

Overview/ Introduction:

Thomas Morton (c. 1579–1647) was an early American colonist from England,. He was a lawyer, writer and social reformer, famed for founding the colony of Merrymount (later known as Quincy, MA) and his work studying Native American culture. Under Morton's 'hostship,' an almost utopian project was embarked upon, in which the colonists were declared free men and a certain degree of integration into the local Algonquian culture was attempted. However, it was Morton's long-term plan to 'further civilize' the native population by converting them to his liberal form of Christianity, providing them with free salt for food preservation, and enabling them to give up hunting and settle permanently.

Thomas Morton: Manners and Customs of the Indians (of New England), 1637

Of Their Houses and Habitations: The Natives of New England are accustomed to build themselves houses much like the wild Irish; they gather poles in the woods and put the great end of them in the ground, placing them in form of a circle or circumference, and, bending the tops of them in form of an arch, they bind them together with the bark of walnut trees, which is wondrous tough, so that they make the same round on the top for the smoke of their fire to ascend and pass through; these they cover with mats, some made of reeds and some of long flags, or sedge, finely sewed together with needles made of the splinter bones of a crane's leg, with threads made of their Indian hemp, which there grows naturally, leaving several places for doors, which are covered with mats, which may be rolled up and let down again at their pleasure, making use of the several doors, according as the wind sits. The fire is always made in the middle of the house, with windfall commonly, yet sometimes they fell a tree that grows near the house, and, by drawing in the end thereof, maintain the fire on both sides, burning the tree by degrees shorter and shorter, until it be all consumed, for it burns night and day.

Their lodging is made in three places of the house about the fire; they lie upon blankets, commonly about a foot or 18 inches above the ground, raised upon rails that are borne upon forks; they lay mats under them, and coats of deer skins, otters, beavers, racoons, and of bears' hides, all which they have dressed and converted into good leather, with the hair on, for their coverings, and in this manner they lie as warm as they desire. In the night they take their rest; in the day time either the kettle is on with fish or flesh, by no allowance, or else the fire is employed in the roasting of fishes, which they delight in. The air does beget good stomachs, and they feed continually and are no niggards of their victuals, and they are willing that any one shall eat with them. Nay, if any one that shall come into their houses and there fall asleep, when they see him disposed to lie down, they will spread a mat for him of their own accord, and lay a roll of skins for a bolster, and let him lie. If he sleep until their meat be dished up, they will set a wooden bowl of meat by him that sleeps, and wake him, saying, "Cattup keene Meckin." That is, "If you be hungry, there is meat for you, whereof if you will eat you may." Such is their humanity.

Likewise, when they are minded to remove, they carry away the mats with them; other materials the place adjoining will yield. They use not to winter and summer in one place, for that would be a reason to make fuel scarce; but, after the manner of the gentry of civilized natives, remove for their pleasures; sometimes to their hunting places, where they remain keeping good hospitality for that season; and sometimes to their fishing places, where they abide for that season likewise; and at the spring, when fish comes in plentifully, they have meetings from several places, where they exercise themselves in gaming and playing of juggling tricks and all manner of revelries which they are delighted in; so that it is admirable to behold what pastime they use of several kinds, every one striving to surpass each other. After this manner they spend their time.

Of the Indians' Apparel: The Indians in these parts do make their apparel of the skins of several sorts of beasts, and commonly of those that do frequent those parts where they do live; yet some of them, for variety, will have the skins of such beasts that frequent the parts of their neighbors, which they purchase of them by commerce and trade. Their skins they convert into very good leather, making the same plume and soft. Some of these skins they dress with the hair on, and some with the hair off; the hairy side in winter time they wear next their bodies, and in warm weather they wear the hair outwards. They make likewise some coats of the feathers of turkeys, which they weave together with twine of their own making, very prettily. These garments they wear like mantels knit over their shoulders, and put under their arms. They have likewise another sort of mantel, made of moose skins, which beast is a great large deer, so big as a horse. These skins they commonly dress bare, and make them wondrous white, and stripe them with furs round about the borders, in form like lace set on by a tailor, and some they stripe with fur in works of fantasies of the workmen, wherein they strive to excel one another. And mantels made of bears' skins is a usual wearing among the natives that live where the bears do haunt.

