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J E A N D E L É R Y



HISTORY
OF A VOYAGE TO
THE LAND OF BRAZIL,
OTHERWISE CALLED
AMERICA

Containing the Navigation and the Remarkable
Things Seen on the Sea by the Author; the Behav-
ior of Villegagnon in That Country; the Customs
and Strange Ways of Life of the American Sav-
ages; Together with the Description of Various
Animals, Trees, Plants, and Other
Singular Things Completely
Unknown over Here

translation and introduction by
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OF THE NATURAL QUALITIES, STRENGTH, STATURE, NUDITY, DISPOSITION AND ORNAMENTATION OF THE BODY OF THE BRAZILIAN SAVAGES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, WHO LIVE IN AMERICA, AND WHOM I FREQUENTED FOR ABOUT A YEAR

Thus far I have recounted both what we saw on the sea on our way to the land of Brazil, and what took place on the Island and Fort of Coligny, where Villegagnon was staying while we were there; I have also described the bay called *Guanabara*. Since I have gone so far into these matters, before reembarking for France I also want to discuss what I have observed concerning the savages' way of life, as well as other singular things, unknown over here, that I have seen in their country.

In the first place then (so that I begin with the chief subject, and take things in order), the savages of America who live in Brazil, called the *Tupinamba*, whom I lived among and came to know for about a year, are not taller, fatter, or smaller in stature than we Europeans are; their bodies are neither monstrous nor prodigious with respect to ours. In fact, they are stronger, more robust and well filled-out, more nimble, less subject to disease; there are almost none among them who are lame, one-eyed, deformed, or disfigured.¹

Furthermore, although some of them reach the age of a hundred or a hundred twenty years (for they know how to keep track of their ages and count them by moons), few of the elderly among them have white or gray hair. Now this clearly shows not only the benign air and temperature of their country (in which, as I have said elsewhere, there are no frosts or great cold, and the woods, plants, and fields are always greening), but

also—for they all truly drink at the Fountain of Youth—the little care or worry that they have for the things of this world. And indeed, as I will later show in more detail, since they do not in any way drink of those murky, pestilential springs, from which flow so many streams of mistrust, avarice, litigation, and squabbles, of envy and ambition, which eat away our bones, suck out our marrow, waste our bodies, and consume our spirits—in short, poison us and kill us off before our due time—nothing of all that torments them, much less dominates or obsesses them.²

As for their natural color, considering the hot region where they live, they are not particularly dark, but merely of a tawny shade, like the Spanish or Provençals.

Now this next thing is no less strange than difficult to believe for those who have not seen it: the men, women, and children do not hide any parts of their bodies; what is more, without any sign of bashfulness or shame, they habitually live and go about their affairs as naked as they come out of their mother's womb. And yet, contrary to what some people think, and what others would have one believe, they are by no means covered with hair;³ in fact, they are not by nature any hairier than we are over here in this country. Furthermore, as soon as the hair begins to grow on any part of the body, even the beard and eyelashes and eyebrows, it is plucked out, either with their fingernails, or, since the arrival of the Christians, with tweezers that the latter have given them—which makes their gaze seem wall-eyed, wandering, and wild. It has been written that the inhabitants of the island of Cumana in Peru do the same.⁴ As for our *Tupinamba*, they make an exception only of the hair on the head, which on all the males, from their youth onward, is shaved very close from the forehead to the crown, like the tonsure of a monk; behind, in the style of our forefathers or of those who let their hair grow, they have it trimmed on the neck.

To leave nothing out (if that is possible), I will also add this. There are certain grasses in that land with leaves about two fingers wide, which grow slightly curved both around and lengthwise, something like the sheath that covers the ear of the grain that we call "Saracen wheat." I have seen old men (but not all of them, and none of the young men or children) take two leaves of these grasses and arrange them together and bind them with cotton thread around their virile member; sometimes they wrapped it with handkerchiefs and other small pieces of cloth that we

⁴[Gómara,] *Histoire*, Book 2, Chapter 79.

gave them. It would seem, on the face of it, that there remains in them some spark of natural shame, if indeed they did this on account of modesty, but, although I have not made closer inquiry, I am still of the opinion that it is rather to hide some infirmity that their old age may cause in that member.⁴

To go on, they have the custom, which begins in the childhood of all the boys, of piercing the lower lip just above the chin; each of them usually wears in the hole a certain well-polished bone, as white as ivory, shaped like one of those little pegs that we play with over here, that we use as tops to spin on a table. The pointed end sticks out about an inch, or two fingers' width, and is held in place by a stop between the gums and the lip; they can remove it and put it back whenever they please. But they only wear this bodkin of white bone during their adolescence; when they are grown, and are called *conomi-ouassou* (that is, big or tall boy), they replace it by mounting in the lip-hole a green stone (a kind of false emerald), also held in place inside by a stop, which appears on the outside to be of the roundness and width of a testoon, with twice its thickness.^a There are some who wear a stone as long and round as a finger (I brought one such stone back to France). Sometimes when these stones are removed, our Tupinamba amuse themselves by sticking their tongues through that slit in the lip, giving the impression to the onlooker that they have two mouths; I leave you to judge whether it is pleasant to see them do that, and whether that deforms them or not. What is more, I have seen men who, not content with merely wearing these green stones in their lips, also wore them in both cheeks, which they had likewise had pierced for the purpose.⁵

As for the nose: our midwives over here pull on the noses of newborn babies to make them longer and more handsome; however, our Americans, for whom the beauty of their children lies in their being pug-nosed, have the noses of their children pushed in and crushed with the thumb as soon as they come out of their mothers' wombs (just as they do in France with spaniels and other puppies). Someone else has said that there is a certain part of Peru where the Indians have such outlandishly long noses that they set in them emeralds, turquoises, and other white and red stones with gold thread.^b

Our Brazilians often paint their bodies in motley hues; but it is

^a[In French, *teston*; in English, "testoon," a silver coin.]

^b[Gómara,] *Histoire*, Book 4, Chapter 108.

especially their custom to blacken their thighs and legs so thoroughly with the juice of a certain fruit, which they call *genipap*,^a that seeing them from a little distance, you would think they had donned the hose of a priest; and this black dye is so indelibly fixed on their skin that even if they go into the water, or wash as much as they please, they cannot remove it for ten or twelve days.

They also have crescent shaped pendants, more than half a foot long, made of very even-textured bone, white as alabaster, which they name *y-aci*, from their name for the moon; they wear them hung from the neck by a little cord made of cotton thread, swinging flat against the chest.

Similarly, they take innumerable little pieces of a seashell called *vignol*, and polish them for a long time on a piece of sandstone, until they are as thin, round, and smooth as a penny; these they pierce through the center and string onto cotton threads to make necklaces that they call *boüre*, which they like to wear twisted around their necks, as we do over here with gold chains. I think this is what some people call "porcelain shell";^b we see many women over here wearing belts of it. When I arrived back in France, I had more than fifteen feet of it, as fine as you might ever see. The savages also make these *boüre* of a certain kind of black wood, which is very well suited to this since it is almost as heavy and shiny as jet.

