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The social skin

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Man is born naked but is everywhere in clothes (or their symbolic equivalents). We cannot tell how this came to be, but we can say something about why it should be so and what it means.

Decorating, covering, uncovering or otherwise altering the human form in accordance with social notions of everyday propriety or sacred dress, beauty or solemnity, status or changes in status, or on occasion of the violation and inversion of such notions, seems to have been a concern of every human society of which we have knowledge. This objectively universal fact is associated with another of a more subjective nature—that the surface of the body seems everywhere to be treated, not only as the boundary of the individual as a biological and psychological entity but as the frontier of the social self as well. As these two entities are quite different, and as cultures differ widely in the ways they define both, the relation between them is highly problematic. The problems involved, however, are ones that all societies must solve in one way or another, because upon the solution must rest a society's ways of 'socialising' individuals, that is, of integrating them into the societies to which they belong, not only as children but throughout their lives. The surface of the body, as the common frontier of society, the social self, and the psycho-biological individual; becomes the symbolic stage upon which the drama of socialization is enacted, and bodily adornment (in all its culturally multifarious forms, from body-painting to clothing and from feather head-dresses to cosmetics) becomes the language through which it is expressed.

The adornment and public presentation of the body, however inconsequential or even frivolous a business it may appear to individuals, is for cultures a serious matter: *de la vie sérieuse,* as Durkheim said of religion. Wilde observed that the feeling of being in harmony with the fashion gives a man a measure of security he rarely derives from his religion. The seriousness with which we take questions of

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dress and appearance is betrayed by the way we regard not taking them seriously as an index, either of a 'serious' disposition or of serious psychological problems. As Lord Chesterfield remarked:

> Dress is a very foolish thing; and yet it is a very foolish thing for a man not to be well dressed, according to his rank and way of life; and it is so far from being a disparagement to any man's understanding, that it is rather a proof of it, to be as well dressed as those whom he lives with: the difference in this case, between a man of sense and a fop, is, that the fop values himself upon his dress; and the man of sense laughs at it, at the same time that he knows that he must not neglect it (cited in Bell 1949, p. 13).

The most significant point of this passage is not the explicit assertion that a man of sense should regard dress with a mixture of contempt and attentiveness, but the implicit claim that by doing so, and thus maintaining his appearance in a way compatible with 'those he lives with', he defines himself as a man of sense. The uneasy ambivalence of the man of sense, whose 'sense' consists in conforming to a practice he laughs at, is the consciousness of a truth that seems as scandalous today as it did in the eighteenth century. This is that culture, which we neither understand nor control, is not only the necessary medium through which we communicate our social status, attitudes, desires, beliefs and ideals (in short, our identities) to others, but also to a large extent constitutes these identities, in ways with which we are compelled to conform regardless of our self-consciousness or even our contempt. Dress and bodily adornment constitute one such cultural medium, perhaps the one most specialised in the shaping and communication of personal and social identity.

The Kayapo are a native tribe of the southern borders of the Amazon forest. They live in widely scattered villages which may attain populations of several hundred. The economy is a mixture of forest horticulture, and hunting and gathering. The social organisation of the villages is based on a relatively complex system of institutions, which are clearly defined and uniform for the population as a whole. The basic social unit is the extended family household, in which residence is based on the principle that men must leave their maternal households as boys and go to live in the households of their wives upon marriage. In between they live as bachelors in a 'men's house', generally built in the centre of the circular village plaza, round the edges of which are ranged the 'women's houses' (as the extended family households are called). Women, on the other hand, remain from birth to death in the households into which they are born.

