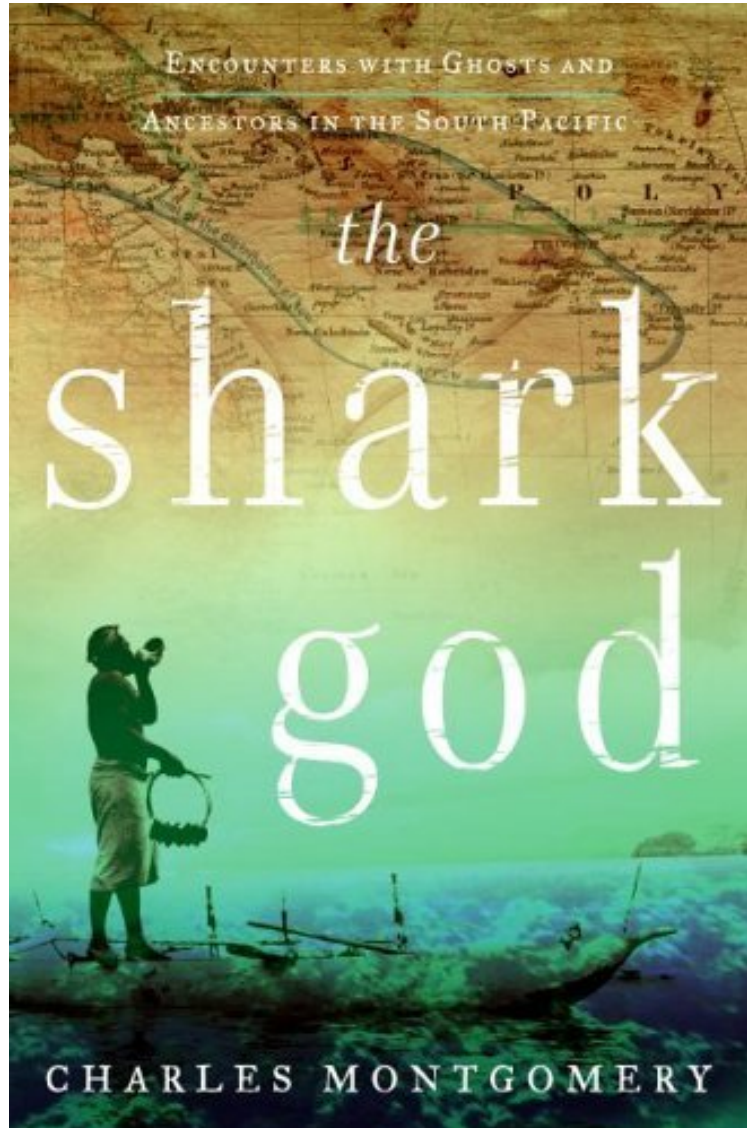


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The Shark God: Encounters with Ghosts and Ancestors in the South Pacific

Von Charles Montgomery

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Von Charles Montgomery : The Shark God: Encounters with Ghosts and Ancestors in the South Pacific before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Shark God: Encounters with Ghosts and Ancestors in the South Pacific:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Manufacturing mythologiesVon Stephen A. HainesHaving a missionary ancestor is a fine prompt for travel. Most