Our Americans have a great many ordinary hens, which the Portuguese introduced among them and for which they have a use that I will now describe. They pluck the white ones, and after they have boiled the feathers and the down and dyed them red with brazilwood, they cut them up finer than mincemeat (with iron tools since they have acquired them—before that with sharpened stones). Having first rubbed themselves with a certain gum that they keep for this purpose, they cover themselves with these, so that they are feathered all over: their bodies, arms, and legs all bedecked; in this condition they seem to be all downy, like pigeons or other birds newly hatched. It is likely that some observers, who upon their arrival saw these people thus adorned, went back home without any further acquaintance with them, and proceeded to spread the rumor that the savages were covered with hair. But, as I have said above, they are not so in their natural state; that rumor has been based on ignorance and too easily accepted.

^a*Genipa americana* L.

^b[In modern usage, the cowrie.]

In the same vein, someone has written that the people of Cumana anoint themselves with a certain gum or sticky unguent, and then cover themselves with feathers of various colors; they are not unhandsome in such a costume.^a

As for the head ornaments of our Tupinikin,^{b,6} aside from the tonsure in the front and the hair hanging down in back, which I have mentioned, they bind and arrange wing feathers of rosy or red hues, or other colors, to make adornments for their foreheads somewhat resembling the real or false hair, called "rackets" or "batwings," with which the ladies and young girls of France and of other countries over here have been decorating their heads; you would say that they have acquired this invention from our savages, who call this device *yempenambi*.

They also have pendants in their ears, made from white bone, of almost the same kind as the bodkin that the young boys wear in their pierced lips. Furthermore, they have in their country a bird that they call *toucan*, which (as I will later describe more fully) has a plumage as black as a crow's, except for a patch under the neck, which is about four fingers' width long and three wide, all covered with fine little yellow feathers, edged with red on the bottom. They skin off these patches (which they also call *toucan*, from the name of the bird that bears them), of which they have a large supply; after these are dry, they attach them with a wax that they call *yra-yetic*, one on each side of the face in front of the ears. These yellow plaques, worn on their cheeks, seem like two ornaments of gilded copper on the ends of the bit of a horse's bridle.

If our Brazilians go off to war, or if—as I will recount elsewhere—they ceremonially kill a prisoner in order to eat him, they want to be more gallantly adorned and to look more bold and valiant, and so they put on robes, headdresses, bracelets, and other ornaments of green, red and blue feathers, and of other various true and natural colors of extreme beauty. When these feathers have been mixed and combined, and neatly bound to each other with very small pieces of cane and cotton thread (there is no featherworker in France who could handle them better, nor arrange them more skillfully), you would judge that the clothes made of them were of a deep-napped velvet. With the same workmanship they make the ornaments for their wooden swords and clubs, which, decorated and adorned

^a[Gómara,] *Histoire*, Book 2, Chapter 79.

^b[Léry means Tupinamba. See note 6.]

with these feathers so well suited and fashioned to this use, are a marvelous sight.

To finish off their outfitting: they procure from their neighbors great gray-hued ostrich feathers (which shows that there are some of these huge, heavy birds in certain parts of those lands, where, however, not to misrepresent anything, I myself have not seen any).⁷ Binding all the quill ends together, with the other ends of the feathers spread out like a little tent, or like a rose, they make a great cluster of plumes that they call *araroye*. They tie this around their hips with a cotton string, the narrow part next to the flesh, and the spread-out feathers facing outward. When they are rigged out in this you would say (as it has no other purpose) that they were carrying a chicken-coop attached to their buttocks.

I will explain more fully in another place how the greatest warriors among them, in order to show their valor—especially to show how many enemies they have killed, and how many prisoners they have massacred to eat—make incisions in their breast, arms, and thighs; they then rub these slashes with a certain black powder, which makes the scars visible for life, as if they were wearing hose and doublets slit with great gashes in the Swiss fashion.

If it is a question of leaping, drinking and *caouimage*⁸ (which is just about their daily occupation), to have—besides their voices and the chants that they customarily use in their dances—something more to arouse their spirits, they gather a certain rather firm-skinned fruit of the size and approximately the shape of a water-chestnut. When these are dried and the pits removed, they put little stones inside them and string several of them together, making leggings that, when tied on, make as much noise as snail shells—indeed, almost as much as the bells we have over here (which they greatly covet).

They have a kind of tree in that region, which bears a fruit as big as an ostrich-egg, and of the same shape.^a The savages pierce it through the middle (as you see children in France pierce big walnuts to make rattles), then hollow it out and put little round stones into it, or else kernels of their coarse grain (of which I will speak later); they then pass a stick about a foot and a half long through it. In this way they make an instrument that they call a *maraca*, which rattles louder than a pig bladder full of peas, and which our Brazilians usually have in hand. When I discuss their religion, I will tell you the idea they have about this *maraca* and its

^aThe calabash tree, *Crescentia cubete* L.

sound once they have adorned it with beautiful feathers and consecrated it to the use that we will see.

There you have their natural condition, and the accoutrements and ornaments with which our Tupinamba customarily outfit themselves in their country. Besides all that, since we had carried in our ships a great quantity of cloth in red, green, yellow, and other colors, we had coats and multicolored breeches made for them, which we exchanged for food supplies, monkeys, parrots, cotton, long peppers, and other things of their region with which our seamen usually load their ships. Now some, with nothing else on their bodies, would sometimes put on these wide, sailor-style trousers, while others, on the contrary, would leave aside the trousers and put on only the jackets, which came down just to their buttocks. After they had gawked at each other a while and paraded around in these outfits (which gave us our fill of laughing), they would take them off and leave them in their houses until the desire came to don them again; they also did this with the hats and shirts we gave them.

Now that I have fully treated what can be said concerning the exterior of the bodies of the American men and of the male children, if you would picture to yourself a savage according to this description, you may imagine in the first place a naked man, well formed and proportioned in his limbs, with all the hair on his body plucked out; his hair shaved in the fashion I have described; the lips and cheeks slit, with pointed bones or green stones set in them; his ears pierced, with pendants in the holes; his body painted; his thighs and legs blackened with the dye that they make from the *genipap* fruit that I mentioned; and with necklaces made up of innumerable little pieces of the big seashell that they call *vignol*. Thus you will see him as he usually is in his country, and, as far as his natural condition is concerned, such as you will see him portrayed in the following illustration, wearing only his crescent of polished bone on his breast, his stone in the hole in his lip, and, to show his general bearing, his unbent bow and his arrows in his hands. To fill out this plate, we have put near this Tupinamba one of his women, who, in their customary way, is holding her child in a cotton scarf, with the child holding on to her side with both legs. Next to the three is a cotton bed, made like a fishing net, hung in the air, which is how they sleep in their country. There is also the figure of the fruit that they call *ananas*,^a which, as I shall describe hereafter, is one of the best produced in this land of Brazil.

^a[Pineapple.]



For the second contemplation of a savage, remove all the flourishes described above, and after rubbing him with a glutinous gum, cover his whole torso, arms, and legs with little feathers minced fine, like red-dyed down; when you have made him artificially hairy with this fuzzy down, you can imagine what a fine fellow he is.