The Kayapo possess a quite elaborate code of what could be called 'dress', a fact which might escape notice by a casual Western observer because it does not involve the use of clothing. A well turned out adult Kayapo male, with his large lower-lip plug (a saucer-like disc some six centimetres across), penis sheath (a small cone made of palm leaves covering the *glans penis*), large holes pierced through the ear lobes from which hang small strings of beads, overall body paint in red and black patterns, plucked eyebrows, eyelashes and facial hair, and head shaved to a point at the crown with the hair left long at the sides and back, could on the other hand hardly leave the most insensitive traveller with the impression that bodily adornment is a neglected art among the Kayapo. There are, however, very few

Western observers, including anthropologists, who have ever taken the trouble to go beyond the superficial recording of such exotic paraphernalia to inquire into the system of meanings and values which it evokes for its wearers. A closer look at Kayapo bodily adornment discloses that the apparently naked savage is as fully covered in a fabric of cultural meaning as the most elaborately draped Victorian lady or gentleman.

The first point that should be made about Kayapo notions of propriety in bodily appearance is the importance of cleanliness. All Kayapo bathe at least once a day. To be dirty, and especially to allow traces of meat, blood or other animal substances or food to remain on the skin, is considered not merely slovenly or dirty but actively anti-social. It is, moreover, dangerous to the health of the unwashed person. 'Health' is conceived as a state of full and proper integration into the social world, while illness is conceived in terms of the encroachment of natural, and particularly animal forces upon the domain of social relations. Cleanliness, as the removal of all 'natural' excrescence from the surface of the body, is thus the essential first step in 'socialising' the interface between self and society, embodied in concrete terms by the skin. The removal of facial and bodily hair carries out this same fundamental principle of transforming the skin from a mere 'natural' envelope of the physical body into a sort of social filter, able to contain within a social form the biological forces and libidinal energies that lie beneath.

The mention of bodily hair leads on to a consideration of the treatment of the hair of the head. The principles that govern coiffure are consistent with the general notions of cleanliness, hygiene, and sociality, but are considerably more developed, and accord with those features of the head-hair which the Kayapo emphasise as setting it apart from bodily hair (it is even called by a different name).

Hair, like skin, is a 'natural' part of the surface of the body, but unlike skin it continually grows outwards, erupting from the body into the social space beyond it. Inside the body, beneath the skin, it is alive and growing; outside, beyond the skin, it is dead and without sensation, although its growth manifests the unsocialised biological forces within. The hair of the head thus focuses the dynamic and unstable quality of the frontier between the 'natural', bio-libidinous forces of the inner body and the external sphere of social relations. In this context, hair offers itself as a symbol of the libidinal energies of the self and of the never-ending struggle to constrain within acceptable forms their eruption into social space.

So important is this symbolic function of hair as a focus of the socialising function, not only among the Kayapo but among Central Brazilian tribes in general, that variations in coiffure have become the principal visible means of distinguishing one tribe from another. Each people has its own distinctive hairstyle, which stands as the emblem of its own culture and social community (and as such, in its own eyes, for the highest level of sociality to have been attained by humanity). The Kayapo tribal coiffure, used by both men and women, consists of shaving the hair above the forehead upwards to a point at the crown, leaving the hair long at the back and sides of the head (unless the individual belongs to one of the special categories of people who wear their hair cut short, as described below). Men may tease up a little widow's peak at the point of the triangular shaved area. The sides of this area are often painted in black with bands of geometrical patterns.

Certain categories of people in Kayapo society are *privileged* to wear their hair long. Others must keep it cut short. Nursing infants, women who have borne chil-

dren, and men who have received their penis sheaths and have been through initiation (that is, those who have been socially certified as able to carry on sexual relations) wear their hair long. Children and adolescents of both sexes (girls from weaning to childbirth, boys from weaning to initiation) and those mourning the death of a member of their immediate family (for example, a spouse, sibling or child) have their hair cut short.

