds a warrior could perform, and they took extraordinary risks to ensure that their companions would not be defiled in death." For more on the Comanches' burial practices and their cyclical means of revenge-based warfare, see DeLay, "The Politics of Vengeance," in *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 114-138.

scalps and slaves.²⁶ When the Hasinai women laid eyes upon the enslaved Cannohatinnos, they mercilessly set upon the captives and dispensed revenge for prior loss of their kith and kin:

One tore off [a captive's] hair, another cut off her finger, and every one of those outrageous women endeavored to put her to some exquisite torture, to revenge the death of their husbands and kinsmen who had been killed in the former wars; so that the unfortunate creature expected her death-stroke as mercy. At last one of them gave her a stroke with a heavy club on the head, and another ran her stake several times into her body, with which she fell down dead on the spot. Then they cut that miserable victim into morseles [sic] and obliged some slaves of that nation [the Cannohatinno]...to eat them.²⁷

In this grisly scene of torture, cannibalism is a mechanism to “revenge the death of husbands and kinsmen” and operates as a means to humiliate and degrade newly-acquired slaves. After tormenting and then murdering the Cannohatinno captive, the Hasinai women force fed “morseles” of the tortured woman to the other enslaved people—making the Cannohatino slaves nullify the afterlife of one of their own.²⁸

These selected examples demonstrate that Texas and Gulf Coast Native American groups held comparable beliefs that whatever condition a body was in upon and after death

²⁶ John Swanton speculates the Cannohatinno to be the Wichita, see Swanton, *Source Material on the History and Ethnology of the Caddo Indians*, 186, 312.

²⁷ Cecile Elkins Carter, *Caddo Indians*, 39. Swanton's translation of the event varies slightly: “They cut her body into many pieces which the conquerors divided among themselves, and which they forced several slaves they had taken in the past [not necessarily the Cannohatinno] to eat.” Swanton, *Source Material on the History and Ethnology of the Caddo Indians*, 186. Significantly, Joutel did not witness the torture personally. He gleaned the information from six Frenchmen who fought alongside the Hasinai in their battle with the Cannohatinno. But later, Joutel did see “the flesh of the woman whom they had tortured, [fed] to two young boys...as well as some other slaves whom they had taken at other times.” Joutel comments that he “did not notice that they themselves [the Hasinai] ate of them.” Swanton, *Source Material on the History and Ethnology of the Caddo Indians*, 187. For an example of Whites torturing their captives in a similar manner—sans the forced cannibalism—see Andrew Graybill, *The Red and the White* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2013), 76-77.

²⁸ Pierre Talon confirms that the Cannohatinos “continually making war on them.” Weddle, *La Salle, Mississippi, and the Gulf*, 230.

played a role in whether entry could be gained to the afterlife.²⁹ Consuming the flesh of an enemy left a foe's body corrupted, unwhole, and too weak to make an already fraught journey to the Second Life. And because the majority of Texas Native American groups—with their panoply of languages—had similar concepts of “an immortality of the soul,” the intention of cannibalism could not be lost in cultural translation.³⁰

²⁹ For more examples, see Frederick Henry Ruecking, “The Coahuiltecan Indians of Southern Texas and Northeastern Mexico,” (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1955), 149; Noah Smithwick, *The Evolution of a State*, 181. F.M. Buckelew, *Life of F.M. Buckelew* (San Francisco: Lucknow Books, 2015), 114-115, 123-124; Raymond Breton, *Father Raymond Breton's Observations of the Island Carib: A Compilation of Ethnographic Notes Taken from Breton's Carib-French Dictionary*, trans. Marshall McKusick and Pierre Verin (Gilles Bouquet, 1665), 6; Peter Hulme and Neil Whitehead, *Wild Majesty: Encounters with Caribs from Columbus to the Present Day* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 40; Three individual accounts are seen in Swanton's, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi*, 203, 204, 209; Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and the Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 24; Mildred Mayhall, *The Kiowas* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 32-33.

Alice Oliver's account in the Gatschet's *The Karankawa Indians* provides a contradiction. Oliver testifies that the Karankawas were “indifferent” to any “sacredness of feeling, or particular rites in reference to the burial of their dead.” Annie Harris, another Anglo-American who lived in close proximity to the Karankawas during the early nineteenth-century depicts these First People burying their dead with the implements they made use of in life—as I suggest—but Harris also describes the process as being done with insensitivity: “literally dragging [the deceased] off for burial.” Although each account is known to hold flaws, both Harris and Oliver's recollections are valuable in showing forced cultural metamorphosis of the Karankawas. Annie P. Harris and Ethel Mary Franklin, “Memoirs of Mrs. Annie P. Harris,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (1937): 237; Gatschet, *The Karankawa Indians*, 19. See chapter 5 of this thesis for more information on the regression of cannibalism and the major shift in Native American cultural practices in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century.

³⁰ Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi and the Gulf*, 253. Ironically, baptism and the offering-based mortuary practices of Texas Native American groups functioned in similar ways—to provide passage to the afterlife. Father Casañas, after berating the Hasinai for their “foolish” burial ceremonies, flew into a rage when one of the Caddo shamans attempted to stop a baptism, “I hurled an exorcism against him, and, all at once he ran away as if I had tried to kill him.” Mattie Austin Hatcher, “Descriptions of the Tejas or Asinai Indians, 1691-1722, II,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (1927): 295. Taking things a step further, as Merrill Price puts it, “At least once a year, the vast majority of Christians in the Middle Ages had an immediate and personal experience of anthropophagy. In swallowing a consecrated wafer that did not merely represent the body of Christ, but *was* the body of Christ, the medieval believer not only partook of human and divine flesh, but was incorporated into a community of theophagists for whom theophagy was a central and fundamental aspect of the church.” For more on transubstantiation as a cannibalistic act, see Merrill Price, *Consuming Passions* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 26-44; Lee Wandel, *The Eucharist in the Reformation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 176-177.

Left unanswered is how much a body needs to be consumed for it to be too weakened to make the fraught journey to the afterlife. Is the act of consumption itself enough to inhibit travel to the hereafter, or does the body need to be eaten in full?

But if the goal is to simply desecrate an enemy's body and in turn limit the departed's access to the afterlife, why consume their flesh? Why not scalp the body or burn the body or expose the body to the ravages of the wild? The answer lies in the second motive of the Karankawas' anthropophagy—power absorption.

When the Karankawas ate the flesh of their foes, they did so to condemn but also as a means of acquiring a spiritual or physical aspect of their enemy: be it bravery, physical strength, or prestidigitation. This motive exists in neighboring Native American societies, the Tonkawas being a prime example. In 1840, after the Battle of Plum Creek, Robert Hall observed a group of Tonkawas "cut [a dead Comanche warrior] into slices and broil him on sticks." As Hall remembers, "[The Tonkawas] invited me to get up and eat a slice of Comanche, they said it would make me brave."³¹ John Holland Jenkins also encountered the Tonkawas cannibalism, and saw "[them] feed their squaws on the hands and feet of the dead Indian, believing that this would make them bring forth brave men who would hate their enemies and be able to endure hardness and face dangers."³²

³¹ Robert Hall, *Life of Robert Hall: Indian Fighter and Veteran of Three Great Wars, also Sketch of Big Foot Wallace* (Austin: State House Press, 1992), 57. Texas Ranger James Pike also details the Tonkawas cannibalism used as a means of absorbing the power of an enemy, "Tocasan, a war chief, and several others of the principal men, who had been in the chase, gathered about, and said very earnestly; 'eat it Cah-hah-ut,' which was the name they gave me, 'it will make you might much brave; might much brave.'" Pike, *Scout and Ranger*, 95-96. Pike's account, however, is problematic, see Chapter Five of this thesis.

For more on the Tonkawas' cannibalism, see Chapter 2. The Comanches are recorded as considering the Tonkawas among their most hated enemies because of the cannibalism the Tonkawas practiced, see W.S. Nye, *Carbine and Lance: The Story of Old Fort Sill* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), 28-30, 151, 190; Himmel, *The Conquest of the Tonkawas and Karankawas*, 83-86. The O'oodham (or Pima), in their constant warfare with the Apache believed "He [I'toi or Big Brother] put power between the Apaches and the [O'oodham], so that when the Apaches were victorious they acquired the power, and when the [O'oodham] won, in their turn they acquired power." Historian Karl Jacoby, describing this conflict continues in saying that after undergoing a strict ceremony, a trophy of an enemy "was 'like a relative,' its power could be added to the killer's and harnessed for the People's healing and fertility rituals," see Jacoby, *Shadows at Dawn: An Apache Massacre and the Violence of History* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), 23. Aztec cannibalism being associated with acquiring power is well documented, see Lewis Petrinovich, *The Cannibal Within* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2000), 91-101.

³² John Holland Jenkins, *Recollections of Early Texas: The Memoirs of John Holland Jenkins* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964), 77.

In regard to the Akokisas, the Karankawas' neighbors, J.O. Dyer claims that they lined up those pregnant and placed "a morsel of the enemy's flesh into each mouth, expressing the sentiment that the unborn babes might acquire the particular attribute (valor, strength, or fleetness)."³³ Dyer, a prolific writer for the *Galveston Daily News*, acquired this information through childhood talks with members of Lafitte's pirate crew who themselves lived alongside the Karankawas and Akokisas. As most journalists who write about the "savage" Indians, he had a tendency to inflate reality. His sensationalist inconsistencies (of which include depicting the Capoques as living only off "roots, beetles, and the dung of deer") need to be examined critically.³⁴ Nevertheless, his 1917 account reveals that Texans commonly associated First Peoples' cannibalism with power absorption.

Better evidence that the Karankawas' cannibalism served as a means of power absorption comes from Cabeza de Vaca's *Relación*, as well as Alonso del Castillo Maldonado, Andrés Dorantes de Carranza, and Cabeza de Vaca's testimony in the *Joint Report*. These two sources detail a mortuary practice in which the ashes of a deceased spiritual leader are drunk a year after their death.³⁵ By doing so, the spiritual leader's power remained with the community and their family.³⁶ This practice of endocannibalism displays

³³ Lawrence E. Aten, *Indians of the Upper Texas Coast* (New York: Academic Press, 1983), 72.

³⁴ Joseph Dyer, "Corrected and Epitomized Lessons of Texas History, part 1, period of 1518 to 1807," in *Joseph Osterman Dyer Scrapbook 1915-1923*, (Rosenberg Library, c. 1920s). Lawrence Aten puts more faith in Dyer, see Aten, *Indians of the Upper Texas Coast*, 24.

³⁵ Cabeza de Vaca, *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition*, 38; Krieger, *We Came Naked and Barefoot*, 297.

³⁶ Jean-Baptiste Talon, who witnessed the Karankawas cannibalism first-hand, makes no comment on *why* the Karankawas consumed the flesh of their enemies. Neither does Simars de Bellisle who viewed (and likely participated) in Akokisas cannibalism. But the two aforementioned sources never discuss the religious aspects of the Karankawas or the Akokisas. What little religious information we do have on the Karankawas is derived from Gaspar de Solis—who has many of his own issues as discussed in Chapter 5. For more

the ingrained cultural complexity of anthropophagy. It operated as a means of honoring the departed, not to degrade them.³⁷

With the motives of Gulf Coast cannibalism better understood—to demean and deprave and to absorb an enemy’s power, or in some cases, a relative’s power—Edward Moore’s question deserves revisiting: Why would supposed man-eaters be shocked at witnessing the Spaniards’ survival cannibalism?

information on the piece mail spiritual practices of the Karankawas, see Aten, *Indians of the Upper Texas Coast*, 90-92.

Would this endocannibalism inhibit travel to the hereafter? This does not seem to be the case. The year-long mourning ritual attached to the endocannibalism marks a sharp distinction between it and the exocannibalism practiced on enemies, see Cabeza de Vaca, *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition*, 38. Of an interesting note, the Mohicans and Housatonic River Indians also had an analogous year-long mourning ritual, see Linford Fisher, *The Indian Great Awakening: Religion and the Shaping of Native Cultures in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 19.

³⁷ Just as in New Guinea, 8000 miles away, cannibalism was seen “as an inhuman, ghoulish nightmare or as a sacred, moral duty.” Erick Eckholm, “What is the meaning of cannibalism?,” *New York Times*, Dec 9, 1986, <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/12/09/science/what-is-the-meaning-of-cannibalism.html>.



(3.2) *“Forty ailing conquistadors crawled out of the Gulf of Mexico to a rocky spot where they built a fire, ate the last of their corn, and drank some standing rainwater.”*

The Spaniards Damned Their Companions

When the shipwrecked Europeans consumed their companions’ flesh to survive, the Karankawas were indeed outraged. Not because cannibalism was foreign to them, but rather over the shock that the Christians committed such a vicious act—an act meant as the highest level of disrespect—toward their own people. The starving Spaniards did not observe the specific rituals that made consuming the flesh of a companion or relative acceptable. Instead, the starving Europeans inadvertently blackened a regulated spiritual practice. It seems both the Karankawas and Europeans considered survival-cannibalism abominable.

In the *Indians of the Upper Texas Coast*, Lawrence Aten comes to similar conclusions to explain the Capoques' disgust:

It can be suggested that the natives were shocked at the Spanish eating the bodies of their deceased comrades not because of an abhorrence of the practice, but because the comrades were not 'enemies.' Rather, the dead were members of their own social group, who, by this act, were being deprived of entrance into the afterlife. Such way of treating 'kinsmen,' as opposed to enemies or those possessed by or in contact with supernatural entities, would have seemed quite unthinkable to the Capoque.³⁸

Donald Chipman and Harriett Denise Joseph follow suit in *Spanish Texas*:

To the Indians, this [cannibalism] reflected disrespect for one's own dead, and it underscored that Karankawas commonly regarded cannibalism as a gesture of revenge against their enemies, not as a source of food.³⁹

Nonetheless, noteworthy historians have reproduced in almost all certitude an incorrect and misleading statement by labeling the Karankawas as horrified by the mere notion of cannibalism.⁴⁰ David La Vere's *The Texas Indians*, deemed "the starting point for anyone interested in conducting Indian-centered research on Texas in any era," is a particularly glaring example:

The most serious charge laid against the Karankawas was that they were cannibals. Virtually every writer who came into contact with them mentioned it, but not one of the writers ever witnessed it first hand. Ironically, it was the Karankawas who had been shocked by the cannibalism practiced by the Cabeza de Vaca survivors, not the other way around.⁴¹

³⁸ Aten, *Indians of the Upper Texas Coast*, 94-95.

³⁹ Donald Chipman and Harriett Joseph, *Spanish Texas: 1519-1821* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 15.

⁴⁰ David Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 44; Maril, *Cannibals and Condos*, 49-50; Newcomb, *Handbook of Native Americans: Southwest*, 366; Newcomb, *The Indians of Texas*, 77. Joseph Butler, "The Atakapa Indians: Cannibals of Louisiana." *Louisiana History* 11 (Spring 1970), 175-176; Eugenia Reynolds Briscoe, "A Narrative History of Corpus Christi, Texas, 1519-1875" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Denver, 1972), 51-53.

⁴¹ Matthew M. Babcock, "Native Americans," in *Discovering Texas History*, ed. Bruce Glasrud, Light Townsend Cummins, and Cary Wintz (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 2014), 15-16; David La Vere, *The Texas Indians* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2013), 178. For evidence against the

Kelly Himmel, in an otherwise wonderful study of the extermination of the Karankawas and Tonkawas, also misportrays this event in *The Conquest of the Karankawas and Tonkawas*:

Cabeza de Vaca did not mention cannibalism among the coast people of Texas. In fact, he reported that they were horrified by tales of the stranded Spanish sailors resorting to cannibalism in order to survive on the barren Texas coast. The first vague rumors of cannibalism among the Karankawas came from the survivors of the La Salle colony.⁴²

There is no denying that the Karankawas were horrified to see “Spanish sailors resorting to cannibalism in order to survive on the barren Texas coast.” Yet implying that “not one of the writers ever witnessed it first hand” or that “the first *vague* rumors of cannibalism among the Karankawas came from the survivors of the La Salle colony” is misleading and minimizing. Himmel and La Vere overlook or dismiss Jean-Baptiste Talon’s testimony, which *does* give a first-hand accounting of the Karankawas’ cannibalism during a formal interrogation in France.

It is unclear if Himmel is aware of Talon’s interrogation. I find no mention of the interview in his book, which is surprising considering the source’s magnitude to the Karankawas’ ethnography. La Vere, on the other hand, directly cites the Talon interrogation, which makes his charge that “not one of the writers ever witnessed [cannibalism] first hand”

Karankawas’ cannibalism La Vere cites Juan Nepomuceno Almonte’s 1834 Secret Report which states, “[The Karankawas] have been accused of being cannibals, but I believe this is merely a fable.” Almonte only briefly encountered the Karankawas near Goliad and painted them in a positive light because, as he writes, “They are practically reared in the water, and I believe that they could be advantageously used in the navy. Up to the present they are the best pilots in Matagorda and Aransaso [sic] bays.” Juan N. Almonte and C. E. Castañeda, “Statistical Report on Texas,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (1925): 194. For more references in Almonte’s Secret Report in which he recommends bolstering Mexican influence near the entrances of Texas’s bays, see Jack Jackson, *Almonte’s Texas: Juan N. Almonte’s 1834 Inspection, Secret Report, & Role in the 1836 Campaign* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2003), 213, 217.

⁴² Himmel, *The Conquest of the Karankawa and the Tonkawas*, 21.

perplexing.⁴³ Why do Himmel and La Vere overlook and ignore Talon's testimony? Why are other first- and second-hand accounts of the Karankawas' cannibalism and an extensive documentation of cannibalism among neighboring indigenous groups minimized?

Himmel and La Vere see the destruction wrought by labeling First Peoples as "cannibals." They believe this label to be too tainted by colonial myth to hold any semblance of authenticity. It certainly must be recognized that Anglo-American and European colonizers used the designation of "cannibal" as a means to dehumanize First Peoples and to justify their forced appropriations, migrations, and exterminations.⁴⁴ Yet, to outright dismiss the anthropophagic rituals of the Karankawas and various Texas Native American groups, washes away cultural history and agency, and in its own way, is similarly dehumanizing. Fully treating Native Americans as human means that we must recognize that Indians, like Europeans, had cultural practices that are considered stomach-churning.⁴⁵

Astonishingly, several writers have taken matters a step farther. They make or propagate the bold claim that the Karankawas *learned* cannibalism from the Spanish castaways of the Narváez expedition.⁴⁶ In *Cannibal Coast*, Edward Kilman surmises, "[The

⁴³ La Vere cites the interrogation only when describing the appearance of the Hasinai and the Karankawas. Even then, Joutel's journal is prioritized over the Talons's interview. La Vere, *The Texas Indians*, 104-109, 252-253.

⁴⁴ To make matters more interesting, Himmel and La Vere both recognize that "virtually all Texas Indian peoples [an overstatement] utilized a ritual cannibalism, where the people of a band or village might eat part of the body of an enemy for revenge, to gain his power, or to deny him a whole body in the afterlife." Both, however, remain doubtful of the Karankawas' cannibalism. Himmel, *The Conquest of the Karankawa and the Tonkawas*, 21; La Vere, *The Texas Indians*, 119.

⁴⁵ This paragraph is reused in my introduction.

⁴⁶ Gerald Ashford, *Spanish Texas Yesterday and Today* (Jenkins Publishing Company, 1971), 16; Morris Bishop, *The Odyssey of Cabeza de Vaca* (Century Company, 1933), 69; Butler, "The Atakapa Indians: Cannibals of Louisiana," 172; Edward Kilman, *Cannibal Coast* (San Antonio: Naylor House Publishing, 1959), 19. David G. McComb, *Galveston: A History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 33; James M. Day, "Karankawas," in *Indian Tribes of Texas* (Waco: Texian Press, 1971), 75. Distinguished historian and archaeologist, Alex Krieger writes, "It has been said by many researchers of the coastal Indians of Texas (such as the Karankawa) who have been described as 'cannibals' that they learned the practice from Europeans."

Capoques] horror would indicate that their Christian guests may have set the example of man-eating for the heathen aborigines—a practice for which their posterity would become distinguished.”⁴⁷ Gerald Ashford, follows, albeit tenuously, “If the Karankawas of Texas Coast were cannibals at a later date, can it be that the custom was introduced among them by the ‘Christians?’ Though this may be a fantastic speculation, the thought cannot be kept back.”⁴⁸

This “speculation” is seriously lacking. The universality of cannibalism makes finding a culture without a tale of cannibalism near impossible.⁴⁹ Although the Karankawas’ fables are fragmented and faded, the myths of other Native American nations persist. In the Lakotas’ folklore, Iktomi, the spider deity of trickery, deceives a man-eating monster from consuming a passing band of Native Americans by convincing the monster to say what he fears most: menstruating women, rattle noises, and whistling.⁵⁰ S.C. Gwynne, author of *Empire of the Summer Moon*, writes of the Comanches’ Piamempit, “the Big Cannibal Owl,

Krieger states a trend he saw in Karankawa-related literature. The inclusion of the statement in his book without any form of disqualification legitimizes incorrect information, see Krieger, *We Came Naked and Barefoot*, 28.

⁴⁷ Kilman, *Cannibal Coast*, 19. Absurd, hateful, and racist, Kilman’s *Cannibal Coast* is useful in showing how the Texas public perceived the Karankawas in the 1950s and 1960s.

⁴⁸ Gerald Ashford, *Spanish Texas Yesterday and Today*, 16.