In the third place, whether he remains in his natural color, or whether he is painted or covered with feathers, attire him again in his garments, headdresses and bracelets so laboriously wrought of these beautiful natural feathers of various colors that I have described to you; when he is thus outfitted, you might say that he is in his full Papal splendor.⁹

For the fourth description, leave him half-naked and half-dressed, in the way I have described him; give him the breeches and jackets of our colored cloth, with one of the sleeves green and the other yellow; you will judge that he no longer needs anything but a fool's bauble.

Finally, if you add to these the instrument called the *maraca* in his hand, the plumed harness that they call *araroye* on his hips, and his rattles made of fruits around his legs, you will then see him (as I will show him again later) equipped as he is when he dances, leaps, drinks, and capers about.

As for the rest of the devices that the savages use to bedeck and adorn their bodies, according to the description that I have just given: you would need several illustrations to represent them well, and even then you could not convey their appearance without adding painting, which would require a separate book. However, beyond what I have already said about them, when I come to speak of their wars and their arms, lacerating their bodies, and putting in their hands their wooden swords (or clubs), and their bows and arrows, I will portray them as more furious.

But for now let us leave a little to one side our Tupinamba in all their magnificence, frolicking and enjoying the good times that they know so well how to have, and see whether their wives and daughters, whom they call *quoniam* (and in some parts, since the arrival of the Portuguese, *Maria*) are better adorned and decked out.

First, besides what I said at the beginning of this chapter—that they ordinarily go naked as well as the men—they also share with them the practice of pulling out all body hair, as well as the eyelashes and eyebrows. They do not follow the men's custom regarding the hair of the head: for while the latter, as I have said above, shave their hair in front and clip it in the back, the women not only let it grow long, but also (like the women over here), comb and wash it very carefully; in fact, they tie it

up sometimes with a red-dyed cotton string. However, they more often let it hang on their shoulders, and go about wearing it loose.

They differ also from the men in that they do not slit their lips or cheeks, and so they wear no stones in their faces. But as for their ears, they have them pierced in so extreme a fashion for wearing pendants that when they are removed, you could easily pass a finger through the holes; what is more, when they wear pendants made of that big scallop shell called *vignol*, which are white, round, and as long as a medium-sized tallow candle, their ears swing on their shoulders, even over their breasts; if you see them from a little distance, it looks like the ears of a bloodhound hanging down on each side.

As for their faces, this is how they paint them. A neighbor woman or companion, with a little brush in hand, begins a small circle right in the middle of the cheek of the one who is having her face painted; turning the brush all around to trace a scroll or the shape of a snail-shell, she will continue until she has adorned and bedizened the face with various hues of blue, yellow, and red; also (as some shameless women in France likewise do), where the eyelashes and eyebrows have been plucked, she will not neglect to apply a stroke of the brush.

Moreover, they make big bracelets, composed of several pieces of white bone, cut and notched like big fish-scales, which they know how so closely to match and so nicely to join—with wax and a kind of gum mixed together into a glue—that it could not be better done. When the work is finished, it is about a foot and a half long; it could be best compared to the cuff used in playing ball over here. Likewise, they wear the white necklaces (called *boüre* in their language) that I have described above, but they do not wear them hung around the neck, as you have heard that the men do; they simply twist them around their arms. That is why, for the same use, they find so pretty the little beads of glass that they call *mauroubi*, in yellow, blue, green, and other colors, strung like a rosary, which we brought over there in great number for barter. Indeed, whether we went into their villages or they came into our fort, they would offer us fruits or some other commodity from their country in exchange for them, and with their customary flattering speech, they would be after us incessantly, pestering us and saying "*Mair, deagatorem, amabé mauroubi*":¹⁰ that is, "Frenchman, you are good; give me some of your bracelets of glass beads." They would do the same thing to get combs from us, which they call *guap* or *kuap*, mirrors, which they call *aroua*, and all the other goods and merchandise we had that they desired.

But among the things doubly strange and truly marvelous that I

observed in these Brazilian women, there is this: although they do not paint their bodies, arms, thighs, and legs as often as the men do, and do not cover themselves with feathers or with anything else that grows in their land, still, although we tried several times to give them dresses and shifts (as I have said we did for the men, who sometimes put them on), it has never been in our power to make them wear clothes: to such a point were they resolved (and I think they have not changed their minds) not to allow anything at all on their bodies. As a pretext to exempt themselves from wearing clothes and to remain always naked, they would cite their custom, which is this: whenever they come upon springs and clear rivers, crouching on the edge or else getting in, they throw water on their heads with both hands, and wash themselves and plunge in with their whole bodies like ducks—on some days more than a dozen times; and they said that it was too much trouble to get undressed so often. Is that not a fine and pertinent excuse? But whatever it may be, you have to accept it, for to contest it further with them would be in vain, and you would gain nothing by it.

This creature delights so much in her nakedness that it was not only the Tupinamba women of the mainland, living in full liberty with their husbands, fathers, and kinsmen, who were so obstinate in refusing to dress themselves in any way at all; even our women prisoners of war, whom we had bought and whom we held as slaves to work in our fort—even they, although we forced clothing on them, would secretly strip off the shifts and other rags, as soon as night had fallen, and would not be content unless, before going to bed, they could promenade naked all around our island. In short, if it had been up to these poor wretches, and if they had not been compelled by great strokes of the whip to dress themselves, they would choose to bear the heat and burning of the sun, even the continual skinning of their arms and shoulders carrying earth and stones, rather than to endure having any clothes on.

And there you have a summary of the customary ornaments, rings, and jewelry of the American women and girls. So, without any other epilogue here, let the reader, by this narration, contemplate them as he will.

When I treat the marriage of the savages, I will recount how their children are equipped from birth. As for the children above the age of three or four years, I especially took great pleasure in watching the little boys, whom they call *conomi-miri*; plump and chubby (much more so than those over here), with their bodkins of white bone in their split lips, the hair shaved in their style, and sometimes with their bodies painted,

they never failed to come dancing out in a troop to meet us when they saw us arrive in their villages. They would tag behind us and play up to us, repeating continually in their babble, "*Contouïassat, amabé pinda*": that is, "My friend and my ally, give me some fishhooks." If thereupon we yielded (which I have often done), and tossed ten or twelve of the smallest hooks into the sand and dust, they would rush to pick them up; it was great sport to see this swarm of naked little rascals stamping on the earth and scratching it like rabbits.

During that year or so when I lived in that country, I took such care in observing all of them, great and small, that even now it seems to me that I have them before my eyes, and I will forever have the idea and image of them in my mind. But their gestures and expressions are so completely different from ours, that it is difficult, I confess, to represent them well by writing or by pictures. To have the pleasure of it, then, you will have to go see and visit them in their own country. "Yes," you will say, "but the plank is very long." That is true, and so if you do not have a sure foot and a steady eye, and are afraid of stumbling, do not venture down that path.

We have yet to see more fully, as the matters that I treat present themselves, what their houses are like, and to see their household utensils, their ways of sleeping, and other ways of doing things.