To understand this social distribution of long and short hair it is necessary to comprehend Kayapo notions about the nature of family relations. Parents are thought to be connected to their children, and siblings to one another, by a tie that goes deeper than a mere social or emotional bond. This tie is imagined as a sort of spiritual continuation of the common physical substance that they share through conception and the womb. This relation of biological participation lasts throughout life but is broken by death. The death of a person's child or sibling thus directly diminishes his or her own biological being and energies. Although spouses lack the intrinsic biological link of blood relations, their sexual relationship constitutes a 'natural' procreative, libidinal community that is its counterpart. In as much as both sorts of biological relationship are cut off by death, cutting off the hair, conceived as the extension of the biological energy of the self into social space, is the symbolically appropriate response to the death of a spouse as well as a child.

The same concrete logic accounts for the treatment of children's hair. While a child is still nursing, it is still, as it were, an extension of the biological being and energies of its parents, and above all, at this stage, the mother. In these terms nursing constitutes a kind of external and attenuated final stage of pregnancy. Weaning is the decisive moment of the 'birth' of the child as a separate biological and social being. Thus nursing infants' hair is never cut, and is left to grow as long as that of sexually active adults: infants at this stage *are* still the extensions of the biological and sexual being of their long-haired parents. Cutting the infant's hair at the onset of weaning aptly symbolises the severance of this bio-sexual continuity (or, as we would say, its repression). Henceforth, the child's hair remains short as a sign of its biological separation from its parents, on the one hand, and the undeveloped state of its own bio-sexual powers on the other. When these become strong enough to be socially extended, through sexual intercourse and procreation, as the basis of a new family, the hair is once again allowed to grow to full length. For men this point is considered to arrive at puberty, and specifically with the bestowal of a penis sheath, which is ideally soon followed by initiation (a symbolic 'marriage' which signals marriageability, or 'bachelorhood', rather than being a binding union in and of itself).

The discrepancy in the timing of the return to long hair for the two sexes reflects a fundamental difference in Kayapo notions of their respective social roles. 'Society' is epitomized for the Kayapo by the system of communal societies and age sets centred on the men's house. These collective organisations are primarily a male domain, as their association with the men's house suggests, although women have certain societies of their own. The communal societies are defined in terms of the criteria for recruitment, and this is always defined as a corollary of some important transformation in family or household structure (such as a boy's moving out of his maternal family household to the men's house, marriage, the birth of children, etc.). These transformations in family relations are themselves associated with key points in the process of growth and sexual development.

The structure of communal groups, then, constitutes a sort of sociological mechanism for reproducing, not only itself but the structure of the extended family households that form the lower level or personal sphere of Kayapo social organisation. This communal institutional structure, on the other hand, is itself defined in terms of the various stages of the bio-sexual development of men (and to a much lesser extent, women). All this comes down to the proposition that men reproduce society through the transformation of their 'natural' biological and libidinal powers into collective social form. This conception can be found elaborated in Kayapo mythology.

Women, by contrast, reproduce the natural biological individual, and, as a corollary, the elementary family, which the Kayapo conceive as a 'natural' or infra-social set of essentially physical relations. Inasmuch as the whole Kayapo system works on the principle of the cooption of 'natural' forces and their channelling into social form, it follows that women's biological forces of reproduction should be exercised only within the framework of the structure of social relations reproduced by men. The effective social extension of a woman's biological reproductive powers therefore occurs at the moment of the first childbirth within the context of marriage, husband and household. This is, accordingly, the moment at which a woman begins to let her hair grow long again. For men, as we have seen, the decisive social cooption of libidinal energy or reproductive power comes earlier, at the point at which those powers are publicly appropriated for purposes of the reproduction of the collective social order. This is the moment symbolically marked by the bestowal of the penis sheath at puberty.

