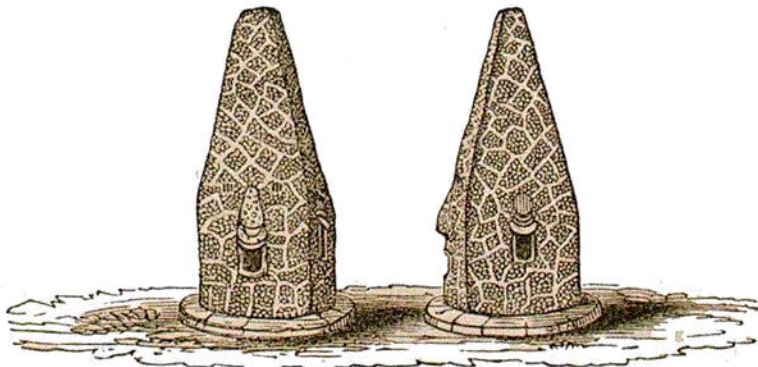


but, as before remarked, they are merely the instruments of the chiefs. When the latter are about going to battle, or engaging in any other important enterprise, they desire the priest to let the spirit enter him forthwith, making him, at the same time, a present. The priest speedily begins to shake and shiver, and ere long communicates the will of the god, which always tallies with the wishes of the chief. It sometimes happens that the priest fails in exciting himself to convulsive action; but this, among a people so wrapt in superstition, can always be ingeniously accounted for: the most usual mode of excusing the failure, is to say that the kalou is dissatisfied with the offering.

The chiefs themselves admitted, and Whippy informed me, that they have little respect for the power of the priests, and use them merely to govern the people. The ambati are generally the most shrewd and intelligent members of the community, and the reasons for their intimate union with the chiefs are obvious: without the influence of the superstition of which they are the agents, the chief would be unable successfully to rule; while without support from the authority of the chief, the ambati could scarcely practise their mummeries without detection.

The priests, when their services are not wanted by the chiefs, are sometimes driven to straits for food. In such cases they have recourse to the fears of the people, and among other modes of intimidation, threaten to eat them if their demands are not complied with. To give force to the menace, they pretend to have had communication with the god in dreams, and assemble the people to hear the message of the deity. This message is always portentous of evil; the simple natives are thus induced to make propitiatory offerings, which the priest applies to his own use.



FEEJEE ORACLE.

The priest at Levuka pretends to receive oracles from a miniature mbure, an engine of superstition of the form represented in the figure,