

eat their food from the ground. On the death of a chief, a taboo is laid upon the cocoa-nuts, pigs, &c., of a whole district.

Taking off a taboo is attended with certain ceremonies. It can be done by none but a chief of high rank. Presents are brought to the priest, and a piece of ava, which is brewed and drunk; he then makes a prayer (*sevu-sevu*), and the ceremony is finished.

In laying a taboo, a stone about two feet in length is set up before the mbure, and painted red; ava is chewed; after which the priest makes a prayer, and invokes maledictions on the heads of those who shall break it. Trees that are tabooed have bands of cocoa-nut or pandanus-leaves tied around them, and a stick is set in a heap of earth near by. We had an instance of this at the time of our arrival, when we found all the cocoa-nuts tabooed. We in consequence could obtain none, until I spoke to the chiefs of Ambau, who removed the taboo.

To the funeral ceremonies we have described, others are added, in some parts of the group, and there are differences in some of the details of the rites. Thus, at Muthuata, the body of a chief is usually taken to the royal mbure, on the island of that name, to be interred. The corpse, instead of being dressed in the habiliments of life, is wrapped in white mats, and borne on a wide plank. On its arrival at the mbure, it is received by the priest, who pronounces an eulogium on his character, after which the young men form themselves into two ranks, between which, and around the corpse, the rest of the people pass several times.

All the boys who have arrived at a suitable age are now circumcised, and many boys suffer the loss of their little fingers. The fore-skins and fingers are placed in the grave of the chief. When this part of the ceremony is over, young bread-fruit trees are presented by the relatives of the chief to the boys, whose connexions are bound to cultivate them until the boys are able to do it themselves.*

The strangulation of the chief's wives follows; and this is succeeded by a farther eulogium of the deceased, and a lament for the loss his people have sustained. The whole is concluded by a great feast of hogs, taro, yams, and bananas.

The funerals of persons of lower rank are of course far less ceremonious. The body is wrapped in tapa or mats, and sometimes sprinkled with turmeric, and is buried in a sitting posture, just below the surface of the ground. Even in this class the wife generally insists on being

* This custom has an important influence in keeping up a stock of this important source of food, and may have originated with that view.