

5 The Unknown God: Myth in History

Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription on it: To an unknown god. What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

Acts 17:23-24

Like the Greeks, they [the Maori] have given a place to the unknown [Christian] God among their other divinities.

Taranaki Herald, 20 September 1862

I

I intend to reflect on the problem of myth and history—not as usually put, as a distinction between repetition and uniqueness, circularity and linearity. For so stated, it is an uninteresting discussion, one more influenced by biblical apologetics and the frustrated attempt to locate the Bible as unique than by the proper concerns of the historian of religion.¹ Rather I should like to reflect on the historicity of myth, not in the sense of recovering historical realities from myths—the sort of patient, critical enterprise carried out with notable success by the Africanists²—but rather on the historical context of myth and the question of the utility of concern for such context in the interpretation of texts by historians of religion. This grows out of an increasing preoccupation with making clear and explicit the *preinterpretative decisions and operations* undertaken prior to exegesis by the historian of religion. Such public clarity is a necessary step in the formation of a discipline, and too often refused by historians of religion.

In chapter 6, I will seek to set the well-known Ceramese myth of Hainuwele within the context of a post-European “cargo situation” rather than interpreting it as an archaic, tuber cultivator text, and the Babylonian Akitu festival within a hellenistic postconquest situation rather than viewing it as reflecting archaic, second millennium New Year rituals involving

the humiliation and/or death of the king (or deity). This allows me to develop the theme of “recification,” obscured by previous interpreters who held both these texts to be archaic and, hence, both the myths and rituals to be concerned with repetition.³ In this essay, I should like to attempt the same sort of analysis for a Maori cosmogony, the creation of the world by Io.⁴

I have not chosen this Maori text at random. It has played an important role in the development of the history of religions. A succession of major scholars have devoted articles to it.⁵ It has attained all but canonical status within the discipline. Indeed, this status has been imputed to its native context as well. Thus Eliade terms it “the Polynesian cosmogonic myth,” one that stands “high in the estimation of the Polynesians.”⁶

In their use of the text, scholars of religion have focused on three topics: (1) the “High God” and the question of *Urimonothetismus*, using this text to extend the range of this religious form to Oceania; (2) the question of the relationship of the “High God” to “secondary deities”; and (3) the notion that in archaic religion, the cosmogony provides the model for all creative human activity (a portion of this text has been used, especially by Eliade, as the proof text for this point).

A “High God” text was chosen as well because the problem with which this essay is concerned was raised with respect to this sort of data at an early date, albeit in a somewhat unrefined form. I need not rehearse the dramatic discovery of the figure of “All Father” among the Australian aborigines, especially as set forth in the writings of A. W. Howitt in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* between 1882 and 1887,⁷ and the use of this material, along with comparative data, to develop a theory of the origin of religion by Andrew Lang in *The Making of Religion*, especially in two chapters entitled, “The High Gods of Low Races,” and “More Savage Supreme Beings.”⁸ Nor do I need to rehearse the extension of the Australian materials to other cultures in the massive works of Father Wilhelm Schmidt and Raffaele Pettazzoni.⁹ It may, as well, be recalled that in an article entitled, “The Limits of Savage Religion,” E. B. Tylor, largely in response to Lang, forcefully argued that the “High Gods” were the result of direct or indirect influence from missionary activities by European Christians.¹⁰ Although such influence could often be questioned in the specific examples Tylor adduced,¹¹ Tylor’s point has always seemed to me persuasive, at least to deserve more attention than the slighting references often given to it in the works of historians of religion. Important reformulations of Tylor’s model, made with better evidence and more sophisticated theories, have been proposed, on somewhat different grounds, in the case of African traditions by Robin Horton and Jack Goody. Indigenous, latent “High Gods” become increasingly explicit in response to missionary activities and native theological speculation.¹² This

is to reopen the question of the historicity of the "High God" myths in particular cultural settings in contrast to some postulation of their timeless and universal archaic presence.

II

To begin with an agenda for the preinterpretative study of the Maori text, we need, first, to establish *context*, both native context and our academic context. The latter is suggested by the debates over *Uymono-theismus*.

The first step must be the gathering of the most proximate contextual information, that conveyed in the text as published.¹³ The cosmogony, Tiwai Paraoe, of the Maru-tuahu (Ngati Maru) tribe of Hauraki, a British colonial officer, Colonel Gudgeon, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. (The latter point is an inference. The note, published in 1907, states "some years ago.") Whether it was given in oral or written form is nowhere stated, but an oral recitation is strongly suggested by the style of parts II and III, by the reference in V to memory and in a footnote by the translator discussed below. The text was presented by Gudgeon to the Polynesian Society in New Zealand, under whose auspices it was translated by Hare Hongi. The Maori text with English translation was published in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* for 1907 and was widely distributed as well by a separate offprint.

Gudgeon's original document is not available for study. One later scholar terms it "a mystery jealously guarded by the editors" of the *Journal*.¹⁴ As neither I nor many other historians of religion who have written on this text read Maori, we must presume the text to be well translated. This presumption is supported by the fact that, save for one detail, there is little difference, apart from matters of style, between Hare Hongi's 1907 translation and a later translation of the text, by J. Prytz Johansen, published in 1958.¹⁵

As the editorial note makes clear, Io is being presented to the readers of the *Journal* as a hitherto secret deity. He is alleged to be the supreme creator god of the Maori, unknown to the majority of the Maori as well as to all Europeans. Knowledge of Io was reserved to the highest class of priesthood. His name could be uttered only in settings of extreme ritual purity.

To evaluate this claim, we must evaluate the sources. We are given three names for which information external to the text may be sought. (1) *Tiwai Paraoe*. Nothing further is known for certain. His name does not recur in any other article on the Maori that I have seen. He is listed as a (native) corresponding member of the Polynesian Society from 1894 through 1913. There is, presumably, archival material concerning him.

(2) *Colonel Gudgeon*. Walter Edward Gudgeon (1842-1920) was a prominent British colonial and military figure. Distinguished during the Maori Wars, he served successively as captain of the native constabulary, under secretary of defense, commissioner of police for the dominion, and a judge of the Native Land Court. He was a founding member and first president of the Polynesian Society and wrote extensively on the Maori.¹⁶ (3) *Hare Hongi*. A Maori half-breed with the British name of H. M. Stowell. An exceedingly eccentric and often unreliable scholar, he played an important role in the early years of the society.¹⁷ From such data, not much of importance may be concluded with any degree of assurance. Staying with the text as published, we need next to attempt to describe it, fix its boundaries and form, and determine its setting. This is extremely difficult, for the text appears quite variegated.¹⁸

The opening section is a creation myth presented in poetic form. This is rare among collected Maori cosmogonies. Does this suggest that it was recited at a ritual? Again, this would be unusual. Section II describes I as "sayings" and records their recitation in a variety of cultic and non-cultic settings.¹⁹ Thus I appears unusual when compared with other Maori materials, a necessary step in preinterpretation in order to locate the particular text under discussion.