They make shoes of moose skins, which is the principal leather used to that purpose; and for want of such leather (which is the strongest) they make shoes of deer skins, as they dress bare, they make stockings that comes within their shoes, like a stirrup stocking, and is fastened above at their belt, which is about their middle. Every male, after he attains unto age which they call Puberty, wears a belt about his middle, and a broad peace of leather that goes between his legs and is tucked up both before and behind under that belt; those garments they always put on, when they go a hunting, to keep their skins from the brush of the shrubs, and when they have their apparel on they look like Irish in their trousers, the stockings join so to their breeches. A good well grown deer skin is of great account with them, and it must have the tail on, or else they account it defaced; the tail being three times as long as the tails of our English deer, yea four times so long, this when they travel is wrapped round their body and, with a girdle of their making, bound round about their middles, to which girdle is fastened a bag, in which his instruments be with which he can strike fire upon any occasion. Thus with their bow in their left hand, and their quiver of arrows at their back, hanging on their left shoulder with the lower end of it in their right hand, they will run away on a dog trot until they come to their journey's end; and, in this kind of ornament, they do seem to me to be handsomer than when they are in English apparel, their gesture being answerable to their own habit and not unto ours.

Their women have shoes and stockings to wear likewise when they please, such as the men have, but the mantle they use to cover their nakedness with is much longer than that which the men use, for, as the men have one deer skin, the women have two sewed together at the full length, and it is so large that it trails after them like a great lady's train; and in time I think they may have their pages to bear them up; and where the men use but one bear skin for a mantle, the women have two sewed together, and if any of their women would at any time shift one, they take that which they intend to make use of, and cast it over them round, before they shift away the other, for modesty, which is to be noted in people uncivilized; therein they seem to have as much modesty as civilized people, and deserve to be applauded for it.

Of Their Reverence, and Respect to Age: It is a thing to be admired, and indeed made a precedent, that a nation yet uncivilized should more respect age than some nations civilized, since there are so many precepts both of divine and humane writers extant to instruct more civil nations: in that particular, wherein they excel, the younger are always obedient unto the elder people, and at their commands in every respect without grumbling; in all counsels, (as therein they are circumspect to do their actions by advise and counsel, and not rashly or inconsiderately,) the younger men's opinion shall be heard, but the old men's opinion and counsel embraced and followed. Besides, as the elder feed and provide for the younger in infancy, so do the younger, after being grown to years of manhood, provide for those that be aged; and in distribution of acts the elder men are first served by their dispensator; and their counsels (especially if they be powahs), are esteemed as oracles amongst the younger natives. The consideration of these things, methinks, should reduce some of our irregular young people of civilized nations, when this story shall come to their knowledge, to better manners, and make them ashamed of their former error in this kind, and to become hereafter more dutiful; which is, as a friend (by observation having found) have herein recorded for that purpose.

Of the Maintaining of Their Reputation: Reputation is such a thing that it keeps many men in awe, even amongst civilized nations, and is very much stood upon: it is (as one has very well noted) the awe of great men and of kings. And, since I have observed it to be maintained amongst savage people, I cannot choose but give an instance thereof in this treatise, to confirm the common received opinion thereof.

The Sachem or Sagamore of Sagus made choice, when he came to man's estate, of a lady of noble descent, daughter to Papasiquineo, the Sachem of Sagamore of the territories near Merrimack river, a man of the best note and estimation in all those parts, and (as my countryman Mr. Wood declares in his prospect) a great Necromancer; this lady the young Sachem with the consent and good liking of her father marries, and takes for his wife. Great entertainment he and his received in those parts at her father's hands, where they were feasted in the best manner that might be expected, according to the customs of their nation, with reveling and such other solemnities as is usual amongst them. The solemnity being ended, Papasiquineo causes a selected number of his men to wait upon his daughter home into those parts that did properly belong to her Lord and husband; where the attendants had entertainment by the Sachem of Sagus and his countrymen: the solemnity being ended, the attendants were gratified.

Not long after the new married lady had a great desire to see her father and her native country, from whence she came; her Lord willing to please her, and not deny her request, amongst them

thought to be reasonable, commanded a selected number of his own men to conduct his lady to her father, where, with great respect, they brought her, and, having feasted there a while, returned to their own country again, leaving the lady to continue there at her own pleasure, amongst her friends and old acquaintance, where she passed away the time for a while, and in the end desired to return to her Lord again. Her father, the old Papasiquineo, having notice of her intent, sent some of his men on embassy to the young Sachem, his son-in-law, to let him understand that his daughter was not willing to absent herself from his company any longer, and therefore, as the messengers had in charge, desired the young Lord to send a convoy for her, but he, standing, upon terms of honor, and the maintaining of his reputation, returned to his father-in-law this answer, that, when she departed from him, he caused his men to wait upon her to her father's territories, as it did become him; but, now she had an intent to return, it did become her father to send her back with a convoy of his own people, and that it stood not with his reputation to make himself or his men too servile, to fetch her again. The old Sachem, Papasiquineo, having this message returned, was enraged to think that his young son-in-law did not esteem him at a higher rate than to capitulate with him about the matter, and returned him this sharp reply; that his daughter's blood and birth deserved more respect than to be so slighted, and, therefore, if he would have her company, he were best to send or come for her.