Before closing this chapter, however, I must respond both to those who have written and to those who think that the frequenting of these naked savages, and especially of the women, arouses wanton desire and lust. Here, briefly, is what I have to say on this point. While there is ample cause to judge that, beyond the immodesty of it, seeing these women naked would serve as a predictable enticement to concupiscence; yet, to report what was commonly perceived at the time, this crude nakedness in such a woman is much less alluring than one might expect. And I maintain that the elaborate attire, paint, wigs, curled hair, great ruffs, farthingales, robes upon robes, and all the infinity of trifles with which the women and girls over here disguise themselves and of which they never have enough, are beyond comparison the cause of more ills than the ordinary nakedness of the savage women—whose natural beauty is by no means inferior to that of the others. If decorum allowed me to say more, I make bold to say that I could resolve all the objections to the contrary, and I would give reasons so evident that no one could deny them. Without going into it further, I defer concerning the little that I have said about this to those who have made the voyage to the land of Brazil, and who, like me, have seen both their women and ours.¹¹

I do not mean, however, to contradict what the Holy Scripture says about Adam and Eve, who, after their sin, were ashamed when they recognized that they were naked, nor do I wish in any way that this nakedness be approved; indeed, I detest the heretics who have tried in the past to introduce it over here, against the law of nature (which on this particular point is by no means observed among our poor Americans).¹²

But what I have said about these savages is to show that, while we condemn them so austere for going about shamelessly with their bodies entirely uncovered, we ourselves, in the sumptuous display, superfluity, and excess of our own costume, are hardly more laudable. And, to conclude this point, I would to God that each of us dressed modestly, and more for decency and necessity than for glory and worldliness.



WHAT ONE MAY CALL LAWS AND CIVIL ORDER AMONG THE SAVAGES: HOW HUMANELY THEY TREAT AND RECEIVE FRIENDS WHO VISIT THEM; AND OF THE TEARS AND JOYOUS SPEECHES THAT THE WOMEN MAKE TO WELCOME THEM¹

As for the civil order of our savages, it is an incredible thing—a thing that cannot be said without shame to those who have both divine and human laws—how a people guided solely by their nature, even corrupted as it is, can live and deal with each other in such peace and tranquillity. (I mean, however, each nation within itself, or among allied nations: as for enemies, you have seen in another chapter how harshly they are treated.) Nevertheless, if it happens that some of them quarrel (which occurs so rarely that during almost a year I was with them I only saw them fight with each other twice), by no means do the others try to separate them or make peace; on the contrary, even when the adversaries are on the point of putting each others' eyes out, they let them go ahead without saying a word to prevent them. However, if anyone is wounded by his neighbor, and if he who struck the blow is apprehended, he will receive a similar blow in the same part of his body by the kinsmen of the one injured. If the wounds of the latter prove to be mortal, or if he is killed on the spot, the relatives of the dead man will take the life of the killer in the same way. In short, it is a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,^a and so forth; but as I have said, this is very rarely seen among them.

The real property of this people consists of houses and of many

^aLeviticus 24.19–20.

more excellent pieces of land than they need for their subsistence. In a given village of five or six hundred people, while several families may live in the same house, nevertheless each has its own place, and the husband keeps his wife and children separate; however, there is nothing to keep you from seeing down the full length of these buildings, which are usually more than sixty feet long.

It is a curious fact worth noting that the Brazilians, who usually stay only five or six months in a place, carry with them the big pieces of wood and tall *pindo* plants, with which their houses are made and covered; thus they often move their very villages from place to place. These, however, still retain their former names, so that we have sometimes found villages at a quarter- or half-league's distance from the location where we had visited them before. Their dwellings being so easily transported, you can imagine that they have no great palaces (such as those attributed to the Peruvian Indians, whose wooden houses are so well built that there are rooms one hundred fifty feet long and eighty feet wide);^a and no one of the Tupinamba nation ever begins a dwelling or any other building that he will not see built and rebuilt twenty times in his life, if he lives to the age of manhood. If you ask them why they move their household so often, they simply answer that the change of air keeps them healthier, and that if they did other than what their grandfathers did, they would die immediately.²

With regard to fields and trees, each head of a family will have several acres of his own, in a place that suits him, where he makes his garden and plants his root crops. As for the rest, all the to-do about dividing inheritances, or going to court to place boundaries and separate property—they leave all that to the miserly landowners and wrangling pettifoggers over here.

As for their furnishings, I have already mentioned in several places in this account what they consist of. Still, to omit nothing of what I know about the domestic economy of our savages, I will first speak of the women's method of spinning cotton, which they use to make cord and other things as well, and especially to make the beds, the style of which I will also explain. Here is how they work with it. After they have pulled it from the boll (which I have described in the chapter^b treating the plant that bears it), they spread it out a little with their fingers, without carding

^a[Gómar,] *Histoire*, Book 2, Chapter 60.

^b[Chapter XIII.]

it further, and heap it beside them, either on the ground or on some other object, for they use no distaff as the women do over here. Their spindle is a round stick, no bigger than a finger and about a foot long, which passes through the middle of a little board, round like a wooden trencher and of about that thickness. They attach the cotton to the longer end of this lengthwise stick, spinning it on their knees and releasing it with the hand as spinners do their spindles: with this roller twirling like a top in the midst of their houses or elsewhere, they make the great nets for their beds. I later brought to France some of the finer cord, so well spun and tightly twisted by these same women that when I had a white cloth doublet stitched with it, everyone who saw it thought it was fine purled silk.

As for those cotton beds, which the savages call *inis*,³ their women make them on wooden looms, which are not laid flat like those of our weavers, nor equipped with so many devices, but are simply raised in front of them at their height. When they have laid the warp in their style, beginning the plaiting from the bottom, they make some of the beds with fishnet, and others more densely like heavy canvas. These beds are for the most part four, five or six feet long and about five feet wide; they have loops at each end also made of cotton, to which the cords are tied for hanging them in the air by attaching them to wooden beams set crosswise in their houses expressly for the purpose.

When they go to war, or sleep in the woods during a hunt, or by the seashore, or by their fishing streams, they hang them between two trees. When these cotton beds are soiled, whether from sweat, or from the smoke of the fires that are burning continually in the houses where they hang, or in some other way, the American women gather from the woods a wild fruit, in form like a flat pumpkin, but much bigger, so that it is all you can do to carry one in your hand. They cut it in pieces, soak it in water in a big earthen vessel, and beating it with wooden sticks, they work up great billows of foam. They use this as soap, and the beds come out as white as snow or as fuller's sheets.

I ask those who have tried them out whether you don't sleep better on these cotton beds than on our ordinary ones, especially in summer; and whether I was not right when I said in the history of Sancerre that in time of war, it is far easier to suspend these sheets in the guardroom for some of the soldiers to sleep on while the others stand guard, than to have them sprawl in the usual way on the straw, where you soil your clothes and get them full of vermin, and find when you get up to be ready for duty that your ribs are bruised from the arms that you must always have

at your belt (as we did during the siege of Sancerre, where the enemy did not move from our gates for a whole year).⁴

To sum up the other furnishings of our Americans: the women, who among themselves have all the housework to do, make a great many receptacles and earthen vessels to prepare and store the beverage called *caouin*, as well as cooking pots, both round and oval, and pans of medium and small sizes; although the earthenware is not smooth and even on the outside, it is so polished and sealed on the inside by a certain white liquid that hardens, that our potters over here could do no finer work. These women even dilute certain grayish pigments for their task, and with their brushes they paint a thousand pretty little designs of interlaced curves, tendrils, and other delightful patterns on the inside of these earthen vessels, especially in those that hold flour and other foodstuffs. So you are served quite properly—indeed, more properly than by those over here who serve out of wooden vessels.

