

WORSHIP.

If we may judge from what appears in the eastern groups, the original form of worship of the Polynesians was no less simple than their theology. In Samoa, Tonga, and New Zealand, their divinities are regarded as spiritual beings, and approached only by prayers, invocations, penances, offerings of first fruits, libations, and similar forms. They have neither temples nor altars, nor, properly speaking, either idols or sacrifices. In Samoa, indeed, they had a few inanimate objects of reverence, which were worshipped by a small portion of the population. Mr. Heath says, "A branch of bamboo, set upright, with a bunch of cocoa-nut fibres tied at the top, was worshipped by part of Manono, a sacred stone by another district, and some families had roughly-carved wooden idols, as representations of deceased chiefs, to whom they paid religious homage."* In the latter custom, of preserving the effigies of deified chiefs, we probably see the origin of the idolatrous worship which prevails in eastern Polynesia. In Tonga they have a few images as in Samoa, but the chief peculiarity in their system is a certain kind of human sacrifice, which differs from that of the Tahitians in its mode and object. On the sickness of a chief, it is usual to strangle an infant belonging to the same family,—sometimes his own child,—whose death it is supposed will be accepted by the gods, in lieu of that of the sick person. In New Zealand there are no idols of any description, and the only approach to human sacrifice is the custom of immolating several slaves at the death of their master; which, however, is done rather out of respect to him, and to provide him with attendants in his future existence, than for the purpose of appeasing the gods.

In the eastern groups we meet with a wholly different form of worship, with sensual and shocking rites. In Tahiti and Rarotonga the word *marae*, which in the Navigator and Friendly Islands signifies merely the public place or lawn in the centre of a village, is applied to certain sacred enclosures of stone, containing two or three houses, where are deposited the hideous idols which they worship, and in or before which their sacrifices are performed. In the Sandwich Islands similar enclosures exist, but with the name of *heiau*. In the Marquesas the *ma'ae* is merely a grove, containing idols, and

* Polynesian, vol. i. No. 18.