The young Sachem, not willing to undervalue himself and being a man of a stout spirit, did not stick to say that he should either send her by his own convey, or keep her; for he was determined not to stoop so low. So much these two Sachems stood upon terms of reputation with each other, the one would not send her, and the other would not send for her, lest it should be any diminishing of honor on his part that should seem to comply, that the lady (when I came out of the country) remained still with her father; which is a thing worth the noting, that savage people should seek to maintain their reputation so much as they do.

Of Their Traffic and Trade With One Another: Although these people have not the use of navigation, whereby they may traffic as other nations, that are civilized, use to do, yet do they barter for such commodities as they have, and have a kind of beads instead of money, to buy withal such things as they want, which they call Wampampeak; and it is of two sorts, the one is white, the other is of a violet color. These are made of the shells of fish. The white with them is as silver with us; the other as our gold; and for these beads they buy and sell, not only amongst themselves, but even with us. We have used to sell any of our commodities for this Wampampeak, because we know we can have beaver again of them for it: and these beads are current in all the parts of New England, from one end of the coast to the other.

And although some have endeavored by example to have the like made of the same kind of shells, yet none have ever, as yet, attained to any perfection in the composure of them, but that the savages have found a great difference to be in the one and the other; and have known the counterfeit beads from those of their own making; and have, and do slight them. The skins of beasts are sold and bartered, to such people as have none of the same kind in the parts where they live. Likewise they have earthen pots of divers sizes, from a quart to a gallon, two or three to boil their victuals in; very strong, though they be thin like our iron pots. They have dainty wooden bowls of maple, of high price amongst them; and these are dispersed by bartering one with the other, and are but in certain parts of the country made, where the several trades are appropriated to the inhabitants of those parts only. So, likewise (at the season of the year), the

savages that live by the seaside for trade with the inlanders for fresh water, reles curious silver reles which are bought up of such as have them not frequent in other places: chestnuts, and such like useful things as one place affords, are sold to the inhabitants of another, where they are a novelty accounted amongst the natives of the land. And there is no such thing to barter withal, as is their Wampampeak.

Of Their Magazines or Store Houses: These people are not without providence, though they be uncivilized, but are careful to preserve food in store against winter; which is the corn that they labor and dress in the summer. And, although they eat freely of it, while it is growing, yet have they a care to keep a convenient portion thereof to relieve them in the dead of winter (like to the ant and the bee), which they put under ground. Their barns are holes made in the earth, that will hold a hogshead of corn a piece in them. In these (when their corn is out of the husk and well dried) they lay their store in great baskets (which they make of bark) with mats under, about the sides, and on the top; and putting it into the place made for it, they cover it with earth; and in this manner it is preserved from destruction or putrefaction; to be used in case of necessity, and not else.

And I am persuaded, that if they knew the benefit of salt (as they may in time), and the means to make salt meat fresh again, they would endeavor to preserve fish for winter, as well as corn; and that if anything bring them to civility, it will be the use of salt, to have food in store, which is a chief benefit in a civilized commonwealth. These people have begun already to incline to the use of salt. Many of them would beg salt of me to carry home with them, that had frequented our homes and had been acquainted with our salt meats; and salt I willingly gave them, although I sold them all things else, only because they should be delighted with the use thereof, and think it a commodity of no value in itself, although the benefit was great that might be had by the use of it.

Of Their Admirable Perfection in the Use of the Senses: This is a thing not only observed by me and divers of the savages of New England, but, also, by the French of New France, and therefore I am the more encouraged to publish in this treatise my observation of them in the use of their senses; which is a thing that I should not easily have been induced to believe, if I myself had not been an eyewitness of what I shall relate. I have observed that the savages have the sense of seeing so far beyond any of our nation, that one would almost believe they had intelligence of the devil sometimes, when they have told us of a ship at sea, which they have seen sooner by one hour, yes, two hours earlier, than any Englishman that stood by of purpose to look out, their sight is so excellent. Their eyes indeed are black as jet; and that color is accounted the strongest for sight. And as they excel us in this particular so much noted, so I think they excel us in all the rest.

