

ously in a semicircle, the open side of which is occupied by the person who prepares the ava. This mode of sitting is intended as an act of humiliation on the part of the chiefs, which is considered as acceptable to the gods. When all is prepared, the principal chief, if the occasion be a great one, presents a whale's tooth. The priest receives this in his hands, and contemplates it steadily, with downcast eyes, remaining perfectly quiet for some time. In a few minutes distortions begin to be visible in his face, indicating, as they suppose, that the god is entering into his body. His limbs next show a violent muscular action, which increases until his whole frame appears convulsed, and trembles as if under the influence of an ague fit; his eyeballs roll, and are distended; the blood seems rushing with violence to and from his head; tears start from his eyes; his breast heaves; his lips grow livid, and his utterance confused. In short, his whole appearance is that of a maniac. Finally, a profuse perspiration streams from every pore, by which he is relieved, and the symptoms gradually abate; after this, he again sinks into an attitude of quiet, gazing about him from side to side, until suddenly striking the ground with a club, he thus announces that the god has departed from him. Whatever the priest utters while thus excited, is received as a direct response of the gods to the prayers of those who made the offering. The provisions of which the offering is composed are now shared out, and ava prepared. These are eaten and drunk in silence. The priest partakes of the feast, and always eats voraciously, supplying, as it were, the exhaustion he has previously undergone. It is seldom, however, that his muscles resume at once a quiescent state, and they more usually continue to twitch and tremble for some time afterwards.

When the candidate for the office of ambati has gone successfully through such a ceremony, and the response he gives as from the god is admitted to be correct, he is considered as qualified to be a priest, and takes possession of the mbure. It is, however, easily to be seen, that it is the chief who in fact makes the appointment. The individual chosen is always on good terms with him, and is but his tool. The purposes of both are accomplished by a good understanding between them. There can be no doubt that those who exercise the office of ambati, and go through the actions just mentioned, are consummate jugglers; but they often become so much affected by their own efforts, that the motions of the muscles become in reality involuntary, and they have every appearance of being affected by a supernatural agency.

By the dexterity with which the ambati perform their juggling performances, they acquire great influence over the common people;