Section II contains what appear to be a poetic commentary and a prose one on the use of the myth in I. To whom is it addressed? Who are the "friends" referred to at the beginning of the prose commentary? Is this Io? Is it similar to a sermon preached on a sacred text? Or, are the "friends" the presumed western readers and the comments intended as testimony as to how the text was used in the cult by Tiwai Paraoe or someone else?

Section III appears to be a personal aside. By Tiwai Paraoe? By someone else? I do not know why the square brackets were inserted by the editors. Unlike the conventions in publishing ancient texts, there is no apparent consistency to the use of brackets and parentheses in the *Journal*.

Section IV appears to be a prose fragment of a cosmogony. It seems out of place in its present location, but connects well with the conclusion to I. Does this suggest some textual disarrangement? Is this a mark of oral composition?

Section V continues the myth of Io in a "recital." Was this originally a part of I? Is it another version? It is in more traditional Maori form and introduces a number of familiar Maori deities and cosmogonic motifs, especially the separation of Sky Father (Rangi) from Earth Mother (Papa). The second list in V is structured around the common Maori theogonic motif of sexual generation. But who are the "brethren" in the strange

aside that begins this section? Are they devotees of Io? Is the question to be interpreted as catechetical? Are they the Maori ("many brethren") as distinct from the devotees of Io? Are they the Europeans?

The final section VI appears to be a set of learned glosses. By whom? They summarize traditional Maori lore, especially the legends of Maui, the Polynesian trickster. Is it mentioned only once, by way of an aside. What is this section's relationship to the Io tradition? Does it belong with this text?

We can answer none of our preinterpretative questions about this text with any security. The best we can conclude is that the text, at first glance, appears to be composite. This is recognized by Hare Hongi in a footnote to his translation:

the text may be described as the fragment of a mosaic, some of the missing parts of which have been substituted [for] by slightly later material, which causes a confusion of the original pattern.

By whom was this "substitution" performed? On what basis does he conclude that there has been use of "slightly later material"? What does he mean by "the original pattern"? Does Gudgeon's original manuscript provide additional information that was available to him, but not to us? He continues:

Had the reciter been asked to repeat it on many different occasions, each recital being separately written, slight variations would have enabled such a reconstruction of its parts as to more really accord with its antique and original setting. It is now apparently too late to do this and we are obliged to take it as we find it. In some important respects, the fragment is unique. It is informing in its introduction of new ideas.²⁰

The preinterpretative questions raised thus far make the text difficult to interpret insofar as they raise fundamental issues as to the nature and extent of the text which is to be exegeted. Is the poetic myth (section I) the text, and all the rest native interpretation? This is how the majority of scholars have considered the text, and therefore they have dispensed with commenting on sections II through VI. Are I and II the text? So Eliade and Long.²¹ Are I and V, the poetic "recitals," the text? So Johannes C. Andersen.²² Or should we attempt to interpret the entire text as given, I through VI, while recognizing its apparently composite character? The latter task has not been undertaken.

If these preinterpretative questions about the extent of the text give rise to frustration, questions about the setting of the text result in further puzzlement. By whom was it said? To whom was it addressed? Is there a difference between its original setting and its presentation to Gudgeon? If we accept the statement that the cult of Io was a secret group which

jealously guarded its traditions, here we find a possibly initiated native telling a certainly uninitiated foreigner its secret myths and rituals. In what sort of a setting might this occur? Why? Does this affect our understanding of the text?

If we assume that the persona of the text is Tiwai Paraone—an assumption I am not at all certain we are entitled to make—was he a priest of Io or a member of the cult? Was he fully initiated? Was he a learned, native outsider? As there are no certain clues external to the text, we must derive our information from the aside in III.

He does not seem to be a fully initiated member, most certainly not a priest, as he invites his listener to "seek out a skilled Maori" for details about the rituals he names. He knows something about the Io cult, but not much. He "knows not the details," his information is "fragmentary," he has "caught but fragments." But why should even these be revealed to an outsider? The text was given by a native informant to a British soldier in a period of military conflict between the Maori and the Whites, during a time of rejection, by the Maori, of European missionaries and culture. (Note the reference to the Waikato War and to the Maori hearts "which were torn from them by Christian doctrine and European law.") The person who speaks in section III expects to die soon. He believes that the rituals he describes are no longer efficacious. Even the war ritual was not used against the Whites.

The persona in III explicitly asks our question: "Why then need I withhold these sacred rituals?" But how do we interpret his answer? Are we receiving the traditions of a man in despair who is convinced that a cherished cult no longer has power? Does he believe that his culture is breaking apart, and that secrecy no longer matters? Is he resentful of the cult's apparent failure and seeking to damage it further by revealing its secrets? Does he believe that the teachings of the cult were false? Or does he believe that the Maori are doomed, and is he seeking to pass on to their conquerors their valued spiritual heritage? All of these reasons have been the motivation for revealing secret traditions in other societies (especially among the Amerindians). Which one of these, or what other one (e.g., he was paid), is operative here? We cannot know on the basis of the information given in the text. Yet our evaluation of the text, which is at the same time an evaluation of the informant, would be aided if we could. *The text is a transaction between two quite particular individuals at a quite particular time.* The attempt to clarify these particularities must be a leading item in the preinterpretative agenda.

III

Our text was first published in 1907. It is the *earliest* extensive source of information on Io and, as such, takes on peculiar importance.²³ The next

moment of significance is 1913, which must be taken as *the* creative year in Io scholarship. Two scholars, Elsdon Best and S. Percy Smith, both associated with the Dominion Museum and the Polynesian Society, issued massive documents on the Io cult, derived from native informants, which present total, esoteric systems of Io mythology, theosophy, and cult. The material is varied. Lists of titles, invocations, and rituals predominate.²⁴ The source of these materials is alleged to be a secret Maori "college" of *tohungas* (priests skilled in ancient lore).

There is nothing inherently improbable in this. We know of many such esoteric tribal traditions and institutions. It has been one of the deficiencies of ethnography that such evidence—and, for that matter, both formal and informal native exegetical labors—have not been well collected. However, our evaluation of such materials must depend on our evaluation of the informants. (Carlos Castaneda's reports of the "teachings" of Juan Matus would be an obvious example of both the claim and the need for an evaluation of the claim.)