This I am sure I have well observed, that in the sense of smelling they have very great perfection; which is confirmed by the opinion of the French that are planted about Canada, who have made relation that they are so perfect in the use of that sense, that they will distinguish between a Spaniard and a Frenchman by the scent of the hand only. And I am persuaded that the author of this relation has seen very probable reasons that have induced him to be of that opinion; and I am the more willing to give credit thereunto, because I have observed in them so much as that comes to. I have seen a deer pass by me upon a neck of land, and a savage that has pursued him by the view. I have accompanied him in this pursuit; and the savage, tracking

the deer, comes where he finds the view of two deers together, leading several ways. One, he was sure, was fresh, but which (by the sense of seeing) he could not judge; therefore, with his knife, he digs up the earth of one; and by smelling, says, that was not of the fresh deer; then digs he up the other; and viewing and smelling to that, concludes it to be the view of the fresh deer, which he had pursued; and thereby follows the chase, and kills that deer, and I did eat part of it with him; such is their perfection in these two senses.

Of Their Pretty Conjuring Tricks: If we do not judge amiss of these savages in accounting them witches, yet out of all question we may be bold to conclude them to be but weak witches, such of them as we call by the names of Powahs; some correspondency they have with the devil out of all doubt, as by some of their actions, in which they glory, is manifested. Papasiquineo, that Sachem of Sagamore, is a Powah of great estimation amongst all kind of savages there; he is at their revels (which is the time when a great company of savages meet from several parts of the country, in amity with their neighbors) has advanced his honor in his feats or juggling tricks (as I may rightly term them) to the admiration of the spectators, whom he endeavored to persuade that he would go under water to the further side of a river, too broad for any man to undertake with a breath, which thing he performed by swimming over, and deluding the company with casting a mist before their eyes that see him enter in and come out, but no part of the way he has been seen; likewise by our English, in the heat of all summer to make ice appear in a bowl of fair water; first, having the water set before him, he began his incantation according to their useful custom, and before the same has been ended a thick cloud has darkened the air and, on a sudden, a thunder clap has been heard that has amazed the natives; in an instant he has shown a firm piece of ice to float in the midst of the bowl in the presence of the vulgar people, which doubtless was done by the agility of Satan, his consort.

And by means of these sleights, and such like trivial things as these, they gain such estimation amongst the rest of the savages that it is thought a very impious matter for any man to derogate from the words of these Powahs. In so much as he that should slight them is thought to commit a crime no less heinous amongst them as sacrilege is with us, as may appear by this one passage, which I will set forth for an instance.

A neighbor of mine that had entertained a savage into his service, to be his factor for the beaver trade amongst his countrymen, delivered unto him divers parcels of commodities fit for them to trade with; amongst the rest there was one coat of more esteem than any of the others, and with this his new entertained merchantman travels amongst his countrymen to truck them away for beaver: as our custom has been, the savage went up into the country amongst his neighbors for beaver, and returned with some, but not enough answerable to his master's expectation, but being called to an account, and especially for that one coat of special note, made answer that he had given that coat to Tantoquineo, a Powah; to which his master in a rage cried, what have I to do with Tantoquineo? The savage, very angry at the matter, cried, what you speak? you are not a very good man; will you not give Tantoquineo a coat? what's this? as if he had offered Tantoquineo the greatest indignity that could be devised; so great is the estimation and reverence that these people have of these Ingling Powahs, who are usually sent for when any person is sick and ill at ease to recover them, for which they receive rewards as do our surgeons and physicians; and they do make a trade of it, and boast of their skill where they come. One amongst the rest did undertake to cure an Englishman of a swelling of his hand for a

parcel of biscuit, which being delivered him he took the party grieved into the woods aside from company, and with the help of the devil (as may be conjectured), quickly recovered him of that swelling, and sent him about his work again.

Of Their Duels, and the Honorable Estimation of Victory Obtained Thereby: These savages are not apt to quarrel one with another; yet such has been the occasion that a difference has happened which has grown to that height that it has not been reconciled otherwise than by combat, which has been performed in this manner: the two champions prepared for the fight, with their bows in hand and a quiver full of arrows at their backs, they have entered into the field; the challenger and challenged have chosen two trees, standing within a little distance of each other; they have cast lots for the choice of the trees, then either champion setting himself behind his tree watches an advantage to let fly his shafts, and to gall his enemy; there they continue shooting at each other; if by chance they espie any part open, they endeavor to gall the combatant in that part, and use much agility in the performance of the task they have in hand. Resolute they are in the execution of their vengeance, when once they have begun; and will in no wise be daunted, or seem to shrink though they do catch a clap with an arrow, but fight it out in this manner until one or both be slain.

I have been shown the places where such duels have been performed, and have found the trees marked for a memorial of the combat, where that champion has stood that had the hap to be slain in the duel; and they count it the greatest honor that can be to the surviving combatant, to show the scars of the wounds received in this kind of conflict, and if it happen to be on the arm, as those parts are most in danger in these cases, they will wear a bracelet upon that place of the arm, as a trophy of honor to their dying day.