The penis sheath, then, symbolises the collective appropriation of male powers of sexual reproduction for the purposes of social reproduction. To the Kayapo, the appropriation of 'natural' or biological powers for social purposes implies the suppression of their 'natural' or socially unrestrained forms of expression. The penis sheath works as a symbol of the chanelling of male libidinal energies into social form by effectively restraining the spontaneous, 'natural' expression of male sexuality: in a word, erection. The sheath, the small cone of woven palm leaf, is open at both the wide and narrow ends. The wide end fits over the tip of the penis, while the narrow end has an aperture just wide enough to enable the foreskin to be drawn through it. Once pulled through, it bunches up in a way that holds the sheath down on the *glans penis*, and pushes the penis as a whole back into the body. This obviously renders erection impossible. A public erection, or even the publicly visible protrusion of the *glans penis* through the foreskin without erection, is as embarrassing for a Kayapo male as walking naked through one's town or work place would be for a Westerner. It is the action of the sheath in preventing such an eventuality that is the basis of its symbolic meaning.

Just as the cutting or growing of hair becomes a code for defining and expressing a whole system of ideas about the nature of the individual and society and the relations between the two, so other types of bodily adornment are used to express other modalities of the same basic relationships.

Pierced ears, ear-plugs, and lip-plugs comprise a similar distinct complex of social meanings. Here the emphasis is on the socialisation, not of sexual powers, but of the faculties of understanding and active self-expression. The Kayapo distinguish between passive and active modes of knowing. Passive understanding is associated with hearing, active knowledge of how to make and do things with

seeing. The most important aspect of the socialisation of the passive faculty of understanding is the development of the ability to 'hear' language. To be able to hear and understand speech is spoken of in terms of 'having a hole in one's ear'; to be deaf is 'to have the hole in one's ear closed off'. The ear lobes of infants of both sexes are pierced, and large cigar-shaped ear-plugs, painted red, are inserted to stretch the holes to a diameter of two or three centimetres (I shall return to the significance of the red colour). At weaning (by which time the child has learned to speak and understand language) the ear-plugs are removed, and little strings of beads like earrings are tied through the holes to keep them open. Kayapo continue to wear these bead earrings, or simply leave their ear-lobe-holes empty throughout adult life. I suggest that the piercing and stretching of these secondary, social 'holes-in-the-ear' through the early use of the ear-plugs for infants is a metaphor for the socialisation of the understanding, the opening of the ears to language and all that implies, which takes place during the first years of infancy.

The lip-plug, which reaches such a large size among older men, is incontestably the most striking piece of Kayapo finery. Only males have their lips pierced. This happens soon after birth, but at first only a string of beads with a bit of shell is placed in the hole to keep it open. After initiation, young bachelors begin to put progressively larger wooden pins through the hole to enlarge it. This gradual process continues through the early years of adult manhood, but accelerates when a man graduates to the senior male grade of 'fathers-of-many children'. These are men of an age to have become heads of their wives' households, with married daughters and thus sons-in-law living under, their roofs as quasi-dependents. Such men have considerable social authority, but they wield it, not within the household itself (which is considered a woman's domain) but rather in the public arena of the communal men's house, in the form of political oratory. Public speaking, in an ornate and blustering style, is the most characteristic attribute of senior manhood, and is the essential medium of political power. An even more specialised form of speaking, a kind of metrical chanting known as *ben,* is the distinctive prerogative of chiefs, who are called 'chanters' in reference to the activity that most embodies their authority.

Public speaking, and chanting as its more rarified and potent form, are the supreme expression of the values of Kayapo society considered as a politically ordered hierarchy. Senior men, and, among them, chiefs, are the dominant figures in this hierarchy, and it can therefore be said that oratory and chanting as public activities express this dominance as a value implicit in the Kayapo social order. The lip-plug of the senior male, as a physical expression of the oral assertiveness and pre-eminence of the orator, embodies the social dominance and expressiveness of the senior males of whom it is the distinctive badge.

The senior male lip-plug is in these terms the complement of the pierced ears of both sexes and the infantile ear-plugs from which they derive. The former is associated with the active expression and political construction of the social order, while the latter betoken the receptiveness to such expressions as the attribute of all socialised persons. Speaking and 'hearing' (that is, understanding and conforming) are the complementary and interdependent functions that constitute the Kayapo polity. Through the symbolic medium of bodily adornment, the body of every Kayapo becomes a microcosm of the Kayapo body politic.