Smith and Best relied on a single informant for the bulk of their data. H. Te Whatahoro (J. M. Jury) was a baptized Christian half-breed who had lived most of his life in European style and whose skill in the Maori language appears to have been deficient. According to what can be pieced together from several sources, in the late 1850s a group of Maori from the Wairarapa District, meeting on political matters, agreed that ancient tribal traditions should be taught to a group of young men. Three priests, each a former convert to Christianity, agreed to undertake the task. Moihī Te Matorohanga served as the prime tradent, with Nepia Pohuhu and Paratene Te Okawhare supplementing his accounts. Whatahoro was to act as "scribe." The materials were dictated over the better part of a decade in a specially constructed ritual house. The manuscripts remained in Whatahoro's possession. In 1899, Tamanaū Manupuku made a plea that a record be made of old Maori traditional learning before those who were knowledgeable died out. In 1905, there was an intertribal meeting which formed a committee (the Taane-nui-a-rangi komiti) and a number of old manuscript books and oral traditions were put "forward and the selection of the best of these made by a popular vote." In 1906–7, the committee agreed on the "authorization" of the materials recorded by Whatahoro from Matorohanga, Pohuhu, and Okawhare. These were transcribed into two volumes which the committee sealed. In 1910, these volumes were deposited in the Dominion Museum. They are now lost. But copies of them by Hare Hongi and Best survive, as well as a large collection of Whatahoro manuscripts. These, supplemented by questions asked of Whatahoro by Best and Smith, are alleged to provide the bulk of the Io traditions that they record.²⁵

There is considerable evidence that Best mistrusted Whatahoro. Smith appears to have had no questions concerning his credibility.²⁶ Later scholars have treated the matter of Whatahoro's veracity with more severity.²⁷ The judgment by E. W. G. Craig is typical: "The information on Io certainly flowed freely, but how much of it stemmed from the original teachings of Te Matorohanga, and how much from Whatahoro's fertile imagination, it is impossible to say."²⁸ More recent study of the complex Whatahoro manuscripts has demonstrated that none of the Io materials are contained in documents that may be traced back to the traditions "approved" by the Taane-nui-a-rangi committee and, hence, to Matorohanga.

Almost all of *Te Kauae Runga* ["Things Celestial"—the first part of the Whatahoro materials published by Smith as *The Lore of the Whare-wānanga*] corresponds with the contents of Best's copies of the original Taane-nui-a-rangi manuscripts which are said to have been approved by a committee of tribal leaders from the Hawkes Bay and Wairarapa areas. If authentic tradition can be defined as that body of lore which is accepted as genuine by mature well-informed members of the group concerned, *Te Kauae Runga* (with the exception of Chapter 2 [i.e., the chapter containing almost all of the Io materials]) can be accepted as such.²⁹

With the 1913 publications by Best and Smith, a period of intense discussions of Io began. Europeans tended to treat these reports with either excessive skepticism or credulity, both equally naive.³⁰ For the Maori, decisively defeated by the British, the "discovery" of Io was an occasion for intense national pride.³¹ A number of books and articles, in Maori and English, most published in New Zealand, claimed to give further details. I find nothing in this literature after 1913 that cannot be accounted for as an extension or elaboration of the materials in Best and Smith which were available in both Maori and English.

During this period, two further tasks were attempted, although both were present in rudimentary form prior to 1913: the collection of evidence for the prehistory of the Io cult and the demonstration of its wide diffusion throughout Polynesia. Neither of these attempts can be judged successful, although they persist in the literature.³²

In what might be termed a quest for prestigious origins, the literature on the Maori prior to the period 1907–13 was ransacked for possible references to Io. It is likely that none of the references that were uncovered would have seemed of great significance before the publications by Hare Hongi, Best, and Smith.

The first strategy was to collect reports of an alleged, unnamed Maori supreme being from the early period of European contact with the Maori,

of the assumption being that these were reports of Io, but without mention of his tabooed name. A handful were located. They are all vague and suggest the use of Christian vocabulary on the part of missionary writers rather than signs of the presence of a cult of Io. For example, "there is not a wind that blows but that they [the Maori] imagine it bears some message from the supreme being."³³ From such materials, nothing can be concluded with certainty.

The second strategy was to note mentions of Maori deities whose names were secret, the assumption being that this prohibition was a sufficient cause for assuming that the deity was Io. Perhaps the most influential example would be an anthology of such reports, undated and from unidentified informants, which appeared in 1904 in E. Tregear's widely quoted *The Maori Race*:

Each initiate into the sacred mysteries considered his knowledge as a trust to be guarded against the outer world, and it is only under the most exceptional circumstances that information could be acquired. Some gods could only be named in the Whare Kura or Whare-wananga (temples) of the tribe. To utter "the ineffable name" (Io) under a roof of any kind was to blaspheme most frightfully, and would be a sacrilege that only an ignorant person (religiously ignorant) like a European god-descended, would not be regarded as treated with due respect if mentioned at certain times or in unsuitable localities. A European student of Maori lore once ventured to speak to an old priest whom he met in a country store (shop) and asked him some question about ancient history. The Maori turned round with a disgusted look and remarked, "This is no place in which to speak of solemn things."³⁴

There appears to be nothing in this composite account that would suggest to anyone not already committed to the notion of Io, that the reference is to a supreme being, let alone that the deity be identified as Io. What is reported is a set of well-known cultic regulations concerning purity and secrecy of names. The plural "gods" and the fact that the same prohibitions are applied to ancestors and tribal traditions indicate that nothing like Io is being referred to. Rather this is a catalog of items which may not be mentioned except in a sacred precinct.³⁵ That Tregear, in 1904, draws the assumption that the reference is to Io indicates only that the deity was being discussed in the circle of European scholars associated with the Polynesian Society and with colonial activities prior to the 1907 publication of the Io cosmogony.

Finally, there was the attempt to recover explicit mentions of Io's name in materials prior to 1907-13. The earliest alleged reference to Io as a supreme deity occurs in a report, published in 1876, by C. O. Davis:

while travelling with a distinguished Maori chieftain some years ago, he inadvertently revealed the fact that the Maoris in olden times worshipped a Supreme Being whose name was held to be so sacred that none but a priest might utter it at certain times and places. The name was Io, perhaps an abbreviation of Io-uru. Witnessing my anxiety to obtain further information on the subject, he refused to disclose any more Maori secrets as he called them, and politely referred me to an old priest who resided about one hundred miles off.³⁶

Here too, as in the case of Tregear, one must ask whether the identification with Io is not a gloss, rather than a direct statement from the informant. Perhaps Davis was influenced by his transcription and translation, later in the same volume, of what he claims to be "one of the oldest" Maori prayers—if accurate, the earliest reference to Io in direct Maori speech published by a European.