Of Their Subtilty: These people are not, as some have thought, a dull, or slender-witted people, but very ingenious, and very subtle. I could give many instances to maintain my opinion of them in this; but I will only relate one, which is a passage worthy to be observed. In the Massachusetts Bay lived Cheecatawback, the Sachem or Sagamore of those territories, who had large dominions which he did appropriate to himself. Into those parts came a great company of savages from the territories of Narohiganset, to the number of one hundred persons; and in this sachem's dominions they intended to winter.

When they went hunting for turkeys they spread over such a great scope of ground that a turkey could hardly escape them; deer they killed in great abundance, and feasted their bodies very plentifully; beavers they killed by no allowance; the skins of those they traded away at Wassaguscus with my neighbors for corn, and such other commodities as they had need of; and my neighbors had a wonderful great benefit by their being in those parts. Yea, sometimes (like ingenious fellows) they would present their merchant with a fat beaver skin, always the tail was not diminished, but presented full and whole; although the tail is a present for a sachem, and is of such masculine virtue that if some of our ladies knew the benefit thereof they would desire to have ships sent for the purpose to trade for the tail alone; it is such a rarity, as is not more esteemed of than reason does require.

But the Sachem Cheecatawback (on whose possessions they usurped, and converted the commodities thereof to their own use, contrary to his liking), not being of power to resist them, practiced to do it by a subtle stratagem. And to that end gave it out amongst us, that the cause why these other savages of the Narohigansets came into these parts, was to see what strength

we were of, and to watch an opportunity to cut us off, and take that which they found in our custody useful for them; and added further, they would burn our homes, and that they had caught one of his men, named Meshebro, and compelled him to discover to them where their barns, magazines, or storehouses were, and had taken away his corn; and seemed to be in a pitiful perplexity about the matter. And, the more to add reputation to this tale, desires that his wives and children might be harbored in one of our houses. This was granted; and my neighbors put on corsets, headpieces, and weapons defensive and offensive.

This thing being known to Cheecatawback, he caused some of his men to bring the Narohigansets to trade, that they might see the preparation. The savage, that was a stranger to the plot, simply coming to trade, and finding his merchants look like lobsters, all clad in harness, was in a maze to think what would be the end of it. He made haste to trade away his furs, and took anything for them, wishing himself well rid of them and of the company in the house. But (as the manner has been) he must eat some furmety before he goes: down he sits and eats, and withal had an eye on every side; and now and then saw a sword or a dagger laid athwart a headpiece, which he wondered at, and asked his guide whether the company were not angry. The guide (that was privy to his lord's plot), answered in his language that he could not tell. But the harmless savage, before he had half filled his belly, started up on a sudden, and ran out of the house in such haste that he left his furmety there, and stayed not to look behind him who came after; glad he was that he had escaped so.

The subtle sachem, he played the tragedian, and feigned a fear of being surprised; and sent to see whether the enemies (as the messenger termed them) were not in the house; and comes in a by-way with his wives and children, and stops the chinks of the out-house, for fear the fire might be seen in the night, and be a means to direct his enemies where to find them. And, in the meantime, he prepared for his ambassador to his enemies a savage, that had lived twelve months in England, to the end it might add reputation to his embassy. This man he sends to those intruding Narohigansets, to tell them that they did very great injury to his lord, to trench upon his prerogatives: and advised them to put up their pipes, and be gone in time: if they would not, that his lord would come upon them, and in his aid his friends, the English, who were up in arms already to take his part, and compel them by force to be gone, if they refused to depart by fair means.

This message, coming on the neck of that which doubtless the fearful savage had before related of his escape, and what he had observed, caused all those hundred Narohigansets (that meant us no hurt) to be gone with bag and baggage. And my neighbors were gulled by the subtilty of this sachem and lost the best trade of beaver that ever they had for the time; and in the end found their error in this kind of credulity when it was too late.

Of a Great Mortality That Happened Amongst the Natives of New England About the Time That the English Came There to Plant: It fortun'd some few years before the English came to inhabit at New Plymouth, in New England, that upon some distaste given in the Massachusetts bay by the Frenchmen, then trading there with the natives for beaver, they set upon the men at such advantage that they killed many of them, burned their ship, then riding at anchor by an island there, now called Peddocks island, in memory of Leonard Peddock that landed there (where many wild anckies haunted that time, which he thought had been tame), distributing them unto five sachems, which were lords of the several territories adjoining: they did keep them so long

as they lived, only to sport themselves at them, and made these five Frenchmen fetch them wood and water, which is the general work that they require of a servant. One of these five men, outliving the rest, had learned so much of their language as to rebuke them for their bloody deed, saying that God would be angry with them for it, and that he would in his displeasure destroy them; but the savages (it seems boasting of their strength), replied and said, that they were so many that God could not kill them.

