

and the local circumstances, such as they can now be described, it will be easy to conceive how the different hypotheses recorded on our maps have taken rise by degrees, and have modified each other. To oppose an error, it is sufficient to recall to mind the variable forms in which we have seen it appear at different periods.

Till the middle of the eighteenth century, all that vast space of land comprised between the mountains of French Guiana and the forests of the Upper Orinoco, between the sources of the Carony and the River Amazon (from 0° to 4° of north latitude, and from 57° to 68° of longitude), was so little known, that geographers could place in it lakes where they pleased, create communications between rivers, and figure chains of mountains more or less lofty. They have made full use of this liberty; and the situation of lakes, as well as the course and branches of rivers, has been varied in so many ways, that it would not be surprising, if among the great number of maps some were found that trace the real state of things. The field of hypotheses is now singularly narrowed. I have determined the longitude of Esmeralda in the Upper Orinoco; more to the east, amid the plains of Parima (a land as unknown as Wangara and Dar-Saley, in Africa), a band of twenty leagues broad has been travelled over from north to south along the banks of the Rio Carony and the Rio Branco, in the longitude of sixty-three degrees. This is the perilous road which was taken by Don Antonio Santos in going from Santo Thomé del Angostura to Rio Negro and the Amazon; by this road also the colonists of Surinam communicated very recently with the inhabitants of Grand Para. This road divides the *terra incognita* of Parima into two unequal portions; and fixes limits at the same time to the sources of the Orinoco, which it is no longer possible to carry back indefinitely toward the east, without supposing that the bed of the Rio Branco, which flows from north to south, is crossed by the bed of the Upper Orinoco, which flows from east to west. If we follow the course of the Rio Branco, or that strip of cultivated land which is dependent on the Capitania General of Grand Para, we see lakes, partly imaginary, and partly enlarged by geographers, forming two distinct groups. The first of these groups includes the lakes which they place between the Esmeralda and the Rio Branco; and to the