

a term which truly expresses their position. The whole weight of labour being supported by these unhappy women, we must not be surprised if, in some nations, their number is extremely small. Where this happens, a kind of polyandry is formed, which we find more fully displayed in Thibet, and on the lofty mountains at the extremity of the Indian peninsula. Among the Avanos and Maypures, brothers have often but one wife. When an Indian, who lives in polygamy, becomes a christian, he is compelled by the missionaries, to choose among his wives her whom he prefers, and to reject the others. At the moment of separation the new convert sometimes discovers the most valuable qualities in the wives he is obliged to abandon. One understands gardening perfectly; another knows how to prepare *chiza*, an intoxicating beverage extracted from the root of cassava; all appear to him alike clever and useful. Sometimes the desire of preserving his wives overcomes in the Indian his inclination to christianity; but most frequently, in his perplexity, the husband prefers submitting to the choice of the missionary, as to a blind fatality.

The Indians, who from May to August take journeys to the east of Esmeralda, to gather the vegetable productions of the mountains of Yumariquin, gave us precise notions of the course of the Orinoco to the east of the mission. This part of my itinerary may differ entirely from the maps that preceded it. I shall begin the description of this country with the granitic group of Duida, at the foot of which we sojourned. This group is bounded on the west by the Rio Tamatama, and on the east by the Rio Guapo. Between these two tributary streams of the Orinoco, amid the *morichales*, or clumps of mauritia palm-trees, which surround Esmeralda, the Rio Sodomoni flows, celebrated for the excellence of the pine-apples that grow upon its banks. I measured, on the 22nd of May, in the savannah at the foot of Duida, a base of four hundred and seventy-five metres in length; the angle, under which the summit of the mountain appeared at the distance of thirteen thousand three hundred and twenty-seven metres, was still nine degrees. A trigonometric measurement, made with great care, gave me for Duida (that is, for the most elevated peak, which is south-west of the Cerro Maraguaca) two thousand