But contrary-wise, in short time after the hand of God fell heavily upon them, with such a mortal stroke that they died on heaps as they lay in their houses; and the living, that were able to shift for themselves, would run away and let them die, and let their carcasses lie above the ground without burial. For in a place where many inhabited, there had been but one left to live to tell what became of the rest; the living being (as it seems) not able to bury the dead, they were left for crows, kites and vermin to prey upon. And the bones and skulls upon the several places of their habitations made such a spectacle after my coming into those parts, that, as I travelled in that forest near the Massachusetts, it seemed to me a new found Golgatha.

But otherwise, it is the custom of those Indian people to bury their dead ceremoniously and carefully, and then to abandon that place, because they have no desire the place should put them in mind of mortality; and this mortality was not ended when the Brownists of New Plymouth were settled at Patuxet in New England; and by all likelihood the sickness that these Indians died of was the plague, as by conference with them since my arrival and habitation in those parts, I have learned. And by this means there is as yet but a small number of savages in New England, to that which had been in former time, and the place is made so much the more fit for the English nation to inhabit it, and erect in it temples to the glory of God.

Of their Religion: It has been a common received opinion from Cicero, that there is no people so barbarous but have some worship or other. In this particular, I am not of opinion therein with Tully; and, surely, if he had been amongst those people so long as I have been, and conversed so much with them touching this matter of religion, he would have changed his opinion. Neither should we have found this error, amongst the rest, by the help of that wooden prospect, if it had not been so unadvisedly built upon such high land as that coast (all men's judgments in general) does not yield, had he but taken the judicial counsel of Sir William Alexander, that sets this thing forth in an exact and conclusive sentence; if he be not too obstinate, he would grant that worthy writer, that these people are *sine side, sine lege, and sine rege*, and he has exemplified this thing by a familiar demonstration, which I have by long experience observed to be true.

And, methinks, it is absurd to say they have a kind of worship, and not able to demonstrate whom or what it is they are accustomed to worship. For my part, I am more willing to believe that the elephants (which are reported to be the most intelligent of all beasts) do worship the moon, for the reasons given by the author of this report, as Mr. Thomas May, the mission of the Muses does recite it in his continuation of Lucan's historical poem, rather than this man: to that I must be constrained, to conclude against him, and Cicero, that the natives of New England have no worship nor religion at all; and I am sure it has been so observed by those that need not the help of a wooden prospect for the matter.

Of their Acknowledgement of the Creation, and Immortality of the Soul: Although these savages are to be found without religion, law and king (as Sir William Alexander has well observed), yet are they not altogether without the knowledge of God (historically); for they have it amongst

them by tradition that God made one man and one woman, bade them live together and get children, kill deer, beasts, birds, fish and fowl, and what they would at their pleasure; and that their posterity was full of evil, and made God so angry that he let in the sea upon them, and drowned the greatest part of them, that were naughty men (the Lord destroyed so); and they went to Sanaconquam, who feeds upon them (pointing to the center of the earth, where they imagine is the habitation of the devil); the other (which were not destroyed) increased the world, and when they died (because they were good) went to the house of Kytan, pointing to the setting of the sun; where they eat all manner of dainties, and never take pains (as now) to provide it. Kytan makes provision (they say) and saves them labor; and there they shall live with him forever, void of care. And they are persuaded that Kytan is he that makes corn grow, trees grow, and all manner of fruits.

And that we that use the book of common prayer do it to declare to them, that cannot read, what Kytan has commanded us, and that we do pray to him with the help of that book; and do make so much account of it, that a savage (who had lived in my house before he had taken a wife, by whom he had children) made this request to me (knowing that I always used him with much more respect than others), that I would let his son be brought up in my house, that he might be taught to read in that book; which request of his I granted; and he was a very joyful man to think that his son should thereby (as he said) become an Englishman; and then he would be a good man. I asked him who was a good man; his answer was, he that would not lie, nor steal.

These, with them, are all the capital crimes that can be imagined; all other are nothing in respect of those; and he that is free from these must live with Kytan forever, in all manner of pleasure.

Of Their Annals and Funerals: These people, that have by tradition some touch of the immortality of the soul, have likewise a custom to make some monuments over the place where the corpse is interred. But they put a great difference between persons of noble, and of unnoble, or obscure, or inferior descent. For, indeed, in the grave of the more noble they put a plank in the bottom for the corpse to be laid upon, and on each side a plank, and a plank upon the top in form of a chest, before they cover the place with earth. This done, they erect something over the grave in form of a hearse cloth, as was that of Cheekatawback's mother, which the Plymouth planters defaced because they accounted it an act of superstition; which did breed a brawl; for they hold impious and inhuman to deface the monuments of the dead. They themselves esteem of it as piaculum; and have a custom amongst them to keep their annals and come at certain times to lament and bewail the loss of their friend; and use to black their faces, which they so wear, instead of a mourning ornament, for a longer or a shorter time according to the dignity of the person; so is their annals kept and observed with their accustomed solemnity. Afterwards they absolutely abandon the place, because they suppose the sight thereof will but renew their sorrow.

