

with the *poya*. Perhaps Father Gumilla has confounded the preparation of the earth, which the natives swallow, with the custom they still retain (of which M. Bonpland acquired the certainty on the spot) of burying in the ground the beans of a species of mimosacea,* to cause them to enter into decomposition, so as to reduce them into a white bread, savoury, but difficult of digestion. I repeat that the balls of *poya*, which we took from the winter stores of the Indians, contained no trace of animal fat, or of amylaceous matter. Gumilla being one of the most credulous travellers we know, it almost perplexes us to credit facts, which even he has thought fit to reject. In the second volume of his work, he however gainsays a great part of what he advanced in the first; he no longer doubts, that "half at least (a lo menos) of the bread of the Ottomacs and the Guamos is clay." He asserts, "that children and full grown persons not only eat this bread without suffering in their health, but also great pieces of pure clay (*muchos terrones de pura greda.*)" He adds, that those who feel a weight on the stomach physic themselves with the fat of the crocodile, which restores their appetite, and enables them to continue to eat pure earth.† It is certain, that the Guamos are very fond, if not of the fat, at least of the flesh of the crocodile, which appeared to us white, and without any smell of musk. In Sennaar, according to Burckhardt, it is equally esteemed, and sold in the markets.

The little village of Uruana is more difficult to govern than most of the other missions. The Ottomacs are a restless, turbulent people, with unbridled passions. They are not only fond to excess of the fermented liquors prepared from cassava and maize, and of palm-wine, but they throw themselves into a peculiar state of intoxication, we might say of madness, by the use of the powder of *niopo*. They gather the long pods of a mimosacea, which we have made known by the name of *Acacia niopo*,‡ cut them into pieces, moisten

* Of the genus *Inga*.

† Gumilla, vol. ii, p. 260.

‡ It is an acacia with very delicate leaves, and not an *Inga*. We brought home another species of mimosacea (the *chiga* of the Ottomacs, and the *sepa* of the Maypures), that yields seeds, the flour of which is eaten at Uruana like cassava. From this flour the *chiga bread* is prepared, which is so common at Cunariche, and on the banks of the Lower