⁴⁹ For European folktales of cannibalism, see Price, *Consuming Passions*, 23; Piero Camporesi, *Bread of Dreams: Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), 40-55; Anthony Pagden, *The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 80-82; William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1979), 148-151. Presently, the public’s anthropophagic curiosity (or desire) is satiated by popular entertainment: *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), *Silence of the Lambs* (1991), *28 Days Later* (2002), *Raw* (2016), and *The Walking Dead* (2010-2018). All have been catapulted to success in-part because they revolve around the taboo of cannibalism, see Kristen Guest, ed., *Eating Their Words: Cannibalism and the Boundaries of Cultural Identity* (New York: SUNY Press, 2001); Jennifer Brown, *Cannibalism in Literature and Film* (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

⁵⁰ Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz, *American Indian Trickster Tales* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 99-101. Jane Archer, *Texas Indian Myths and Legends* (Landham: Republic of Texas Press, 2000), 21-26.

a mythological creature who dwelt in a cave in the Wichita Mountains and came out by night to eat naughty children.”⁵¹ And famously in Algonquin myth, the Wendigo spirit possesses a victim and causes them to have “an insatiable urge to devour human-flesh.”⁵² As meat eaters, humans naturally wrestle with the concept of anthropophagy, its morality, and the social mores surrounding it. Myths are reflections of these innate worries.

Air conditioning, dredging, and mosquito-repellant have drastically changed ecosystems on the Gulf of Mexico. This change does not extend to the people. Those of us who live upon the Gulf today, and those who lived upon it a few hundred years ago, remain just as human. To assume that the Karankawas lacked their own cannibal-based myths or to say that the Capoques learned of anthropophagy from shipwrecked Christians is both ethnocentric and unrealistic. The very documents these historians quote—Oviedo’s *Joint Report* and Cabeza de Vaca’s *Relación*—already detail a ritualistic endocannibalism among the Karankawas:

Their custom is to bury the dead, except those among them who are shamans, who they burn. While the fire is burning, they all dance and have a big festival. They grind the bones to powder and, at the end of the year when they celebrate the anniversary, they scarify themselves and give the relatives the pulverized bones to drink in water.⁵³

Scholars Gerald Ashford, Morris Bishop, Eugenia Briscoe, Joseph Butler, Kelly Himmel, Edward Kilman, Robert Lee Maril, and W.W. Newcomb, Jr. make a point in

⁵¹ S. C. Gwynne, *Empire of the Summer Moon: Quanah Parker and the Rise and Fall of the Comanches, the Most Powerful Indian Tribe in American History* (New York: Scribner Publishing, 2010), 198.

⁵² Peggy Sanday, *Divine Hunger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 104-107

⁵³ Álgvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition*, 38. For a case of well-documented endocannibalism that is analogous to the endo-cannibalism Cabeza de Vaca describes, see Beth Conklin, “‘Thus Are Our Bodies, Thus Was Our Custom,’: Mortuary Cannibalism in an Amazonian Society,” *American Ethnologist*, vol. 22, no. 1, (Feb., 1995), 76, 79; and Gertrude Dole, “Endocannibalism among the Amahuaca Indians,” *Transactions* 24, no. 5, 568-569.

saying, “[Cabeza de Vaca] saw no native cannibalism in all his progress.”⁵⁴ This ritual of drinking pulverized bones (as I have mentioned previously in this chapter) proves otherwise.⁵⁵

Asserting that the Karankawas simultaneously discovered anthropophagy from the Spaniards and then immediately developed an intricate system of endocannibalism that Cabeza de Vaca witnessed mere months after crashing is inconceivable. Anthropophagy was

⁵⁴ Gerald Ashford, *Spanish Texas Yesterday and Today*, 16; Bishop, *The Odyssey of Cabeza de Vaca* (Century Company, 1933), 69; Briscoe, “A Narrative History of Corpus Christi, Texas, 1519-1875” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Denver, 1972), 51-53; Himmel, *The Conquest of the Karankawa and the Tonkawas*, 21; Robert Lee Maril, *Cannibals and Condos*, 49-50; Newcomb, *The Indians of Texas*, 59-60.

For the historians that have pointed out this endocannibalism, see Foster, *Historic Native Peoples of Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 127; John Terrell, *Journey into Darkness* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1962), 124; Paul Schnieder, *Brutal Journey*, 224-225. Schnieder’s comments, however, are puzzling: “The only cannibalism the Narvaez survivors saw was a little ceremonial sipping of pulverized shaman’s bones mixed with water, a practice that modern anthropologists believe was intended to deny the dead the opportunity for an afterlife.” Schnieder’s statement that this endocannibalistic ritual—which took a full year to undergo and mirrors the Capoques’ mourning rituals—served to “deny the dead the opportunity for an afterlife” is plainly off base.

⁵⁵ Although technically incorrect, there is merit upon dissecting their argument. I too find it odd that exo-cannibalism is unmentioned in either the *Joint Report* or the *Relación*. Cabeza de Vaca writes extensively on Native warfare in the *Relación*—the hiding of women and children, the intricate defensive positions, and how “the Indians are readiest people with their weapons of any I have seen in the world”—but warfare-based cannibalism never arises. Cabeza de Vaca, *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition*, 66-68.

One explanation, admittedly weak, is that Cabeza de Vaca’s hierarchical positions of a slave, a trader, and a spiritual leader never afforded him the opportunity to observe exo-cannibalism first-hand. Yet Simars de Bellisle, who the Akokisas enslaved in 1719, witnessed anthropophagy while inhabiting the lower hierarchical rungs of Native society. Furthermore, I argue that Native cannibalism is a community activity which means even as a slave or shaman, Cabeza de Vaca should have participated in the subsequent celebrations or at least heard of exocannibalism if any had occurred. This thesis also argues that cannibalism occurred infrequently. Cabeza de Vaca spent around six years on the coast. Plenty of time to have become aware of cannibalism.

The most compelling answer, although still very delicate, is that Cabeza de Vaca purposefully neglected to mention Native American exocannibalism. As historian Robin Varnum explains, “Cabeza de Vaca had come to see the native people of the New World as human beings, not savages. He opposed enslaving Indians, and because he knew that under existing Spanish law Indians could be enslaved for practicing idolatry or human sacrifice, he swore that during all his years in North America, he had seen no instances of either abomination.” But then a new contradiction arises. Why is Cabeza de Vaca open about the Guaraníes’ cannibalism while governing the province of Río de la Plata from 1540 to 1545? For one, the Christians intimately knew of the Guaraníes’ widespread cannibalism well before Cabeza de Vaca’s arrival. For more information on the motives of Cabeza de Vaca’s *Relación*, see Varnum, *Cabeza de Vaca*, xii, 171-189, 192-193. For information on the Cannibal Law of 1503, see Michael Palencia-Roth, “The Cannibal Law of 1503,” in *Early Images of the America*, eds. Jerry M. Williams and Robert E. Lewis (The University of Arizona Press, 1993), 21-65; Neil Whitehead, *Lord of the Tiger Spirit: A History of the Caribs in Colonial Venezuela and Guyana* (Providence: Foris Publications, 1988), Chp 7.

established culturally long-before any Europeans set foot in Texas. By saying the Karankawas learned cannibalism from Europeans, is another way of saying that the Karankawas were unable to independently discover the practice of anthropophagy on their own. As psychologist Lewis Petrinovich aptly puts, “there are cannibals within us all.”⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Petrinovich, *The Cannibal Within*, vii.

Chapter Four: Neighboring Cannibalism:

Francois Simars de Bellisle and the Akokisa Peoples

Marooned on the Texas coast in 1719, Francois Simars de Bellisle lived for roughly a year and a half among the Akokisas, the north-eastern neighbors of the Karankawas. The Akokisas rescued and then enslaved de Bellisle. While in captivity he witnessed the Akokisas' exocannibalism first-hand. The anthropophagy de Bellisle describes fits the model of a revenge-based community-oriented, post-mortem, rare, and ritualistic exocannibalism that this thesis forwards, and parallels the cannibalism witnessed by Jean-Baptiste Talon among the Clamcoehs three decades prior.

I focus on de Bellisle's account for four reasons: (1) his account is one of only a handful of first-hand viewings of Gulf Coast cannibalism, (2) his account shows that Native American groups that neighbored the Karankawas practiced cannibalism, (3) his account is chalk full of misconceptions and inaccuracies in need of clarification, and (4) his account exemplifies how some scholars wrongly dismiss primary sources because of the mere mention of cannibalism by a European.

To begin, I provide a narrative of de Bellisle's time marooned on the Texas coast and then I provide evidence that de Bellisle lived with the Akokisas, not the Karankawas as a litany of literature mistakenly advances. Following that, I examine the bias and validity of de Bellisle's recollection of events on the Texas coast. After this chapter, I delve into other viewings of cannibalism among the Karankawas' neighbors—the Tonkawas specifically.

Francois Simars de Bellisle Narration: Silvers, Stockings, and Swords Exchanged for Salvation

In 1719, off the coast of Galveston, the French *Maréchal d'Estrées* ran aground due to the negligence of her captain: Gervais de La Gaudelle. On deck, the sailors and the first mate milled around contemplating their hopeless situation. La Gaudelle retreated to his cabin, locking himself away.

A day passed, and through the door of the captain's quarters the mate asked for La Gaudelle's plan. The captain replied, "That they could do what they wanted."¹ Hearing this, the mate resolutely gathered all the sailors on deck and ran from one side of the ship to the other in an effort to dislodge the craft from the silty Gulf mud.² To aid in their efforts, the sailors unfurled the sails and with a strong seaward wind, the grounded ship careened free.

Back at sea, a twenty-four-year-old officer by the name of Simars de Bellisle, four other men of the same rank, and two pilots met in secret.³ The ineptitude of their captain, the lack of potable water, and an illness spreading through the ship worried greatly them and the clandestine body decided to send de Bellisle and the four other officers (Alain, Courbet,

¹ Henri Folmer, "De Bellisle on the Texas Coast," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (1940): 209.

² Folmer, "De Bellisle on the Texas Coast," 209.

³ As explained by French historians De Villiers du Terrage and Paul Rivet, Simars de Bellisle also signed his name "Seymars de Bellile" and "Beslile." The spelling of "Simars de Bellisle" is widely recognized and as such, is adopted in this thesis, see De Villiers du Terrage and Paul Rivet, "Les Indiens du Texas et les expéditions françaises de 1720 et 1721 à la Baie Saint-Bernard," *Journal de la société des américanistes* 11, (1919): 417.

Duclos, and Legendre) to shore and have them walk to Ship Island for rescue.⁴⁵ They believed Ship Island to be only a few dozen miles away, not four hundred.⁶

Unsurprisingly, La Gaudelle had no qualms sending five potentially mutinous men off his vessel; he loaned the officers a shallop, and with about half a week's worth of sustenance and shot, Simars de Bellisle and his companions landed on a coast that they became acquainted with in the worst of ways. The first day ashore, the small party scouted the lay of the land and camped without significant movement. When the self-volunteered castaways awoke the next morning, the *Maréchal d'Estrées* had disappeared from sight.⁷ Abandoned, the men began their trek east. After five days of walking and with rations running low, de Bellisle writes that the group "came to a place submerged, and where the

⁴ For the comment about water, see Jean Béranger, *Béranger's Discovery of Aransas Pass*, trans. William M. Carroll, ed. Frank Wagner (Corpus Christi: The Friends of the Corpus Christi Museum, 1983), 29. For the comment about illness, see Jean-Baptiste Bernard de La Harpe, *The Historical Journal of the establishment of the French in Louisiana*, trans. Joan Cain and Virginia Koenig, ed. Glenn R. Conrad (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana studies University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1971), 111. Of note regarding this last source, it seems that the true author is actually Jean de Beaurain, see de Villiers and Rivet, "Les Indiens du Texas," 403-442; Béranger, *Béranger's Discovery of Aransas Pass*, 29.

⁵ When the five officers reached Ship Island they intended to return and rescue the two pilots aboard the *Maréchal d'Estrées* who believed they "would certainly perish [otherwise]." Folmer, "De Bellisle on the Texas Coast," 209. The French officers agreed to "light three fires every evening" so the ship could track their position, see Folmer, "De Bellisle on the Texas Coast," 209. The officers also expected to encounter Native Americans that could lead them to a French settlement, see La Harpe, *The Historical Journal*, 111. The Frenchmen proposed a dangerous plan. As historian Robert Weddle aptly summarizes, "their qualifications for wilderness survival were even less than La Gaudelle's as a ship captain," see Robert Weddle, *The French Thorn* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991), 213.

Frank Wagner, the editor and translator of Jean Béranger's journal, writes that "MM. de Belisle, Legendre, Duclos, Allard, and Corbet, went ashore with plans for a week of hunting, preferring the sport to the risk of contagion shipboard," see Béranger, *Béranger's Discovery*, 10. Wagner received this information from Jean-Bernard Bossu's *Travels in the Interior of North America*, which is filled with errors, exaggerations, and aberrations that will be discussed later in this chapter.

Wagner's spelling of "Allard" is opposed to Folmer's spelling of "Alain" and Conrad's spelling of "Habain." I have decided to stick with Folmer's spelling of "Alain" in this thesis.

⁶ Folmer, "De Bellisle on the Texas Coast," 209; and I made my own calculation using Google Maps.

⁷ "Self-volunteered" inspired by Weddle, *The French Thorn*, 213. The *Maréchal d'Estrées*, after stranding the French officers, made its way—with aid from an English ship—to Leogane. Upon arrival, La Gaudelle was demoted, see La Harpe, *The Historical Journal*, 111.

mud was to [their] necks.”⁸ The marooned men, as historian Henri Folmer speculates, had stumbled upon the mouth of the Sabine.⁹ All too often conquistadors and colonizers, fretting over the massive distance and fickle weather of Texas, found a more dangerous and confounding obstacle in its rivers.

Their path blocked, the men turned inland in search of a European presence. They did so in vain. Starvation and the downright hellish environment took the ultimate toll on Corbet first. A day later, the castaways found Legendre unable to wake from his sleep. The remaining officers: Alain, de Bellisle, and Duclos headed back to the Gulf of Mexico accompanied by physical sickness and psychological sorrow. When the thinned party reached Galveston Bay, they arrived at the spot where they initially made landfall more than a month ago.

Finding an abundance of oysters, the stranded Frenchmen stayed for ten days. De Bellisle, the healthiest, resolved to press his luck alone by trekking west toward New Spain in search of rescue.¹⁰ After five days of walking he encountered the Brazos, and unable to cross, de Bellisle gave up on his westward attempt and returned to his companions.

“I saw very clearly something red,” relates de Bellisle, “this struck me forcibly and I did not doubt that it was my comrade who had died...I touched him and found him stiff and smelling very bad. I quickly dug a hole and buried him.”¹¹ Finding Alain dead, de Bellisle

⁸ Folmer, “De Bellisle on the Texas Coast,” 210. Captain Béranger makes a mysterious comment that the officers stranded on the Texas coast met an “Englishman from Jamaica” who directed them toward Louisiana. The Englishman does not appear in any other retelling of de Bellisle’s account, see Béranger, *Béranger’s Discovery of Aransas Pass*, 29.

⁹ Folmer, “De Bellisle on the Texas Coast,” 210.

¹⁰ Alain initially accompanied de Bellisle on this westward trek, but exhaustion took its toll and Alain turned back to join Duclos, see Folmer, “De Bellisle on the Texas Coast,” 213-214.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 214.

held out hope of Duclos' survival. Instead, de Bellisle found that Duclos had perished too. His corpse was still warm.

Alone and surviving on anything deemed edible, de Bellisle encountered a band of Native Americans collecting bird eggs.¹² These Native Americans—the Akokisas—rescued de Bellisle:

They took immediately everything...which consisted of our rifles, our swords, our silver forks and knives, my coat, and a few other things....when that was done they began to take my stockings off, my breeches, my coat, my shirt and my hat, and finally left me as naked as my hand. They had collected on this island more than five hundred eggs. They cooked some. They offered me some. I ate as long as I was hungry.¹³

After being rescued (in exchange for his material effects), de Bellisle traveled throughout the summer with the Akokisas in search of food. By winter, de Bellisle's uselessness in hunting became overwhelmingly apparent. At the height of the season where food-certainty was the most unreliable, de Bellisle consumed more resources than he contributed. Accordingly, the guest-host relationship that existed between the Frenchman and the First Peoples slowly became one of captive-captor.¹⁴ De Bellisle, describing the transition, wrote the following:

They began to treat me worse than before. If they needed water or wood they ordered me to go and get it. In the beginning I told them to go and get it themselves because I

¹² This occurred two and half months since coming ashore. Alice Oliver, who interacted with a composite group of Karankawas on her father's ranch records "at certain times in the year [these groups] obtained quantities of sea-birds' eggs of many different kinds of which they were very fond," see Albert Gatschet, *The Karankawa Indians: The Coast People of Texas* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, 1891), 12.

¹³ Folmer, "De Bellisle on the Texas Coast," 215.

¹⁴ Sentence structure and idea from Andrés Reséndez: "What had begun as a guest-host relationship between natives and the Spaniards eventually degenerated into a relationship between masters and slaves." In this quote, Reséndez is referencing Cabeza de Vaca but the idea is relevant with Simars de Bellisle, see Andrés Reséndez, *A Land So Strange: The Epic Journey of Cabeza de Vaca* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 143.

knew a little of their language. When I told them this the second time, there was one who gave me a blow with all his force. I understood then that I should obey without replying.¹⁵

A surprising number of historians consider the Native Americans that saved and later enslaved de Bellisle to be the Karankawas.¹⁶ Instead, these First Peoples are almost certainly the Akokisas, the north-eastern neighbors of the Karankawas. This mistake is somewhat understandable. The Native Americans who resided on the Texas coast lived nearly identical migratory lifestyles and to Europeans—the primary writers of the most accessible History—all “savages” looked the same.¹⁷ Expressing the European frustration is the Talon brothers’ interrogator:

All the different nations of savages in this whole country live in a rather uniform manner and resemble each other so much that it is very difficult, not to say impossible, to distinguish them except with respect to their different dialects and the different geographical regions inhabited by those who have villages.¹⁸

¹⁵ Folmer, “De Bellisle on the Texas Coast,” 217.

¹⁶ Eugenia Briscoe, “A Narrative History of Corpus Christi: 1519-1875” (dissertation, University of Denver, 1972), 18; Kelly Himmel, *The Conquest of the Karankawa and the Tonkawas, 1821-1859* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 20-21; Paul Schneider, *Brutal Journey: The Epic Journey of the First Crossing of North America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006), 223-224; Edward W. Kilman, *Cannibal Coast* (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1959) 73-81; *Béranger’s Discovery of Aransas Pass*, trans. William M. Carroll, ed. Frank Wagner (Corpus Christi: The Friends of the Corpus Christi Museum, 1983), 11; David La Vere, *The Texas Indians* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 112; Carol Lipscomb, “Karankawa Indians,” Texas State Historical Association, accessed 12/29/18, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/bmk05>.

¹⁷ This blanket statement, as with all blanket statements, isn’t quite right. Europeans make great efforts in distinguishing different Native American Peoples. They just had a hard time fully conceptualizing the Natives culture into their own.

¹⁸ Robert Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1987), 250. The diversity of Texas’s First People is dizzying. Friar Francisco Casañas de Jesús María, provides another good example of the confusion this Native diversity caused European chroniclers. When listing the Peoples who surrounded the Hasinai, Casañas writes, “The proper name of the province is Asinai. It is composed of the nine tribes already named. There is not one tribe of these nine called Asinai but each of the tribes combined with the remaining eight compose the Asinai Nation. The friendly tribes called the “Tejias” are: *Nazonis, Nacan, Nabaydacho, Nesta, Guasco, Cataye, Neticatzi, Nasayaya, Naviti, Caxo, Dastones, Nadan, Tativas, Nabeyxa, Nacoz, Caynigua, Caudadachos, Quizi, Natzoos, Nasitox, and Bidey*....The *Guaza, Yaduza, Bata, Cojo, Datana, Chuman, Cagaya*, and the *Assenay* – different from the *Asinai*– live towards the south and west about eighty leagues from this province....The *Caquiza, Quintanuaha, Coai, Canu, Tiniba, Vidix, Sico, Toaha, Cautouhaona*, and *Nepayaya*, are located toward the southwest; the *Canonidiba, Casiba, Dico, Xanna*,



(4.2) *Brazos River*

Vinta, Tobo, Caquixadoquix, Canonizachitous, and Zanomi toward the south-east....The enemies of the Province of the Asenay are the following: *Anao, Tanico, Quibaya, Cauzeaux, Hauydiz, Naviti, Nondacau, Quitxix, Zauanito, Tancaquaay, Canabatinu, Quiguayua, Diu-Juan, Sadammo*....Others are called *Apaches, Ca-au-cozi, and Mani*.” Mattie Austin Hatcher, “Descriptions of the Tejas or Asinai Indians, 1691-1722, II,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (1927): 286-287.



(4.3) Bird Eggs

Which Peoples Rescued and then Enslaved de Bellisle: The Akokisas

Identifying de Bellisle's captors is challenging when only studying how his enslavers lived, even more so when the term "Karankawa" is used for every Native American group that inhabited the Texas coast despite their actual relationships or connections to the Karankawa-speaking Peoples.¹⁹ However, the primary reason for the misidentification of de Bellisle's Native American rescuers originates from a single citation made by Henri Folmer, the translator and editor of de Bellisle's *Relation*:

In his "Memoir" de Bellisle called this tribe "Caux Indians," whereas at the time he wrote the above he still did not know the name of his Indian masters.²⁰ De Villiers

¹⁹ "Living identical lifestyles" inspired by Reséndez, *A Land So Strange*, 279. The more popular a Native American People, the more imagined territory they receive in the historical record, see Elizabeth Fenn and her study on the Mandans, in which she constantly has to clarify the territory of the Assiniboines, Hidatsas, Mandans, and other Peoples living in the area, Elizabeth Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World: A History of the Mandan People* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2014), 68.

