

of our planet, they attained that height.* In this tomb of a whole extinct tribe we soon counted nearly six hundred skeletons well preserved, and regularly placed. Every skeleton reposes in a sort of basket made of the petioles of the palm-tree. These baskets, which the natives call *mapires*, have the form of a square bag. Their size is proportioned to the age of the dead; there are some for infants cut off at the moment of their birth. We saw them from ten inches to three feet four inches long, the skeletons in them being bent together. They are all ranged near each other, and are so entire that not a rib or a phalanx is wanting. The bones have been prepared in three different manners, either whitened in the air and the sun, dyed red with anoto, or, like mummies, varnished with odoriferous resins, and enveloped in leaves of the heliconia or of the plantain-tree. The Indians informed us that the fresh corpse is placed in damp ground, that the flesh may be consumed by degrees; some months afterwards it is taken out, and the flesh remaining on the bones is scraped off with sharp stones. Several hordes in Guiana still observe this custom. Earthen vases half-baked are found near the *mapires* or baskets. They appear to contain the bones of the same family. The largest of these vases, or funeral urns, are five feet high, and three feet three inches long. Their colour is greenish-grey, and their oval form is pleasing to the eye. The handles are made in the shape of crocodiles or serpents; the edges are bordered with painted meanders, labyrinths, and grecques, in rows variously combined. Such designs are found in every zone among nations the farthest removed from each other, either with respect to their respective positions on the globe, or to the degree of civilization which they have attained. They still adorn the common pottery made by the inhabitants of the little mission of Maypures; they ornament the bucklers of the Otaheitans, the fishing-implements of the Esquimaux,

* I saw no vein, no hole (*four*) filled with crystals. The decomposition of granitic rocks, and their separation into large masses, dispersed in the plains and valleys in the form of *blocks* and *balls* with concentric layers, appear to favour the enlarging of these natural excavations, which resemble real caverns.