It was a thing very offensive to them, at our first coming into those parts, to ask of them for any one that had been dead; but of later times it is not so offensively taken to renew the memory of any deceased person, because by our example (which they are apt to follow) it is made more familiar unto them; and they marvel to see no monuments over our dead, and therefore think no great sachem is yet come into those parts, or not as yet dead; because they see the graves all alike.

Of Their Custom in Burning the Country, and the Reason Thereof: The savages are accustomed to set fire of the country in all places where they come, and to burn it twice a year, viz.: at the spring, and the fall of the leaves. The reason that moves them to do so, is because it would otherwise be so overgrown with underweeds that it would be all a coppice wood, and the people would not be able in any wise to pass through the country out of a beaten path. The means that they do it with, is with certain mineral stones, that they carry about them in bags made for that purpose of the skins of little beasts, which they convert into good leather, carrying in the same a piece of touch wood, very excellent for that purpose, of their own making. These mineral stones they have from the Piquetteenes (which is to the southward of all the plantations in New England), by trade and traffic with those people.

The burning of the grass destroys the underwoods, and so scorches the elder trees that it shrinks them, and hinders their growth very much; so that he that will look to find large trees and good timber, must not depend upon the help of a wooden prospect to find them on the upland ground; but must seek for them (as I and others have done), in the lower grounds, where the grounds are wet, when the country is fired, by reason of the snow water that remains there for a time, until the sun by continuance of that has exhaled the vapors of the earth, and dried up those places where the fire (by reason of the moisture) can have no power to do them any harm; and if he would endeavor to find out any goodly cedars, he must not seek for them on the higher grounds, but make his inquest for them in the valleys, for the savages, by this custom of theirs, have spoiled all the rest; for this custom has been continued from the beginning.

And lest their firing of the country in this manner should be an occasion of damnifying us, and endangering our habitations, we ourselves have used carefully about the same time to observe the winds, and fire the grounds about our own habitations; to prevent the damage that might happen by any neglect thereof, if the fire should come near those houses in our absence. For, when the fire is once kindled, it dilates and spreads itself as well against, as with the wind; burning continually night and day, until a shower of rain falls to quench it. And this custom of firing the country is the means to make it passable; and by that means the trees grow here and there as in our parks; and make the country very beautiful and commodious.

Of Their Inclination to Drunkenness: Although drunkenness be justly termed a vice which the savages are ignorant of, yet the benefit is very great that comes to the planters by the sale of strong liquor to the savages, who are much taken with the delight of it; for they will pawn their wits, to purchase the acquaintance of it. Yet in all the commerce that I had with them, I never proffered them any such thing; nay, I would hardly let any of them have a dram, unless he were a sachem, or a winnaytue, that is a rich man, or a man of estimation next in degree to a sachem or sagamore. I always told them it was amongst us the sachems drink. But they say if I come to the northern parts of the country I shall have no trade, if I will not supply them with lusty liquors; it is the life of the trade in all those parts; for it so happened that thus a savage desperately killed himself; when he was drunk, a gun being charged and the cock up, he sets the mouth to his breast, and, pulling back the trigger with his foot, shot himself dead.

That the Savages Live a Contented Life: A gentleman and a traveller, that had been in the parts of New England for a time, when he returned again, in his discourse of the country, wondered (as he said) that the natives of the land lived so poorly in so rich a country, like to our beggars in England. Surely, that gentleman had not time or leisure while he was there truly to inform

himself of the state of that country, and the happy life the savages would lead were they once brought to Christianity. I must confess they want the use and benefit of navigation (which is the very finest of a flourishing commonwealth), yet are they supplied with all manner of needful things for the maintenance of life and livelihood. Food and raiment are the chief of all that we make the use of; and of these they find no want, but have, and may have them, in most plentiful manner.

If our beggars of England should, with so much ease as they, furnish themselves with food at all seasons, there would not be so many starved in the streets, neither would so many jails be stuffed, or gallows furnished with poor wretches, as I have seen them. But they of this sort of our own nation, that are fit to go to this Canaan, are not able to transport themselves; and most of them unwilling to go from the good ale tap, which is the very loadstone of the land by which our English beggars steer their course; it is the north pole to which the flour-de-luce of the compass points. The more is the pity that the commonalty of our land are of such leaden capacities as to neglect so brave a country, that does so plentifully feed many lusty and grave, able men, women and children, that have not the means that a civilized nation has to purchase food and raiment; which the country with a little industry will yield a man in a very comfortable measure, without overmuch working.

