

almost imperceptible manner in the very mass of granite rocks, without our being able to perceive that there is a ramification and an intertwining of small veins. Not long ago the Indians of Encaramada found in the Quebrada del Tigre* a piece of native gold two lines in diameter. It was rounded, and appeared to have been washed along by the waters. This discovery excited the attention of the missionaries much more than of the natives; it was followed by no other of the same kind.

I cannot quit this first link of the mountains of Encaramada without recalling to mind a fact that was not unknown to Father Gili, and which was often mentioned to me during our abode in the Missions of the Orinoco. The natives of those countries have retained the belief that, "at the time of the great waters, when their fathers were forced to have recourse to boats, to escape the general inundation, the waves of the sea beat against the rocks of Encaramada." This belief is not confined to one nation singly, the Tamanacs; it makes part of a system of historical tradition, of which we find scattered notions among the Maypures of the great cataracts; among the Indians of the Rio Erevato, which runs into the Caura; and among almost all the tribes of the Upper Orinoco. When the Tamanacs are asked how the human race survived this great deluge, the 'age of water,' of the Mexicans, they say, "a man and a woman saved themselves on a high mountain, called Tamanacu, situated on the banks of the Asiveru; and casting behind them, over their heads, the fruits of the mauritia palm-tree, they saw the seeds contained in those fruits produce men and women, who re-peopled the earth." Thus we find in all its simplicity, among nations now in a savage state, a tradition which the Greeks embellished with all the charms of imagination! A few leagues from Encaramada, a rock, called *Tepu-mereme*, or 'the painted rock,' rises in the midst of the savannah. Upon it are traced representations of animals, and symbolic figures resembling those we saw in going down the Orinoco, at a small distance below Encaramada, near the town Caycara. Similar rocks in Africa are called by travellers *fetish stones*. I shall not make use of this term, because fetishism does not prevail among the natives of the Orinoco; and the

* The Tiger-ravine.