Move on, O Whakatau

Move to Hawaiki

Establish there thy house

As though it were [beneath] the *maru* [shadow, shelter or sacred leadership, or protecting care] of Io.³⁷

However, as Buck has demonstrated, Davis misread the text. The fourth line, which he divided, *Me ko maru a Io*, ought to be read, *Me ko Te Maru-aio*, "your house, the Shelter-of-Peace." Buck dismisses Davis's reference as "pseudo-evidence."³⁸

In a chapter entitled "The God Io," John White, in 1887, offered a single sentence from Ngati Hu tradition which is the first unambiguous claim concerning Io in direct native speech: "Io is really the god. He made the heaven and the earth."³⁹ Without context, it is impossible to evaluate this claim. The rest of White's chapter contains a yam-planting invocation in which "O Io" appears at the end of each unit—most probably to be understood as the refrain "i-o!"⁴⁰ rather than as the god's proper name—and a lengthier section which explains that Io means "twitch" and goes on to record a set of omens from the Ngati Ruani based on various spasms that serve as "signs of good and evil."⁴¹ As one scholar caustically notes, "White supported a page of a god Io with three pages of twitches (io), but capitalization does not convert a muscular twitch into a god."⁴²

Elsewhere in his multivolume work, White records a Ngati Tahu genealogy with Io at its head, followed by Io-nuko and Io-rangi. This genealogical cosmogony, with its implied notion of sexual generation, compares well with many other traditional Maori cosmogonies, but represents a different mythologem than that of Io as sole creator. It does

demonstrate the ease with which Io could be inserted at the head of a traditional Maori cosmogony.⁴³

The most curious tradition in White is one that reports, again from the Ngati Tahu, that a "heretical teacher" held that "Tiki made man, whilst the fathers had always maintained that it was Io."⁴⁴ The "heresy" is, of course, traditional Maori lore. If the text is not European (as Johansen conjectures), then it suggests a beginning, among the Ngati Tahu, of an attempt to substitute Io for a variety of traditional Maori deities and their functions, although the theme of anthropogony in this form does not reappear in later Io traditions.⁴⁵

Of White's five traditions concerning Io, at most three (more probably, two) can claim to survive criticism. Nevertheless, we have for the first time clear evidence for the earliest European knowledge of Io and reports of the deity's presence in indigenous Maori speculation. The date of White's publication, 1887, accords with the general range of time in which Gudgeon must have received the cosmogony printed in 1907.

In 1891, Tregear's authoritative *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary* defined Io as, "God, the Supreme Being," citing Davis and White.⁴⁶ In an appendix, he printed a Moriori genealogy with Rangī and Papa as the primordial parents and Io and Io-rangi as the tenth and eleventh of their "heaven born" descendants. This text may be used as evidence for Io's name as a deity. But it directly contradicts any understanding of Io as supreme deity. It does witness to the ease with which Io could be inserted into a traditional genealogy.⁴⁷ In the same appendix, Tregear published a Maori genealogy from the Ngati Maniapoto collected by William Mair which is headed by "Te-Ahau-o-te-Rangi (Io)" (who generates Rangī and Papa. The parenthetical identification of Io is, most likely, a gloss by Tregear and not part of the original report.⁴⁸

Finally, in the same issue of the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* as Hare Hongi's translation, there is a long narrative poem on the ascent of Tane through the heavens to "the very home in Heaven, this of Io," the title, "Io-the-parentless" occurs, and there is a possible additional reference to Io as "the nameless one." This poem seems to derive from the Whatahoro collection, and, therefore, cannot be used as independent evidence. It is an early version of what will appear in 1913.⁴⁹

This concludes a survey of all the known independent references to Io that appeared prior to 1907-13.⁵⁰ It may be significant that none of the texts which make explicit claims regarding Io and his status suggest secrecy or the presence of separate "Io colleges," major motifs in the later, more extensive, reports. However, in 1899, S. Percy Smith referred to this:

On the subject of Io, as the Supreme God of the Maori, a good deal could be said by a very limited number of our members [of the Poly-

nesian Society]. But they, we think, with the deep sympathy the old Pakeha Maori had with his teachers, remain silent, feeling that there are certain subjects so extremely sacred to the Maori of old that it is in them a sacrilege to speak. But *taihoa* [presently, bye and bye].⁵¹

I suspect this is more eloquent witness to the existence of an "Io college" among the old British colonial hands clustered around the Polynesian Society, than it is to the presence of such a "college" among the Maori.

There is one additional text, only recently republished, which may be the earliest reference to Io. In a letter, most probably sent to a Christian missionary, which gives an account of the acknowledgment of Potatau I as king by various Maori tribes, published in the *Southern Cross* for 6 August 1858, one Te Taphana, a teacher of the Ngati Hikairo, is depicted as stepping forth and saying, "Name the King, O Io, O Io." The correspondent, Wiremu Tamihana, explains, "He meant, 'Name the King, O William, O William,' " with apparent reference to William Thompson Tarapipi, one of Potatau's chief supporters.⁵² The setting would seem to be wrong for this to be a reference to the secret Io. It is a large public gathering, including at least one European Christian missionary (Rev. Robert Burrows).⁵³ Yet there is a connection posited, in the later Io traditions, between Io and the institution of kingship or chieftainship.⁵⁴ The strange interpretation given Taphana's petition by Tamihana *might* be related to the well-documented practice of substituting another, often nonsensical name, for the tabooed name of a chief.⁵⁵ I shall return to this text, below.⁵⁶

Eliminating those texts which are doubtful, a sparse but suggestive picture may be sketched. The name Io is known to Europeans as early as 1887 (possibly as early as 1858). He is stated to be the supreme god, the maker of heaven and earth (Ngati Hu tradition). His name is inserted in various genealogical traditions (Ngati Tahu, Ngati Maniapoto[?], Moriori), but only once in its expected position of primacy. The statement with which I began this survey may be affirmed—the text translated by Hare Hongi in 1907 is the earliest published extensive information on Io and, as such, takes on peculiar importance.

As might be anticipated, given the period in which Io came into scholarly prominence, there were some attempts to provide a diffusionist account of Io in the Victorian sense of the word.⁵⁷ I cite only some representative examples:

1. It would seem that the name of Io originated in the East, since we are told that among the ancient Egyptians Io was the lunar goddess and in the language of the Argives the moon itself.
2. Can there be any doubt that the Maori deity Io is the same as the circum-Levantine Iao? If the two are identical, another clue is furnished for the threading of the labyrinth built by the Polynesians in their wanderings.

3. The Maori people obtained the name for the chief god from the Assyrians.
4. The Phoenician god Io was the supreme god of the Maori, who still on occasions keep a *hakari*, or feast, also of Cushite origins.⁵⁸

However, most attempts were made not to prove Old World diffusion, but rather to demonstrate a pan-Oceanic distribution of the deity.

The earliest example, consistently adduced by subsequent scholarship, is a fragment of a text from Tahiti, recorded by Edmond de Bovis in 1855 and first published by him in 1863.