early missionaries, to justify their existence and purpose, were dogged journal keepers. Montgomery's grandfather was no exception. Rev. H.H. Montgomery had not only kept extensive notes, but much of that collection and other thoughts were produced in a book, "The Light of Melanesia". Discovering that account led Vancouver-born Charles to light out to the Pacific to see the results of his grandfather's and other missionaries' endeavours. In keeping his own records, Charles has produced a 21st Century adventure yarn of captivating interest. If there is a pivotal point in this book, it is the 1871 "murder" of Bishop John C. Patteson. The bishop seems to have died happy - martyrdom has an appeal to some religious folk. The century following may have justified his bizarre view, since his death has become a symbol to the local people. For one thing, they are able to brag that "we don't kill white folks any more". The author has some reason to doubt this claim as he travels through Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. He has trouble separating the various Christianities spread throughout the islands. A good many of them are still practising various forms of ancient witchcraft as part of their new religious activities. Montgomery sets himself a quest to find Melanesian witchcraft in its pure state. This is easier told than accomplished, since today's missionaries, and many of their converts, hunt down the practitioners. Sometimes with violence. The islanders, however, have a long warrior tradition supporting their activities and working out winners and losers is challenging. Still, for him to unearth the ancient practices, he must trek deep into mountain hideaways, convince those claiming to hold special powers that he won't reveal them to Christian authorities, and come away unscathed. If the Melanesians don't do him in, the weather is always waiting for its own chance. "Getting there is half the fun" as the author haunts docks and ships seeking elusive transport. Ships run weekly, monthly, or when fuel money is produced. His persistence ought to be worth some kind of award. His luck might be due to some recognition, as well. In the islands, the witchcraft Montgomery seeks is based on "mana". Mana is the life force and may be transferred from one human to another - by head hunting [cognitive scientists take note]. The more exalted the victim, the greater the mana. The missionaries, and the military forces they frequently called in to support them, sought to quell the practice. Their substitution was "Christian love", which often took a beating when the islanders objected to their land being taken or their wives and daughters raped. Montgomery laces the history of missionary work with his personal account seamlessly. Daily confronting the results of what the missionaries imposed [this book was originally titled: "The Last Missionary"] Montgomery's scepticism of their work can only be enhanced. Belief, however, is an immense force among humans. Montgomery realises he cannot dismiss it thoughtlessly. The result of his quest results in a fascinating essay on what "religion" has come to mean to the Pacific Islanders. It's far from what the missionaries intended - and intend - but it's demonstrably real. The book is a valuable social commentary, both about the Pacific islands and our own culture. [stephen a. haines - Ottawa, Canada]

Kurzbeschreibung When Charles Montgomery was ten years old, he stumbled upon the memoirs of his great-grandfather, a seafaring missionary in the South Pacific. Poring over the faint text and faded pictures, he was entranced by the world of black magic and savagery the bishop described, and couldn't help but wonder what drove the Victorian to risk his life among people who had shot, drowned, or clubbed to death so many of his predecessors. Twenty years later and a century after that journey, Montgomery sets out for the reefs and atolls of Melanesia in search of the very spirits and myths the missionaries had sought to destroy. He retraces his ancestor's path through the far-flung islands, exploring the bond between faith and magic, the eerie persistence of the spirit world, and the heavy footprints of Empire. What he discovers is a world of sorcery and shark worship, where the lines between Christian and pagan rituals are as blurred as the frontiers of fact, fantasy, and faith. After confrontations with a bizarre cast of cult leaders, militants, and mystics, the author, in his quest for ancient magic, is led to an island in crisis -- and to a new myth with the power to destroy or to save its people forever. Alternately terrifying, moving, and hilarious, with overtones of Melville and Conrad, *The Shark God* is Montgomery's extraordinary and piercingly intelligent account of both Melanesia's transformation and his own. This defiantly original blend of history and memoir, anthropology and travel writing, marks the debut of a singular new talent. **Pressestimmen** 'As delicate and impressively beautiful as any essay of exploration that I have read in recent years! the quality of his prose seems matched only by the wisdom of his observations.' Simon Winchester, *Globe and Mail* 'By far the best book of the whole year, perhaps in any field! Adventurous, thorough in his research -- the history is as compelling as the journey -- and sensitive to the customs and character of the people he meets, Montgomery has produced a remarkable work. If you seek only one gift this Christmas, ask that it be ["The Shark God"].' Michael Hanlon, *Toronto Star* 'A fascinating journey into a landscape of modern-day myth and magic, where people have not let go of their pagan ways despite the better efforts of generations of evangelical Christians. Tales of the supernatural meet travelogue, history and anthropology.' **Scotland on Sunday** **Kurzbeschreibung** When Charles Montgomery was ten years old, he stumbled upon the memoirs of his great-grandfather, a seafaring missionary in the South Pacific. Poring over the faint text and faded pictures, he was entranced by the world of black magic and savagery the bishop described, and couldn't help but wonder what drove the Victorian to risk his life among people who had shot, drowned, or clubbed to death so many of his predecessors. Twenty years later and a century after that journey, Montgomery sets out for the reefs and atolls of

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