

tombs, or, as the Creoles say, employing a word altered from the Inca language, *guacas*. When in Peru, at Mancichi, I went into the *guaca*, from which, in the sixteenth century, masses of gold of great value were extracted. No trace of the precious metals has been found in the caverns which have served the natives of Guiana for ages as sepulchres. This circumstance proves, that, even at the period when the Caribs, and other travelling nations, made incursions to the south-west, gold had flowed in very small quantities from the mountains of Peru towards the eastern plains.

Wherever the granitic rocks do not present any of those large cavities caused by their decomposition, or by an accumulation of their blocks, the Indians deposit their dead in the earth. The hammock (*chinchorro*), a kind of net in which the deceased had reposed during his life, serves for a coffin. This net is fastened tight round the body, a hole is dug in the hut, and there the body is laid. This is the most usual method, according to the account of the missionary Gili, and it accords with what I myself learned from Father Zea. I do not believe that there exists one tumulus in Guiana, not even in the plains of the Cassiquiare and the Essequibo. Some, however, are to be met with in the savannahs of Varinas, as in Canada, to the west of the Alleghanies.* It seems remarkable enough that, notwithstanding the extreme abundance of wood in those countries, the natives of the Orinoco were as little accustomed as the ancient Scythians to burn the dead. Sometimes they formed funeral piles for that purpose; but only after a battle, when the number of the dead was considerable. In 1748, the Parecas burned not only the bodies of their enemies, the Tamanacs, but also those of their own people who fell on the field of battle. The Indians of South America, like all nations in a state of nature, are strongly attached to the spots where the bones of their fathers repose. This feeling, which a great writer has beautifully painted in the episode of *Atala*, is cherished in all its primitive ardour by the Chinese. These people,

* Mummies and skeletons contained in baskets were recently discovered in a cavern in the United States. It is believed, they belong to a race of men analogous to that of the Sandwich Islands. The description of these tombs has some similitude with that of the tombs of Ataruipe.