

to which they are attracted by the fisheries, and some dwell in little farms on the plains or savannahs. The Missions of the Aragonese Capuchins which we visited, alone contain fifteen thousand Indians, almost all of the Chayma race. The villages, however, are less populous there than in the province of Barcelona. Their average population is only between five or six hundred Indians; while more to the west, in the Missions of the Franciscans of Piritu, we find Indian villages containing two or three thousand inhabitants. In computing at sixty thousand the number of natives in the provinces of Cumana and Barcelona, I include only those who inhabit the mainland, and not the Guayquerias of the island of Margareta, and the great mass of the Guaraunos, who have preserved their independence in the islands formed by the Delta of the Orinoco. The number of these is generally reckoned at six or eight thousand; but this estimate appears to me to be exaggerated. Except a few families of Guaraunos who roam occasionally in the marshy grounds, called *Los Morichales*, and between the Caño de Manamo and the Rio Guarapiche, consequently, on the continent itself, there have not been for these thirty years, any Indian savages in New Andalusia.

I use with regret the word *savage*, because it implies a difference of cultivation between the *reduced* Indian, living in the Missions, and the free or independent Indian; a difference which is often belied by fact. In the forests of South America there are tribes of natives, peacefully united in villages, and who render obedience to chiefs.\* They cultivate the plantain-tree, cassava, and cotton, on a tolerably extensive tract of ground, and they employ the cotton for weaving hammocks. These people are scarcely more barbarous than the naked Indians of the Missions, who have been taught to make the sign of the cross. It is a common error in Europe, to look on all natives not reduced to a state of subjection, as wanderers and hunters. Agriculture was practised on the American continent long before the arrival of Europeans. It is still practised between the Orinoco and the river Amazon, in lands cleared amidst the forests, places to which the missionaries have never penetrated. It would be to imbibe false ideas respecting the actual condition of the nations of South America, to consider as synonymous the

\* These chiefs bear the designations of *Pecannati*, *Apoto*, or *Sibierne*.