As a man grows old he retires from active political life. He speaks in public less often, and on the occasions when he does it is to assume an elder statesman's role of appealing to common values and interests rather than to take sides. The transformation from the politically active role of the senior man to the more honorific if less dynamic role of elder statesman is once again signalled by a change in the style and shape of the lip-plug. The simplest form this can take is a diminution in the size of the familiar wooden disc. It may, however, take the form of the most precious and prestigious object in the entire Kayapo wardrobe—the cylindrical lip-plug of ground and polished rock crystal worn only by elder males. These neolithic valuables, which may reach six inches in length and one inch in diameter, with two small flanges at the upper end to keep them from sliding through the hole in the lip, require immense amounts of time to make and are passed down as heirlooms within families. They are generally clear to milky white in colour. White is associated with old age and with ghosts, and thus in general terms with the transcendence of the social divisions and transformations whose qualities are evoked by the two main Kayapo colours, black and red. This quality of transcendence of social conflict, and of direct involvement in the processes of suppression and appropriation of libidinal energies and their transformation into social form which constitute Kayapo public life in its political and ritual aspects, is characteristic of the content of the oratory of old men, and is what lends it its great if relatively innocuous prestige. Once again, then, we find that the symbolic qualities of the lip-plug match the social qualities of the speech of its wearer.

Before the advent of Western clothes, Kayapo of both sexes and all ages constantly went about with their bodies painted (many still do, especially in the more remote villages). The Kayapo have raised body painting to an art, and the variety and elaborateness of the designs is apt to seem overwhelming upon first acquaintance. Analysis, however, reveals that a few simple principles run through the variation of forms and styles and lend coherence to the whole. These principles, in turn, can be seen to add a further dimension to the total system of meanings conveyed by Kayapo bodily adornment.

There are two main aspects to the Kayapo art of body painting, one concerning the association of the two main colours used (red and black) on distinct zones of the body, the other concerning the two basic styles employed in painting that part of the body for which black is used.

To begin with the first aspect, the use of the two colours, black and red, and their association with different regions of the body reveal yet another dimension of Kayapo ideas about the make-up of the person as biological being and social actor. Black is applied to the trunk of the body, the upper arms and thighs. Black designs or stripes are also painted on the cheeks, forehead, and occasionally across the eyes or mouth. Red is applied to the calves and feet, forearms and hands, and face, especially around the eyes. Sometimes it is smeared over black designs already painted on the face, to render the whole face red.

Black is associated with the idea of transformation between society and unsocialised nature. The word for black is applied to the zone just outside the village that one passes through to enter the 'wild' forest (the domain of nature). It is also the word for death (that is, the first phase of death, while the body is still decomposing and the soul has not yet forsaken its social ties to become a ghost: ghosts are white). In both of these usages, the term for black applies to a spatial or

temporal zone of transition between the social world and the world of natural or infra-social forces that is closed off from society proper and lies beyond its borders. It is therefore appropriate that black is applied to the surface of those parts of the body conceived to be the seat of its 'natural' powers and energies (the trunk, internal and reproductive organs, major muscles, etc.) that are in themselves beyond the reach of socialisation (an analogy might be drawn here to the Freudian notion of the id). The black skin becomes the repressive boundary between the natural powers of the individual and the external domain of social relations.

Red, by contrast, is associated with notions of vitality, energy and intensification. It is applied to the peripheral points of the body that come directly into contact with the outside world (the hands and feet, and the face with its sensory organs, especially the eyes). The principle here seems to be the intensification of the individual's powers of relating to the external (that is, primarily, the social) world. Notice that the opposition between *red* (intensification, vitalisation) and *black* (repression) coincides with that between the *peripheral* and *central* parts of the body, which is itself treated as a form of the relationship between the *surface* and *inside* of the body respectively. The contrasting use of the two colours thus establishes a binary classification of the human body and its powers and relates that classification back to the conceptual oppositions, *inside: surface: outside,* that underlies the system of bodily adornment as a whole.

