

The road skirted with the bamboos above mentioned led us to the small village of San Fernando, situated in a narrow plain, surrounded by very steep calcareous rocks. This was the first Mission* we saw in America. The houses, or rather the huts of the Chayma Indians, though separate from each other, are not surrounded by gardens. The streets, which are wide and very strait, cross each other at right angles. The walls of the huts are made of clay, strengthened by lianas. The uniformity of these huts, the grave and taciturn air of their inhabitants, and the extreme neatness of the dwellings, reminded us of the establishments of the Moravian Brethren. Besides their own gardens, every Indian family helps to cultivate the garden of the community, or, as it is called, the *conuco de la comunidad*, which is situated at some distance from the village. In this conuco the adults of each sex work one hour in the morning and one in the evening. In the missions nearest the coast the garden of the community is generally a sugar or indigo plantation, under the direction of the missionary; and its produce, if the law were strictly observed, could be employed only for the support of the church and the purchase of sacerdotal ornaments. The great square of San Fernando, in the centre of the village, contains the church, the dwelling of the missionary, and a very humble-looking edifice pompously called the king's house (*Casa del Rey*). This is a caravanserai, destined for lodging travellers; and, as we often experienced, infinitely valuable in a country where the name of an inn is still unknown. The *Casas del Rey* are to be found in all the Spanish colonies, and may be deemed an imitation of the *tambos* of Peru, which were established in conformity with the laws of Manco Capac.

We had been recommended to the friars who govern the Missions of the Chayma Indians, by their syndic, who resides at Cumana. This recommendation was the more useful to us, as the missionaries, either from zeal for the purity of the

* A certain number of habitations collected round a church, with a missionary monk performing the ministerial duties, is called in the Spanish colonies *Mision*, or *Pueblo de mision*. Indian villages, governed by a priest, are called *Pueblos de doctrina*. A distinction is made between the *Cura doctrinero*, who is the priest of an Indian parish, and the *Cura rector*, priest of a village inhabited by whites and men of mixed race.