In the beginning there was nothing but the god Jhotho; there was next an expanse of water which covered the abyss and the god Tino-ta'ata (human form) floated on the surface.⁵⁹

This is palpably a native paraphrase of Genesis 1:1-2, and cannot be used as evidence for a cult of Iho in the Society Islands, which would be the ideological as well as the linguistic equivalent of the Maori Io.⁶⁰ De Bovis recognized the close parallel to Genesis, but assumed the Tahitian tradition was independent. In fact, the text represents native Christian tradition from an area that had knowledge of biblical stories some thirty years before the arrival of the first missionaries, and for more than eighty years before de Bovis collected his text.⁶¹ The otherwise unknown Jhotho appears to be a native attempt at reproducing the name Jehovah.⁶²

After 1913, two additional "Io cults" have been claimed: Kiho (or Kiho-Tunu) in the Tuomotus and 'Io in Hawaii.⁶³ Both have been proven to have been directly influenced by knowledge of the Io materials published in 1913.⁶⁴ There is no evidence for Io as an archaic, pan-Oceanic supreme deity.⁶⁵

On the basis of this survey of published Io materials, some tentative historical conclusions may be suggested. (1) Io, as a "High God," is a post-European phenomenon.⁶⁶ (2) If we set aside the Tamihane letter of 1838,⁶⁷ there is a small collection of contextless, brief references to Io in the literature from 1887 to 1907. Little can be determined from these. (3) The first extensive information on Io is the publication of Gudgeon's text in 1907. (4) The only other major source of information is from Te Whatahoro as translated and edited by E. Best and S. Percy Smith in 1911 and published in 1913. Whatahoro's reliability as a tradent is open to severe question, being a Christian half-breed of uncertain skill in Maori. While there is little doubt that much of Whatahoro's materials can be traced back to the teachings of three formerly Christian Maori priests during the period 1863-86, the materials on Io *do not* seem a part of this transmission. There is good reason to believe that Whatahoro added the Io materials during the period 1908-11, after the publication of Gudgeon's text.⁶⁸ The basis for the Io traditions in Best and Smith can neither be

recovered nor evaluated. (5) With both the 1907 and 1913 Io texts available in English and Maori, it would appear that all subsequent Io traditions among the Maori are dependent on these texts. At least, the burden of proof would fall on those who would assert otherwise. (6) All evidence for Io outside of New Zealand is either dependent upon the publications of 1907 and 1913 or upon false inference from native attempts to transliterate Jehovah or paraphrase biblical traditions in native Christian discourse.

These preinterpretative conclusions appear exceedingly negative as to the trustworthiness of the Io traditions and place a great burden on the 1907 text. But further reflection suggests that they, and the data from which they were drawn, contain some important clues to a possible reconstruction and reconsideration of the Io tradition and, therefore, of the 1907 text.

The necessary quest by the historian of religion for context as a prior condition for the interpretation of any religious text, requires, in this instance, further inquiry.

IV

Examining the traditions surveyed in the previous section suggests some chronological convergence. Geographical convergence, while less apparent, seems also present.

Starting with the text translated by Hare Hongi, the prefatory note to the 1907 publication states that Gudgeon received the text "some years ago." Gudgeon refers to the text in 1905.⁶⁹ Taking this date as the *terminus ad quem*, the *terminus a quo* may be established as 1885. In that year, *The History and Doings of the Maori* was published under the name of Gudgeon's father, T. W. Gudgeon. However, the son, W. E. Gudgeon, "supplied and wrote most of the matter contained" in the book.⁷⁰ No mention of Io occurs. Therefore, it may be assumed that the text and information concerning Io became available to Gudgeon between 1885 and 1905. But, there is more. Gudgeon was away from New Zealand, serving as the British president at Rarotonga from 1899 to 1909, after which he retired to Auckland until his death in 1920. Therefore, it seems likely that both the text and knowledge of the traditions of Io became available to Gudgeon between 1885 and 1899. I am tempted to suggest a further refinement, the period 1894-99, when both Gudgeon and Tiwai Paraoone were members of the Polynesian Society, the former as its first president (1892), the latter as an early native corresponding member—but this must remain sheer conjecture.

If these arguments be accepted, then the possible dates for Gudgeon's text, 1885-99, overlap with the dates for the earliest independent notices of Io surveyed above, 1887-1907. Furthermore, while I doubt the antiquity

of the Whatahoro traditions concerning Io as being older than 1908, if they could be traced back in some form to the Matorohanga transmission, the dates on Whatahoro's manuscripts, 1863-86, likewise converge.

The geographical provenance of the various traditions appears more scattered. Plotted according to the location of the tribes to which they are attributed or to which their tradent belonged, a clear concentration appears in the Taranaki-Waikato region. Three of the six items may be mapped in this district.⁷¹

Taken together, chronology and geography seem to suggest that the Io traditions reached some measure of formulation in the 1880s in the Taranaki-Waikato region. I doubt that the creation of Io as a "High God" began elsewhere or much antedated this period.

There are thematic interrelationships as well. Both the earliest tradent (Tamihane) and the latest (Whatahoro) are identified as Christians. The persona in the 1907 text states in section III that, "the fragments" of the Io theosophy "may be placed side by side with the law to become a basis for the history following on after our own time."⁷² Best, in 1913, reports that his informant (probably Whatahoro) had claimed:

I think that if your missionaries had sympathy with our people and had patiently studied the cult of Io instead of despising and condemning our belief, that the cult [of Io] would have been incorporated into your Bible.⁷³

There can be little doubt that one of the purposes of the meetings of the 1850s, sealed by the Taane-nui-a-rangi committee, was an effort by formerly Christian Maoris to produce a native counterpart to the Christian Bible.⁷⁴ Finally, there is the similarity of the various transliterations of the name Jehovah in Polynesian biblical translations and paraphrases (Ihowa in Maori, Jhoiho in Tahiti, Io-ora in Rarotonga), all of which preexist any certain knowledge of the Io cult.

These thematic elements appear to point to the following conclusions. (1) The Io cult was developed in the 1880s. It was most probably created earlier, perhaps as early as the late 1850s. The cult was centered in the Taranaki-Waikato region. (2) It was deliberately created as a Maori parallel to biblical tradition. Hence, the parallels often adduced between Io traditions (e.g., section III) and Genesis must be taken as deliberate imitations.⁷⁵ By this interpretation, *the Io cult is an instance of Maori syncretism.*

If this hypothesis be valid, historians of religion will have lost an allegedly archaic "High God" and an important proof text for the nature of primitive ritual, but they will have gained an interesting *new religion*, no less interesting in its modernity than it would be if it were truly "neo-Ihthic."⁷⁶

The question that ought to occur to any historian of religion at this point in his preinterpretative labors is whether there is any historical situation that makes these conjectures plausible and that he can connect with the specific text at hand. The answer, I believe, is affirmative. The chronology and geography, the variety of former converts as important tradents, and the desire to find Maori equivalents for European institutions must instantly coalesce for even the most casual student of New Zealand history. The context is the period and the region of the Maori Wars, a complex set of political and religious rebellions against colonial authority which began in the 1840s, intensified during the decade 1860-70, and ended (with some exceptions) in Maori defeat by 1880.⁷⁷ A review of this history becomes a necessary part of the preinterpretative study of the Io cosmogony.

V

Captain Cook was the first European to have direct recorded contact with the Maori (1767-70).⁷⁸ In the nineteenth century, contact became more intense. The first Christian missionary arrived in 1814.⁷⁹ In 1838, New Zealand was annexed by Great Britain.

