

so disguised in different dialects of the same tongue, as not to be recognizable; for the tribes into which a nation is divided, often designate the same objects by words altogether heterogeneous. Hence it follows that we readily fall into mistakes, if, neglecting the study of the inflexions, and consulting only the roots (for instance, in the words which designate the moon; sky, water, and earth), we decide on the absolute difference of two idioms from the mere want of resemblance in sounds. But, while aware of this source of error, travellers would do well to continue to collect such materials as may be within their reach. If they do not make known the internal structure, and general arrangement of the edifice, they may point out some important parts.

The three languages now most used in the provinces of Cumana and Barcelona, are the Chayma, the Cumanagota, and the Caribbee. They have always been regarded in these countries as different idioms, and a dictionary of each has been written for the use of the Missions, by Fathers Tauste, Ruiz-blanco, and Breton. The *Vocabulario y Arte de la Lengua de los Indios Chaymas* has become extremely scarce. The few American grammars, printed for the most part in the seventeenth century, passed into the Missions, and have been lost in the forests. The dampness of the air and the voracity of insects\* render the preservation of books almost impossible in those regions: they are destroyed in a short space of time, notwithstanding every precaution that may be employed. I had much difficulty to collect in the Missions, and in the convents, those grammars of American languages, which, on my return to Europe, I placed in the hands of Severin Vater, professor and librarian at the university of Königsberg. They furnished him with useful materials for his great work on the idioms of the New World. I omitted, at the time, to transcribe from my journal, and communicate to that learned gentleman, what I had collected in the Chayma tongue. Since neither Father Gili, nor the Abbé Hervas, has mentioned this language, I shall here explain succinctly the result of my researches.

On the right bank of the Orinoco, south-east of the Mis-

\* The termites, so well known in Spanish America under the name of *comegen*, or 'devourer,' is one of these destructive insects.