²⁰ The "Memoir" refers to a later document written by de Bellisle which covers his time on the Texas Coast. Mildred Mayhall seems to have confused de Bellisle's *Memoir* with Captain Béranger's *Memoir*. Mayhall says that Béranger's *Memoir* "gives these Indians the name 'Caux.'" I could not find any usage of

writes that it is possible de Bellisle called his captors Caux Indians after the name of the Indian woman who saved him from being killed. De Villiers suggests the name of Cocos Indians. The author was unable to verify these suggestions because he did not have access to de Bellisle's "Memoir" Cf. de Villiers, "Les Indiens du Texas," 421. Le Page du Pratz calls de Bellisle's captors Atac-Apas, which means man-eater.²¹ Cf. Hodge, Handbook of American Indians, Part I, 114-115. H. E. Bolton in an article on the Mission Rosario, mentions the names of several Indian tribes living about the Matagorda Bay, among whom he mentions the Cocos. Bolton thought that these Cocos might be the same tribe as the Coaques met by Cabeza de Vaca. H. E. Bolton. "The Founding of Mission Rosario . . .," The Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, X, No. 2 [October, 1906], 114f²²

Historians have interpreted Folmer's confusing and ill-cited footnote in two contradicting ways. The more popular discernment is that de Bellisle's captors were Karankawa-speaking, the Coco Peoples in particular. The second, less popular but correct interpretation is that de Bellisle's captors were Atakapa-speaking, the Akokisa Peoples in particular. Because of the significance in gauging exactly who de Bellisle's enslavers were, not just for this thesis but for future historical works on Texas Native American ethnology

"Caux" in Béranger's *Memoir*. Mayhall also suggests that the Akokisas adopted de Bellisle after he killed one of their enemies. Mayhall received this information from De Villiers and Rivet, see De Villiers and Rivet, "Les Indiens du Texas," 419; Mildred P. Mayhall, "The Indians of Texas: the Atákapa, the Karankawa, the Tonkawa" (dissertation, University of Texas, 1939), 101. Captain Béranger only writes, "[De Bellisle] told us how he had been in the war with that nation against those among whom I had been the year before, in which they were beaten. They took some prisoners, whom they made suffer all that is most horrible and would eat them even to the bones. They would make fun of [de Bellisle] because he was not willing to eat any. At last, however, by deceit they made him eat under the pretense of having him eat some smoked beef." Béranger, *Béranger's Discovery of Aransas Pass*, 29-30.

Weddle, on his citations in *The French Thorn* refers to Béranger's relation as "Béranger, *Mémoire*" and "Wagner, Béranger's Discovery." Both appear to be the same document, not two separate memoirs which Mayhall's comment led me to believe at first.

²¹ Le Page du Pratz does not specifically call de Bellisle's captors "Atac-Apas" or "man-eaters" as is implied by Folmer, instead du Pratz gives a geographical location of where the Atakapas resided with no mention of de Bellisle. Du Pratz writes, "Along the west coast, not far from the sea, inhabit the nation named Atacapas, that is, Man-eaters, being so called by the other nations on account of their detestable custom of eating their enemies, or such as they believe to be their enemies," see Antoine Simon Le Page Du Pratz, "The History of Louisiana, or of the Western Parts of Virginia and Carolina," Project Gutenberg, March 14, 2015, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/9153/9153-h/9153-h.htm>.

²² Folmer, "De Bellisle on the Texas Coast," 216.

and History, I will clarify Folmer's footnote and give strong evidence showing that de Bellisle spent his time stranded on the Texas Coast with the Akokisas, not the Karankawas as popularly believed. Distinguishing de Bellisle's captors is important because it clarifies a historical inaccuracy, strengthens the Akokisas' territorial claim to the Galveston area, and enlightens us to the Akokisas' culture. But I have gone through the pains of determining who de Bellisle's captors were because the Frenchman witnessed his captors practice anthropophagy. Therefore his testimony gives us another first-hand look at Gulf Coast cannibalism in extremely close proximity to the Karankawas.

To begin, Folmer initially states in his footnote that he did not have access to de Bellisle's *Memoir*. De Bellisle's *Memoir* is untranslated and incredibly difficult to acquire (likely only housed in the French National Archives), but it presents greater detail of de Bellisle's time on the Texas Coast and includes an admission that his captors tricked him into consuming human flesh.²³ The *Relation* is translated into English, well known, and is the basis for this chapter.²⁴ De Bellisle wrote the *Relation* before the *Memoir*.

Marc de Villiers du Terrage and Paul Rivet, early twentieth-century French historians, had access to de Bellisle's hard to find *Memoir* and in an article they published about the castaway officer in 1919—"Les Indiens du Texas"—they mention that de Bellisle referred to his captors as the "Caux." De Villiers and Rivet list the *Memoir* as their source.

²³ De Villiers and Rivet, "Les Indiens du Texas," 417. Béranger also mentions this deception in Jean Béranger, *Béranger's Discovery of Aransas Pass*, 29.

²⁴ I found no citation to or the location of the *Memoir* in De Villiers and Rivet's "Les Indiens du Texas" even though De Villiers and Rivet discuss and expand upon the *Memoir*'s contents: "[The] *Memoir* complements some of the shortcomings, rectifies the indicated distances and omits various improbabilities [in the *Relation*]. In this document, [de Bellisle] pushes the veracity to acknowledge having eaten, by surprise, it is true, human flesh—which made him vomit up blood!" My translation, see De Villiers and Rivet, "Les Indiens du Texas," 417. I presume the *Memoir* is housed in the French National Archives. I intend to acquire it and translate it sometime in the future.

The two French scholars claim the Caux to be the Native American Peoples known as the Cocos primarily because of name similarity (“Coco” & “Caux”). This is their first mistake.²⁵ “Caux” looks and sounds phonetically similar to the first half of “Akokisa” and “Orcoquisac,” and the Akokisas’ word for water is “cacaux.”²⁶ Phonetic similarity—in this instance—is not concrete enough to identify the Native Americans who rescued de Bellisle.²⁷

De Villiers and Rivet’s second err is that they mistakenly believe the Cocos to have been the ancestors of the Akokisas: “The Caux [Cocos] were eventually transformed into the Coquizas’, Orcoquizas or Orquizacos [Akokisas].”²⁸ The Cocos did not transform into the Akokisas. The Cocos are presently and correctly considered to be a Karankawa-speaking Peoples. The Cocos and Akokisas *did* intermarry and in the early nineteenth-century small parties of the Karankawas and Akokisas *did* merge to form composite groups, but during de

²⁵ De Villiers and Rivet, “Les Indiens du Texas,” 424. Edward Kilman in *Cannibal Coast* makes the poor assumption that because “Caux” looks similar to “Caoques” or “Cokes” that there should be “no serious doubt to their identity,” see Kilman, *Cannibal Coast*, 74.

²⁶ There is no way of ascertaining why and with what association de Bellisle identified his captors.

²⁷ Thomas Nolan Campbell and Tommy Jo Campbell, a father and daughter team of archaeologists and anthropologists renowned in the field of Texas Native American Ethnohistory, explain my assertion with more detail: “It does not take much research to discover that some names are not quite what they seem to be. Two similar names may refer to the same group or to two separate groups. Two dissimilar names may refer to the same group....European documents sometimes spell the name of a specific Indian group in many different ways, sometimes 50 or more, depending upon the phonetic complexity of the name. Some names are so badly distorted that scholars at times have regarded two or more variants of the same name as names of separate Indian groups,” see T.N. Campbell and T.J. Campbell, *Indian Groups Associated with Spanish Missions of the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park*, 2nd ed. (San Antonio: Center for Archaeological Research, 1996), 9-10. Pierre LeMoyné d’Iberville, the head of another French colonization mission on the Mississippi (this time more successful) directly touches on how the names of tribes recorded in former travel logs misaligned with the names of the Native American tribes he encountered. See Pierre Le Moyné d’Iberville, *Iberville’s Gulf Journals*, trans. and ed. Richebourg Gaillard McWilliams (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1981), 6, 60.

²⁸ “*Les Caux se transformèrent sans doute par la suite en Coquizas’, Orcoquizas ou Orquizacos.*” My translation, De Villiers and Rivet, “Les Indiens du Texas,” 425.

Bellisle's captivity in the early eighteenth-century, the Akokisas and Cocos had distinct cultures, identities, and languages.²⁹

I believe de Villiers and Rivet are *trying* to say that de Bellisle's captors are the Akokisas (which is correct). But they do so in the most roundabout and incorrect way that in the process they confused future historians by stating that the Cocos and Akokisas are one in the same tribe.³⁰ Henri Folmer misinterpreted de Villiers and Rivet's article and accidentally spread the notion that de Bellisle lived with the Cocos (who are the Karankawas), which led a lineage of scholars astray.

Further down Folmer's footnote, there is a reference to Bolton's work on Mission Rosario. This is an attempt to place the Cocos in the geographic area of where the Akokisas enslaved Simars de Bellisle. The evidence Folmer provides is inadequate. Although the Cocos are recorded at varying points to have resided around the southern end of Galveston Bay, the encompassing area of Galveston and Trinity Bay is most frequently documented by the archaeological and historical record as being inhabited by the Akokisas. In assuming that de Bellisle landed in the vicinity of Galveston Bay, of which he almost assuredly did, then the likelihood that de Bellisle encountered the Akokisas over the Coco-Karankawas is far greater.

²⁹ The time period is crucial. As Kelly Himmel explains, "In 1821, American Indian groups occupied all of Texas....In 1859, American Indian groups held only the plains of the northwest and the more isolated mountains and deserts of the far west." Looking at the Akokisas and the Cocos during different portions of the seventeenth century will reveal a totally different set of circumstances, see Himmel, *The Conquest of the Karankawa and Tonkawa*, IX.

³⁰ De Villiers and Rivet consider the Cocos to have been Atakapas based on Albert Gatschet's allocation (which can be dissected to reveal its own flaws) and believed "the Coco had for neighbors 'Karankawa.'" De Villiers and Rivet, "Les Indiens du Texas," 424.

With Folmer's footnote explained, I will present two pieces of evidence that conclusively show that the Akokisas saved and enslaved de Bellisle. The first piece of evidence is a letter of assistance de Bellisle drafted that fell into the hands of the Bidais, a People closely related to the Akokisas. The second, is a dictionary compiled by the French Captain Jean Béranger of de Bellisle's captors' language. This dictionary drastically differs from the Karankawas' language.

The First Piece of Evidence: A Letter Scratched with Charcoal

Sometime between 1719 and 1720 during de Bellisle's captivity, he gave a letter he wrote in charcoal to his captors and instructed them to deliver it to the "first White" they encountered. If they did, he told them "they would be well rewarded."³¹ De Bellisle's enslavers agreed to take the message but with no intention of actually doing so:

They told me that what they had done was to mock me, and that I must think them very dumb to believe that they would expose themselves to being badly treated by carrying this letter. Nevertheless, this letter had been taken but it was for the purpose of showing it to all their tribe.³²

De Bellisle's captors instead passed the letter from band to band as something to gawk at. This inadvertently accomplished what de Bellisle intended. The letter fell into the hands of a Native American group known as the Bidais, who then passed the charcoal note to the Hasinai, who then passed it to the commandant of Natchitoches, Louis Juchereau de St. Denis, who then implored the Hasinai—his close trading partners—to retrieve de Bellisle

³¹ Folmer, "De Bellisle on the Texas Coast," 217.

³² Ibid., 218.

from the Akokisas.³³ The Hasinai agreed, and on April 5, 1721, de Bellisle reintegrated into French colonial society.

De Bellisle's letter coming into the hands of the Bidais is the first overlooked piece of evidence that de Bellisle lived among the Akokisas. The Bidai Peoples acted as intermediaries in trade from the Texas Gulf Coast to the Texas interior. The coastal tribes, such as the Akokisas and the Atakapas, are frequently recorded as being at war with inland tribes, like the Hasinai and the Natchitoches.³⁴ The Bidais maintained their standing as middlemen between the coastal and inland groups by intermarrying with the Akokisas—their neighbors to the South—and the Hasinai—their neighbors to the North (along with many smaller nations in the vicinity). However, linguistically and culturally, the Bidais—during de Bellisle's captivity—were to a greater extent related to the Akokisas.³⁵

During the meager prominence of the Spanish mission system in East Texas, the frontier Friars learned that intermixing unlike tribal groups ended in conflict. Native Americans joined missions as family units, picking and choosing between places of worship based on whether or not they culturally paired with the other inhabitants. In a sense, Native Americans shopped around for missions and self-segregated themselves based on ethnicity.³⁶

³³ Ibid., 221.

³⁴ Two sources that immediately come to mind are, Robert Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi and the Gulf* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1987), 248; Mattie Austin Hatcher, "Descriptions of the Tejas or Asinai Indians, 1691-1722, II," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (1927): 283-304.

³⁵ David La Vere contends, I think correctly, that "increasingly, the Bidais were being pulled into the Hasinai's orbit." La Vere, *Texas Indians*, 113. For more on why the Hasinai had an "orbit," see Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 91.

³⁶ As historian Juliana Barr explains in *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman*, "When allied groups of Mayeyes, Yojuanes, Deadoses, and Bidais first discussed joining a mission, Fray Mariano de los Dolores y Viana asked them to visit San Antonio, but they explained that the Indians there 'were not related to them, nor did they come from their locality, and for that reason they could not live with them.' Insisting instead on a mission settlement within their own territories, they said that 'they could not move so far away from their relatives...nor could they leave their neighboring and allied nations because they were all intermingled and had

The Akokisas and Bidais frequently resided at the same missions, which is a telling sign that they considered each other as a related People. Andrée Francis Sjoberg, who wrote her thesis on the Bidais, confirms this suggestion:

[The Indians] were distributed according to their linguistic affiliations. The Tonkawa tribes (Mayeye, Hierbipiame, and Yojuane,) were placed in Mission San Francisco Xavier, the Karankawa group (including the Cocos and Tops Indians) were assigned to Candelaria, and in the third mission, San Ildefonso, were gathered the Bidai, Akokisa, Deadosé, and Patriri Indians.”³⁷

In addition to Mission San Ildefonso, the Bidais and Akokisas lived together at Mission Nuestra Señora de la Luz and Mission San Francisco Xavier. Simars de Bellisle in his *Relation* writes that his captors “showed [the letter] to all their tribes.”³⁸ The Akokisas, who spoke the same language as the Bidais, frequently intermarried with the Bidais, and resided at the same missions as the Bidais, reasonably would considered the Bidais to be one

intermarried.”Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 131-133, 156.

³⁷ Andrée Frances Sjoberg, “The Bidai Indians of Southeastern Texas” (master’s thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1951), 18, 32. Sjoberg isn’t exact enough. She could improve her paragraph by writing that *the missions* were distributed according to Native American linguistic affiliations. Otherwise it makes it sound like the Spanish had a stockpile of Native American converts awaiting to be assigned to a mission. In reality, the Native Americans were the ones requesting the missions, maintaining them, coming and going based on their needs, and many times playing one Order off another. As Barr vividly writes, “The idea of missions as institutions through which to ‘conquer,’ ‘subdue,’ ‘pacify,’ and ‘subjugate’ indians was so firmly locked in their imaginations that they refused to acknowledge the reality of their situation. Despite such stereotypes (more often found at higher levels of administration, in day-to-day life the warriors at the San Antonio missions were crucial to the defense of the mission-presidio-complexes, and the Spaniards knew it.” Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman*, 146. See also Mayhall, “The Indians of Texas: the Atákapa, the Karankawa, the Tonkawa,” 87, 100-101; Herbert Bolton, *Texas in the Middle Eighteenth Century: Studies in Spanish Colonial History and Administration* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970), 3.

³⁸ Folmer, “De Bellisle on the Texas Coast,” 218, 221; Mayhall, “The Indians of Texas: the Atákapa, the Karankawa, the Tonkawa,” 108.

of “their tribes.”³⁹ The Karankawas, who spoke a different language, had different customs, and *generally* resided at other missions, would not.⁴⁰

The Second Piece of Evidence: Different Languages

The second and most convincing proof that the Akokisas rescued and enslaved de Bellisle comes from the French Captain Jean Béranger. In 1720, the Governor of Louisiana ordered Captain Jean Béranger to reconnoiter Saint Bernard Bay in search of a feasible

³⁹ Sjoberg, “The Bidai Indians of Southeastern Texas,” 11-12, 34. For consideration, de Mezieres does write in great detail in the late eighteenth-century of the close trading bond between the Akokisas and Karankawas. See Mezieres: I - 32, 114 II - 126, 190, 298-305. Mezieres also mentions that with the Akokisas aid (through gifts), they planned to lure the Karankawas to their village and with the Spanish/French decimate the entire tribe. 301

⁴⁰ A blemish in my argument is noticeable when realizing that the Coco-Karankawas also at times lived in the same missions and encampments as the Akokisas and Bidais. The Cocos seem to be far more cosmopolitan when compared to other Karankawa-speaking Peoples. The Karankawas range is typically thirty miles from the coast. Yet the Cocos are found more than fifty miles from the coast and in such perplexing places that Historian William C. Foster has raised questions as to their classification as a Karankawa-speaking Peoples. As Foster explains: “A number of reports on early [Spanish] expeditions suggest that the Coco had a closer connection with tribes other than the Karankawa. In 1690, a Coco village was identified by De León over fifty miles from the central Gulf Coast and between two neighboring tribes of Toho and either Aranama or Aname. Thereafter, expeditions continued to report Coco living near and associating with tribes other than the three traditionally recognized Karankawan coastal tribes.” William C. Foster, *Historic Native Peoples of Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 183, 186, 201, 208, 272-273.” Archaeologist Robert Ricklis found Rockport Phase pottery (pottery associated with the Karankawas) well past thirty miles inland. He believes that the drop of population from European diseases, European conflict, and Native American conflict opened greater territory for the Karankawas to acquire. The Cocos took advantage of this open territory, and like the Bidais, became a People who spoke various languages and intermingled with bordering Peoples. There are a dizzying number of Native American tribes in Texas. These tribes have been lost and ignored in part because they are hard to nail down to a specific location. One reason why is because they constantly transitioned, merged, migrated, and intermarried. Ricklis (archaeologist and author of *The Karankawa Indians*) interview with the author, August 2018. See also Juliana Barr, “Geographies of Power: Mapping Indian Borders in the ‘Borderlands’ of the Early Southwest,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (January 2011): 5-46. For the Akokisas and Bidais visiting the San Antonio de Béxar Presidio together, see Martínez Pacheco to Ugalde, “Reporting visit of Vidai and Orcoquisac Indians to Béxar” (Bexar Archive, 2C63, September 17, 1787); Martínez Pacheco to Ugalde, “Reporting departure of Vidais and Orcoquizas visiting Béxar.” (Bexar Archive, 2C63, September 30, 1787). For the Cocos and Akokisas visiting the San Antonio de Béxar Presidio together, see Martínez Pacheco to Ugalde, “Reporting arrival of Cocos and Orcoquisacs visiting Béxar” (Bexar Archive, 2C64, December 7, 1787); Martínez Pacheco to Ugalde, “Reporting departure of Cocos and Orcoquizas visiting Béxar” (Bexar Archive, 2C64, December 23, 1787). For the Cocos, Bidais, and Akokisas willingness to attack the Karankawas, see Cabello to Croix, “reporting on visit of Tejas Indians who gave account of Comanche hostilities” (Bexar Archive, 2C42, August 17, 1780). Keep the date in mind, this is the late eighteenth-century—nearly a century after de Bellisle’s captivity.

French settlement site.⁴¹ Captain Béranger accidentally sailed past his intended destination (unwittingly passing the marooned and miserable Simars de Bellisle) and entered Aransas Bay. Béranger stayed in the area for an unspecified amount of time to repair his ship and Biscayan launch “that were springing many leaks.”⁴²

In the process of these repairs, Béranger became friendly with a large group of Karankawas.⁴³ With cordial relations between both parties, the Karankawas served as Béranger’s guides around Aransas and Copano Bays and helped the French Captain acquire the materials needed to repair his vessels. In turn, Béranger provided the Karankawas with valuable trinkets and documented their way of life.⁴⁴ Importantly, Béranger had the foresight to create a small dictionary of the Karankawas’ language. After finishing the temporary repairs to his vessels, Béranger embarked for Biloxi.

The following year, in 1721, the Governor of Louisiana assigned Captain Béranger to transport Bérnard de La Harpe and fifteen soldiers to Saint-Bernard Bay to establish a French military post.⁴⁵ Simars de Bellisle, recently rescued and considered an obvious asset to the expeditionary force, accompanied as an ensign interpreter.

⁴¹ Saint Bernard Bay is recognized to be Galveston Bay, but in this instance, the French likely meant Matagorda Bay.

⁴² Jean Béranger, *Béranger’s Discovery of Aransas Pass: A Translation of Jean Beranger’s French Manuscript*, ed. Frank Wagner (Corpus Christi: Friends of the Corpus Christi Museum, 1983), 20.

