

them, and cause them to ferment. When the softened seeds begin to grow black, they are kneaded like a paste, mixed with some flour of cassava and lime procured from the shell of a helix, and the whole mass is exposed to a very brisk fire, on a gridiron made of hard wood. The hardened paste takes the form of small cakes. When it is to be used, it is reduced to a fine powder, and placed on a dish five or six inches wide. The Ottomac holds this dish, which has a handle, in his right hand, while he inhales the *niopo* by the nose, through the forked bone of a bird, the two extremities of which are applied to the nostrils. This bone, without which the Ottomac believes that he could not take this kind of snuff, is seven inches long: it appeared to me to be the leg-bone of a large sort of plover. The *niopo* is so stimulating, that the smallest portions of it produce violent sneezing in those who are not accustomed to its use. Father Gumilla says, "This diabolical powder of the Ottomacs, furnished by an arborescent tobacco-plant, intoxicates them through the nostrils (*emboracha por las narices*), deprives them of reason for some hours, and renders them furious in battle." However varied may be the family of the leguminous plants in the chemical and medical properties of their seeds, juices, and roots, we cannot believe, from what we know hitherto of the group of mimosaceæ, that it is principally the pod of the *Acacia niopo*, which imparts the stimulant power to the snuff of the Ottomacs. This power is owing, no doubt, to the freshly calcined lime. We have shown above, that the mountaineers of the Andes of Popayan, and the Guajiros, who wander between the lake of Maracaybo and the Rio la Hacha, are also fond of swallowing lime as a stimulant, to augment the secretion of the saliva and the gastric juice.

A custom analogous to the use of the *niopo* just described, was observed by La Condamine among the natives of the Upper Marañon. The Omaguas, whose name is rendered celebrated by the expeditions attempted in search of El Dorado, have like the Ottomacs, a dish, and the hollow bone of a bird, by which they convey to their nostrils their powder of *curupa*. The seed that yields this powder is no doubt also a mimosacea; for the Ottomacs, according to Orinoco. The *chiga* is a species of Inga, and I know of no other mimosacea that can supply the place of the cerealia.