

and the face completely covered as with a mask, in which holes are left for the eyes, nostrils, and mouth. The mask is gradually removed, until the last that is seen of it is a small patch on the top of the head.

They have some idea of a future state, although some assert that the whole man dies, and that nothing is left of him; while others are of opinion that his spirit yet lives, either as a wandering ghost or in a state of metamorphosis, animating a bird or other creature of a lower order than man.

Their opinions on religious subjects generally partake of the same unsettled character, which makes it very difficult to obtain any clear idea of them. The great difficulty is the unwillingness of the natives to talk upon the subject, either from superstition or shame; and it is the opinion of the missionaries that no full account of their religious notions will be obtained, until one of the well-informed adults is converted to Christianity, an event which is not soon to be expected. The missionaries have had little or no success; none of the adults have hitherto shown any desire to embrace Christianity; and it is remarked, that there appears to be a want of susceptibility in their character to religious impressions. Some of their ceremonies which partook of that character have been discontinued of late years, and no others have been adopted in their place. They have, however, some indistinct notions of a Deity. The missionaries at Wellington have heard from them of a being whom they call Bai-a-mai, and whom, with his son Burambin, they deem the creator of all things. To this Bai-a-mai they pay a kind of annual worship by dancing and singing a song in his honour. This song, they say, was brought from a distant country by strangers who went about teaching it. This annual worship took place in the month of February, and all who did not join in it were supposed to incur the displeasure of the god.

Bai-a-mai was supposed to live on an island beyond the great sea of the coast, and to eat fish, which, when he required food, came up at his call from the water. Burambin, others say, was brought into existence by Bai-a-mai, when the missionaries first came to Wellington.

Dararwirgal is a brother of Bai-a-mai, and lives in the far west. To him they ascribe the origin of the small-pox, which has made such ravages among them. They say that he was vexed for want of a tomahawk, and therefore sent that disease among them; but they now suppose that he has obtained one, and that the disease will come no more.

Balumbals are angels, said to be white, who live on a mountain to the southwest, at a great distance. Their food is honey, and their employment like that of the missionaries.