

garrison of Cayenne (mentioned by La Condamine), who affirmed that these mineral substances were obtained from the "country of women," west of the rapids of the Oyapoc. The Indians who inhabit the fort of Topayos on the Amazon, five degrees east of the mouth of the Rio Negro, possessed formerly a great number of these stones. Had they received them from the north, that is, from the country pointed out by the Indians of the Rio Negro, which extends from the mountains of Cayenne towards the sources of the Essequibo, the Carony, the Orinoco, the Parime, and the Rio Trombetas? or did they come from the south by the Rio Topayos, which descends from the vast table-land of the Campos Parecis? Superstition attaches great importance to these mineral substances: they are worn suspended from the neck as amulets, because, according to popular belief, they preserve the wearer from nervous complaints, fevers, and the stings of venomous serpents. They have consequently been for ages an article of trade among the natives, both north and south of the Orinoco. The Caribs, who may be considered as the Bucharrians of the New World, made them known along the coasts of Guiana; and the same stones, like money in circulation, passed successively from nation to nation in opposite directions: their quantity is perhaps not augmented, and the spot which produces them is probably unknown rather than concealed. In the midst of enlightened Europe, on occasion of a warm contest respecting native bark, a few years ago, the green stones of the Orinoco were gravely proposed as a powerful febrifuge. After this appeal to the credulity of Europeans, we cannot be surprised to learn that the Spanish planters share the predilection of the Indians for these amulets, and that they are sold at a very considerable price. The form given to them most frequently is that of the Babylonian cylinders,\* longitudinally perforated, and loaded with inscriptions and figures. But this is not the work of the Indians of our days, the natives of the Orinoco and the Amazon, whom we find in the last degree of barbarism. The Amazon stones, like the perforated and sculptured emeralds, found in the Cordilleras of New Grenada and Quito, are vestiges of anterior civilization.

\* The price of a cylinder two inches long is from twelve to fifteen piastres.