Three elements in the colonization of New Zealand were of special importance.⁸⁰ (1) The explosion of the White settler population resulted in the relative as well as the absolute decline of the Maori. The number of Maori stood between 150,000 and 200,000 in 1800; by the *Census Report* of 1861, their number had been reduced to 55,336. In 1840, there were no more than 2,000 Whites, chiefly from Australia. By 1858, the Whites outnumbered the Maori. Following the discovery of gold in 1860, there was a fivefold increase in the White population in less than a decade. By 1880, there were 546,000 Whites and no more than 46,000 Maori, including some 7,000 half-breeds.⁸¹ (2) The introduction of the musket had a devastating effect on tribal warfare. Furthermore, needing cash to purchase weapons, together with the increased pressure from the increasing settler population, the Maoris sold off their land at a rapid rate. (3) Most serious of all, in a tribal culture whose ideology traced ownership of the land back to the "original canoes" of the fourteenth-century migration to New Zealand, was the insatiable settler appetite for land, primarily for agriculture and grazing. The forests were diminished at a rate of some 5 percent per year. Out of the twelve million acres that could be cultivated, about one fifth of the total land area of the two islands, more than one and a half million acres, had been cleared and planted by 1870. This would rise to seven million acres by 1880.⁸²

The Crown, by treaty with some Maori tribes in 1840, had preemptive rights to purchase Maori land. This was exercised, often paying the Maori six pence per acre and selling it to settlers for twenty times that amount.

Not only were the ancestral traditions being violated and the Maori being cheated, but also land titles, in a nonliterate culture, were extremely vague from a European viewpoint. The Maori had to resort to Native Land Courts where administrators such as Col. Gudgeon served as judges. The decisions of these courts concerning disputed property often led to intense tribal conflicts.⁸³ Taken together, this ensemble of elements provided a well-known scenario for the rise of nativistic resistance movements.⁸⁴ Two such movements, the King Movement and the Hauhau (Pai Marire), provide a possible context for the development of the Io traditions.

From the early 1840s through the 1850s, a number of Maori land leagues were formed. These leagues, in one district or another, sought to prevent further Maori land sales to the White settlers. In 1857, these various initiatives came together in the first attempt at a postcolonial, pan-Maori political movement—the King Movement.⁸⁵

In June 1858, drawing upon a mixture of traditional Maori and borrowed European models of political organization, a confederation of Central North Island tribes (the Waikato, Ngati Hau, Ngati Maniapoto, and Ngati Tuwharetoa) elected a Maori king, Potatau Te Wherowhero (Potatau I), to provide leadership for a united front against further land sales to the Europeans.⁸⁶ Based upon traditional ideas of the land being under the *mana* of chiefs, in the face of the capitulation of some chiefs to the pressure to sell off their lands to the Whites, the controlling notion of the King Movement was that of placing a confederation of tribal lands under the all-encompassing *mana* of a chief of chiefs, the king, who would not weaken.⁸⁷ The king was advised by a council, which closely resembled the traditional *runanga*, and it, in turn, monitored a countercolonial system of local courts, councils, and a hierarchy of officials, as well as publishing its own newspapers.⁸⁸ From the beginning, there seems to have been tension between the older, more traditional chiefs represented by Potatau I, who were legitimated by their *mana* and who spoke in terms of ancient lore, and the younger, mission-educated chiefs, represented preeminently by Wiremu Tamihana, the prime statesman of the King Movement, who was a Waikato Christian and who employed diplomatic and political skills and spoke in terms of biblical and liturgical rhetoric.⁸⁹

At first, the White attitude toward the Maori king was one of bemused tolerance. But this was followed, in 1860, by a military response. The first Maori War (the Taranaki or Waitara campaign), ended inconclusively. In 1861, Wiremu Tamihana negotiated a truce on behalf of the new king, Tawhio (Potatau II), the old king having died.

The second Maori War, the Waikato War, was fought in the king's home territory. It ended in military defeat for the Maoris in April 1864. Tamihana and the Ngati Hau defected. The king fled into the northern forest tribal area of the Ngati Maniapoto, which became designated as "King Coun-

try." A military solution by the Maori to their problems had proven impossible.

I would suggest that the King Movement provides the most proximate context for the development of the Io cult and for the understanding of the 1907 Maori cosmogony. The earliest reference to Io that is known is in Wiremu Tamihana's account of the public acknowledgment of Potatau Te Wherowhero as king in 1858.⁹⁰ The majority of instances of mentions of Io in reports prior to the publication of the cosmogony in 1907 occur in "King Country," especially from among the Ngati Maniapoto (see p. 84).⁹¹ Main events from the history of the King Movement are referred to in section III of the 1907 text: the Waikato War, the name of the Kingite statesman, Wiremu Tamihana,⁹² the military defeat of the Maoris, the fact that European property law was destroying the Maori. The voice of the persona who speaks in III is most likely that of a member of the militaristic faction within the King Movement that suffered defeat in April 1864 and went into exile with the king.⁹³

In 1864, a second movement intersected with the King Movement. Known popularly as Hauhau, but more accurately, especially in its formative stages, as Pai Marire (Good and Peaceful), it had its origins, in 1862, in a reported vision of the angel Gabriel seen by a Taranaki Maori, Te Ua Haumene Horopapera Tuwhakararo.⁹⁴

