

At the Navigator Islands two such individuals, father and son, by name, *Tamafaingá*, had, for many years, down to the period of the first arrival of the missionaries, held the inhabitants in slavish awe, and ruled them at their will, by the dread of their supernatural power. At the Tonga Islands, though it is not known that any person is actually worshipped, as elsewhere, there are two high chiefs, whose official titles are, *Tuitonga* and *Veati*, and a woman, called the *Tamahá*, who are believed to be descended from gods, and are treated with reverence on that account by all, not excepting the king, who regards them as his superiors in rank. In New Zealand the great warrior-chief, Hongi, claimed for himself the title of a god, and was so called by his followers. At the Society Islands Tamatoa, the last heathen king of Raiatea, was worshipped as a divinity. At the Marquesas there are, on every island, several men, who are termed *atua*, or gods, who receive the same adoration, and are believed to possess the same powers as other deities. In the Sandwich Islands, that the reverence shown to some of the chiefs bordered on religious worship, is evident from a passage in a speech of John Ii, (formerly a priest, and now one of the best informed of the native orators,) delivered in 1841, and published in the *Polynesian*, for May 1, of that year, in which he gives an account of some of their ancient superstitions. He says: "Here is another sort of tabu that I have seen, namely, that relating to high chiefs, and especially to the king. They were called gods by some, because their houses were sacred, and every thing that pertained to their persons." At Depeyster's Group, the westernmost cluster of Polynesia, we were visited by a chief, who announced himself as the *atua* or god of the islands, and was acknowledged as such by the other natives.

This singular feature in the religious system of the Polynesians, appearing at so many distant and unconnected points, must have originated in some ancient custom, or some tenet of their primitive creed, coeval, perhaps, with the formation of their present state of society. There is certainly no improbability in the supposition that the lawgiver, whose decrees have come down to us in the form of the tabu system, was a character of this sort,—a king, invested by his subjects with the attributes of divinity. It is worthy of remark, that in all the cases in which we know of living men having been thus deified, they were chiefs of high rank, and not ordinary priests (*tufuna*), or persons performing the sacerdotal functions.