⁴³ Béranger’s first contact with the Karankawas is evocative of La Salle’s—to a point. As Béranger relates, “[his] men, having caught sight of a band of savages were seized by fear and came back on board. The savages carried off their casks in order to get their iron hoops.” Instead of attacking the Karankawas for the iron hoops Béranger presented gifts and became affable with the Karankawas that he describes as “not [being] ungrateful to us, for they were giving to us lavishly.” Béranger, *Béranger’s Discovery of Aransas Pass*, 20-23.

⁴⁴ Tim Seiter, “Cabeza de Vaca Galveston or Follets Island,” *Karankawas*, June 25, 2017, <https://karankawas.com/2018/06/10/sizing-up-the-karankawa-were-the-karankawa-giants/>.

⁴⁵ Saint Bernard Bay has been the label for modern-day Galveston and Matagorda Bay. The party intended to reach Matagorda Bay and settle near the location of La Salle’s razed Fort Saint Louis. For the actual orders, see La Harpe, *The Historical Journal*, 15.

Jean Béranger this time undershot his determined destination and sailed the French soldiers to Galveston Bay instead of Matagorda Bay.⁴⁶ The party disembarked, and immediately made contact with the Native Americans in the vicinity. De Bellisle recognized his previous captors and Beranger writes, “the savages were very much surprised to meet their slave again well fitted out, [de Bellisle] pointed out to us several of those who had maltreated him.”⁴⁷ Significantly, Captain Béranger made note that these Indians at Galveston Bay “were different” than those he met while repairing his ship while at Aransas Bay a year earlier.⁴⁸

La Harpe asked de Bellisle's former subjugators if they were opposed to a French fort being established in their vicinity. With de Bellisle translating, the Akokisas received the offer “coldly,” and asked “if the French had brought them any merchandise. Monsieur de Bellisle answered that it was still on the way and that they had only come as a sign of friendship. The Indians replied that when anyone came among strangers, he should not come with empty hands.”⁴⁹ The Akokisas, face to face with their former slave, expected him to seek revenge—the French refusal to give gifts heightened the suspicions and tensions.

⁴⁶ Historian William C. Foster makes clear that “the French were still confused over the locations of Matagorda and Galveston Bays.” Foster, *Historic Native Peoples of Texas*, 226

⁴⁷ Béranger, *Béranger's Discovery*, 30.

⁴⁸ According to La Harpe's testimony, Béranger left a man among the Karankawa during his visit with the Karankawas. The following year, when treating with the Akokisa, he could not obtain any information on the whereabouts or well-being of this man. Jean Baptiste Bénard de La Harpe, *The Historical Journal of the Establishment of the French in Louisiana*, ed. Glenn Conrad, trans. Joan Cain and Virginia Koenig (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1971), 128.

⁴⁹ La Harpe, *The Historical Journal*, 128. The quote above has been used to make the Akokisas out as greedy, but the custom of gift-giving to establish alliances and partnerships was well established and understood on the Gulf Coast. Sieur de Iberville, the successor of Sieur de La Salle, owes his success—in many regards—to the free flow of gifts he provided to the tribes near the Mississippi. Although, de Bellisle suggests that the French colonists had few trinkets or trade goods, La Harpe's orders clearly laid out that he hand out such items to the local First Peoples in order to build the best possible foundation: “He should pay particular attention to make as many alliances as possible with the Indians of these regions, offering presents to them when he judges

Facing potentially hostile neighbors, La Harpe scrapped his plans to settle on the Texas Coast and prepared to leave for Mobile. Before setting sail, the disappointed Frenchman enticed roughly a dozen Akokisas to his ship under the guise of receiving gifts. Once aboard, La Harpe ordered four soldiers with bayonets to confine nine of the lured Indians “to bring to Louisiana.”⁵⁰ La Harpe justified the kidnapping in hopes that “upon seeing the French settlements and being well received [the Akokisas] would be influenced to want to have the French in their country.”⁵¹

On route back to Mobile, Captain Béranger compiled a dictionary from the imprisoned First Peoples.⁵² In doing so, he recognized that “their language [was] different from the former [Karankawa language].”⁵³ An excerpt of the dictionaries Béranger created is presented below:

Jean Béranger Word List Comparison		
Word	Béranger’s First Word List (Karankawa)	Béranger’s Second Word List (Akokisa)

it indispensable. He will keep a separate account for each of the nations to which he will distribute merchandise, and he will send us a copy of it.” La Harpe, *The Historical Journal*, 125.

At every mention of a French settlement, the Akokisa responded adversely. The Akokisas claimed to be “afraid of white men,” but whatever fear they had evaporated when these First Peoples led French sailors “near a heap of bones of people they had eaten and made them understand that they would do it to the [sailors], also, if they did not give them their clothes.” La Harpe, *The Historical Journal*, 18; Béranger, *Béranger’s Discovery*, 30. Captain Béranger believed the hesitancy of the Akokisas spawned from their fear “that [the French] were seeking to get revenge for the bad treatment inflicted upon Monsieur de Bellisle.” Béranger, *Béranger’s Discovery*, 30.

⁵⁰ Béranger, *Béranger’s Discovery*, 30.

⁵¹ Ibid., 30. Béranger disapproved of the beguilement. La Hape also writes that he was taking these nine individuals “to see the great chief of the French to explain to him the Indians’ refusal to receive his soldiers in their country.” La Harpe, *The Historical Journal*, 130.

⁵² Mayhall, “The Indians of Texas: the Atákapa, the Karankawa, the Tonkawa,” 90, 114.

⁵³ Béranger, *Béranger’s Discovery*, 31.

A man	<i>alane</i>	<i>chacq</i>
The head	<i>enoquer</i>	<i>sache</i>
The neck	<i>emubecq</i>	<i>coé</i>
The eye(s)	<i>emicout</i>	<i>audle</i>
The mouth	<i>emy aquoy</i>	<i>cat</i>
The hair	<i>equioay</i>	<i>queche</i>
The arm(s)	<i>sumahaha</i>	<i>noe</i>
The nose	<i>emay aloumy</i>	<i>audle</i>
A knife	<i>cousila</i>	<i>casme</i>
Water	<i>clay</i>	<i>cacaux</i>
The sun	<i>clos</i>	<i>gehe</i>
The wind	<i>eta</i>	<i>sst</i>
Wood	<i>quesoul</i>	<i>té</i>

(4.4) *These are not the complete Béranger dictionaries, only the words shared between the two dictionaries. For the full dictionaries see Karankawas.com/Language.*

The two dictionaries are a compilation of two languages: one Karankawan and the other Atakapan.⁵⁴ The language Jean Béranger records Simars de Bellisle speaking very well is the language attributed to the Akokisas.

Sufficient evidences are available to conclude that de Bellisle lived among the Akokisas. Historians Mildred P. Mayhall, Andrée Francis Sjoberg, and Robert S. Weddle

⁵⁴ The sheer difference between the two dictionaries recorded by Béranger is outstanding enough to disprove an idea of different dialects. To my knowledge, Robert Weddle is the first to point out that the word lists are associated with two different cultural groups. See Weddle, *The French Thorn*, 219-223.

have come to the same conclusions.⁵⁵ Other scholars, including Edward Kilman in *Cannibal Coast*, Kelly Himmel in *The Conquest of the Karankawa and Tonkawa*, Paul Schneider in *Brutal Journey*, Gary Cartwright in *Galveston*, and Carol A. Lipscomb in her *Texas State Historical Association* article on the Karankawas (the most available secondary source for the general public), continue to perpetuate the misinformed idea that de Bellisle lived among the Karankawas instead of the Akokisas.⁵⁶

I will now discuss the incident of cannibalism that Simars de Bellisle witnessed and show that the practice of cannibalism was present in the region surrounding the Karankawas' territory.

An Analysis of the Akokisas' Cannibalism: Shot From a Tree

Amid de Bellisle's captivity in 1720, a party of Akokisas forced the captive Frenchman to accompany them as a baggage carrier on a buffalo hunt. After three days of travel, the party reached a prairie where they slew "fifteen or sixteen" buffalo. The hunters then spotted smoke in the distance. What occurred next will be quoted at length because of the event's importance to this thesis:

When this expedition was finished [hunting buffalo], we saw smoke at a distance of about a league and a half [5 miles]. One of them [the Akokisas] asked me what this

⁵⁵ Weddle, *The French Thorn: Rival Explorers in the Spanish Sea* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1991), 223. Mildred P. Mayhall, "The Indians of Texas: the Atákapa, the Karankawa, the Tonkawa" (dissertation, University of Texas, 1939), 112. Andrée Frances Sjoberg, "The Bidai Indians of Southeastern Texas" (master's thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1951).

⁵⁶ Gary Cartwright, *Galveston: A History of the Island* (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 1991), 19; Paul Schneider, *Brutal Journey: The Epic Story of the First Crossing of North America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006), 224; Edward Kilman, *Cannibal Coast* (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1959), 72-81; Kelly Himmel, *The Conquest of the Karankawas and the Tonkawas, 1821-1859* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 19-20; Carol A. Lipscomb, "Karankawa Indians," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed April 15, 2019, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/bmk05>.

was. I told him that it was a fire on the prairie. He asked me if there were people. I answered him that someone ought to be there and that no deer had lighted the fire. They said that eight of their band would go there to kill the people and that they were their enemies. They left to go towards this smoke, where they found ten or twelve Toyals. That is the name of their enemies. Nevertheless, they were able to kill but one, who was up in a tree to knock walnuts down. With their arrows they made him come down much more quickly than he had climbed up. When this man was dead, they loaded him on their horses and brought him to the place where we had stayed to wait for them.⁵⁷ When they returned, they threw this Indian on the prairie. One of them cut his head off and another one cut the arms off, while they skinned him at the same time. Several of them ate the yellow fat, which was still raw, and finally they devoured him completely.

Afterwards one of them asked me why I had not warned them that there were twelve to fifteen at the place of the smoke because if they had known they would all have gone and would have destroyed them all, instead of killing only one. I told them that I could not know the number. He gave me a slap in the face with all his might, calling me a dog.... They decided the next morning to return to the place where they had left their wives. We left accordingly at daybreak. They went very fast. All I could do was to follow them, running as fast as I could. In addition, they had given me my portion of buffalo meat to carry.

The second evening we reached a little river where we passed the night. I was so tired that I could not go any farther. Consequently, I fell on the ground like a dead man and I slept without waking up till the next morning. Then I had to leave to join their wives where we arrived at four o'clock in the evening. As soon as the women heard that their husbands had killed one of the enemies, they began to dance for joy, and continued to do so without halting a moment during two days, holding in their hands a bone or a nail of one of their enemies which their husbands had killed.⁵⁸

Although de Bellisle's account does not speak of the Karankawas' anthropophagy—instead that of the Akokisas' cannibalism—it directly parallels the experience Jean-Baptiste

⁵⁷ Gary Cartwright, the author of *Galveston: A History of the Island*, embellishes this event by writing that de Bellisle's captors "peeled the skin off the arms of a still-living Toyal tribesman." In actuality, the act of cannibalism occurred after the Akokisas killed the Toyal—a post-mortem cannibalism. Cartwright, *Galveston*, 19.

⁵⁸ Folmer, "De Bellisle on the Texas Coast," 219-220.

Talon had in 1690 among the Karankawas. Coastal Indians traveled inland, found an enemy, killed an enemy, consumed the corpse, and then the community celebrated by ceremonial dance.⁵⁹ That de Bellisle's captors hoped to "destroy all the Toyals" confirms that cannibalism was reserved for exceptionally hated enemies. The dismemberment of the dead Toyal and the great speed in which the Akokisas' war party entered and exited their foes' territory supports that the practice served to debase and demean, an injustice worthy of similar retribution.⁶⁰ Lastly, that the Akokisas chose to consume the Toyal "completely," despite killing "fifteen or sixteen buffalo" earlier that morning (which equates to roughly nine thousand pounds of harvestable meat), is meaningful evidence that coastal anthropophagy was not purely sustenance-driven.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Ibid., 220-221.

⁶⁰ Because nearly all the Toyals at the hunting camp got away, the Akokisas likely expected an attack of reprisal, hence the swiftness in leaving. The process of going to war and hiding the women and children is also matched in this account with Jean-Baptiste's, see Weddle, *La Salle, The Mississippi, and the Gulf*, 248. Although, in this instance it seems that some women accompanied the men to setup a staging area/camp for the hunt—which is also corroborated in Jean-Baptiste Talon's testimony, see Ibid., 249.

⁶¹ Gerald Hauer, "Expected Meat Yield from a Bison Bull Carcass," Canadian Bison Association, <https://www.canadianbison.ca/application/files/2414/8778/3203/ExpectedMeatYieldfromaBisonBullCarcass.pdf>.



(4.5) With their arrows they made him come down much more quickly than he had climbed up.

Who did the Akokisas Consume: Who are the Toyals?

Back to identifying Native Peoples, the Toyals' identity is significant because the Akokisas also label the Toyals as cannibals.⁶² Historian Mildred Mayhall believes the Toyals to be the Tonkawas on the basis of geographic proximity and the name similarity of “a small Tonkawa tribe—the Toaa.”⁶³ Robert S. Weddle, the preeminent historian on French colonial Texas, similarly suggests the Toyals to be the Tonkawas, yet with more hesitation than Mayhall.⁶⁴ My thoughts differ. There are compelling clues provided by de Bellisle, Captain Jean Béranger, and Jean Baptiste Bénard de La Harpe pointing to the Toyals being the Karankawas.

To begin, Captain Béranger labels the Toyals as “that nation...among whom I had been the year before.”⁶⁵ The year before, in 1720, Béranger encountered the Karankawas while repairing his vessels on Aransas Bay. Furthermore, Bénard de La Harpe reveals “that the Tayas [Toyals]....lived sometimes on the island, other times on the mainland in the direction of the southwest, along the sea near where M. Béranger had landed.”⁶⁶ The description of the Toyals' southwest residence on the coast and their pattern of seasonally migrating from the mainland to the islands matches the lifeway and territory of the Karankawas, not the Tonkawas.⁶⁷ And the last piece of evidence is that de Bellisle mentions

⁶² La Harpe, *The Historical Journal of the establishment of the French in Louisiana*, 129-130.

⁶³ Mildred Mayhall, “The Indians of Texas: the Atakapa, the Karankawa, the Tonkawa” (dissertation, University of Texas, 1939), 106-107.

⁶⁴ Robert Weddle, *The French Thorn*, 380 n17.

⁶⁵ Béranger, *Béranger's Discovery of Aransas Pass*, 22, 29. Moreover, when Béranger lived with the Karankawas he describes them as being “divided among themselves and experience civil war.”

⁶⁶ La Harpe, *The Historical Journal of the establishment of the French in Louisiana*, 129-130.

⁶⁷ Béranger and La Harpe relied on de Bellisle as a translator. All of the information they extracted went through him first.

that he saw a bay on the hunt, which is an indicator that the war party traveled along the coast—instead of inland—for their hunt: “I dare to affirm,” de Bellisle writes, “in spite of the fact that I am no pilot, that we passed along the bay where we landed with my five comrades, who are dead now.”⁶⁸

Although “Toyal” looks more like “Tonkawa” than it does “Karankawa,” La Harpe explains that “Toyal” was one label of many: “He learned from them [the Akokisas]...that the Tayas [Toyals], who called themselves Nehee, and who the Assinays called Sadamons, were their worst enemies, and were cannibals.”⁶⁹ If the Toyals are the Karankawas, then by the French officer Jean-Baptiste Bénard de la Harpe’s testimony, the Akokisas characterize the Karankawa Peoples as anthropophagites.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Folmer, “De Bellisle on the Texas Coast,” 218-221.

⁶⁹ La Harpe, *The Historical Journal of the establishment of the French in Louisiana*, 129-130.

⁷⁰ In *The Indian Slave Trade* Christina Snyder points out that Native American groups “so zealously demonized their enemies that they sometimes called them cannibals.” Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 56-57. First Peoples and Europeans understood the connotations of cannibalism; therefore, when First Peoples aimed to make their enemies look particularly savage, they called attention to their foes’ cannibalism. Native Americans, such as the Tonkawas, also self-manipulated the title of cannibal in order to instill fear in their enemies and influence the actions of the Anglos. It thus must be considered whether or not the Akokisas labeled the Toyals as cannibals in order to make their enemies seem more savage in the eyes of the Frenchmen. Native American Peoples typically employed this tactic when trying to dissuade Europeans from establishing valuable trading ties with their neighbors—who were often competitors. But in this instance, the Akokisas themselves shun a French trading presence. For more on the manipulation of Europeans to control trade.

Another thing that must be addressed from Amanda Snyder’s book is that some historians have come up with the notion that Gulf Coast cannibalism was “not a physical cannibalism, but a way that that Native groups conceptualized and discussed the violence of slave raids. So, in other words, cannibalism or ‘child eating’ is absolutely about slavery.” Anonymous, email message to author, January 11, 2018. This view does not align with the multiple first-person sightings of anthropophagy along the Gulf Coast. There is, however, truth that Native Americans stole and enslaved their enemies’ kin.

Critiques to de Bellisle's Account: Reliability and Resentment

Since the publication of *The Man-Eating Myth* in 1979—in which William Arens boldly denies the existence of ritualistic anthropophagy—first-hand viewings of cannibalism are becoming ultra-scrutinized in an attempt to dismiss them as European fabrications. The extra examination is not inherently a bad thing.⁷¹ The label of “cannibal” carries a heavy weight; whoever is depicted as such is immediately believed immoral and inhuman. Beginning in 1503, the Spanish crown permitted the enslavement of First Peoples deemed as cannibals. Therefore, as historian Andrés Reséndez explains, “Spaniards had perverse incentives to exaggerate, sensationalize, and even fabricate stories of man-eating Indians, given the legal context.”⁷² For centuries after, oppressors continued to use the tried and true designation of “cannibal” as an effective and efficient rhetorical weapon in claiming cultural supremacy and justifying wars of appropriation, displacement, and extermination.

Yet, problems arise with this skepticism when historians dismiss accounts of anthropophagy solely based on the fact that *it is* an account of anthropophagy. When looking at an ocean of suspect claims, it is easy to declare all claims suspect.

De Bellisle's *Relation* furnishes a detailed first-hand description of Native American anthropophagy and accordingly has received its own scrutiny. Historian Paul Schneider,

⁷¹ Robert Feleppa has the same point, see Robert Feleppa, “Aspects of the Cannibalism Controversy: Comments on Merrilee Salmon.” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 34 (1995): 147-154. https://soar.wichita.edu/bitstream/handle/10057/3456/Feleppa_1995.pdf?sequence=1

⁷² Andrés Reséndez, *The Other Slavery* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016) 41-42. For further writing on the law of 1503 and this issue see Michael Palencia-Roth, “The Cannibal Law of 1503,” in *Early Images of the America*, ed. Jerry M. Williams and Robert E. Lewis (The University of Arizona Press, 1993), 21-65; Neil Whitehead, *Lord of the Tiger Spirit: A History of the Caribs in Colonial Venezuela and Guyana* (Providence: Foris Publications, 1988), Chp 7.

unconvinced with de Bellisle's account, writes that "Bellisle was either a fabricator, an exaggerator, or simply didn't recognize the ritualistic nature of the repast he witnessed."⁷³

Fabricated accounts of cannibalism are ordinarily easy to spot.⁷⁴ They are second-hand, are riddled with inaccuracies, are intertwined with Christian imagery, are internally contradictory, are laced with references to European-style meat markets, drastically morph from telling to telling, and often involve a White victim.⁷⁵ De Bellisle's account of the Akokisas' cannibalism is first-hand, is theologically bare, is coherent, is consistent with all other eye-witness accounts of Gulf Coast anthropophagy, and the victim is Native American. What is left to prove is whether or not de Bellisle's *Relation* is riddled with inaccuracies. Getting to the point quickly, the account is accurate.

To begin, de Bellisle aptly describes the environment of the Coastal Bend: clouds of mosquitoes, marshes that impede travel, and an abundance of oysters.⁷⁶ The marooned Frenchman also—quite precisely—touches on coastal Native American life: migrations based on the changing of seasons (including the periodic joining of "bands" into larger

⁷³ Schneider, *Brutal Journey*, 223-224. Schneider also asserts that the reputation of Texas coastal Native Americans as man-eaters "originated with [the] 1719 account by Simars de Bellisle." The reputation of coastal First Peoples as cannibals began much earlier than 1719. Cabeza de Vaca (15?? Published relation), Jean-Baptiste Talon (1698), and Henri Joutel (16??) all witnessed some form of anthropophagy prior to de Bellisle's time on the Texas Coast.(Sources), and this is not including many more records. In addressing that de Bellisle did not understand "the ritualistic nature of the repast he witnessed," this seems correct. De Bellisle wrote what he saw, not what he thought it meant.

⁷⁴ For a difficult account, see James Pike's *Scout and Ranger* 94-97, discussed in Chapter 5.

⁷⁵ Earle points out that numerous suspicious claims of cannibalism make reference to European meat markets, which the Native Peoples of the "New World" had limited knowledge of, see Rebecca Earle, *The Body of the Conquistador: Food, Race, and the Colonial Experience in Spanish America, 1492-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 124-125.

⁷⁶ Folmer, "De Bellisle on the Texas Coast," 210, 211, 214, 216. "There were so many mosquitoes that I thought I would die."

