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# XIV.15 On the different confidence the laws have in the people according to the climates

- The Spirit of Law - Book XIV. On the laws in their relation to the nature of the climate -  
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## XIV.15 On the different confidence the laws have in the people according to the climates

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The Japanese people have such an atrocious character that their legislators and magistrates have been unable to have any confidence in them ; they have placed before their eyes only judges, threats, and punishments ; they have subjected them for every act to inquisition by the police. Those laws which, for every five family heads, institute one as magistrate over the four others ; those laws which for a single crime punish an entire family or a whole neighborhood ; those laws which find nobody innocent where someone may be guilty, are made so all men will distrust each other, everyone will inquire into everyone else's conduct and be his inspector, witness and judge.

Contrariwise, the people of the Indies are gentle, [1] kind, and compassionate. So their legislators have great confidence in them. They have instituted few punishments, [2] and they are not harsh ; they are not even rigorously executed. They have given nephews to uncles, orphans to guardians, as elsewhere they are given to their fathers ; they have determined succession by the recognized merit of the heir. It seems they have thought that every citizen ought to rely on the good nature of the others.

They readily grant freedom to their slaves ; they marry them off and treat them as their children [3] : happy the climate that generates candor of behavior and produces leniency in the laws !

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[1] See Bernier, vol. II, page 140.

[2] See the fourteenth volume of *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, page 403, the principal laws or customs of the peoples of India and the peninsula beyond the Ganges.

[3] This is perhaps why Diodorus says that in the Indies there was neither master nor slave.