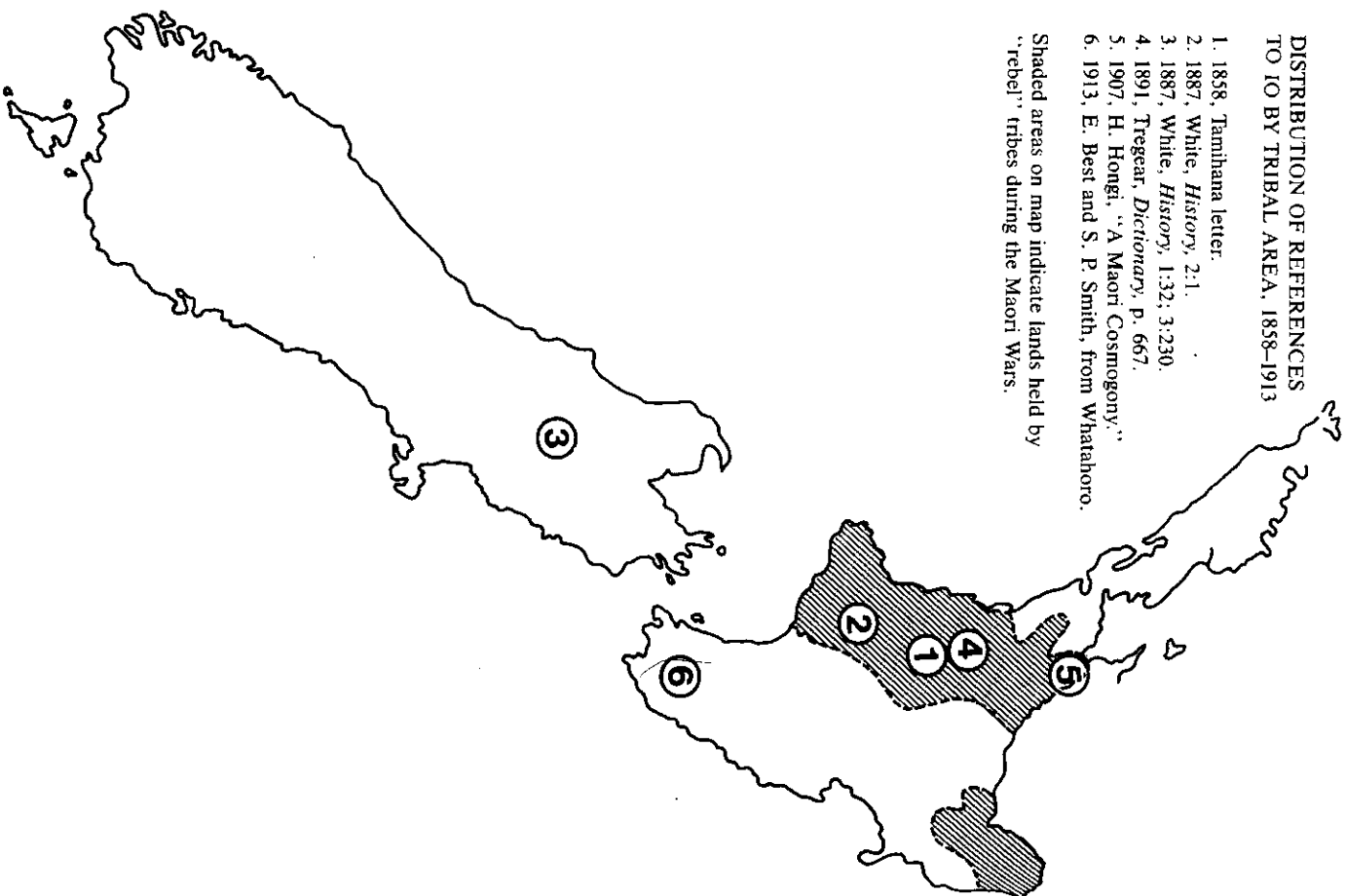
Te Ua was born in the early 1820s. Taken captive at an early age by the Waikato, he lived in their territory, at Kawhia, and was baptized there by Wesleyan missionaries and given the Christian name of Horopapera (Ze-rubbabel). Although trained in mission schools and skilled in reading the Bible in Maori, he claimed to have had a traditional Maori education. Returned to Taranaki in 1840, he served as a church monitor and as a lay preacher known for his intensive study of Scripture. In 1860, he became active in the King Movement and fought in the Taranaki-Waitara War. Some nineteen months after Tamihana's truce, he had his vision.

"The circumstances of this visitation [from Gabriel] might have lent themselves to the formation of a cargo cult."⁹⁵ On 1 September 1862, the steamer *Lord Worsley* ran aground on the southwest coast of Taranaki carrying a rich cargo (including ammunition and 3,000 ounces of gold) and an equally rich complement of White passengers (including three members of the New Zealand House of Representatives, an infantry captain, and a nun). There was conflict between militaristic and pacifist factions, both within and without the King Movement, as to what to do with the cargo and passengers. In this setting, and in a state of intense agitation over the fate of the ship, Te Ua had his first vision on 5 September. The central element in the vision was that Te Ua "should reject the war-like practices."⁹⁶

DISTRIBUTION OF REFERENCES
TO IO BY TRIBAL AREA, 1858-1913

1. 1858, Tamihana letter.
2. 1887, White, *History*, 2:1.
3. 1887, White, *History*, 1:32; 3:230.
4. 1891, Tregear, *Dictionary*, p. 667.
5. 1907, H. Hongi, "A Maori Cosmogony."
6. 1913, E. Best and S. P. Smith, from Whatahoro.

Shaded areas on map indicate lands held by "rebel" tribes during the Maori Wars.



This vision provided the central core of Te Ua's message. During the period 1862-64, he preached peace among the Kingites. For example, in a speech to emissaries of the king, dated 13 January 1863, he declared:

It was time that begat the black and the white. Indeed, this is a concern of the Lord of Peace. Taunting and jeering is an evil. Therefore the white must not bait the black nor the black the white. . . . I became a minister in the past years when the sword was wielded. It was in the last year of the encounter [1861] that I began to speak out and argue, my chief concern being my love for this, my homeland, in the hope that the peoples of Taranaki and Ngatirani would support the King movement. . . . [Now I ask you to] concede peacefully and seek that which is the God of Peace and help succor his people, his forsaken, naked, separated, and half-standing people. . . . Turn to that which concerns you, to the key of the land which is peace. Whatever your belief, be humble before the Lord of Peace and his followers.⁹⁷

Following the defeat of the King Movement in April 1864, Te Ua's promise to teach "a new peaceful gospel" and "the things of the past which were hidden"⁹⁸ attracted increased attention. Potatau II, the second Maori king, adopted Pai Marire in August 1864, receiving from Te Ua his cult name of Tawhiao (To Hold the People Together). Yet, even by this time, it is apparent that Te Ua's influence within his own cult was on the wane. A militaristic solution to the Maori situation would, once more, be attempted. Te Ua died after only four years of cult activity (October 1866). His teachings remained influential on a variety of Maori prophets and cults to the present time.

Much can be written about the complex religious movement created by Te Ua; much would be familiar from the literature on cargo cults, and need not be rehearsed. What characterized Te Ua was his extraordinary and consistent emphasis on peace in a time of military conflict, on a complex religious solution to the Maori situation.

Te Ua declared the name of his god to be Ihowa (Jehovah). He recognized Christ, the Holy Spirit, Gabriel, and other Christian figures alongside a host of Maori deities. Two seem to have been his own creation—Riki, god of war, and Rura, god of peace. He identified himself with Rura as well as with the Israelites in their desire to retake Canaan, signing his letters, "the peaceable Jew." He placed great emphasis on ecstatic speech (probably the original meaning of "Hau") and gave new impetus to the Maori traditional, formal religious sayings (*karakia*). Through this, Te Ua attempted to give the Maori the possibility of direct access to Ihowa without the written Bible and the Christian missionary as intermediaries.⁹⁹

It may be possible to posit a connection between Pai Marire and the 1907 cosmogony, although I do so with extreme caution. I have quoted a portion of Te Ua's speech to emissaries from the Maori king, delivered

in January 1863. Three of the king's representatives are named. One of them is Paraone. Was this the same individual who became Gudgeon's informant? I doubt it. It cannot be established on the basis of the available evidence, although the name is not common. If it were to be the case, then it would establish that the tradent of the 1907 cosmogony was not only a member of the King Movement, but also well placed in its hierarchy. Further it would establish direct connection with Te Ua and his message of the Ihowa of Peace, as well as his promise to teach "the things of the past that were hidden."