“macro bands”), cycles of resource deprivation, and a reliance on buffalo, deer, and seafood.⁷⁷

In addition to accurately describing the day-to-day life of the Akokisas and the environment of the Coastal Bend, de Bellisle alludes to very specific cultural traits of Texas’ First Peoples. In 1528, Cabeza de Vaca wrote that the Han (the ancestors of the Akokisas) and the Capoques (the ancestors of the Karankawas) “wept for half an hour before they spoke.” De Bellisle writes, 190 years later, of an analogous wailing when the Akokisas that rescued him merged into a larger group: “When I arrived there, I heard these people, and even those with whom I had come, yell frightfully. This made me tremble and I thought that they would kill me at any moment.”⁷⁸ The following year in 1721, when de Bellisle returned to Galveston Bay with the La Harpe expedition, the Akokisas once again are recorded as “weeping, howling, and beating their thighs.”⁷⁹

⁷⁷ As for other food related consistencies, Alice Oliver mentions Coastal tribes eating seabird eggs on barrier islands. Cabeza de Vaca describes collecting a similar root during his enslavement, Álgar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition*, trans. Fanny Bandelier (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 42; and for archaeological consistencies, see Ricklis, *Karankawa Indians*, 115.

⁷⁸ “When I arrived there, I heard these people, and even those with whom I had come, yell frightfully. This made me tremble and I thought that they would kill me any moment....Two days after my arrival at this place, I saw five or six pirogues coming. They also came from the end of the bay and landed where I was. At their arrival the same yelling occurred as before. I did not know what it all meant, though later I learned that it was their custom to yell as well for good as for bad news.” Folmer, “De Bellisle on the Texas Coast,” 216-217. Father Breton witnessed a similar greeting ceremony among the Island Caribs, see Raymond Breton, *Father Raymond Breton’s Observations of the Island Carib: A Compilation of Ethnographic Notes Taken from Breton’s Carib-French Dictionary*, trans. Marshall McKusick and Pierre Verin (Gilles Bouquet, 1665), 9. “When the Caribs meet after a long period of absence from each other, they embrace each other impelled by reasons of joy or sadness....They begin a sad chant and go so far as to weep and sob, even continuing to weep for a long time after.” As did Joutel: “What disturbed me more than anything else was the fact that sometimes the women began to weep and I was unable to guess the reason.” John R. Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley and Adjacent Coast of the Gulf of Mexico* (San Francisco: Dover Publications, 2013), 183. Even Bossu recognized this trait in other Southeastern Native Peoples. 190. Isaac Joslin Cox, *Father Douay, The Journeys of Rene Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle as related by his faithful Lieutenant, Henri de Tonty; his missionary colleagues, Fathers...*, ed. Isaac Joslin Cox (New York: Allerton Book Co., 1922), 226. discusses the weepings of the Caddos.

⁷⁹ La Harpe, *The Historical Journal*, 128. The transition from guest to slave is another attribute shared between the de Bellisle and the Narváez narratives. Unable to acquire food for the band and consuming a large amount of resources, de Bellisle gradually fell in status until the Akokisas forced him to carry his own weight.

De Bellisle also goes on to accurately describe the black drink ritual: “When it rains, no one goes out to look for food, and [the Akokisas] pass easily two or three days in this manner without food, drinking only water and throwing it up without any effort. They told me to do the same and that this was good.”⁸⁰ The *black drink*—an emetic tea brewed out of yaupon and mountain laurel berries—is consumed in great excess until vomiting occurs.⁸¹ By vomiting the participant is believed to be purified and imbued with strength. In close proximity to de Bellisle’s location, Cabeza de Vaca (1528), Nicolás de La Salle (1682), Jean-Baptiste Talon (c. 1689), and Alice Oliver (c. 1838) likewise observed the black drink ritual.⁸²

All the particular details of the Akokisas’ life and culture aforementioned—including the incident of anthropophagy—come from six pages of de Bellisle’s twenty-one-page

“In the beginning,” de Bellisle explains, “I told them to go and get [the wood and water] themselves because I knew a little of their language. When I told them this the second time, there was one who gave me a blow with all his force. I understood then that I should obey without replying.” Folmer, “De Bellisle on the Texas Coast,” 217. Béranger mentions that Bellisle might have changed this status by going to war or marrying a woman showing—as Cabeza de Vaca’s account does—that status of the enslaved was flexible.

⁸⁰ Folmer, “De Bellisle on the Texas Coast,” 217.

⁸¹ For more information on the black drink, see Tim Seiter, “Ilex Vomitoria,” *Karankawas*, June 25, 2017, <https://karankawas.com/2017/06/16/ilex-vomitoria/>.

⁸² Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi and the Gulf*, 231; Cabeza de Vaca, *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition*, 70-71; Gatschet, *The Karankawa Indians* (Cambridge: Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, 1891), 18; Nicolas de La Salle, *The La Salle Expedition on the Mississippi River: A Lost Manuscript of Nicolas de La Salle, 1682*, ed. William C. Foster (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2003), 118. This is not including numerous other mentions of the black drink ritual elsewhere.

The coastal Native Peoples considered both de Bellisle and the survivors of the Narvaez expedition to have supernatural powers. Cabeza de Vaca, Andres Dorantes, Estabanico, and Alonso del Castillo, famously became healers and acquired a large following on their trek to New Spain. The Akokisas did not expect de Bellisle to heal the afflicted, but they did expect him to understand ambiguous signs from nature as the following passage demonstrates: “We saw smoke at a distance of about a league and a half [5 miles]. One of them [the Akokisa] asked me what this was. I told him that it was a fire on the prairie. He asked me if there were people. I answered him that someone ought to be there and that no deer had lighted the fire. Folmer, “De Bellisle on the Texas Coast,” 219-220.

Relation. If the Frenchman truly fabricated his experiences as Schnieder and other historians insist, de Bellisle did so with the care of a seasoned ethnologist.

Yet not all is misrepresented in Schnieder's statement. While de Bellisle's *Relation* is an accurate depiction of life on the Gulf Coast during the eighteenth-century, the Frenchman *did* inflate portions of his narrative. For instance, I find it hard to believe that the Akokisas danced for two days straight "without halting a moment" when celebrating a successful hunt and a revenge-killing. This embellishment is understood when looking at other accounts of mitotes and realizing that celebrations of this sort were multi-day, or at the very least, night-long affairs. Fray Francisco Casañas de Jesús María, in describing the pre-war dances of the Hasinai, recollected that "they dance and sing for seven or eight days, offering to God meat, corn, bows, arrows, tobacco, *acoxio* (an herb), and fat from buffalo hearts, praying for the death of their enemies."⁸³ John Jenkins, witnessing the rituals tied to the Tonkawas' anthropophagy, reports that "[the Tonkawas] prolong [their] dances three, five, and sometimes ten days."⁸⁴ Among the Karankawas, Jean-Baptiste Talon relates that "he once went three days without eating, because nothing presented itself during that time except some human flesh of the Ayennis" which is indicative of a three-day-long ceremony.⁸⁵ The

⁸³ Mattie Austin Hatcher, "Descriptions of the Tejas or Asinai Indians, 1691-1722, I," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (1927): 214.

⁸⁴ John Holland Jenkins, *Recollections of Early Texas: The Memoirs of John Holland Jenkins* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958), 78.

⁸⁵ For more talk of the Karankawas' mitotes, see Cabeza de Vaca, *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition*, 34; Gatschet, *The Karankawa Indians*, 18; Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi and the Gulf*, 238; Annie P. Harris and Ethel Mary Franklin, "Memoirs of Mrs. Annie P. Harris," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (1937): 237; Gaspar de Solís, <http://www.sonsofdewittcolony.org/alarconex5.htm> Source. For information on the multi-day dances of the Comanches, see Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 120-122. For information on the multi-day dances of the Kiowa, see Mildred Mayhall, *The Kiowas* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 152.

Akokisas may have held their ritualistic dance over the span of two days, but that the women danced “without halting a moment” is an obvious fragment of hyperbole. There are exaggerations of this sort in de Bellisle’s *Relation*. Exaggerations in which the truth is discernible but is clouded by vagaries of time, cultural mores, and as will now be discussed, resentment.

Any reader of de Bellisle’s *Relation* will notice the palpable resentment de Bellisle felt toward the Akokisas. Unhappy with his position as a slave, the castaway found it easy to personify his captors as “barbarians” who derived pleasure out of beating him senseless.⁸⁶ “I could not say a word,” recalls de Bellisle, “without receiving a slap or a blow with a stick or being beaten with any object upon which they could lay their hands.”⁸⁷ The frequency in which de Bellisle’s laments over his mistreatment may make readers dismiss his abuse as overblown—another European tale of falsified Native American monstrosity rearing its head. But what de Bellisle wrote likely reflected his reality. Most evident is that the abuse de Bellisle endured is well established by countless other narratives of Indian captives in Texas. But, the best indication that de Bellisle was telling the truth about his horrid circumstance is the timidity of the Akokisas to accept a French trading presence—a potential boon to their economy and a valuable wartime ally—when de Bellisle returned to Galveston Bay with Bernard de La Harpe roughly six months after being rescued.

Beyond feelings of resentment influencing de Bellisle’s *Relation*, a few more factors may have impacted the document. To start, de Bellisle published his chronicle in eighteenth-

⁸⁶ Folmer, “De Bellisle on the Texas Coast,” 221.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 217.

century France and dealt with stringent government censorship.⁸⁸ When Jean-Bernard Bossu, a contemporary and acquaintance of de Bellisle, released the highly popular *Travels in the Interior of North America*, Bossu “met all the requirements of the French censors and had received the government’s permission to publish the work, [but] was thrown into the Bastille for six weeks because of his criticism of Kerléc, the governor of Louisiana.”⁸⁹ Facing strict oversight, de Bellisle likely released a watered down version of the truth. Anything that reflected poorly on him or the French government reasonably was re-shaped or conveniently forgotten. For example, de Bellisle told Captain Jean Beranger that the Akokisas tricked him into consuming human flesh by making “him eat it under the pretense of having him eat some smoked beef.”⁹⁰ This morsel of the story was left out of de Bellisle’s *Relation*—ostensibly because de Bellisle did not want to be seen in the same light as cannibalistic “savages.”

It also must be acknowledged that when reading de Bellisle’s *Relation* although he is said to have spoken the Akokisas’ language well, a comprehension of Akokisas’ vernacular does not necessarily correlate with a comprehension of the Akokisas’ culture. What actions and motivations de Bellisle might have thought he understood about his captors after living with them for a year and a half may have been grossly misinterpreted.⁹¹

⁸⁸ We know that de Bellisle released his *Relation* in the eighteenth-century. We do not know for what audience. It seems likely that the *Relation* was intended for royal officials, and then he used it as a base for his *Memoir*, which was seen by a much wider audience. If this is the case, the *Relation* is probably more accurate.

⁸⁹ Jean Bernard Bossu, *Travels in the Interior of North America*, trans. and ed. Seymour Feiler (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), xii.

⁹⁰ Béranger, *Béranger’s Discovery of Aransas Pass*, 29-30.

⁹¹ See Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, 13 for more on cultural logic.

Of all the challenges to de Bellisle's account, sociologist Kelly Himmel's is the most consequential. In his book, *The Conquest of the Karankawas and the Tonkawas*, Himmel indirectly states that de Bellisle's account of anthropophagy is concocted:

De Bellisle's account was widely reported in Europe, and it followed a narrative style that had persisted for more than two hundred years emphasizing the viciousness and strangeness of the Indian other. In this narrative style, the observer would claim to have witnessed the most depraved activities, cannibalism being a favorite.⁹²

Himmel is correct that Europeans "emphasized the viciousness and strangeness of the Indian other." De Bellisle is guilty of doing just that (as with almost all other Europeans during the time period). But if a document contains a bias it does not mean that the document is corrupted. Every human-produced source is biased. The historian's job is to holistically examine how much a source's bias impacts the profession's standard of truth (a finicky thing in itself). In doing so, I do not find any convincing reason to write off de Bellisle's *Relation* as entirely fraudulent. I recognize that censorship, embellishments, and a strong tinge of resentment inhabit the *Relation*. I also recognize that the *Relation* includes unique cultural traits of the Akokisas, verified and corroborated testimony of life along the Gulf Coast, and an experience of cannibalism that matches all other credible testimonies of Texas coastal anthropophagy. In looking at the *Relation* as a whole, the document is more authentic than the bulk of European sources on Native Americans during the eighteenth-century; as such, historians like Himmel are making too big of a leap when implying that de Bellisle fabricated his experience of witnessing anthropophagy.⁹³

⁹² Himmel, *The Conquest of the Karankawas and the Tonkawas*, 21.

⁹³ What makes Himmel's dismissal of the Karankawas' anthropophagy so interesting is that he fully recognizes the Tonkawas' anthropophagy, see Chapter 5.

Although de Bellisle is not a blatant prevaricator, the same cannot be said about the European masses keen on stories of the New World. When the French public got wind of de Bellisle's incredible account they expanded any and all whiffs of what they designated to be barbarism. Bernard Bossu wrote the widest read and most ludicrous version of de Bellisle's journey in *Travels in the Interior of North America*—the travelogue that I previously mentioned got him thrown into the Bastille.⁹⁴ The core of de Bellisle's story of enslavement is visible in Bossu's reimagining; nevertheless, the difference between the two accounts are distinct. Notice the discrepancy in de Bellisle's version of rescue by the Akokisas, and Bossu's version of the same event.

De Bellisle, *Relation*:

Two weeks after the death of my last comrade, when I was looking for worms at noontide, I saw an island which was in the middle of the bay where I was, and on the island I saw Indians who had come there to collect eggs which the birds had laid on the beach....I embarked immediately in my little row-boat to go to the island to join the Indians whom I saw. I thought to die during the crossing because it is two leagues wide and I was exhausted and very thin. But I risked everything. I finally reached this island. First I landed, and I saw at a distance of a hundred feet three men. I went towards them, and approaching the one nearest to me, I wanted to embrace him. But he drew back as if he had never seen a White. I thought then that they would kill me. When the other two came near, they took my hand and had themselves led to my row-boat. They took immediately everything which was in it, and which consisted of our rifles, our swords, our silver forks and knives, my coat, and a few other things. When that was done they began to take my stockings off, my breeches, my coat, my shirt and my hat, and finally left me as naked as my hand. They had collected on this island more than five hundred eggs. They had cooked some. They offered me some. I ate as long as I was hungry.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Finding the exact moment when Bossu met de Bellisle proves ephemeral, but it seems to have been in the August of 1762, see Bossu, *Travels*, 222.

⁹⁵ Folmer, "De Bellisle on the Texas Coast," 215.

Bossu, *Travels in the Interior of North America*:

Alone in the wilderness, [de Bellisle] fell to his knees, raised his arms to heaven and thanked the Almighty for having spared him until then. Resigning himself to the will of Providence, he headed inland to see if he could find other people. He soon saw the footprints of men, which led him to a river bank. There he found a canoe, crossed the river, and saw on the other bank Indians who were drying human flesh and fish. They were Attacapas.⁹⁶ They approached Monsieur de Bellisle, whom they took for a ghost because he was so thin. He pointed to his mouth indicating that he was hungry. The Indians did not want to kill him and eat him because he was so emaciated. They offered him human flesh, but he chose fish which he ate greedily. The Indians then stripped him naked and divided his clothes among themselves. Then they took him to their village to fatten him up.... Little by little, he began to regain his strength, but he was extremely downcast, since he was in constant fear that his hosts would sacrifice him to their false gods and then eat him. His imagination was always troubled by the horrible spectacle of these barbarians feasting on their fattest prisoners of war.... He expected that he would be clubbed to death at any moment if he got fat.⁹⁷

Travels in the Interior of North America is pocked with religious imagery, is obese with exaggeration, is hyper-focused on the Akokisas' savageness and cannibalism, is chalk full of contradictions to other primary sources, and as a caper, was published after de Bellisle's death, which disallowed any refutation.⁹⁸ What makes the validity of Bossu's account messy is that author knew de Bellisle personally. De Bellisle could have told Bossu

⁹⁶ Bossu continues in a footnote: "Among the peoples of America this name means "eaters of men." When they take a prisoner of war, they feast on his flesh. They usually live on fish and drink casina. They can speak sign language and hold long conversations in pantomime." Although Bossu calls de Bellisle's captors "Attacapas," their name, like the Karankwas, is synonymous with cannibalism. Therefore, any coastal group in Louisiana that practiced cannibalism seem to be given the name Atakapa.

⁹⁷ Bossu, *Travels*, 188. Bossu claims to have written his narrative under the guidance of a "manuscript written in Bell-Isle's own hand." This manuscript seems to have been the *Relation*. Bossu's version of events follows along almost exactly with the *Relation*.

"Fabricated accounts of cannibalism are easy to spot. They are typically second-hand, riddled with other inaccuracies, intertwined with Christian imagery, contradictory, drastically morph from telling to telling, and involve a White victim."

⁹⁸ For a comparison of Bossu's version to Captain Jean Béranger's version, see Béranger, *Béranger's Discovery of Aransas Pass*, 29. "He caught sight of fires on a little island in the middle of the mouth of the bay. As soon as it was daylight, he managed to go across; and having met some savages, he went ashore and was about to clasp them in his arms. He was received with a good slap and at the same time stripped stark naked."

an experience that *was* left out of the *Memoir* or the *Relation*. This lends a paltry credence to Bossu's narrative. But the number of brazen contradictions to the *Relation* should make complete trust of Bossu's narrative tenuous at best.

According to the French historian Gilbert Chinard, the reason why an abundance of historical sources remain unused is because the original authors "lacked artistry as writers," or at least that is what Chinard half-jokingly proposed.⁹⁹ Bossu exemplifies why artistry in writing matters. *Travels in the Interior of North America* serves up everything readers hunger for: adventure, drama, and descriptions of a foreign and by association, uncivilized people.¹⁰⁰ Because of Bossu's artistry, or as some might say, perfidy, *Travels* was well read in the eighteenth-century, and is still well read today. Henri Folmer, the translator of de Bellisle's *Relation*, egregiously makes no effort to inform his readers of Bossu's unreliability, and many other unwitting authors have fallen for Bossu's yarns.¹⁰¹

Simars de Bellisle's eyewitness account of Native American cannibalism matches the characteristics and motives I established in Chapter Two and Three. Moreover, their cannibalism occurred among Peoples who the Karankawas neighbored and intermarried. And lastly, the author is shown to have accurately portrayed other cultural aspects of the Akokisas. De Bellisle's testimony further solidifies that cannibalism existed on the Texas Gulf Coast in the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century. The next chapter will focus

⁹⁹ Gilbert Chinard, *L'exotisme américain dans la littérature française au XVI^e siècle* (Paris, Hachette: 1911).

¹⁰⁰ The word "cannibal" or some reference to cannibalism shows up, on average, 2.3 times per page in Bossu's retelling of the *Relation*. By comparison, the *Relation* itself alludes to cannibalism .13 times per page.

¹⁰¹ The best example comes from Joseph Butler who latches onto Bossu's sensationalized account, see Butler, "The Atakapa Indians: Cannibals of Louisiana," *The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 11, n. 2 (Spring, 1970): 167-176. Butler also mislabels de Bellisle's captors as the Atakapas.

on another neighbor of the Karankawas, the Tonkawas and their well-recorded cannibalism in the nineteenth-century.

Chapter Five: Neighboring Cannibalism

The Tonkawas

A slew of records document the Tonkawas' cannibalism. These Peoples had closer and repeated contact with Anglo-American settlers—hence there are far more reports of their culture and cannibalism. This is where things get interesting historiographically: their ritualistic cannibalism is ironically accepted by nearly all the historians who discount the Karankawas' anthropophagy.¹

Although there are more first-hand testimonies of the Tonkawas' cannibalism, these testimonies originate from far more problematic perspectives when compared to sources like Jean-Baptiste Talon's interrogation and Simars de Bellisle's *Relation*. Nevertheless, historians give greater weight to the Tonkawas' customary cannibalism because there are simply more first-hand accounts. This is a telling of History through quantity over quality. As a result, scholars make radically different conclusions about the Tonkawas' and the Karankawas' cannibalism on something as trivial as the difference between three sources and six sources.

Even though the accounts I am about to present have a myriad of problems, they do indeed convince me of the Tonkawas' anthropophagy. This brings us to another virtue to be gleaned from this section, that “perfect” accountings of anthropophagy are impossible to acquire. Every source, including those deemed “truthful” are imbued with bias, embellishment, and flaws. But despite having imperfect sources, the realities of cannibalism

¹ Kelly Himmel, *The Conquest of the Karankawa and the Tonkawas, 1821-1859* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 14. James Pike, *Scout and Ranger: Being the Personal Adventures of James Pike of the Texas Rangers in 1859-1860* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1932), fn. 94. David La Vere denies the Karankawas' cannibalism and then drastically overreaches in saying “virtually all Indians of Texas had practiced some sort of ritual cannibalism.” David La Vere, *The Texas Indians* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2013), 113, 119.

can still be established. The next chapter displays why coming to this conclusion is so significant. Specifically because present-day historians looking for a perfect accountings of cannibalism, are unable to find any, and proclaim the practice of cannibalism to be fraudulent.

In this chapter, I submit all eye-witness narratives of the Tonkawas' cannibalism and examine whether they match the characteristics and motivations I have previously uncovered. Then I explain why prejudicial sources can still hold great value and accuracy, and after that, I throw a curveball and explain why sources that look genuine and meet all my characteristics of Gulf Coast cannibalism can still be untrustworthy. Lastly, I explore why the Tonkawas held onto a dangerous cultural practice like cannibalism for so long.

