

According to Kirby, a king governs also on Taputeouea or Drummond's Island; but it has been seen by the experience of the Peacock that his power was far from being paramount, it having been contested by a large portion of the island.

There are places where the royal authority does not supersede all other, and where the government is carried on by the whole body of chiefs, who take rank according to their age. In these places, for the purpose of accommodating all, there is in every town a large council-house, called the mariapa, one of which has been before described. In it every family of rank has its particular seat, along the side of the house; the middle being occupied by the katokas and kawas, or landholders and slaves, neither of whom have any voice in the affairs of government.

When a meeting is deemed necessary, the oldest or presiding chief sends out his messengers, whose business it is to summon the people, which is done by blowing conchs in all directions. The council then assembles, when the head chief lays before them the business, and any one is at liberty to speak, and if he be so disposed, delivers his opinion. The discussions are said to be at times very animated, and violent quarrels sometimes take place between different speakers, who are with difficulty prevented from coming to blows by those who are present. No regular vote is taken; but the opinion of the majority is very soon ascertained, and this decides the business.

The chiefs have absolute rule over their own families and slaves, and can punish them at pleasure. Minor crimes are punished by the offended party or his relatives, but in cases of importance, the decision is made and the punishment ordered in council.

The great and marked distinction between these natives and those of Polynesia is the absence of the taboo system, or any laws or prohibitions under the control of the priest, or chiefs, that are believed to emanate from their gods. Mr. Hale remarks, that the word taboo occurs in several compounds in their language having the meaning of sacred, but is not used by itself.

The succession to rank and property is hereditary. If a chief has several children by different wives, the son of the mother of the highest rank is the successor. If all the children should be equal in rank, the eldest would receive twice as much land as the others; or if the father does not choose to divide his property, the eldest son would receive the whole, and is obliged to support his brothers and sisters, who are expected in return to work for him, and cannot marry without his consent. Females can inherit property, and their are heiresses in the Kingsmill Group whose wealth allures many suitors. Slaves are held under strict