Turning now to the second major aspect of the system of body painting, that is, the two main styles of painting in black, the best place to begin is with the observation that one style is used primarily for children and one primarily for adults. The children's style is by far the more elaborate. It consists of intricate geometrical designs traced in black with a narrow stylus made from the central rib of a leaf. A child's entire body from the neck to below the knees, and down the arms to below the elbows, is covered. To do the job properly requires a couple of hours. Mothers (occasionally doting aunts or grandmothers) spend much time in this way keeping their children 'well dressed'.

The style involves building up a coherent overall pattern out of many individually insignificant lines, dots, etc. The final result is unique, as a snowflake is unique. The idiosyncratic nature of the design reflects the relationship between the painter and the child being decorated. Only one child is painted at a time, in his or her own house, by his or her own mother or another relation. All of this reflects the social position of the young child and the nature of the process of socialization it is undergoing. The child is the object of a prolonged and intensive process of creating a socially acceptable form out of a myriad of individually unordered elements. It must lie still and submit to this process, which requires a certain amount of discipline. The finished product is the unique expression of the child's relationship to its own mother and household. It is not a collectively stereotyped pattern establishing a common identity with children from other families. This again conforms with the social situation of the child, which is not integrated into communal society above the level of its particular family.

Boys cease to be painted in this style, except for rare ceremonial occasions, when they leave home to live in the men's house. Older girls and women, however, continue to paint one another in this way as an occasional pastime. This use of the infantile style by women reflects the extent to which they remain identified with

their individual families and households, in contrast to men's identification with collective groups at the communal level.

The second style, which can be used for children when a mother lacks the time or inclination for a full-scale job in the first style, is primarily associated with adults. It consists of standardised designs, many of which have names (generally names of the animals they are supposed to resemble). These designs are simple, consisting of broad strokes that can be applied quickly with the hand, rather than by the time-consuming stylus method. Their social context of application is typically collective: men's age sets gathered in the men's house, or women's societies, which meet fortnightly in the village plaza for the purpose of painting one another. On such occasions, a uniform style is generally used for the whole group (different styles may be used to distinguish structurally distinct groups, such as bachelors and mature men).

The second style is thus typically used by fully socialized adults, acting in a collective capacity (that is, at a level defined by common participation in the structure of the community as a whole rather than at the individual family level). Collective action (typically, though not necessarily, of a ritual character) is 'socialising' in the higher sense of directly constituting and reproducing the structure of society as a whole: those painted in the adult style are thus acting, not in the capacity of *objects* of socialisation, but as its *agents.* The 'animal' quality of the designs is evocative of this role; the Kayapo conceive of collective society-constituting activities, like their communal ceremonies, as the transformation of 'natural' or animal qualities into social form by means of collective social replication. The adult style, with its 'animal' designs applied collectively to social groups as an accompaniment to collective activity, epitomises these meanings and ideas. The contrasts between the children's and adults' styles of body painting thus model key contrasts in the social attributes of children and adults, specifically, their relative levels of social integration or, which comes to the same thing, their degree of 'socialisation'.

The greater part of Kayapo communal activity consists of the celebration of long and complex ceremonies, which generally take the form of collective dances by all the men and boys or all the women and girls of the village, and occasionally of both. These sacred events are always distinguished by collective body-painting and renewed coiffures in the tribal pattern, as well as by numerous special items of ritual regalia, such as feather head-dresses, elaborate bracelets, ear- and lip-plugs of special design, belts and leg bands hung with noise-making objects like tapir or peccary hooves, etc. The more important ceremonies are rites either of 'baptism', that is, the bestowal of ceremonially prestigious names, or initiation. Certain items of regalia distinguish those actually receiving names or being initiated from the mass of celebrants. In a more fundamental sense, the entire repertoire of ceremonial costume marks ceremonial activity in contrast to everyday activities and relations. In the ceremonial context itself, the contrast is preserved between the celebrants of the ceremony and the non-participating spectators, who wear no special costume. An important group in the latter category are the parents of the children being named or initiated in the ceremony, who may not take a direct part in the dancing but must work hard to supply the many dancers with food. In this role they are treated with great rudeness and disrespect by the actual celebrants,

who shout at them to bring food and then complain loudly about its quantity and quality.

