

with the chiefs, thus forming a union of power which rules the islands. Each chief has his ambati, who attends him wherever he goes. The people are grossly superstitious, and there are few of their occupations in which the ambati is not more or less concerned. He is held sacred within his own district, being considered as the representative of the kalou, or spirit. Mr. Hunt informed me, that the natives seldom separate the idea of the god from that of his priest, who is viewed with almost divine reverence. My own observations, however, led to the conclusion, that it is more especially the case at Somu-somu, where Mr. Hunt resides, and where the natives are more savage, if possible, in their customs, than those of the other islands. If intercourse with white men has produced no other effect, it has lessened their reverence for the priesthood; for, wherever they have foreign visitors, there may be seen a marked change in this respect.

The office of ambati is usually hereditary, but in some cases may be considered as self-chosen. Thus, when a priest dies without male heirs, some one, who is ambitious to succeed him, and desirous of leading an idle life, will strive for the succession. To accomplish this end, he will cunningly assume a mysterious air, speaking incoherently, and pretending that coming events have been foretold him by the kalou, whom he claims to have seen and talked with. If he should have made a prediction in relation to a subject in which the people take an anxious interest, and with which the event happens to correspond, the belief that his pretensions are well founded is adopted. Before he is acknowledged as ambati, he, however, is made to undergo a further trial, and is required to show publicly that the kalou is entering into him. The proof of this is considered to lie in certain shiverings, which appear to be involuntary, and in the performance of which none but an expert juggler could succeed.

I had an opportunity, while at Levuka, of seeing a performance of this description. Whippy gave me notice of it, having ascertained that the offering which precedes the consultation, was in preparation. This offering consisted of a hog, a basket of yams, and a quantity of bananas. In this case the ambati had received notice that he was to be consulted, and was attached to the person of Seru, (Tanoa's son,) for whose purposes the prophetic intervention was needed.

On such occasions the chiefs dress in the morning in their gala habits, and proceed with much ceremony to the mbure, where the priest is. On some occasions, previous notice is given him; at other times he has no warning of their coming, until he receives the offering.

The amount of this offering depends upon the inclination of the party who makes it. The chiefs and people seat themselves promiscu-