

Tinaco, the Guanarito, and the Chilua, falls into the Portuguesa, which is a branch of the Apure. It is a remarkable phenomenon, that by a particular position of the ground, and the lowering of the ridge of division to south-west, the Rio Pao separates itself from the little system of interior rivers to which it originally belonged, and for a century past has communicated, through the channel of the Apure and the Orinoco, with the ocean. What has been here effected on a small scale by the hand of man, nature often performs, either by progressively elevating the level of the soil, or by those falls of the ground occasioned by violent earthquakes. It is probable, that in the lapse of ages, several rivers of Soudan, and of New Holland, which are now lost in the sands, or in inland basins, will open for themselves a course to the shores of the ocean. We cannot at least doubt, that in both continents there are systems of interior rivers, which may be considered as not entirely developed; and which communicate with each other, either in the time of great risings, or by permanent bifurcations.

The Rio Pao has scooped itself out a bed so deep and broad, that in the season of rains, when the Caño Grande de Cambury inundates all the land to the north-west of Guigue, the waters of this Caño, and those of the lake of Valencia, flow back into the Rio Pao itself; so that this river, instead of adding water to the lake, tends rather to carry it away. We see something similar in North America, where geographers have represented on their maps an imaginary chain of mountains, between the great lakes of Canada and the country of the Miamis. At the time of floods, the waters flowing into the lakes communicate with those which run into the Mississippi; and it is practicable to proceed by boats from the sources of the river St. Mary to the Wabash, as well as from the Chicago to the Illinois. These analogous facts appear to me well worthy of the attention of hydrographers.

The land that surrounds the lake of Valencia being entirely flat and even, a diminution of a few inches in the level of the water exposes to view a vast extent of ground covered with fertile mud and organic remains.* In proportion as the lake retires, cultivation advances towards the new shore.

* This I observed daily in the Lake of Mexico.