

## History of the Discovery and Settlement

taught the use and necessity of labour; but the women are rather more employed than the men, they are obliged when young, every morning to wash and (twice) under the direction of one of their elders, without regard to sex, (mothers who have the care of infants excepted) and this inures them to fatigue, strengthens their limbs, and fits them better for war. They never strike or beat their youth, but endeavour to instruct them by repeated precepts and example.

**Their belief.** These people believe in one great and good God incapable of evil, who created the world, and whose common commands are executed by angels, or subservient spirits, of which an inferior order who have offended him, govern in the air; and these they invoke for rain, or sun-shine, as it may be wanting to the ground. Man he created, say they, with his own hand, and the whole world is the produce of his wisdom and power.

**The sacred fire explained.** The sacred fire, of which we have before made some mention, was, according to the account given of it to our missionary, by the principal person entrusted with the care of it, enkindled by means of a miraculous flame, brought from the sun, by a holy person who had descended himself from that planet, and whom they had chosen for their sovereign, submitting to a set of laws which he laid down for their government, and which were admirably adapted to the advantage of society.

**Precept of their first grand Soiree.** He taught benevolence, social love and resignation to the divine will, as points indispensably necessary to be observed; to avoid quarrelling, and to detest murder, adultery, untruth, avarice and drunkenness. From him are their sovereigns descended, who are also called *soileis*, *Suns*, for he lived to a very great age, and saw the children of his children flourish. Our author astonished the priest, who had given him this account, by enkindling some fuel with reflection of the sun beams upon a piece of glass, which glass, the grand *soilei* intreated of the father as a very great favour; it was given him, and he was very fond to use it.

**Government of the Natchez.** This monarch, if we may be so allowed to call him, governs with despotic power; he has no law but that of reason, and disposes at will of the lives of his subjects. So good use does he happen to make of this authority, that no evil attempt upon him is ever heard of. His stipends are very considerable, tho' not stated, being free gifts, pledges of his people's love, and respect, and never levied by any sort of taxation.

**Fest of the new corn.** Among their many religious festivals, the most solemn is, that of gathering in the new corn, on which they all assemble to feed in common, and have some particular ceremonies, with a relation of which we shall not now detain the reader. They are particularly tenacious of precedency, whether in public or private, and such is the distinction of sexes, that a boy of two years of age, is permitted to take place of a woman. Each man is absolute in his own family, as long as he lives; he governs his children, and his children's children, with an uncontrollable rule, and when he dies, the next to him in years assumes the domestic command.

**Their rules for intermarrying.** They never marry within the third degree, and the oldest of each family, agree upon the terms of the match, without consulting any of the minors, whom, however they never join against their consent; the man having first asked her hand of the woman.

**Marriage ceremonies.** The day for the ceremony being arrived, the bride is conducted to the house of the bridegroom by all her family, with silence and solemnity. They are received at the door by all his friends, who invite them to enter the house, which they do, with few words and little ceremony. For compliments and talkativeness, are by them deemed loss of time. Having seated themselves, after some space, the old men on each side arise, and the contracted parties do the same. A short speech is then made them, in which they are desired not to marry unless they find themselves impelled by mutual liking; and previously resolved to live together happily; "this union," says the ancient orator, "must be of your own choice, think not your friends are here assembled to force your inclinations; if either of you has any objection, declare it, that we may break off." The father of the bridegroom then delivers the portion intended for his son, into his custody, and he, having asked the love and hand of the bride, and being answered satisfactorily, gives it in keeping to his father. The nuptials being celebrated with some other ceremonies, their company gives themselves up to merriment, and generally dance till morning.

**Grand division of the people.** The *Natchez* are divided into two grand classes, viz. The nobles and the people. The people are also distinguished by an appellation that implies striking. *Miké-miké-Lusy*, however they do not much relish being called so. They each of them have a

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