Kayapo bodily adornment in its secular and sacred forms constitutes an integral system of differentiated categories of social status, together with the roles, or modes of activity and relationship characteristic of each status. This comprehensive social classification is represented in Table lA. The various forms of bodily adornment that distinguish each category, together with the roles or modes of activity they symbolise, are summarised in Table 1B. Note that the distinctions among the various forms of sacred and secular 'dress' in Table 1B generate the full structure of Table 1A.

TABLE 1A. KAYAPO SOCIAL CLASSIFICATION: STATUS

	SACRED (more prestigious)	SECULAR (less prestigious)
SOCIAL (relatively socialized)	initiands, baptisands	senior men junior men
	ritual celebrants	women ADULTS
NATURAL (relatively unsocialised)	spectators	CHILDREN older children
	parents of initiands	infants

TABLE 1B. *KAYAPO CLASSIFICATION OF ROLES (QUALITIES AND MODES OF SOCIAL ACTIVITY) WITH 'DRESS' INDICATORS*

<table>
<tr><td></td><td>SACRED</td><td colspan="5">SECULAR</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">SOCIAL</td><td>Undergoing initiation, Receiving names

special bracelets</td><td>Expressiveness
lip-plug
small/large</td><td>Socialised procreativity
penis sheath</td><td rowspan="2">Physical extension: children
long hair</td><td rowspan="2">Agent of socialization
adult painting style</td><td rowspan="2">Socialised understanding
ear holes</td></tr>
<tr><td>Dancer in ceremony

ritual ornaments</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
</table>

NATURAL	*Spectator or parent-'worker'* no ornaments		*No physical extension* short hair	*Object of socialization* children's painting style	
			Physical extension of parents Long hair		*No understanding* ear-plugs

The names bestowed in the great naming ceremonies belong to a special class of 'beautiful' names which are passed down from certain categories of kinsmen (mother's brother, and both maternal and paternal grandfathers for boys, father's sister and both grandmothers for girls). In keeping with the ritual prestige of the names being transmitted to them, the children being honoured in the ceremony are adorned with special regalia, notably elaborate bracelets with bead and feather pendants. Initiands are similarly distinguished by bracelets, although they are so huge as to cover the whole forearm, and are exceptionally heavy and bulky in construction. The initiation ceremony itself is named after these bracelets; it is known as 'the black bracelets', or literally 'black bone marrow'. The name at first strikes one as odd, since the bracelets are painted bright red. It may be suggested that the symbolic appropriateness of bracelets as the badges of initiands and baptisands derives from the same set of ideas about the connotations of different parts of the body and the associated colour symbolism. If the extremities of the body represent the extension of the psycho-biological level of the self into social space, and if the hands are in a sense the prototypical extremities in this regard, elaborate bracelets are an apt symbol for the imposition of social form upon this extension. This is, of course, what is happening in the ceremonies in question. In the case of initiation into manhood, which involves a first, symbolic marriage, both the repression of childish, merely individualistic libido and the accentuation of sexuality and procreativity in the service of social reproduction are involved. Black and red, as we have seen, are the symbols of repression and sensory accentuation, respectively, and the accentuation of sexuality and procreativity in the service of social reproduction are involved. That what is 'blackened' or repressed is the inner substance of the bones aptly conveys the idea of the suppression of the pre-social, biological basis of social relatedness, while the actual redness of the so-called 'black' bracelets through which this is achieved simultaneously expresses the activation of this basis in the social form represented by the bracelets themselves. The initiation bracelets thus condense within themselves a number of the fundamental principles of the whole system of bodily adornment and the social concepts it expresses.