It is true that these American painters lack one thing: once they have created with their brushes whatever their fancy has dictated, if you ask them to do the same for you again, they will not be able to imitate the first piece of work, because they have no other plan, model, or sketch than the quintessence of a nimble brain; so you will never see the same design twice.

Our savages also have gourds and other big fruits, split and hollowed out, from which they make their drinking cups, called *coui*, as well as other little containers for other purposes. They also have boxes and baskets, big and small, very neatly woven, some of reeds and some of yellow grasses or straw, called *panacons*; they store flour in them or whatever else they please. I have already described their weapons, feather garments, the device they call a *maraca*, and other utensils, so I will discuss them no further.

With the houses of our savages built and furnished, it is time to go visit them.

Now to take up this subject in a general way: although the Tupinamba receive very humanely the friendly strangers who go to visit them, nevertheless the Frenchmen and others from over here who do not understand their language find themselves at first marvelously disconcerted in their midst. The first time that I myself frequented them was three weeks after we arrived at Villegagnon's island, when an interpreter took me along to four or five villages on the mainland. The first one—called *Yabouraci* in the native language and "Pepin" by the French (because of a ship that loaded there once, whose master had that name)—was only two leagues

from our fort. When we arrived there, I immediately found myself surrounded by savages, who were asking me "*Marapé-derere, marapé derere?*" meaning "What is your name? What is your name?" (which at that I understood time no better than High German). One of them took my hat, which he put on his head; another my sword and my belt, which he put around his naked body; yet another my tunic, which he donned. Deafening me with their yells, they ran through the village with my clothing. Not only did I think that I had lost everything, but I didn't know what would become of me. As experience has shown me several times since, that was only from ignorance of their way of doing things; for they do the same thing to everyone who visits them, and especially those they haven't seen before. After they have played around a little with one's belongings, they carry them all back and return them to their owners.

The interpreter had warned me that they wanted above all to know my name; but if I had said to them Pierre, Guillaume, or Jean, they would have been able neither to retain it nor to pronounce it (in fact, instead of saying "Jean," they would say "Nian"). So I had to accommodate by naming something that was known to them. Since by a lucky chance my surname, "Léry," means "oyster" in their language, I told them that my name was "*Léry-oussou*," that is, a big oyster. This pleased them greatly; with their "*Teh!*" of admiration, they began to laugh, and said, "That is a fine name; we have not yet seen any *Mair* (that is, a Frenchman) of that name." And indeed, I can say with assurance that never did Circe metaphorize a man into such a fine oyster, nor into one who could converse so well with Ulysses, as since then I have been able to do with our savages.⁵

One must note that their memory is so good that as soon as someone has told them his name, if they were to go a hundred years (so to speak) without seeing him, they will never forget it. Presently I will tell about the other ceremonies they observe when they receive friends who go to see them.

But for the moment I will continue to recount some of the noteworthy things that happened to me during my first journey among the Tupinamba. That same day the interpreter and I were going on to spend the night in another village called *Euramiri* (the French call it "Goset," because of an interpreter of that name who stayed there). Arriving at sunset, we found the savages dancing and finishing up the *caouin* of a prisoner whom they had killed only six hours earlier, the pieces of whom we saw on the *boucan*. Do not ask whether, with this beginning, I was astonished to see such a tragedy; however, as you will hear, that was nothing compared to the fright that I had soon after.

We had entered one of the village houses, where each of us sat, according to custom, in a cotton bed hung in the air. After the women had wept (in a manner that I will describe in a moment) and the old man, the master of the house, had made his speech of welcome, the interpreter—who was not new to the customs of the savages, and who, moreover, liked to drink and *caouiner* as much as they did—without saying a single word to me, nor warning me of anything, went over to the big crowd of dancers and left me there with some of the savages. So after eating a little root flour and other food they had offered us, I, weary and asking only for rest, lay down in the cotton bed I had been sitting on.

Not only was I kept awake by the noise that the savages made, dancing and whistling all night while eating their prisoner; but, what is more, one of them approached me with the victim's foot in hand, cooked and *boucané*, asking me (as I learned later, for I didn't understand at the time) if I wanted to eat some of it. His countenance filled me with such terror that you need hardly ask if I lost all desire to sleep. Indeed, I thought that by brandishing the human flesh he was eating, he was threatening me and wanted to make me understand that I was about to be similarly dealt with. As one doubt begets another, I suspected straight away that the interpreter, deliberately betraying me, had abandoned me and delivered me into the hands of these barbarians. If I had seen some exit through which to flee, I would not have hesitated. But seeing myself surrounded on all sides by those whose intentions I failed to understand (for as you will hear, they had not the slightest thought of doing me harm), I firmly expected shortly to be eaten, and all that night I called on God in my heart. I will leave it to those who understand what I am saying, and who put themselves in my place, to consider whether that night seemed long.

At daybreak my interpreter (who had been off carousing with those rascals of savages all night long in other village houses) came to find me. Seeing me, as he said, not only ashen-faced and haggard but also feverish, he asked me whether I was sick, or if I hadn't rested well. Distraught, I answered wrathfully that they had well and truly kept me from sleeping, and that he was a scoundrel to have left me among these people whom I couldn't understand at all; still as anxious as ever, I urged that we get ourselves out of there with all possible speed. Thereupon he told me that I should have no fear, and that it wasn't us they were after. When he recounted the whole business to the savages—who, rejoicing at my coming, and thinking to show me affection, had not budged from my side all night—they said that they had sensed that I had been somewhat fright-

ened of them, for which they were very sorry. My one consolation was the hoot of laughter they sent up—for they are great jokers—at having (without meaning to) given me such a scare.

The interpreter and I went from there to several other villages, but I will content myself with what I have just recounted as a sample of what happened to me during my first journey among the savages, and go on to generalities.