John White, then native magistrate at Wanganui, who took a deep interest in Pai Marire, the same who twelve years later would begin the work of translating the materials for his *Ancient History of the Maori*, records, in a note dated 2 May 1864, that this same Paraone, after the defeat of the King Movement in April, was one of those who withdrew to the forests of "King Country" to "await the millennium."¹⁰⁰

Such a native figure might well have been attracted to the variety of Christian-Maori cults founded by members of the King Movement and influenced by Te Ua following the prophet's death: the Taikomako cult (founded 1886); the cult of Ti Whiti and Tohu (1867); Tawhiao's own cult, the Tariao (1877); Ringatu (1874); the cult of Te Mahuki (1880). Such a native may have joined, as well, in the later creation and elaboration of the Io cult which was centered in the same geographical region during the same span of years.

This is all speculation. It seems to me unlikely that an individual with such a history would have been invited to join the Polynesian Society and become associated with the core of the British colonial establishment.¹⁰¹ But if this Paraone is not "our" Paraone, and if "our" Paraone is not the persona of the text, someone with a history very much like the one I have inferred does stand behind the 1907 cosmogony, especially as the persona of section III.

These various cults, all more or less distinguished by their pacifism, may be related to two enigmatic traditions that cannot be dated with certainty—both were published late—although Johansen speculates that they are early evidence for a more primitive form of Io, perhaps "another Io" which preexisted the traditions of Io as supreme being.

The first is a brief lexical reference to a deity named Ioto-whenua who "represents peace and all peaceful conditions and pursuits . . . in Matatua lore."¹⁰²

The second was collected by S. Locke from the Ngati Kahungunu, the putative center of the Whatahoro traditions of Io.¹⁰³ It is a myth which records a conflict between Rongomaraera, "whose sphere is that of providing food, sending his people on travels, dancing and building homes," and Tumatauenga, whose "sphere is always war and fight."¹⁰⁴

The conflict is mediated by Io, who builds "a fortified place with palisades, and a watch tower," for "Io's work is that of building fortified places with palisades" and by a female deity, Mohanuterangi. Through her, "a permanent peace was concluded. It was a peace which woman had mediated, a consolidated peace in the sacred precinct."¹⁰⁵

If Johansen is right, then the earliest stratum of Io tradition associates Io with peace. Is this some development from Te Ua's Ihowa of Peace or from his invention of Rura?

Drawing these various contextual elements together, I would suggest that the cult of Io must be understood in direct relationship to the King and Pai Marire movements, that the cult of Io, rather than continuing these movements' attempts to supplant the missionaries' Bible with esoteric speech, sought the longer and more speculative road of providing a Maori parallel to the Bible, utilizing the revitalized karakia and the more prosaic forms of traditional Maori mythological and genealogical lore.¹⁰⁶ I would suggest that in the same way that the traditional Maori cosmology of ten heavens had two additional heavens superimposed in the Io traditions to "make room" for Io,¹⁰⁷ so too with the myth. The traditional Maori mythology and cosmology has not been disturbed in the 1907 text. It was merely prefaced by the newly created, allegedly esoteric, Io mythology.

VI

If the above be taken as a plausible account of our text's context, then we may proceed to the final element in the preinterpretative agendum, a speculative reconstruction of the 1907 text. Here the historian of religion must attempt to order what is perceived as a composite document.

The typical form of Maori cosmogony is genealogy, consisting of a set of proper names related to each other, sexually, by division.¹⁰⁸ This is what is given in sections V and VI—indeed, in the first summary in section V, Io's name has merely been inserted at the head of a traditional list.¹⁰⁹ These sections represent the indigenous, generative core of the text. There is nothing specific to the Io cult in them. They have been adapted and adopted by the cult. It is possible to invoke the Horton and Goody models. Io, in relation to these traditional materials, might be understood as an expression of an indigenous impulse to posit a primordial unity.¹¹⁰

For the specifically Io mythology in the text, a history of tradition reconstruction may be proposed. The brief invocation to the power of the karakia in II might well be considered a prologue. Careful reading of the prose commentary in II reveals that it is not the myth of creation which is being repeated—*pace* Eliade!¹¹¹—but rather the original karakia, the originating formulae. "There are three occasions on which the karakias

in these words are brought out."¹¹² The *karakias* are the generators of the myth.

In the cosmogony, it is the words which Io speaks which function as *karakias*. Four such formulae occur in I:

1. "Night, a day owning night."
2. [Cannot be translated.]
3. "Let one night be above/ and one night below.
Night, the magician's night.
Night, the priest's night/ a subjected night.
Let one Day be above/ and one Day below.
Day, the magician's day.
Day, the priest's Day/ a resplendent Day, a bright Day."
4. "Te Wai-ki-Tai-tama, divide the waters,
So that heaven will unfold itself.
Heaven has been lifted up.
Te Tupua-horo-nuku is born."¹¹³

Around the base of these four sayings, the deliberate attempt to parallel Genesis I in section I and IV was, most likely, constructed.

The ritual parallels that can be cited elsewhere in Maori practice suggest that II is a genuine reflection of a cult.¹¹⁴

Section III is a personal aside by the informant.

At this point the preinterpretative labors may cease. An historian may wish to take up the various connections proposed between text and context and, through archival research, may uncover other evidence either for Io or for more secure connections between the cult of Io and its historical setting. The historian may wish to pursue more definite identification of the tradent of the 1907 text and recover more precisely the manner of its transmission. The historian of religion has a different task. He may choose to refuse further interpretation (if, for example, his interest in the text required that it serve as witness to an archaic pre-European "High God"); or, he may choose to continue with the tasks of exegesis and the question of further relationships between this text and other forms of religious expression both within and without New Zealand.

I would draw only one set of conclusions for the historian of religion from these preinterpretative investigations. The 1907 Io cosmogony might be labeled a fraud. It most certainly is not "neolithic," it is not "the Polynesian creation myth," and it cannot be used as evidence for *Uramontheismus* or for the nature of archaic ritual, as has been done in previous scholarship. But it is a genuine, perhaps even an eloquent, expression of a more recent form of Maori religion, the interpretation of which may now be undertaken, but only after the necessary labors of preinterpretation have been completed.

The text gives witness to a people who have moved, in large numbers, through several forms of religion in a short period of time: native, Christian, repudiated Christian, nativistic, King, Pai Marire, Io, and various forms of active and passive resistance. Through the kind of careful preinterpretative investigation that is a necessary prerequisite for the historian of religion's investigation of any religious text, we have been led to an appreciation of *religious work* which will repay further study, here and elsewhere. This native work has been obscured by taking the text to be static, to be archaic, to be a myth. By placing it back within its context, the historian of religion may begin to perceive its labors, its strains, its achievements. Such a study may allow us to begin to interpret properly and appreciate *homo religiosus* as being, preeminently, *homo faber*.¹¹⁵