The Tonkawas' Cannibalism: Cultural Resilience

The dominant account of the Tonkawas' cannibalism comes from Noah Smithwick, an early colonizer of Texas. Smithwick describes an incident where a party of Anglo-Americans and Tonkawas jointly pursued a body of Comanches who had stolen a herd of horses. During the chase, the Tonkawa warriors caught and killed a trailing Comanche warrior:

After killing and scalping him [the Comanche] they [the Tonkawas] refused to continue the chase, saying they must return home to celebrate the event, which they accordingly did by a feast and scalp dance. Having fleeced off the flesh of the dead Comanche, they borrowed a big wash kettle from Puss Webber, into which they put the Comanche meat, together with a lot of corn and potatoes—the most revolting mess my eyes ever rested on. When the stew was sufficiently cooked and cooled to allow of its being ladled out with the hands the whole tribe gathered round, dipping it up with their hands and eating it as greedily as hogs. Having gorged themselves on

this delectable feast they lay down and slept till night, when the entertainment was concluded with the scalp dance.²

Despite the demeaning characterization (portraying the Tonkawas animalistically gorging themselves “as greedily as hogs”) Smithwick describes a ritualistic, post-mortem, community-oriented, and revenge-based anthropophagy. The Tonkawas celebrated the Comanche’s death as a community with a ritualistic “scalp dance.” They consumed the Comanche’s flesh after his demise. And they considered the Comanche Peoples great enemies at that time.

Another Texas colonizer, John Holland Jenkins, details a resembling episode of anthropophagy. When Jenkins killed a Waco who tried to steal his horses, the Tonkawas heard of the murder and came to Jenkins’s farm seeking reprisal on the Waco because “a short time before, a band of Wacoes [sic] had killed five of them [the Tonkawas] while out hunting.”³

[The Tonkawas] came in a body—thirty of them—and insisted that I should go with them and show them the dead warrior. As we went, their excitement and speed increased, and every now and then they would trot on faster than ever, while I trotted with them, determined to keep up and see what they intended doing. When they discovered the body, they seemed wild with delight or frenzy. They sprang upon the body, scalped him, cut off both legs at the knees, both hands at the wrists, pulled out his fingernails and toenails, strung them around their necks, and then motioned for me to move aside.⁴ Seeing they meant further violence to the body, already horribly mutilated, I demanded why I must move. They said, ‘we must shoot him through the

² This incident occurred in present day Webberville, ten or so miles outside of Austin. Noah Smithwick, *The Evolution of a State*, 179.

³ John Holland Jenkins, *Recollections of Early Texas: The Memoirs of John Holland Jenkins* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964), 77.

⁴ The practice of stringing “fingernails and toenails of the departed across the necks” analogous with de Bellisle’s mention in 1719 that his captors danced and “[held] in their hands a bone or a nail of one of their enemies which their husbands had killed.” Henri Folmer, “De Bellisle on the Texas Coast,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (1940): 220.

head for good luck.’ I tried to stop them, but they would hear nothing, said they were *compelled* to shoot him for luck.

I moved aside and they shot, tearing the head literally in pieces. They then went back to the house and camped, getting me to furnish them some beef. They boiled their beef, and the hands and feet of the dead Waco together, turning them with the same hands. Upon inquiry, I found they intended having a dance, and would feed their squaws on the hands and feet of the dead Indian, believing that this would make them bring forth brave men who would hate their enemies and be able to endure hardness and face dangers. They erected a pole, to which they attached the scalp, hands, and feet of the Waco, and then with horrible yells and gestures, all danced around it, while the squaws constantly danced up to the pole and took bites from the hands and feet and then would go back and dance again. They would prolong these dances three, five, and sometimes ten days.⁵

The Tonkawas’ desire to acquire the lifeless Waco body in order to enact vengeance shows that their anthropophagic actions served to hinder the deceased in reaching the afterlife—as does the brutal method in which they dismembered and mutilated it. The celebration around the scalp pole is community-centered and ritualistic.⁶ And feeding the Comanche’s flesh to their women so that they might “bring forth brave men,” matches the motive of power absorption described in Chapter Two.

Adding another account, Robert Hall, a Texas Ranger, details his encounter with the Tonkawas’ cannibalism after the battle of Plum Creek in 1840:

The Tonkawas brought in the dead body of a Comanche warrior, and they built a big fire not far from where I was lying. My wound had begun to pain me considerably, and I did not pay much attention to them for some time. After awhile they began to sing and dance, and I thought that I detected the odor of burning flesh. I raised up and looked around, and, sure enough, our allies were cooking the Comanche warrior.

⁵ Jenkins, *Recollections of Early Texas*, 77-78.

⁶ The central object of which the Tonkawa danced, the scalp pole, is widely seen among Texas Native Americans. Pierre Talon, while living with the Hasinai detailed that “they pulled off their [enemies] scalp with the hair...[and] hang them on sticks....Upon returning from some war that was favorable to them, they dance to the songs that are for celebrating their victory....they one who has the most scalps is the most esteemed by the others.” Robert Weddle, *La Salle, the Mississippi and the Gulf* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1987), 239.

They cut him into slices and broiled him on sticks. Curiously enough the eating of the flesh acted upon them as liquor does upon other men. After a few mouthfuls they began to act as if they were very drunk, and I don't think there was much pretense or sham about it. They danced, raved, howled and sang, and invited me to get up and eat a slice of Comanche. They said it would make me brave. I was very hungry, but not sufficiently so to become a cannibal. The Tonkaways were wild over the victory, and they did not cease their celebration until sunrise.⁷

The Tonkawas harvested meat from the “dead body of a Comanche warrior” (post-mortem), the Tonkawas “danced, raved, howled and sang” as a group (community-oriented), the Tonkawas explain that eating the Comanche “would make [Hall] brave” (ritualistic and power absorption), and the Tonkawas saw the Comanches as their greatest enemies (revenge-based). Like the other Anglo-American testimonies above, Hall describes a rare, ritualistic, community oriented, revenge-based, post-mortem cannibalism.

The accounts by Smithwick, Jenkins, and Hall are first-hand and are consistent in their descriptions of Texas Gulf Coast exocannibalism. As their testimonies match in possible credibility, they also match in possible fallibility. They are blaringly biased, as they come from men who look down upon Native Peoples. They are easily embellished, as they had incentive to dehumanize the Indians. And they are tumultuously timeworn, as these three

⁷ For recollections of the Anglo-American participants at the battle of Plum Creek, see “Eyewitness Descriptions: The Battle of Plum Creek,” *Sons of Dewitt Colony Texas*, accessed Jan 1, 2019, <http://www.sonsofdewittcolony.org/plumcreek.htm#houstonreport>; John C. L. Scribner, “Indian Fighting,” *Texas Military Forces Museum*, accessed Jan 1, 2019, <http://www.texasmilitaryforcesmuseum.org/tnghist8.htm>; John Henry Brown, *Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas* (South Carolina: Southern Historical Press, 1978), 79-82, 106, 227, 452, 690, 739; Andrew Jackson Sowell, *Early Settlers and Indian Fighters of Southwest Texas* (Austin: State House Press, 1986); John J. Linn, *Reminiscences of Fifty Years in Texas* (Austin: The Steck Company, 1935), 338-344. Linn's *Reminiscences* are free online at <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/011441154>; William Bluford DeWees, *Letters from an Early Settler of Texas* (Waco: Texian Press, 1968), 230-235. John Henry Brown and a multitude of other authors have discredited many of DeWees' letters. For more information on the discreditation, see DeWees, *Letters from an Early Settler of Texas*, iv-vii; Brown, *Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas*, 79. For a list of all the known Anglo-participants, see <http://www.sonsofdewittcolony.org/plumcreek.htm>.

men wrote about their experiences years after they occurred.⁸ I deconstructed Fray Gaspar de Solís's account in Chapter One for similar reasons. Yet I believe, as do the majority of Texas Historians, that these sources legitimately attest to the Tonkawas' cannibalism. Why? What separates these White men's memoirs from Padre Solís's *Diario*?

The first reason has already been mentioned: these accounts all contain specific characteristics of Gulf Coast exo-cannibalism. Finding the same pattern in three eyewitness viewings is more than coincidence, especially when accounts prior to the eighteenth-century also follow this criterion. Nevertheless, just because a source depicts a rare, ritualistic, community oriented, revenge-based, post-mortem anthropophagy, that is not proof enough of a source's legitimacy.

Which brings us to the most compelling reason why these sources are accepted as genuine: these Anglo-Americans writers were actually in a position to witness the Tonkawas' cannibalism. While the Karankawa Peoples and the land-hungry Anglo settlers found themselves in a confused state intermittent war and peace, the Tonkawas held more durable and serviceable relations with the invading Whites. As sociologist Kelly Himmel explains,

The Tonkawas, threatened by Comanche and Wichita expansion from the northwest and blocked from old trade ties to Louisiana by the immigrant American Indians, saw the Anglo-American settlers as potential military allies and trade partners....Settler dependence on the Tonkawas for food and clothing helped bridge the chasm created by anti-Indian sentiment among the settlers, [and] realizing the potential threat to their colonies from the Comanches and Wichitas, [settlers] soon saw the Tonkawas as potentially valuable allies.⁹

⁸ As sociologist Kelly Himmel writes, these mens' memoirs are "written years after the fact [and]...and usually are influenced by a sense of historical inevitability, other accounts, and editing, by oneself or others." Himmel, *The Conquest of the Karankawa and the Tonkawas*, 141.

⁹ Himmel, *The Conquest of the Karankawa and the Tonkawas*, 61.

Simply put, the Anglo-Americans endured the Tonkawas because they acted as a barrier to other “more hostile” Indians, provided a source of trade, and lived on the outskirts of the colony. On the opposite side, the Tonkawas endured the Anglo-Americans because they served as a safe haven from enemy Indians, they bolstered raiding parties, and they represented a reliable source of trade.¹⁰

Although plagued by its fair share of hiccups, the arrangement worked well enough for both groups that one Tonkawa chief proudly boasted that he had never “shed a white man’s blood.”¹¹ The Anglo-Americans likewise lauded the Tonkawas, particularly on their military prowess. At the Battle of Plum Creek, for example, John Henry Brown recounts that,

The heroic action of Placido, chief of the Toncahuas, attracted universal praise. He seemed reckless of life, and his twelve followers....all being on foot, could only be mounted by each vaulting into the saddle of a slain Comanche. They were all mounted in a marvelously short time after the action commenced.¹²

Perhaps most telling in the relationship between the Anglo-Americans and the Tonkawas is the empresario Green Dewitt’s willingness to aid these First Peoples in acquiring land—a

¹⁰ The Tonkawas’ raiding and trading lifeways jibed remarkably well with the rough and tough Anglo-Texans, who happily tagged along to plunder Native settlements or purchase the goods the Tonkawas stole. In the early years of settlement, the “colonizers” in essence assimilated themselves into the Tonkawas’ culture. See Himmel, *The Conquest of the Karankawa and the Tonkawas*, 56-58, 60-61, 82-83. An argument can be made for a middle ground during the early nineteenth-century. Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹¹ Noah Smithwick, *The Evolution of a State* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 181. For more on the friendly relations between the Anglo-Americans and the Tonkawas see James Day, “The Karankawas,” in *Indian Tribes of Texas* (Waco: Texian Press, 1971), 158-163. On the flip side, for more on the prejudice the Tonkawas faced see Himmel, *The Conquest of the Karankawa and the Tonkawas*; Andrée F. Sjoberg, “The Culture of the Tonkawa, A Texas Indian Tribe,” *The Texas Journal of Science* 5, no. 3 (1953): 280-304; R.B. Marcy, *Army Life on the Border, comprising descriptions of the Indian nomads of the plains, explorations of new territory, a trip across the rock mountains in the winter, descriptions of the habits of different animals found in the west, and the methods of hunting them, with incidents in the life of different frontier men* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1866), 170-172.

¹² Brown, *Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas*, 82. For other instances of Anglo-Americans depicting the Tonkawas as “good Indians,” see DeWees, *Letters from an Early Settler of Texas*, 44-45; Pike, *Scout and Ranger*, 102-103; J.W. Wilbarger, *Indian Depredations in Texas* (Austin: Pemberton Press, 1967), 321.

sign of great respect in the Anglo-Americans' culture.¹³ In sum, this close relationships between the Tonkawas and the Whites positioned a myriad of Anglo-Americans to view the Tonkawas' cannibalism.¹⁴

The third factor of legitimacy in these Whites' accounts is that the authors are relatively accurate in their description of other events. In other words, Smithwick's, Jenkins's, and Hall's memoirs do not contain brazen distortions or contradictions. Texas Ranger James Pike, for instance, provides a testimony of the Tonkawas' cannibalism that checks nearly all of my boxes for characteristics of Gulf Coast anthropophagy, but upon closer examination, it holds some worrisome dilemmas. The full account reads,

A party was just starting in pursuit, and desiring to see the fun, I secured a fresh horse and started with it at full speed. We chased the fugitives some fifteen miles out. They numbered thirteen—eleven Comanches and two Kiowas, all of whom were killed or scalped. The bodies of the slain were carried back by the victorious Tonchues [Tonkawas], who made a feast upon them....when I saw the Comanches killed and scalped, I had hoped the affair would, at least, end there; and when I saw the victors carrying off the bodies of the slain, I could not conceive of their motive, for, up to that time, I had not learned that I was among cannibals; but once at the village, I was not long in discerning what was to follow. The bodies had hardly been brought in before the women commenced digging holes in the ground, over which to cook them. The bodies were disemboweled and then cut up, and the pieces put upon stakes over the fire and roasted; after which they were divided out—every member of the tribe, even down to the smallest child, getting a share.

At first I tried to avoid seeing the disgusting spectacle; but when the Indians saw this, they insisted on my presence. During the cooking, a grand war dance was progressing, at which all the achievements of the tribe from the beginning of time, when the little primogenitor of the Tonchues was nurtured at the breast of a she-wolf, down to the victory of that day, were duly paraded, and expatiate upon by improvised song, set to an unearthly music, timed by a monotonous tap, tap, tap, on the little

¹³ Himmel, *The Conquest of the Karankawa and the Tonkawas*, 59.

¹⁴ For a comprehensive look at this relationship between the Anglo-Americans and the Tonkawas, see Thomas W. Dunlay, "Friends and Allies: The Tonkawa Indians and the Anglo-Americans, 1823-1884," *Great Plains Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (Summer, 1981): 147-158.

deerskin drum. A pole was erected and the scalps displayed upon it, when the grand scalp dance was commenced. At first, only the warriors who had taken one of these trophies joined in the ceremony; but afterward the old men fell in, and gradually the crowd increased until the entire tribe, save the women were whirling in circles around the scalp pole.

That portion of the flesh which was not eaten on the ground, was given out, and taken to the various lodges, for future use, and to be set before visitors, as a choice delicacy. As I was sitting beneath the shade of a mesquite tree, three or four venerable heads of the village came to me, bearing two large pieces of the meat, which appeared to have been cut from the thigh, and offered them to me to eat. The flesh was of a rusty color, and had an unearthly, grave-yard smell; and this with the sight sickened me. I refused the proffered delicacy politely, but firmly; seeing which, Tocasan, a war chief, and several others of the principal men, who had been in the chase, gathered about, and said very earnestly; “eat it Cah-hah-ut,” which was the name they gave me, “it will make you might much brave; might much brave.”

Seeing that something must be done, I told them I wanted to go to a house near the agency, where I would get some bread and milk to eat with it. But no sooner was I out of their sight, than I buried it, and returned to their dance, which was every moment getting more and more frenzied. They had managed, by some means, to secure a supply of whisky, and their yells and screams, beside other frightful noises, together with their frantic gestures, made them appear more like demons, than human beings.

In the midst of their excitement, I left them for the night, and on my return in the morning, found the whole population completely exhausted, stupid, and almost torpid. During the day, however, they sobered off, and on the following morning were ready to join us in a grand circle hunt for wild horses.¹⁵

Pike was in a position to view the Tonkawas’ cannibalism; the cannibalism he describes matches the rare, ritualistic, community oriented, revenge-based, post-mortem anthropophagy I have established; and throughout his memoir, Pike admits to embarrassing facts such as accidentally killing a White woman after mistaking her for an Indian.¹⁶

¹⁵ Pike, *Scout and Ranger*, 95-96.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 100.

Nonetheless, Pike's memoir is known to contain clear fabrications. He claimed to have been present at the capture of Cynthia Ann Parker, the famous Comanche captive, and he writes that she told him that the Comanches never allowed "a white person over nine years old...to live," and that "their prisoners...are tortured, and then killed, and eaten."¹⁷ As the editor of Pike's memoir corrects, "Pike could not have been present...he was discharged in October and Cynthia Ann was captured in December."¹⁸ Moreover, the Comanches *did* capture and adopt Whites over the age of nine, and in all of the Comanche-related sources I scoured, I found no evidence of ritualistic cannibalism among these Peoples. There is no proof that Pike's experience with the Tonkawas' cannibalism is falsified, but because this is a sensitive topic, because he lied about the Comanches' cannibalism, and because he also lied about the capture of Cynthia Ann Parker, red flags need to be raised.¹⁹

Herman Lehmann's encounter with the Tonkawas' cannibalism in the late nineteenth-century is also not quite up to snuff. Captured by the Apaches as a boy, Lehmann came to live with the Comanches for around nine years. When the Tonkawas killed some of their number, roughly one hundred Comanche warriors saddled and surged to battle:

When we found those Tonkaways in camp our chief gave a war-whoop and we all joined in one continual yell as we charged that camp. They fled at the onslaught and several of them were killed. We took possession of the camp, and what do you suppose we found on that fire, roasting? One of the legs of a Comanche! A warrior of our tribe! Our chief gave the cry for vengeance, and we all joined the chorus.²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid., 101.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Carl L. Cannon, who edited Pike's *Scout and Ranger*, believes "that Pike was a truthful man and his memory for names and places while with the Texas Rangers is little short of uncanny." Ibid., xii.

²⁰ Herman Lehmann, *Nine Years Among the Indians: 1870-1879, the Story of the Captivity and Life of a Texan Among the Indians* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 153-154. Lehmann explains the Tonkawas success because they "were well armed and equipped." A result of the Tonkawas' interaction with the Whites.

Lehmann's memoir is free of any known flagrant fabrications, but it glorifies war, lacks information, and Lehmann never saw the Tonkawas eating the Comanches' leg—something that is heavily implied. Although Lehmann holds an insider perspective, because Lehmann sided with the Comanches, we only get a perspective of the Tonkawas' enemies. These question and issues do not disqualify Lehmann's testimony, but there are enough to give me pause if Lehmann was my sole source of cannibalism—which he is not.

The sources aforementioned make-up the bulk of eyewitness testimony of the Tonkawas' cannibalism. When deeply examining these sources, all sorts of unseemly things bob to the surface: bias, confusion, and ethnocentricity. This is when certain historians exclaim victory. They believe that a flawed source cannot be trusted.²¹ But the search for a perfect accounting of Native American anthropophagy, or any other occurrence in history, is asking the impossible. Humans are imbued with flaws; their accounts are too.

I am not comfortable relying on Pike's and Lehmann's testimony as my sole sources on the Tonkawas' anthropophagy. The testimonies coming from Noah Smithwick, John Holland Jenkins, and Robert Hall, although containing their fair share of ethnocentrism, are first-hand; in a feasible position to view the practice; lack major contradictions and fabrications; and describe the characteristics of Texas Gulf Coast cannibalism that my thesis

²¹ As Daniel Richter discusses in his historiography of Native American Studies, "Native Studies specialists and many tribal leaders...argue that Euro-American documents are so inevitably tainted by biases and falsehoods and that Western concepts of history are so invariably foreign to Indian culture, that almost nothing written by white academics—no matter how attuned they may be to cultural difference—can be trusted." Daniel K. Richter, "Whose Indian History," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 2, Early American History: Its Past and Future (Apr., 1993), pp. 383.

establishes. With these sources, there is enough evidence to authenticate the Tonkawas' ritualistic anthropophagy.²²

Before moving on, I find it necessary to address an interesting and divergent comment by the sociologist Kelly Himmel. In *The Conquest of the Tonkawas and Karankawas*, Himmel recognizes that the Tonkawas "probably practiced some form of ritual cannibalism," but he speculates that they adopted the ritual in the early nineteenth-century due to their truculent environment.²³ In other words, Himmel contends that the Tonkawas' cannibalism was not a continuation of a centuries long tradition, but a recent addition. What is gained from a sudden acquisition of ritualistic cannibalism?²⁴

Very little. Himmel agrees, "Although Tonkawa cannibalism or tales of Tonkawa cannibalism may have frightened their enemies and enhanced their usefulness to their Anglo-Texan allies, the practice had a negative result for the Tonkawas."²⁵ Cannibalism reaffirmed the "primitive" nature of their culture; it reinforced conflict with the surrounding Native

²² For other accounts of the Tonkawas' cannibalism, see William C. Foster, *Historic Native Peoples of Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 209-210, 211, 216-217; Himmel, *The Conquest of the Karankawas and the Tonkawas*, 33, 84, 159-160; Sjoberg, "The Culture of the Tonkawas, 296-297; George Bird Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians: Their History and Way of Life*, Volume 1, 200; George Bonnell, *Indian Tribes*, 38; Edwin Waller, "Reminiscences of Judge Edwin Waller," *Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association* 4 (1900): 33-53; Frank Collinson, "The Tonkawas," *Ranch Romances*, (1938): 128-30; John Salmon Ford, *Rip Ford's Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 236-37.

²³ Himmel, *The Conquest of the Karankawa and the Tonkawas*, 84. Himmel also cites Michael Taussig's "Culture of Terror," saying that "colonial pressure may stimulate, if not create, cannibalism among colonized people." Taussig's article does not exactly suggest that colonial pressures stimulate or create cannibalism, but that colonial pressures stimulate or create *the perception* of cannibalism, not necessarily the act of cannibalism. See Michael Taussig, "Culture of Terror—Space of Death. Roger Casement's Putumayo report and the Explanation of Torture," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 26, no. 3, July 1984, 495-496.

