

formed a separate horde. Not knowing any of the tongues spoken on the Orinoco and the Rio Negro, I could learn nothing certain respecting the popular traditions of the women without husbands, or the origin of the green stones, which are believed to be intimately connected with them. I shall, however, quote a modern testimony of some weight, that of Father Gili. "Upon inquiring," says this well-informed missionary, of a Quaqua Indian, what nations inhabited the Rio Cuchivero, he named to me the Achirigotos, the Pajuros, and the Aikeambenanos.* Being well acquainted," pursues he, "with the Tamanac tongue, I instantly comprehended the sense of this last word, which is a compound, and signifies 'women living alone.' The Indian confirmed my observation, and related that the Aikeambenanos were a community of women, who manufactured blow-tubes,† and other weapons of war. They admit, once a year, the men of the neighbouring nation of Vokearos into their society, and send them back with presents. All the male children born in this horde of women are killed in their infancy." This history seems framed on the traditions which circulate among the Indians of the Marañon, and among the Caribs; yet the Quaqua Indian, of whom Father Gili speaks, was ignorant of the Castilian language; he had never had any communication with white men; and certainly knew not, that south of the Orinoco there existed another river, called the river of the 'Aikeambenanos,' or 'Amazons.'

What must we conclude from this narration of the old missionary of Encaramada? Not that there are Amazons on the banks of the Cuchivero, but that women in different parts of America, wearied of the state of slavery in which they were held by the men, united themselves together; that the desire of preserving their independence rendered them warriors; and that they received visits from a neighbouring and friendly horde. This society of women may have acquired some power in one part of Guiana. The Caribs of the continent held intercourse with those of the islands; and no doubt in this way the traditions of the Marañon and the Orinoco were propagated toward the north. Before the

* In Italian, *Acchirecolti*, *Pajuri*, and *Aicheam-benano*.

† Long tubes made from a hollow cane, which the natives use to propel their poisoned arrows.