

Kendall described the significance of the carving he had drawn in his accompanying letter; he wrote that the two-fingered hand was the sign that the figure existed in the 'First State', or before creation. He said that man in his first state bore no distinction of form or gender and 'was shut up between the Thumb and Little Finger' of the deity. 'He was a *Tapu*. See *Nuku Tawiti*.'⁷ In the sketch, yet-unborn man is represented caught between the fingers of Nukutawhiti. He is, presumably, the undifferentiated circle between the two fingers. One other, early, two-fingered carving is known. It is a Te Arawa carving, and there the join between the two long, spindly fingers was carved as an interlocking spiral, or figure of eight. One commentator has seen this shape between the fingers as *manaia*-like,⁷ and some other elements relating to creation in the carving can be described.⁸

As the canoe ancestor of Ngapuhi, Nukutawhiti was clearly an important mythological figure for this tribe, although the references to him recorded in the nineteenth century are fragmentary. The inference from Kendall's drawing is, however, that Nukutawhiti was part of a wider cosmological system and there is evidence from other, and early, northern sources for such an interpretation. In the genealogies descending from Nukutawhiti, the origin of the land and of the 'real men' are traced.⁹ Moreover, he is the ancestor for whom the great funeral lament of the north and of the east coast, the *Pihe*, was originally composed.¹⁰ For Ngapuhi, Nukutawhiti stood at the 'entrance' into this life and into death. He appears in their accounts of their origin as a tribe and of their settlement at Hokianga, and in their funeral 'rite de passage' into the after-life.

The essence of Kendall's sketch is the particular relationship suggested by the placing of the large ancestor-god, his son (or his lineage) between his legs, and the doorway into the storehouse, described as the 'Door of this World'. According to Kendall, the Maoris believed in three states of existence: the first is creation and life before this world; the second is life in this world; and the third is the after-life. He was not the only European commentator to come to this understanding and there seems to be evidence, from the north, for such a view.¹¹ But Kendall also understood that for 'us who are in the Second State', the first state of existence to which we cannot return, 'is death and a *Tapu*.'¹² The after-life is also 'death and a *Tapu*' for living men. The passages between these three states of existence were dangerous in the extreme. Maori religious rites of passage were those most particularly concerned with birth (passage into this world) and death (passage into the next) and they all involved *tapu* lifting ceremonies. I suggest that Kendall's storehouse carving is emblematic of the passage from the first state