²⁴ Could the Tonkawas established consistent ritualistic characteristic of cannibalism in such a short period of time? If the practice is an addition of the long-established scalp dance, I think so. Also, in critiquing my own question, who says that cultural practices must have some community benefit?

²⁵ Himmel, *The Conquest of the Karankawa and the Tonkawas*, 84.

Peoples (especially the Comanches); and in 1862, it sparked the Great Massacre in which the Caddos and Osages on the Wichita Reservation slaughtered half of the residing Tonkawas because the Tonkawas supposedly ate a Caddo boy.²⁶

That the Tonkawas held onto the practice of cannibalism for such an extended period of time is testament to their strong cultural resilience. In the onslaught of disease, dehumanization, depopulation, and destruction the Tonkawas held onto their traditional lifeways.²⁷ And even when the Anglo-Americans forced these Peoples onto reservations in the 1850s, the Tonkawas “resisted the demands of progress more than the other reserve Indians. They refused to farm or garden, attend church, send their children to school, or live in houses because ‘their religion forbade it.’”²⁸

The Tonkawas religion, or rather, their origin story, explains their unwavering cultural endurance, and also explains why they might maintain a cultural practice as dangerous as cannibalism.²⁹ Robert Neighbors, who served as an Indian agent for the Tonkawas, witnessed these Peoples act out their creation myth. It is related as follows:

²⁶ W.S. Nye, *Carbine and Lance: The Story of Old Fort Still* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1937), 30.

²⁷ Himmel, *The Conquest of the Karankawa and the Tonkawas*, 111-112. See James Mooney, “Our Last Cannibal Tribe,” *Harper’s Magazine*, September (1901), for an example of the problem that plagued the Tonkawas in the early twentieth century because of their association with cannibalism. In short, reporters and ethnologists like Mooney are dehumanizing these Indians for a national audience.

²⁸ Marcy, *Thirty Years of Army Life*, 173.

²⁹ Dangerous in that Anglo-American societies saw it has something inhuman. Also see Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 4, for more on cultural “resiliency” and those cultures who *do* adapt. “When Native peoples adapt to foreign economies or utilize outside technologies, they are assumed to abandon their previous—that is, inferior—ways while in the process losing parts of themselves; they lose the very things that according to others define them. Once adoption becomes synonymous with assimilation, change over time—the commonplace definition of history—becomes a death knell. The more things change, the greater the loss.”

About fifty warriors, all dressed in wolf skins from head to feet, so as to represent the animal very perfectly, made their entrance upon all-fours in single file, and passed around the lodge, howling, growling, and making other demonstrations peculiar to that carnivorous quadruped.

After this had continued for some time, they began to put down their noses and sniff the earth in every direction, until at length one of them suddenly stopped, uttered a shrill cry, and commenced scratching the ground at a particular spot. The others immediately gathered around, and all set to work scratching up the earth with their hands, imitating the motions of the wolf in so doing; their hands, imitating the motions of the wolf in so doing; and, in a few minutes, greatly to the astonishment of the major, they exhumed from the spot a genuine live Tonkawa, who had previously been interred for the performance.

As soon as they had unearthed this strange biped, they ran around, scenting his person and examining him through-out with the greatest apparent delight and curiosity. The advent of this curious and novel creature was an occasion of no ordinary moment to them, and a council of venerable and sage old wolves was at once assembled to determine what disposition should be made of him. The Tonkawa addressed them as follows: "You have taken me from the spirit land where I was contented and happy, and brought me into this world where I am a stranger, and I know not what I shall do for subsistence and clothing. It is better you should place me back where you found me, otherwise I shall freeze or starve."

After mature deliberation the council declined returning him to the earth, and advised him to gain a livelihood as the wolves did; to go out into the wilderness, and rob, kill, and steal wherever opportunity presented. They then placed a bow and arrows in his hands, and told him with these he must furnish himself with food and clothing; that he could wander about from place to place like the wolves, but that he must never build a house or cultivate the soil; that if he did he would surely die.³⁰

³⁰ Marcy, *Thirty Years of Army Life*, 178. William B. Parker, "Manners, Customs, and History of the Indians of Southwestern Texas," in H.R. Schoolcraft, *Historical and statistical information respecting the history, condition and prospects of the Indian tribes of the United States: Collected and prepared under the direction of the Bureau of Indian Affairs per act of Congress of March 3rd, 1847*, volume 5 (Historical American Indian Press, 1855), 682-683. William B. Parker, one of many ethnologists sent out by the Bureau of Indian Affairs to compile reports on Native Peoples in the mid nineteenth-century, recounts the same story depicted in Marcy's *Thirty Years of Army Life*. Parker's source must have been Neighbors, or perhaps Marcy who was travelling with Neighbors at the time. Parker changed steal to murder. Sjoberg leaves out steal entirely, Sjoberg, "The Culture of the Tonkawas," 297.

When pulled from the earth by the wolf, the Tonkawas are tasked “to go out into the wilderness, and rob, kill, and steal wherever opportunity presented.” This quote tells us that the Tonkawas considered hit-and-run skirmishes an integral part of their culture. Cannibalism is inextricably tied to this warfare, an explainer for their reluctance to drop such a significant cultural trait.

Chapter Six: The Most Important Text on Cannibalism:

William Arens's *The Man-Eating Myth*

To summarize my thesis thus far, I have examined the validity of Jean-Baptiste Talon's first-hand description of the Karankawas' exocannibalism and from this testimony and others, established a set of characteristics for Texas Gulf Coast cannibalism. Then I studied Álgvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's time among the Capoques and uncovered the motive for this region's anthropophagy. Following that, I showed how Simars de Bellisle eye-witness account of cannibalism among the Akokisas held the same characteristics and motivations, and that multiple eyewitness accounts of the Tonkawas' cannibalism similarly had the same characteristics and motivations. Collectively, this suggests that the Karankawas, and other Native Peoples on the Gulf Coast, practiced customary cannibalism.

I now come to the most prominent challenge to this thesis: William C. Arens's *The Man-Eating Myth*. In the previous chapters, I discussed how colonizers and sensationalist historians exaggerated the Karankawas' cannibalism and used it as a tool in this Peoples' extermination. Now I swing to the other side of the pendulum and discuss how an anthropologist attempted to expunge the cultural practice of cannibalism from the Historical record—which is its own means of extermination.

An Analysis of The Man-Eating Myth

Sometime in the 1970s, a student at Stony Brook University asked his anthropology professor, William Arens, why he "lectured on kinship, politics and economics instead of

more interesting things like witchcraft, fieldwork experiences and cannibalism.”¹ Arens listened to the student, reevaluated what he taught, and “consequently...turned to the study of man-eaters.”²

As Arens researched popular accounts of cannibalism, he discovered a disturbing trend: there was not a single shred of compelling evidence for the practice. Could cannibalism be a colonial concoction? Arens presented the idea to colleagues who promptly told him “to concern [himself] with more serious scholarship.”³ This further stimulated Arens’s curiosity.

Unable to locate reliable textual sources, Arens sent out feelers to present-day anthropologists by putting a notice in the *Newsletter* of the American Anthropological Association asking if anyone had eye-witness knowledge of ritualistic cannibalism.⁴ Arens received four responses. The first was a dead end. The second was from a philosopher wanting to hear the other responses. The third was from a psychiatrist in New Guinea who described a second-hand account of a father eating his son. And the fourth was from a German graduate student who similarly could not find any reliable account of cannibalism and when he told this to his graduate committee, they responded by saying that he “was mistaken...[and] was too enamored of these Indians...to accept the idea that they would resort to the type of behavior western morality found repugnant.”⁵ With Arens’s suspicions

¹ W. Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1979), v.

² Ibid., v.

³ Ibid., vi.

⁴ Ibid., 172-174.

⁵ Ibid., 174.

of ritualistic cannibalism seemingly confirmed, his project picked up steam and soon Oxford University Press accepted his manuscript. The resulting 1979 monograph, *The Man-Eating Myth*, is the most influential text ever written on cannibalism.

The reason why *The Man-Eating Myth* rejuvenated a whole field of study; the reason why it inspired a deluge of articles, theses, dissertations, and books; the reason why it changed the approach scholars take when dealing with sources that contain anthropophagy is because of the book's bombshell of a thesis. Arens argues that ritualistic cannibalism has never been observed or documented. All recorded instances of cannibalism that he studied (save survival cannibalism à la the Donner Party, or "antisocial behavior" in the vein of Jeffrey Dahmer) were fabricated by Whites in their quest to barbarize and brutalize those they intended to colonize.⁶ As Arens summarizes, "Excluding survival conditions, I have been unable to uncover adequate documentation of cannibalism as a custom in any form for any society. Rumors, suspicions, fears and accusations abound, but no satisfactory first-hand accounts."⁷

Most academics, journalists, and other interested readers take this thesis to mean that Arens completely denies ritualistic cannibalism. Arens is very careful in making such a sweeping statement: "[I] have consciously avoided suggesting that customary cannibalism in some form does not or has never existed." Nonetheless, after finishing *The Man-Eating Myth*,

⁶ Ibid., 9, 13, 135.

⁷ Ibid., ?.
"I am dubious about the actual existence of this act as an accepted practice for any time or place." Pg 9
Pg 134-135 for other comments on his thesis

it becomes clear that Arens is, in fact, implying such a thesis: “the available evidence does not permit the facile assumption that the act was or has ever been a prevalent cultural feature.”⁸

Arens released his book at an opportune time. The Ivory Tower was undergoing a post-structuralist transformation and the year before, Edward Said let loose *Orientalism*, another groundbreaking scholarly work that dovetails with Arens findings of colonizers controlling the gazes of outsiders for their own gain.⁹ And to further make the environment ripe, anthropologist Michael Harner published an extremely controversial article suggesting that the Aztecs maintained a “cannibal empire.”¹⁰ Harner argued that rapid population growth and the absence of large sustainable herbivores (buffalo or deer) forced the Aztecs to rely on cannibalism in order to satisfy their protein requirements.¹¹ Arens refutation of ritualistic cannibalism provided a provocative counter to Harner’s arguments.

⁸ Ibid., 180-182. Arens continues to clarify, “The only proper theoretical stance for an anthropologist to take demands an open mind on the possibility of cultural variation....Reporting the custom to be unobserved or undocumented is the best one can hope to do.”

⁹ *Orientalism* propounds that whoever controls the popular portrayal of a people has power over that people. “To have such knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it. And authority here means for ‘us’ to deny autonomy to ‘it’—the Oriental country—since we know it and it exists, in a sense, as we know it.” Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 32.

¹⁰ Michael Harner, “The Ecological Basis for Aztec Sacrifice,” *American Ethnologist*, vol. 4, no. 1, (Feb 1977), 131. Harner’s graduate advisor, Marvin Harris, published *Cannibals and Kings* the next year and echoed Harner’s views of Aztec cannibalism. See Marvin Harris, *Cannibals and Kings* (New York: Random House, 1977), 110. Scholars refer to the concept of a “cannibal empire” or a “cannibal kingdom” as Harris and Harner cannibalism.

¹¹ Harner also includes extreme development, environmental failure, raging population rates, and an emphasis on finicky maize production as factors leading to customary cannibalism, see Harner, “the Ecological Basis for Aztec Sacrifice,” 132-134. There are numerous issues with Harner’s article. He inflates the number of Aztec sacrifices per year, he disregards of other sources of protein, but in my opinion, the most significant fault is the dangerous precedent set—that if a People practice cannibalism, it is because they do not have enough to eat and consequently do so out of a need for sustenance. As numerous anthropologists explain, and as I show in Chapter One, ritualistic anthropophagy is always more complex than a simple hungering for human-flesh. See my chapter for a critique on the sustenance cannibalism of the Karankawas. For more critiques against Harner and Harris, see Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, 70-75; Bernard Ortiz de Montellano, “Counting Skulls: Comment on the Aztec Cannibalism Theory of Harner-Harris,” *American Anthropologist*, vol. 85, no. 2, June 1983, 403-406; George Pierre Castile, “Purple People Eaters?: A Comment on Aztec Elite Class Cannibalism à la Harris-Harner,” *American Anthropologist*, vol. 85, no. 2, June 1980, 389-391 The letter and a wonderful response by Sahlinas, Marshall Sahlins, “Cannibalism: An Exchange,” *The New York Review of Books*, March 22, 1979, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1979/03/22/cannibalism-an-exchange/>

With the stage set for the *Man-Eating Myth*, the initial reception was positive.¹² William McGrew, a psychologist from the University of Stirling, writes “If [Arens’s] idea sounds preposterous, the reader might pause to reflect on how recently it was in Europe and America that withcraft [sic] was taken very seriously indeed.”¹³ John Burton, in *Anthropos*, reverberates the praise: “Despite the voluminous literature on the subject of man-eating in the western world and the plethora of folktales which turn on the same theme, Arens’s extensive and meticulous assaying of this material reveals that time after time, the act of human cannibalism is mythical.”¹⁴ As does Khalid Hasan in *Third World Quarterly*: “In a brilliant and well-documented work Arens scrutinizes the available anthropological and popular literature on cannibalism and establishes that no concrete evidence exists about the practice.”¹⁵

But after one wave of positive reviews, a torrent of negative reviews flooded in—each more vicious than the last. “The difficulty with the book,” contends James Springer in *Anthropological Quarterly*, “is that Arens is almost certainly wrong.”¹⁶ “There is so little

¹² See J. S. Kidd, “Scholarly Excess and Journalistic Restraint in the Popular Treatment of Cannibalism,” *Social Studies of Science*, 18, no. 4, 751, for an interesting article on how non-anthropologists and journalists are those who adopted and praised Arens’ book.

¹³ William McGrew, review of *The Man-Eating Myth*, by W. Arens, *Carnivore* vol. 3, no. 1, 1979, 76-77, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275331216_Review_of_The_Man-Eating_Myth_by_W_Arens. McGrew does fault Arens’ criteria for a valid first-hand account of cannibalism.

¹⁴ John Burton, review of *The Man-Eating Myth*, by W. Arens, *Anthropos*, bd. 75, h. 3/4/ (1980), 644-645, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40460213>.

¹⁵ Khalid Hasan, review of *The Man-Eating Myth*, by W. Arens, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (Oct., 1980), pp. 812-814; For more, see R. E. Downs, review of *The Man-Eating Myth*, by W. Arens, *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Nov., 1980), pp. 785-786; P.G. Bahn, “Ancestral Cannibalism gives us new food for thought,” *New Scientist*, 1992, 134, 40-41; Needham - R. Needham, “Chewing on Cannibals,” *Times Literary Supplement*, Jan 25th, 1980, 75-76; Gina Kolata, “Anthropologists Suggest Cannibalism is a Myth,” *Science*, 232, 1497-1500.

¹⁶ James Springer, review of *The Man-Eating Myth*, by W. Arens, *Anthropological Quarterly* Vol. 53, No. 2 (Apr., 1980), 148.

regard for accuracy,” quips Shirley Lindenbaum, “that one wonders whether the book was in fact ever intended for a scholarly audience.”¹⁷ “Arens—who is more of a sensation-hungry journalist than an exact historian—has received all too much attention,” comments Frank Lestringant, “[his] ‘crazy denial’ [has] undoubted similarity to the negationist historians of the Holocaust.”¹⁸

The supporters of Arens’s work saw the backlash as inevitable.¹⁹ As anthropologist Thomas Abler summarizes, “Arens attacks the entire profession of anthropology for being so gullible that we have accepted tales of cannibalism with no evidence to support such tales.”²⁰ Of course, said Arens defenders, anthropologists will belittle scholarship that challenges their deeply-held disciplinary structures; of course anthropologists are going to be outraged by a work that critiques them.

¹⁷ Shirley Lindenbaum, review of *The Man-Eating Myth*, by W. Arens, *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Winter, 1982), 59, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/481011>.

¹⁸ Frank Lestringant, *Cannibals: The Discovery and Representation of the Cannibal from Columbus to Jules Verne*, trans. Rosemary Morris (Oakland: University of California Press, 1997), 6, 191. For more critiques of Arens’ *The Man-Eating Myth*, see P.G. Riviere, Review of *The Man-Eating Myth*, by W. Arens, *Man*, New Series, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Mar., 1980), pp. 203-205, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2802019>; Thomas Krabacher, review of *The Man-Eating Myth*, by W. Arens, *Human Ecology*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Dec., 1980), pp. 407-409, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4602573>; Sahlins, “Cannibalism: An Exchange,” <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1979/03/22/cannibalism-an-exchange/>; Ivan Brady, *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 84, No. 3 (Sep., 1982), pp. 595-611, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/677335>; Neil L. Whitehead, *Lords of the Tiger Spirit: A History of the Caribs in Colonial Venezuela and Guyana, 1498-1820* (Foris Publishers, 1988), 180.

¹⁹ For the outcropping of academics who hold fast to Arens’ assertions, see Gananath Obeyesekere, *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Sea* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2005); Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 80-87, 226; Merrilee Salmon, “Standards of Evidence in Anthropological Reasoning,” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 35 (supplement), 1995 129-145. For a graceful critique of Salmons article, see Robert Feleppa, “Aspects of the Cannibalism Controversy: Comments on Merrilee Salmon,” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 34, 1995 pp. 147-154.

²⁰ Thomas Abler, review of *The Man-Eating Myth*, by W. Arens, *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 27, No. 4, Special Iroquois Issue (Autumn, 1980), 310, https://www.academia.edu/5099231/Iroquois_Cannibalism_Fact_Not_Fiction.

Arens defenders are marginally correct. It does seem like that is a minor stimulant for the rage that this book provoked. But the leading reason why *The Man-Eating Myth* has received an incredible amount of backlash is because the book truly does contain a litany of ideological and Historical errors. Its thesis enticed the first set of reviewers. The second set revealed it to be built atop a house of cards.

To have all the main critiques assembled in a single location, I will now briefly describe the problems with Arens's *The Man-Eating Myth*. The first issue is that Arens virtually sets his criteria for viewing cannibalism at an almost unattainable level: an eyewitness account from an academically trained anthropologist.²¹ This effectively nullifies every viewing of cannibalism prior to the twentieth century.²² As one scholar incredulously responds, "It is difficult to assume, as [Arens] does, that all explorers, conquistadors, missionaries, traders, and colonizers—as well as many anthropologists, historians, and journalists—have inaccurately, and perhaps dishonestly, represented instances of cannibalism they claimed to have witnessed, and for which physical evidence has been found."²³

Second, Arens has a motivation to find defects in the accounts of cannibalism he examines. The provocative point of Arens's argument is that he *could not* find any valid sources of cannibalism. If a single source is able to meet his strict criteria, his essentialist

²¹ Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, 10.

²² Lewis Petrinovich, *The Cannibal Within* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2000), 150. "‘Anthropologists,’ in the sense of university-trained professionals, have not existed until the twentieth century A.D., which leaves two million years of culture history and 5000 years of written records deprived of these professionals."

²³ Petrinovich, *The Cannibal Within*, 150. The Karanakawas and other Texas Gulf Coast Peoples practiced their exo- and endo-cannibalism in an inclusive community setting therefore only those within the society, such as the adopted Jean-Baptiste Talon, could view the activity in person. When the Karankawas' population declined, when the Spanish admonished mitotes, and when Anglo-Americans began their exterminations, cannibalism became ever harder to encounter.

statement crumbles; with this in mind, Arens looks for every opportunity to cherry pick or haphazardly poke holes in accounts of suspected cannibalism. This is seen vividly in his disqualification of Gertrude Dole's viewing of endocannibalism.

When Arens searched for sightings of cannibalism by an anthropologist, he claims to have found a single publication written by Dole who witnessed the Amahuaca Indians of the Peruvian-Brazilian border consume the bone ash of a deceased infant.²⁴ I relate her record of the event in near-entirety to show her precision as an anthropologist:

An infant died in the night. When this fact was discovered at dawn, the little corpse was flexed and wrapped in its mother's skirt and a blanket. The bundle was firmly bound with bast. The mother of the infant, Yamba Wachi, took the bundle and wailed over it as she sat on the floor of her house. Tears flowed and her eyes swelled. Occasionally she wiped mucus from her nose....One week after the date of burial, the corpse was cremated....Hawachiwa Yamba lighted the funeral pyre. He and one of his helpers opened the grave with machetes and removed the two burial pots, taking care not to open them. Nevertheless, the odor of decaying flesh escaped as Yamba Wachi took the vessels fondly in her arms and wailed over them, caressing the lower one. At this point, Yamba Wachi's husband, Maxopo, approached her beside the grave, put one hand on the vessels, and began to wail with her. Although he had previously shown no grief, he now generated tears, and mucus dripped from his nose....He quickly dumped the decaying remains into a third pot in which he had broken a small hole in the base, covered this pot with another and placed them on the flaming pyre. When they had finished doing this, Maxopo suddenly dashed toward the fire with hands outstretched as if to retrieve the corpse. His gesture was apparently a part of the ritual and was anticipated by the helpers, who had joined in restraining him....the pot was removed from the fire and soon Yamba Wachi, still wailing and weeping began to slowly and laboriously pick out of the cremation pot the tiny bits of whitened bones that remained with the hot coals and ash....Yamba Wachi continued to wail intermittently a few more days, holding the bowl of bones on her lap. During this time her adult son cut a new trough. When finished, she ground corn and made gruel. Into this, she mixed the bone powder and drank the mixture.²⁵

²⁴ Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, 36.