Let me now set forth the ceremonies that the Tupinamba observe when they receive friends who go to visit them. In the first place, as soon as the visitor has arrived in the house of the *moussacat* whom he has chosen for his host (the *moussacat* being the head of a household, who offers food to people passing through the village, and whom one must visit first in each village before going anywhere else if one is not to offend him), he is seated on a cotton bed suspended in the air, and remains there for a short while without saying a word. Then the women come and surround the bed, crouching with their buttocks against the ground and with both hands over their eyes; in this manner, weeping their welcome to the visitor, they will say a thousand things in his praise. For example: "You have gone to so much trouble to come to see us; you are good; you are valiant." And if it is a Frenchman, or some other stranger from over here, they will add: "You have brought us so many fine things that we do not have in this country." Spouting big tears, they will string out this kind of applause and flattery. If the newly arrived guest who is seated in the bed wants in turn to please them, he must assume the appropriate expression, and if he doesn't quite get to the point of tears (I have seen some of our nation, who, upon hearing the bleating of these women next to them, were such babies as to be reduced to tears themselves), at least when he answers them he must heave a few sighs and pretend to weep.⁶

This first salutation having been graciously performed by the American women, the *moussacat*, busy making an arrow or some other object (as you see in the illustration), will meanwhile have spent a quarter of an hour or so pretending not to see you—a blandishment quite contrary to our embraces, hugs, kisses, and handclasps upon the arrival of our friends. Then, approaching you, he will first use this style of speaking: "*Ere-joubé?*" that is, "Have you come?" and then "How are you? What would you like?" and so forth; to which you must respond according to the forms of conversation in their language which you will see hereafter. Then he will ask you if you want to eat; if you reply "Yes," he will immediately have prepared and brought to you, in fine earthen vessels, the flour that they eat instead of bread, as well as meat, poultry, fish, and



other food; but since they have no tables, benches, or stools, the service will be right on the ground in front of your feet. As for drink, if you want a *caouin*, he will give you some if he has any. After the women have wept beside the visitor, they will bring him fruit or some other small gift from their region, to obtain him combs, mirrors, or the little glass beads that they put around their arms.

If, moreover, you want to sleep in that village, the old man will not only stretch out for you a fine white bed, but also, even though it does not get cold in their country, he will place around the bed, against the night's humidity, four or five small fires, which will often be relit in the course of the night, along with some little screens that they call *tatapecoua*, made like the masks that the ladies over here hold in front of them when they are next to the fire, to keep it from spoiling their faces.

Since, in this discussion of the civil order of savages, I have come to the subject of fire (which they call *tata*; and the smoke, *tatatin*), I want to speak of the clever invention, unknown back over here, which permits them to make a fire whenever they please (a thing no less marvelous than the stone of Scotland, which, according to the testimony of the author of the *Singularities* of this country, has the property of lighting a fire in tow or straw without any other device). Since they like fire, they do not linger in a place without having one—especially at night, when they are terrified of being taken unawares by Aygnan, the evil spirit, who, as I have said, often beats and torments them—whether they are hunting in the woods, or fishing by the water's edge, or in the fields. Where we use stone and steel, which is unknown to them for that purpose, they use instead two kinds of wood, one of which is almost as soft as if it were half rotten, and the other as hard as what our cooks use for larding pins. When they want to light a fire, they prepare them in this manner: first, they take a stick of the hard wood, about a foot long, and sharpen one end of it, like the point of a spindle; then they plant this point in the middle of a piece of the soft wood, which they lay on the ground or hold against a trunk or a big log, used for a brace; then they rapidly twirl this stick between the two palms of their hands, as if they wanted to bore clear through the underlying piece. From the rapid and steady motion of these two pieces of wood, the one thrust into the other, there comes not only smoke, but also such heat that if there is any cotton or any dry leaves on hand (just as, over here, one must have a bit of burned cloth or other tinder next to the steel), the fire catches so well that I can assure those who will believe me that I myself started one in this fashion.

However, I do not mean to say, much less do I believe or want you

to believe, what a certain person has written: that is, that the savages of America, before this fire-making invention, dried their meat with smoke;^a for just as I hold that proverbial maxim of physics to be very true—that there is no fire without smoke—also, conversely, I think that he is not a good naturalist who would have us believe that there is smoke without fire. By “smoke” I mean—as did he of whom I am speaking—the kind that cooks meat. If, to get around this, he intended to say that he had heard about vapors and exhalations, he is making fools of us; for while we grant that some of these vapors are hot, they can by no means dry either flesh or fish—they would instead make them moist and humid. Since this author, both in his *Cosmography* and elsewhere, complains so loudly and so often about those who don't speak just as he likes about the matters that he treats (but whose works he admits he hasn't thoroughly read), I entreat my readers to note the ludicrous passage I have cited about his preposterous hot smoke, which I herewith send straight back into his windbag of a brain.

Now to return to the treatment the savages offer visitors. After the guests have drunk and eaten, in the way I have described, and rested or slept in their houses, if they are courteous, they ordinarily present knives to men, or scissors, or tweezers for plucking out beards; to the women, combs and mirrors; and to the little boys, fishhooks. If beyond that there are dealings about food supplies or other things that they have, you ask what they want for it, and upon giving them whatever is agreed upon, you can carry it off and go on your way.

Since, as I have said elsewhere, there are no horses, donkeys, or other beasts of burden in their country, they simply travel on their own two feet. If the foreign visitors are weary, they have only to present a knife or some other object to the savages; the latter, prompt as they are to please their friends, will offer to carry them. In fact, while I was over there, there were those who put us on their shoulders, with their heads between our thighs and our legs hanging against their bellies, and carried us that way more than a league without resting. Sometimes, to give them some relief, we told them to stop; laughing at us, they would say in their language: “What? Do you think we are women, or so slack and weak of heart that we might faint under the burden?” “I would carry you a whole day without stopping for rest,” said one of them who had me around his neck. We, for our part, would roar with laughter at these two-footed

^aThevet, *Singularities*, Chapter 53.

mounts, applauding them and cheering them on, and saying, "Well then! Let's keep going!"

As for their natural fellow-feeling, every day they distribute and present each to each the venison, fish, fruit, and the other good things of their country, and not only would a savage die of shame (so to speak) if he saw his neighbor lacking what he has in his power to give, but also, as I have experienced it, they practice the same liberality toward foreigners who are their allies. As an example of this I will recount the time when, as I mentioned in Chapter X, two Frenchmen and I had lost our way in the woods—when we thought we were going to be eaten by a huge and terrifying lizard—, and moreover, during the space of two days and a night that we were lost, suffered greatly from hunger. When we finally found ourselves in a village called *Pauo*, where we had been on other occasions, we could not have received a better welcome than we had from the savages of that place. To begin with, when they heard us recount the troubles we had endured, and the danger we had been in—not only of being devoured by cruel beasts, but also of being seized and eaten by the *Margaia*, our enemy and theirs, whose land we had unintentionally approached—and when they saw the state we were in, all scratched up by the thorns that we had gone through in the wilderness, they took such pity on us that I can't help saying that the hypocritical welcomes of those over here who use only slippery speech for consolation of the afflicted is a far cry from the humanity of these people, whom nonetheless we call "barbarians."

They had begun (and here they reminded me of the manner of the ancients) by sending for fine clear water and washing the feet and legs of us three Frenchmen, who were seated each on a separate bed. Upon our arrival the old men had given orders to prepare food for us, and had even ordered the women to prepare quickly some soft flour (which I would as soon eat as good hot white bread); seeing us somewhat refreshed, they immediately had us served, in their style, with many good foods such as venison, poultry, fish, and exquisite fruit, which they are never without.

