

As other writers have observed, the threshold beams in all Maori buildings possessed particular symbolic significance. The threshold, *paepae*, mediates life and death, and door lintels, painted red, warn of tapu. The storehouse carving, then, carries the warning of the presence of tapu and the threat of death. Tapu demarcates the human and the ultra-human: it is the protector of life, and the source of death upon its violation.

On either side of Nukutawhiti stand two human figures, whom Kendall has called the 'Dual Rib'. The figure on the left is female, and that on the right is male, by the universal signs which Kendall has sketched between their legs, presumably to avoid drawing their carved genitalia. The 'Dual Rib', Kendall wrote, 'remains in the Side' of the creator-god in the first state of existence, that is, it contained the two principles of creation, 'Knowledge' and 'Life', but they were 'hid or shut up' in the Dual Rib and not yet distinguished.<sup>14</sup> In this carving, the 'Dual Rib' is 'close to' the side and the implication is that the ribs are separating and taking on specific form, male and female. Little human figures in this relationship to the central figure appear in a number of *kuwaha* carvings. As the dual rib, *nga rara*, they represent the two creative principles, knowledge (or wisdom), and life.

Between the legs of Nukutawhiti are the 'Spiritual Waters', which Kendall said, were divided at creation. The implication from the carving is that the image derives from the breaking of the waters which precedes birth. Nukutawhiti, here, appears to be sexless and this may not simply be prudery on Kendall's part, for he was, as Kendall said, a deity in the first state, or before the distinction of gender. Alternatively, the right hand of Nukutawhiti may be resting on his penis, a gesture undoubtedly referring to creation. Some *pataka* figures are sexless, others clearly are male, while yet others are in the act of parturition. Some are a male and female pair copulating.

Nukutawhiti's son, who appears as the sky-father in the genealogies,<sup>15</sup> holds on his breast a lizard or *ngarara*. Moreover, he appears about to eat it. Carvings of a lizard held in precisely this manner are found in Maori wood sculpture. They may be images of conception. Kendall said that the lizard was emblematic of the dual rib of creation, *nga rara*, and of the creative force itself, to which he gave the name the eternal Word, or the Logos. The lizard is held to the breast, *u*, which Kendall said was the seat or source of life, while its tongue appears to be joined to that of the man. Elsdon Best commented that there were a number of Maori carvings in which 'the lizard is shown with its head in a person's mouth'. He drew—like Kendall—on Gnostic traditions when he observed that the tongue appeared to be 'attached to that of the man, as though the