I cannot deny that a civilized nation has the preeminence of an uncivilized, by means of those instruments that are found to be common amongst civil people, and the uncivil want the use of, to make themselves masters of those ornaments that make such a glorious show, that will give a man occasion to cry, sic transit gloria Mundi. Now since it is but food and raiment that men that live need (though not all alike), why should not the natives of New England be said to live richly, having no want of either? Clothes are the badge of sin; and the more variety of fashions is but the greater abuse of the creature: the beasts of the forest do serve to furnish them at any time when they please: fish and flesh they have in great abundance, which they do roast and boil.

They are not indeed served in dishes of plate with variety of sauces to procure appetite; that needs not there. The rarity of the air, begot by the medicinal quality of the sweet herbs of the country, always procures good stomachs to the inhabitants. I must needs commend them in this particular, that, though they buy many commodities of our nation, yet they keep but few, and those of special use. They love not to be cumbered with many utensils, and although every proprietor knows his own, yet all things (so long as they will last), are used in common amongst them: a biscuit cake given to one, that one breaks it equally into so many parts as there are persons in his company, and distributes it. Plato's commonwealth is so much practiced by these people.

According to human reason, guided only by the light of nature, these people lead the more happy and freer life, being void of care, which torments so many minds of so many Christians: they are not delighted in baubles, but in useful things. Their natural drink is of the crystal fountain, and this they take up in their hands, by joining them close together. They take up a great quantity at a time, and drink at the wrists. It was the sight of such a feat which made Diogenes hurl away his dish, and, like one that would have this principle confirmed, Natura paucis contenat, used a dish no more.

I have observed that they will not be troubled with superfluous commodities. Such things as they find they are taught by necessity to make use of, they will make choice of, and seek to purchase with industry. So that, in respect that their life is so void of care, and they are so loving also that they make use of those things they enjoy (the wife of one excepted), as common goods, and are therein so compassionate that, rather than one should starve through want, they would starve all. Thus do they pass away the time merrily, not regarding our pomp (which they feel daily before their faces), but are better content with their own, which some men esteem so meanly of.

They may be rather accounted to live richly, wanting nothing that is needful; and to be commended for leading a contented life, the younger being ruled by the elder, and the elder ruled by the Powahs, and the Powahs are ruled by the Devil; and then you may imagine what good rule is like to be amongst them.

Source.

From: Oliver J. Thatcher, ed., The Library of Original Sources (Milwaukee: University Research Extension Co., 1907), Vol. V: 9th to 16th Centuries, pp. 360-377.

Scanned by Jerome S. Arkenberg, Cal. State Fullerton. The text has been modernized by Prof. Arkenberg.

Driving Questions:

How does Morton's voice differ from that of many English colonists?

When Morton invited local Native Americans men, boys, and "lasses in beaver coats" to dance around the eighty-foot maypole he had erected at Mar-re-Mount in a celebration of spring, the Puritans were so outraged by this open display of "profaneness" that they sent a military contingent out to arrest him. Why did the Puritans find Morton's interactions with the Native Americans so repulsive?

Morton also wrote a book meant to serve as a promotional piece, celebrating the wealth and promise of the lands of New England and encouraging non-Puritans to settle there. Morton's florid, urbane writing style and witty irreverence make him unique among seventeenth-century New England writers. What uses of diction do you notice in "Manners and Customs" that is so different from other New England writers of the period?

Project: In one paragraph, capture Morton's argument about the treatment of Native American peoples. Use specific evidence from the text via direct excerpts to support your position.

Project: Zoom into one particular passage in which Morton describes a particular aspect of Native American life. Do a close reading of the passage. Afterward, write a 3-sentence synthesis of Morton's embedded meanings and messages.

Project: Pick one descriptive passage from Morton's narrative. Zoom in on his imagery. Comment on how the use of imagery creates a persuasive foundation for his writing.

Project: Morton established a fur-trading post at Mount Wollaston (modern-day Quincy), Massachusetts, and quickly began turning a steady profit dealing in beaver pelts. Morton called his community Mar-re-Mount, supposedly in reference to its position overlooking the sea; his Puritan neighbors saw through his pun and called it "Merrymount" in an indictment of what they viewed as the group's heedless indulgence in worldly pleasures. Remembering that what seemed excessive in the 17th century might seem austere today, write a satiric commentary on the new Merrymount community and philosophy.