When evening fell, the elder who was our host had the children taken away from us so that we might rest more comfortably. In the morning when we awoke he said to us, "Well, *Atour-assats* (that is, perfect allies) did you sleep well last night?" We replied that we had, indeed, and he said to us: "Rest some more, my children, because I could tell last night that you were very weary." In short, it is hard for me to express the hospitality that was offered us by those savages, who in truth acted toward us just as, according to Saint Luke in the Acts of the Apos-

ties, the barbarians of the Isle of Malta treated Saint Paul and those who were with him after they had escaped the shipwreck.* Now since we never travelled without each having a leather sack full of small merchandise that served us as money in our dealings with this people, at our departure we could give as we pleased: that is (as is the custom) knives, scissors, and tweezers to the elders; combs, mirrors, bracelets, and glass buttons to the women; and fishhooks to the little boys.

So that you may better understand the great store they set by these things, I will recount the following. One day when I was in a village, my *moussacat* (he who had received me into his house) entreated me to show him everything I had in my *caramemo*, that is, in my leather sack. He had brought to me a fine big earthen vessel in which I arranged all my effects. Marveling at the sight, he immediately called the other savages and said to them: "I pray you, my friends, consider what a personage I have in my house for since he has so many riches, must he not be a great lord?" And yet, as I said, laughing with a companion of mine who was there with me, what this savage held in such high esteem was in sum five or six knives with different kinds of handles, and as many combs, mirrors, and other small objects that would not have been worth two testoons in Paris. As I have said elsewhere, they love above all those who show liberality; since I wanted to exalt myself even more than he had done, I gave him freely and publicly, in front of everyone, the biggest and handsomest of my knives, which he set as much store by as might someone in our France who had just received a golden chain worth a hundred crowns.

Now you may want to know whether we felt safe among the savages of America. Just as they hate their enemies so mortally (as you have already heard) that when they have captured them, without any discussion of terms, they slay and eat them, so, on the contrary, they love so dearly their friends and confederates (as we were to the Tupinamba nation) that to keep them safe and spare them any hardship they would have had themselves cut into a hundred thousand pieces. Having had experience of them, I would entrust myself to them, and in fact felt myself safer among this people we call savage, than I would now in some parts of our France, among disloyal and degenerate Frenchmen (I speak only of those who are such: as for worthy people, of whom by the grace of God the kingdom is not yet empty, I would be very sorry to taint their honor.)

However, so that I give both sides, I will recount an event contain-

*Acts of the Apostles 28, 1-2.

ing the greatest apparent danger I ever found myself in among them. Having met up unexpectedly with six Frenchmen in that fine big village of *Ocarentin*, which I have already mentioned, ten or twelve leagues from our fort, and having decided to spend the night there, we made up a bow-and-arrow shooting match, three against three, to get some wild turkey and other fowl for our supper. As it happened, I was one of the losers. As I was looking through the village for poultry to buy, I came across one of those little French boys whom we had brought along in the ship *Rosée* to learn the language of the country, and who was now living in this village. "Here is a fine big duck," he said. "Kill it, and you will be quits by paying for it." I had no compunction about doing just that, because we had often killed chickens in other villages, which did not anger the savages since we could content them with a few knives as payment.

The dead duck in my hand, I went into a house where nearly all the savages of the place were assembled to *caouiner*. When I asked who the duck belonged to, so that I might pay him, an old man with a fairly disagreeable mug came forward and said, "It's mine." "What do you want me to give you for it?" I asked him. "A knife," he replied. I offered him one at once; when he saw it, he said, "I want a better one." Which, making no reply, I presented to him; he said he didn't want that one either. "Then what do you want me to give you?" I said. "A pruning hook," he answered. Now aside from the fact that in that country a pruning hook was too much to pay for a duck, I didn't even have one; I told him to content himself with the second knife I was offering him, and that he would have nothing more from me. But thereupon the interpreter, who knew their ways of doing things better than I did (although on this point, as I shall tell you, he was as mistaken as I) said to me, "He is very angry; somehow a pruning hook must be found." I borrowed one from the boy I mentioned, but when I tried to give it to this savage, he refused it more emphatically than he had previously done with the knives. Now I was getting angry, and for the third time I said to him: "What do you want from me?" To which he answered in a rage that he wanted to kill me as I had killed his duck; for, he said, "since it belonged to a brother of mine who is dead, I loved it more than anything else I have in my possession." And indeed, this lout went off to find a sword, or rather a big wooden club five or six feet long; suddenly advancing on me again, he kept repeating that he wanted to kill me. I was dumbfounded; still, I knew that one must not seem to knuckle under or show any fear among these people.

Thereupon the interpreter, seated in a cotton bed suspended between the quarreler and me, and warning me about what I didn't understand, said to me: "Hold your sword in your fist, and show him your bow and arrows, and let him know just who he is dealing with; as for you, you are strong and valiant, and will not let yourself be killed as easily as he thinks." So I bluffed my way through, and after a few more exchanges between this savage and me (without any attempt from the others to reconcile us), he left to sleep off the *caouin* that he had been drinking all day. The interpreter and I went off to dine on the duck with our companions, who were waiting for us in the village and knew nothing of our quarrel.

However, as it turned out, the Tupinamba knew perfectly well that, already having the Portuguese for enemies, if they had killed a Frenchman an irreconcilable war would have been declared between them and that they would be forever deprived of our merchandise; so everything that my man had done was in jest. And in fact, when he woke up about three hours later, he sent a message to me saying that I was his son, and that what he had done to me was only to test me, and to see by my countenance whether I would be valiant in war against the Portuguese and the *Margaia*, our common enemies. For my part, in order to deprive him of the chance to do the same another time, either to me or to another of our men—for such jokes are not very pleasant—I sent word to him that I would have nothing to do with him, and that I did not want a father who would test me with a sword in his hand. What is more, so as to make him find some better way of dealing with me, and to show him that such a game displeased me, the next day I gave little knives and fishhooks to the others right in front of him, who got nothing.

One can gather, then, as much from this example as from the other I have recounted about my first sojourn among the savages (where, out of ignorance of the standing that our nation had among them, I thought I was in danger), that what I have said about their loyalty toward their friends remains true and firm; that is, they would be very grieved to cause them displeasure.

For a conclusion on this point, I will add that the elders especially, who in the past lacked axes, pruning hooks and knives—which they now find useful for cutting their wood and making their bows and arrows—not only treat visiting Frenchmen very well, but also exhort their young people to do the same in the future.



HOW THE SAVAGES TREAT EACH OTHER IN THEIR ILLNESSES TOGETHER WITH THEIR BURIALS AND FUNERAL CEREMONIES AND THE GREAT LAMENTATIONS THEY MAKE OVER THEIR DEAD¹

To conclude my remarks about our savages of America, I must speak of the way they conduct themselves in their illnesses, and at the end of their days: that is, when they are close to natural death. If it happens that one of them falls sick, he points out where he hurts, whether in the arm, legs or other parts of the body, and one of his friends then sucks on this place with his mouth. Sometimes this is done by one of those charlatans among them called *pagés*, that is, surgeons or physicians (these are different from the *caraiibes* whom I spoke of when I discussed their religion);² these quacks would have them believe that they are not only extracting their pain, but even prolonging their life.