²⁵ Gertrude Dole, "Endocannibalism among the Amahuaca Indians," *Transactions* 24, no. 5, 568-569. This practice in some ways mirrors the manner in which the Capoques of the Texas Gulf Coast consumed their shamans.

Arens's issue with Dole's account is the lack of "indication...how, where or why the bones were turned into this powdery substance."²⁶ In other words, even though Dole gives an exact, professional, and protracted play-by-play of the anthropophagic ritual—precisely what Arens demands—because she does not describe how the participants pulverized the bones, Arens disqualifies the testimony. To take a quote from Arens's book and apply it himself, "the author is so convinced of the validity of [his] assumption that [his] distortions [are] not consciously perceived."²⁷

Moving onto the next problem, Arens denigrates those who claim to have seen cannibalism. He focuses on Christopher Columbus, Hernán Cortés, and other historical actors who are easily demonized, and then treats feasible sources, such as the shipwrecked German, Hans Staden, in the same light.²⁸ For an example of the *ad hominem* employed, consider Arens' passage on Staden:

[Staden] curiously informs the reader that "the savages had not the art of counting beyond five." Consequently, they often have to resort to their fingers and toes. In those instances when higher mathematics are involved extra hands and feet are called in to assist in the enumeration. What the author is attempting to convey in this simple way with this addendum is that the Tupinamba lack culture in the sense of basic

²⁶ Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, 37-38. Furthermore, Arens states that "with a process reminiscent of the shell game....the bones could easily get lost even from the eye of the trained observer." Of note, Dole also cites other sources that discuss the Amahuacas customary endo-cannibalism, Dole, "Endocannibalism Among the Amahuaca Indians," 570. I do perceive bias in Dole's account, such as believing that "the ritual type [of cannibalism] is usually restricted to uncivilized peoples." Ibid., 567. These biases do not seem to have impacted her record of endocannibalism. Arens' could have attacked this, but he too considers cannibalism as "uncivilized" as I discuss later in this section.

²⁷ Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, 36. the actual quote is, "A careful reading of the material suggests that, rather than trying to delude the reader, the author is so convinced of the validity of the assumption that the distortion is not consciously perceived."

²⁸ Donald Forsyth convincingly counters all of Arens arguments against Hans Staden, see Donald Forsyth, "Three Cheers for Hans Staden: The Case for Brazilian Cannibalism," *Ethnohistory*, vol. 32, no. 1, (1985), 17-36. For other instances of *ad hominem*, see Arens treatment of James Tuck and "Bloody Hill," Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, 127-129; Thomas Abler, "Iroquois Cannibalism: Fact not Fiction," *Ethnohistory* vol. 27 no. 4 (Fall, 1980), 309-316.

intellectual abilities. The inability to count is to him supportive documentation for the idea that these savages would resort to cannibalism.²⁹

As anthropologist Donald Forsyth explains, “Staden’s statement concerning Tupinamba enumeration is correct. Ancient Tupi had no terms for numbers beyond four. Larger numbers were expressed in circumlocutions, often involving fingers and toes.”³⁰ Staden is simply expressing what he saw, but Arens puts thoughts in Staden’s head (“what the author is attempting to convey”) and twists the testimony to fit his needs.

The fourth problem is that Arens forgoes explaining why cannibalism *isn’t* universal. In other words, why don’t humans eat each other on a regular basis?³¹ Why does Arens believe that cannibalism goes against “the strongest and most elementary social constraints”?³² Christopher Robert Hallpike expounds this issue in his 2017 article on *The Man-Eating Myth*:

It is very striking that Arens never makes any attempt to explain why the refusal to eat human flesh must apparently be such a powerful and universal human imperative that cannibalism has never existed anywhere as an accepted social practice. He simply assumes it to be self-evident. One might be unwilling to believe, in principle, that any society could possibly have institutionalized incest between mothers and sons, or the eating of human feces, for example. But in primitive societies (small-scale, face-to-face, non-literate, with subsistence economies) especially, meat is highly prized particularly by those dependent on agriculture because they can only eat it relatively seldom. Since people in many such societies are willing to eat stinking meat, why is it inconceivable for them to eat fresh human meat, especially of enemies killed in battle? Indeed, symbolic cannibalism is quite familiar to Christians when

²⁹ Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, 23-24.

³⁰ Donald Forsyth, “Three Cheers for Hans Staden: The Case for Brazilian Cannibalism,” *Ethnohistory*, vol. 32, no. 1, (1985), 19.

³¹ Helen Macbeth, Wulf Schiefenhovel, and Paul Collinson tackle this question, see Helen Macbeth, Wulf Schiefenhovel, and Paul Collinson, “Cannibalism: No Myth, But Why So Rare?” in *Consuming the Inedible: Neglected Dimensions of Food Choice*, ed. Jeremy MacClancy, Jeya Henry, and Helen Macbeth (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 190-203.

³² Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, 147.

they take the sacraments of Christ's Body and Blood. Arens's unwillingness to believe in the very possibility of cannibalism as an institution appears, in fact, to be his own ethnocentric Western prejudice."³³

This brings us to the fifth problem of the book, Arens does not consider cannibalism as something innately human. As a result, *The Man-Eating Myth* is written with the mindset that cannibalism is naturally aberrant or evil behavior.³⁴ Harkening back to Dole, she writes that the Amahuaca Indians drank the bone ash of the baby to "appease the spirit of the deceased."³⁵ Neglecting to do so could result in the child being stuck in this world "caus[ing] trouble, [and] hanging around wanting to kill someone." The Wari' of coastal Peru similarly describe that "[cannibalism] was considered to be the most respectful way to treat a human body [after death]."³⁶ For the Amahuacas and the Wari', endocannibalism is an affectionate act.³⁷ To not practice endocannibalism is cruel. To not practice endocannibalism is immoral. Arens is unable to inhabit this sort of cultural relativism.

³³ C.R. Hallpike, "The Man-Eating Myth Reconsidered," *New English Review*, August, 2018, https://www.newenglishreview.org/C_R_Hallpike/The_Man-Eating_Myth_Reconsidered/. Arens does acknowledge some of what Hallpike argues, see "My insistence on reliable evidence to support the assumption that of cannibalism has been interpreted by colleagues as repugnance or a refusal to admit the possibility of the practice. This is taken as an indication of an unscientific or ethnocentric turn of mind." Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, 175.

³⁴ The book's dedication showcases this belief: "I hope that in some way [*The Man-Eating Myth*] will provide meaning for a younger generation, including those to become anthropologists, who will find no need for a world thought to be inhabited by man-eating monsters." Preface vii. Two years ago, during my first read through of *The Man-Eating Myth*, I thought this meant Arens wanted the younger generation to transform how they see cannibalism; not as something monstrous, but an act that can be perceived as positive. But Arens's wants to rid the world of all man-eating, therefore he is implying that all man eaters are monstrous. Such demonization casts aside any positive interpretations of the act.

³⁵ Dole, "Endocannibalism among the Amahuaca Indians," 569.

³⁶ Beth Conklin, "Thus Are Our Bodies, Thus Was Our Custom: Mortuary Cannibalism in an Amazonian Society," *American Ethnologist*, vol. 22, no. 1 (Feb. 1995), 76, 79. Conklin interviewed eight-five percent of the Wari' population for this information.

³⁷ Salmon has the same issue, in that she "discounts...cannibalism on the grounds that it is not a normal cultural practice but borders on psychotic behavior." Lewis Petrinovich, *The Cannibal Within* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2000), 148.

The sixth problem is closely related—Arens continually looks outward rather than inward. To clarify, Arens certainly looks inward at the field of anthropology, but Arens neglects to look inward for accounts of Western cannibalism. If he had, he would have found a wonderfully documented cannibalism among Europeans.³⁸ As Louise Noble describes in *Medicinal Cannibalism in Early Modern English Literature and Culture*, “Mummy and other bodily matter were important drugs in the [Western] pharmacological arsenal and were harvested, distributed, prescribed, and consumed in a dynamic medical corpse market.”³⁹ Europeans routinely consumed human flesh in medical tinctures and mirroring one motive of Texas Gulf Coast anthropophagy, believed it renewed their vigor and gave them added strength. “The most highly prized mummy [corpse matter], was that from a fresh corpse, preferably a youth who had died a sudden and violent death, because of the widespread belief that a swift death captured the body’s healing life force, while a slow death depleted it.”⁴⁰

Moving on to the seventh dilemma, in spite of Arens’s assertion that “the rarity of the [archaeological] finds, including those of a dubious nature, does not permit the conclusion that the material evidence ever points to cannibalism as a cultural pattern in either gustatory

³⁸ Arens does include two pages on the Eucharist at the end of his book. He writes it off as a way that “demonstrates...ideological superiority over other mortal percepts and the human mind.” Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, 160. For Arens’s heaviest critiques on the field of anthropology, see 168-170.

Florence Bernault’s syllabus on European perceptions of cannibalism has a host of fantastic sources, see Florence Bernault, “Cannibals and Cannibalism,” (syllabus, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Spring 2016), https://history.wiscweb.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/202/2017/05/history600_spring2016_bernault.pdf.

³⁹ Louise Nobel, *Medicinal Cannibalism in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 3-4.

⁴⁰ Ibid. There are also occurrences of Anglo-Americans in nineteenth-century Texas practicing or considering practicing exo-cannibalism. After the Texas Rangers slew a camp of Indians in mid-nineteenth-century, Dave Lawrence “stepp[ed] up and cut off the thigh of one of the slain Indians. I [Rufus Perry] asked him what he intended to do with it. ‘Why,’ he answered, ‘I am going to take it along to eat. If you don’t get some game before noon tomorrow we’ll need it!’ “Later, the Rangers acquired food from another colonizer, “so old Dave Lawrence did not have to eat his Indian meat.” John Holland Jenkins, *Recollections of Early Texas: Memoirs of John Holland Jenkins* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958), 193-194.

or ritual form, in early times,” archaeological evidence for cannibalism is now robust.⁴¹

Before *The Man-Eating Myth*, there existed a rickety list of criteria for osteological proof of cannibalism.⁴² Since the publication of Arens’s thesis, archaeologists have revamped that list and set a stricter standard. I provide an abbreviated index of the criteria that has helped uncover archaeological evidence of cannibalism:

- Bones that indicate cannibalism are usually in a better state of preservation because the fat and muscle, which usually speeds up decomposition, are removed.
- Bones that indicate cannibalism contain cut marks that are analogous to the cut marks on processed animal bones.
- Bones that indicate cannibalism are “pot polished” from rubbing against the sides of clay boiling pots.
- Bones that indicate cannibalism have fewer signs of animal gnawing or chewing because much of the flesh had already been stripped.
- Bones that indicate cannibalism typically follow a pattern of being cut, and then broken, and then burned (harvested, prepared, and cooked).
- Bones that indicate cannibalism are widely scattered or are found in refuse piles.
- Bones that indicate cannibalism bear little resemblance to the bones of proper burials.

⁴¹ Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, 134. Arens gives a response to some of these archaeological findings in a 22-minute video produced by The Learning Channel. He says, “I think it is impossible to prove that cannibalism took place....cannibalism is this notion that seduces archaeology, if they are going to get any sort of publicity for their research, if they are going to get anyone to listen to their research, it seems as if they are compelled to say that their site, their find, is indication of cannibalism. I believe that they are seduced.” see DocSpot, “Archaeology: Cannibals (Documentary),” YouTube video, 25:00, July 19, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHUI7beK_3M.

⁴² Christy Turner and Jacqueline Turner, *Man Corn: Cannibalism and Violence in the Prehistoric American Southwest* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999), 1-9; Tim White, *Prehistoric Cannibalism at Mancos: 5MTUMR-2346* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 9-10.

Using this framework, archaeologists have discovered cannibalism in the American Southwest, in Neolithic France, and in prehistoric Ethiopia.⁴³ And in 1999, a new technique was developed to further solidify evidence of cannibalism in our past: the presence of myoglobin, a human muscle protein, in fossilized prehistoric feces.⁴⁴

Although the archaeological evidence of cannibalism is robust, the archaeological evidence of *ritualistic* cannibalism was much less evident at *The Man-Eating Myth*'s publication. That is key because Arens does not deny "rare [and] isolated instances of prehistoric beings who engaged in survival cannibalism"; instead he denies "cannibalism as a cultural pattern."⁴⁵

Not until 1993 did archaeologists make a major theoretical advancement by showing strong archaeological evidence of customary cannibalism.⁴⁶ After analyzing hundreds of sites over the span of decades in the Anasazi's cultural region, Christy and Jacqueline Turner explain that,

It became clear that sites with hypothesized cannibalism were not randomly distributed. Almost all were in or very near the Anasazi culture area. None had been found in the Mogollon region, where more severe winters should have produced some

⁴³ White, *Prehistoric Cannibalism at Mancos*; Turner and Turner, *Man Corn*; Paola Villa, Calude Bouville, Jean Courtin, et. al., Cannibalism in Neolithic. *Science* 233 (4762):431-437; Defleur, et. all, Neanderthal cannibalism at Moula-Guercy, Ardeche, France, *Science*, 286, 128-131; For the Southwest, see Michael Dice (1993) - A disarticulated Human Bone Assemblage from Leroux Wash, Arizona. Master's thesis, Department of Anthropology Arizona State University, Tempe; for archaeological evidence of cannibalism in Spain, see Fernandez-Jalvo et. al, Human cannibalism in the early Pleistocene of Europe (Grann Dolina, Sierra de Atapuerca, Burgos, Spain) *Journal of Human Evolution*, 37 (3-4): 59-622; Rougier, H. et al. "Neandertal cannibalism and Neandertal bones used as tools in Northern Europe," *Science* (2016).

⁴⁴ University Of North Carolina At Chapel Hill. "Study Provides Direct Evidence Of Cannibalism In The Southwest." ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2000/09/000913204822.htm (accessed March 10, 2019); John Noble Wilford, "New Data Suggests Some Cannibalism By Ancient Indians," *The New York Times*, Sept. 7, 2000, <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/09/07/us/new-data-suggests-some-cannibalism-by-ancient-indians.html>.

⁴⁵ Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, 134-135.

⁴⁶ Sentence structure taken from Turner and Turner, *Man Corn*, 8. "A major theoretical advance took place in 1993, when it became clear that sites with hypothesized cannibalism were not randomly distributed."

cannibalized assemblages if starvation had been the primary cause. Hence, we were able to rule out emergency cannibalism as the principal cause, and our thinking shifted to cultural and behavioral rather than environmental explanations. Environment had never topped our list as the single best explanation anyway, especially after the Polacca Wash study, in which the damaged human remains could be connected with the Hopi attack on Awatovi.⁴⁷

Turner and Turner showed that ritualistic cannibalism took place among the Anasazi, finding proof just took an enormous amount of time, a new archaeological framework, and solid historical backing.

The final problem is that Arens bites off more than he can reasonably chew. *The Man-Eating Myth* attacks instances of cannibalism among Africans, early man, Polynesians, the Indians of the American Southwest, the Iroquois, the Caribs, the Aztecs, the Tupinambás, and the peoples of the New Guinea Highlands. With such a broad range of peoples, Arens is unable to give a nuanced analysis of each group's supposed cannibalism.⁴⁸ I devoted roughly two hundred pages to carefully examine the Karankawas' cannibalism. I feel like I need two hundred more. Arens, in contrast, devotes roughly twelve pages per community.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁸ Arens kind of address this problem. He says he limited the amount of accounts he looked at to so he could go in depth. I argue that he should have gone much further in depth instead of just scratching the surface of accounts "which normally figure prominently in any discussion of cannibalism." Even still, Arens only gets up to his ankles in researching various accounts e problem. His book is meant to be a sampling of popular accounts of cannibalism Arens does addresses this problem, "In an effort to overcome some of these defects, this and the following chapter will focus on a limited number of cases which normally figure prominently in any discussion of cannibalism." Ibid., 43. For more nuanced discussions, see Lewis Petrinovich, *The Cannibal Within* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2000), 157-160; Thomas Abler, "Iroquois Cannibalism: Fact not Fiction," *Ethnohistory* vol. 27; Donald Forsyth, "The Beginnings of Brazilian Anthropology: Jesuits and Tupinamba Cannibalism," *Journal of Ethnological Research* vol. 39, no. 2 (Summer 1983), 147-178; Donald Forsyth, "Three Cheers for Hans Staden: The Case for Brazilian Cannibalism," *Ethnohistory*, vol. 32, no. 1, (1985), 17-36; R. Bowden, "Maori Cannibalism: An Interpretation," *Oceania*, vol. 55, no. 2: 81-99; Macbeth, Schiefenhovel, and Collinson, "Cannibalism: No Myth, But Why So Rare?," 193-203.

⁴⁹ For this calculation I used the index. When I could not find the group's name in the index, I did the counting manually. Africans- 83-96, 175; Early Man - 119-124; Indians of the Southwest - 125-127; Iroquois - 127-129; Carbis - 44-54, 181; Aztecs - 55-80, 165-167, 181; Tupinamba - 22-31, 73, 143, 175; Polynesians - 32-39; The Fore - 97, 99-115, 181. Arens acknowledges that his book "has undoubtedly omitted someone's favorite cannibals." But he realizes that to examine all cases of cannibalism is unfeasible and therefore analyzes "the most popular and best-documented case studies of cannibalism." 139. The problem for Arens is that if you

The New Yorker says that “[*The Man-Eating Myth*] is a model of disciplined and fair argument.”⁵⁰ The eight aforementioned problems show that *The Man-Eating Myth* is instead a model of imprecision and sharp sophistry. As one scholar aptly puts, “If anthropologists don’t want to believe in evidence for regularly-practiced, culturally-sanctioned cannibalism it is because they are purposefully avoiding the evidence.”⁵¹

The Second Part That Is Usually Forgotten

Scholars usually end there—they bash the book and call it a day. This is a mistake. Academics are so frenzied by the scent of scholarly blood, that they have ignored insightful aspects of Arens’s work.

To begin, colonizers do in fact use cannibalism as a tool to claim what isn’t theirs.⁵² Relating to the Karankawas, settlers used these Peoples’ cannibalism to justify their killings and in turn, acquire land. In one vivid instance, Anglo-Americans supposedly stumbled upon the Karankawas cannibalizing a colonist’s young child. “The Indians were so completely absorbed in their diabolical and hellish orgie, as to be oblivious to their surroundings, and

can show that one of the overlooked peoples in his study practiced a ritualistic cannibalism, his whole argument falls to pieces. My thesis provides evidence of such a ritual being enacted on the Texas Gulf Coast.

⁵⁰ Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, back cover. I could not locate the original *New Yorker* article.

⁵¹ This scholar is Kim Hill, professor at the School of Human Evolution and Social Change at ASU. Lewis Petrinovich, *The Cannibal Within* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2000), 149. The field of archaeology has had to deal with their own procrustean arguments when it comes to pseudoarcheology in the vein of “ancient aliens” and the work of Erich von Däniken and Graham Hancock.

⁵² For a good example of this in Arens book, see Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, 47-54, which discuss the Cannibal law of 1503 and page 59-60 on how conquistadors used cannibalism to justify their actions, and also 139-142. Also, Arens idea “that our culture, like many others, finds comfort in the idea of the barbarian just beyond the gates,” is certainly thought provoking. 184

were taken by surprise.” The colonizers accordingly massacred all of the Karankawas except “a squaw and her two small children.” After the Whites “consulted a little while...they decided it was best to exterminate such a race,” and proceeded to murder the three remaining survivors.⁵³

Moreover, Arens’s assertion that “anthropology has not maintained the usual standards of documentation and intellectual rigor expected when other topics are being considered” hits the nail on the head.⁵⁴ Before *The Man-Eating Myth*, research tended to lean toward the implication that all native Peoples practiced cannibalism—see Harner’s “cannibal empire.” Now scholars are far more careful with their approach to cannibalism.

And finally, Arens’s work gives us a tangible look at the awe-inspiring power historians possess. For those who believed or still believe Arens, he successfully erased ritualistic cannibalism from the Historical record. All it took was a silver-tongue and a plethora of statements that few feel inclined to fact-check. Who knew it could be that easy to wipe out such a deeply meaningful cultural trait?

In a scathing review, James Springer states that *The Man-Eating Myth* “does not advance our knowledge of cannibalism.”⁵⁵ The opposite is true. Prior to the book’s publication, the field of cannibalism had been grossly understudied (which is one of the reasons why Arens found so little scholarly-backed evidence when examining cases of cannibalism). After publishing *The Man-Eating Myth*, the book’s controversy grew to such a

⁵³ This second-hand account of cannibalism raises a great many suspicions. The little girl is never identified, the means of cannibalization is not matched by any other account, and Blank. A.J. Sowell, *History of Fort Bend County: Containing Biographical Sketches of Many Noted Characters* (Houston: W.H. Coyle & Co., Stationers and Printers, 1904), 91.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁵ Springer, review of *The Man-Eating Myth*, 150.

severe level that scholars representing an assortment of fields jump-started academic research on anthropophagy to disprove the book's thesis. In essence, Arens's book cannibalized itself—the reaction it prompted caused its own undoing. This literary cannibalism has taught us so much about an erroneously maligned cultural practice. This is why *The Man-Eating Myth* is the most important and influential book on cannibalism.

Arens has never outright admitted that his thesis is bunk, but he has taken some of the new evidence in stride: “I think the procedures are sounder, and there is more evidence for cannibalism than before.”⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Sentence structure is inspired by Ann Gibbons, “Archaeologists Rediscover Cannibals,” *Science*, Aug 1, 1997: Vol. 277, Issue 5326, pp. 635, <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/277/5326/news-summaries>.

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