In addition to their common fevers and illnesses (because of their temperate climate, they are not as subject to them as we are over here), our Americans have an incurable disease that they call *pians*.³ Ordinarily it is a result of lechery,³ but I have also seen it in young children, who were covered all over with it just as children over here are afflicted with smallpox. This disease develops into pustules as wide as a thumb, which spread over the entire body, even to the face, so that those who are spotted with it carry the marks of their turpitude and baseness all through their lives, just as our pox-ridden folk do over here. In fact, I have seen an interpreter, a native of Rouen, who had wallowed in all sorts of lechery

¹[Yaws, caused by the spirochete *Treponema pertenu*. Unlike *Treponema pallida*, the vector of syphilis, it is mainly carried by flies and is not a venereal disease, as was commonly believed.]

with the savage women and girls, and had so truly received the wages of his sins that his body and face were as disfigured by these *pians* as if he had been a leper; the marks were so deeply imprinted that they could never be effaced. This is the most dangerous disease in the land of Brazil.

But to return to what I was saying. After they have treated someone by suction, the Americans do not give the bedridden invalid anything to eat unless he asks for it, even if he were to go a month without nourishment. And no matter how grave the illness, those who are healthy do not give up their habits of making noise, drinking, singing, and dancing around the poor patient, who, for his part, knowing full well that he has nothing to gain by getting angry, would rather have his ears assaulted with the noise than say a word about it.

However, if it happens that he should die, and especially if he is a respected head of a household, all the singing is suddenly turned to tears, and they lament so loudly that if we were in a village where someone had recently died, either we didn't try to find a bed there, or we didn't expect to sleep that night.

Above all, it is amazing to hear the cries of the women, as loud as the howling of dogs and wolves, wailing these lamentations and responses: "He is dead," say some, trailing their voices, "he who was so valiant, and who gave us so many prisoners to eat!" Then the others will burst out in the same fashion with "O what a good hunter he was, and the best of fishermen!" "Ha!" another one will say, "What a brave slayer of Portuguese and Margaia; he avenged us well!" So that amid these great tears, inciting each other to compete in ever greater mourning and (as you see in the illustration) embracing each other by the arms and shoulders, they will unceasingly recount in detail everything he said and did in his life, and make long chants in his praise, until the body is removed from before them.

They bring to mind the women of Béarn, who, lamenting over their dead husbands, make virtue out of vice, and sing, "*La mi amou, la mi amou: Cara rident, oeil de splendou: Cama leugé, bet dansadou: Lo mé balen, lo m'esbubat; matî depes: fort tard au theit.*" That is, "My love, my love; laughing face, eye of splendor, light leg, fine dancer, my valiant one, my lively one, early up, late to bed." Some say that the Gascon women add, "*Yere, yere, O le bet renegadou, ô le bet jougadou qu'here.*" That is, "Alas, alas, what a grand swearer, what a fine gambler he was!" And so sing our poor American women, adding at each refrain, "He is dead, he is dead, he whom we now mourn." The men answer with, "Alas, it is true, we will see him no more until we are behind the mountains



where as our *caraiibes* teach us, we will dance with him” and other similar themes.

Now these laments last ordinarily half a day, for they scarcely keep their dead bodies longer. After the grave has been dug (not long, as we dig them, but rather round and deep like a great wine barrel), the body, which immediately after death has been folded with the arms and legs bound around it, will be buried thus almost upright. If it is some worthy elder who has died, he will be entombed in his house, enveloped in his cotton bed; buried with him will be some necklaces, feathers and other objects that he used to wear when he was alive.

One could cite many examples from the ancients, who had similar customs. For instance, Josephus’s account of the things placed in David’s sepulchre,³ and the testimony of the secular histories concerning so many great personages: after their death, they are adorned with precious jewels, and it all goes to rot with their bodies.

If we seek other examples, we need not go far from our Americans. The Indians of Peru, a land adjacent to theirs, buried a great quantity of gold and precious stones with their kings and caciques. A number of Spaniards who were among the first in that country searched out the spoils of those dead bodies even into the tombs and grottoes where they knew to find them, and were thereby made immensely wealthy.⁴ One can apply to such avaricious creatures the words that, according to Plutarch,⁵ Semiramis had engraved in the stone on the outside of her sepulchre:

If you are a king, of money bereft,
When this tomb is opened, take all you can heft.
(Quiconque soit le Roy de pecune indigent,
Ce tombeau ouvert prene autant qu’il veut d’argent.)

Then he who opened it, thinking to find rich booty, saw instead this writing inside:

Were you not a villain, insatiate for gold,
You would never deposit a corpse dead and cold.
(Si tu n’étais méchant insatiable d’or,
Jamais n’eusses fouillé des corps morts le trésor.)

However, to return to our Tupinamba. Since the time that the French have lived among them, they no longer bury things of value with

³*Jewish Antiquities*, VII: 12.

their dead as often as they were in the habit of doing before. But now—for something much worse—you were about to hear of the greatest superstition imaginable, which holds these poor people are in bondage. They firmly believe that if Aygnan (that is, the devil) were to find no other meat nearby, he would unearth the body and eat it. So from the first night after a body has been buried (in the fashion you have heard described), they put out big earthen plates of flour, poultry, fish, and other well-cooked food, along with some *caouin*, on the grave of the dead person; they continue to perform such truly diabolical services until they think that the body is entirely decayed.

It was all the more difficult for us to lead them away from such an error in that the Norman interpreters who had been in that land before us, like the priests of Baal mentioned in Scripture, had thoroughly maintained and even confirmed them in it; so even though we showed them by experiment that what they put out in the evening was still to be found there the next morning, we could only persuade a few of them, and that just barely.

One can say that this vain imagining of the savages is not very different from that of the Judaic theologians or rabbis,^a nor from that of Pausanias. For the rabbis hold that the dead body is left in the power of the devil whom they call “Zazel” or “Azazel,” who they say is the prince of the wilderness in Leviticus. And to confirm their error, they subvert those passages of the Scripture where it is said to the serpent: “Dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.” For, they say, since our body is created from the mud and dust of the earth, which is the serpent’s meat,^b it is subject to him until it is transmuted into spirit. Pausanias⁶ likewise tells of another devil named “Eurinomos,” who, according to the interpreters of Delphi, devoured the flesh of the dead, leaving nothing but the bones; such a belief is the same error as that of our Americans.

In the last chapter we showed how the savages carry their villages from one place to another. Similarly, they put over their graves little coverings of the big plant that they call *pindo*; the passers-by can thus recognize the location of a cemetery, and when the women meet there, or when they are in the woods, if they remember their dead husbands they

^aSee Pierre Viret, *La Physique papale [faite par manière de devis et par dialogues* (Genève, 1552), III: 210.

^bLeviticus 16.8; Genesis 3.14; Isaiah 65.25.

will break out into their customary lamentations, and howl to be heard half a league away.

So now I will leave them to weep their fill. Since I have followed the savages all the way to the grave, I will here make an end to my discourse on their ways of doing things.

However, the readers will be able to see something more in the following dialogue, which was written while I was in America, with the help of an interpreter who had lived there for seven or eight years and understood the language perfectly. He had studied considerably, and even knew some Greek; therefore, since this nation of Tupinamba has drawn several words from that language (as those who understand it have already been able to observe), he could explain it all the better.⁷