Among the ordinary ritual celebrants, there is considerable variation within the standard categories of ritual wear, such as feather head-dresses, ear-plugs, necklaces, bracelets and belts or leg bands already described. Many of these variations (for example, the use of feathers from a particular sort of bird for a head-dress, or distinctive materials such as wound cotton string or perhaps fresh-water mussel

shells for ear-plugs, or the breast plumage of the red macaw for bracelets, etc.) are passed down like names themselves from uncle or grandfather to nephew or grandson (or the corresponding female categories). They thus denote an aspect of the social identity of the wearer that he or she owes to his or her relationship with a particular kinsman. These distinctive items of ritual dress make up the 'paraphernalia' mentioned above that is bestowed, in parallel to, but separately from, names, in the ritual setting. The Kayapo call such accessories by their general (and only) term for 'valuables', 'wealth', or 'riches'.

Ask a Kayapo why he is wearing a certain sort of head-dress for a ceremonial dance, and he will be likely to answer, 'It is my wealth.' Ask him why he dances, or indeed why the ceremony is being performed, and he will almost certainly answer, 'To be beautiful' ('For the sake of beauty' would be an equally accurate Englishing of the usual Kayapo expression). Wealth and beauty are closely connected notions among the Kayapo and both refer to aspects of the person coded by items of prestigious ritual dress. Certain 'beautiful' names are, in fact, associated with specific forms of adornment (that is, with certain types of 'wealth') such as ear-plugs. 'Beautiful people' (those who have received 'beautiful' names in ceremonies) generally possess more 'wealth' than 'common people' who have not gone through a ritual baptism, and thus possess only 'common' names.

The connection of 'beauty' with 'wealth' in the form of bodily adornment is strikingly expressed in the lyrics of the choral hymns sung by the massed ritual celebrants as they dance, with uniform steps which vary with each song, the successive rites that constitute a 'great' or 'beautiful' naming ceremony. These songs are almost invariably those of animals, especially birds, the muses of Kayapo lyric and dance, who have communicated them to humans in various ways. Two verses from the vast Kayapo repertoire may serve as examples. A bird proudly boasts to his human listener,

> Can we [birds] not reach up to the sky?
> Why, we can snatch the very clouds,
> Wind them round our legs as bracelets,
> And sit thus, regaled by their thunder.

Another calls out a stirring summons to earthbound humanity:

> I fly among the branches [rays] of the sun;
> I fly among the branches of the sun.
> I perch on its branches and
> Sit gazing over the whole world.
>
> Throw yourselves into the sky beside me!
> Throw yourselves into the sky beside me!
> Cover yourselves with the blood and feathers of birds
> And follow after me!

The admonition about blood and feathers refers to the technique of covering the body of a dancer with his or her own blood, which is then used as an adhesive to which the breast plumage or down of macaws, vultures or eagles is fixed. This is perhaps the most prestigious ('beautiful') form of sacred costume. These verses

may help one to grasp the connotations of the fact that dancing (and by extension, the celebration of any ritual) is called 'flying' in Kayapo, and of the term for the most common item of ceremonial adornment, the feather head-dress, which is the ritual form of the word for 'bird'.

Birds fly, and 'can scan' the *whole* world. They are not confined by its divisions, but transcend them in a way that to a Kayapo seems the supreme natural metaphor for the direct experience of totality, the integration of the self through the perception of the wholeness of the world. This principle of wholeness, the transcendental integration of what ordinary human (that is, social) life separates and puts at odds, is the essence of the Kayapo notion of 'beauty'.

Two aspects of this notion, as embodied in items of ritual costume and the sacred activities in which they are worn, seem incongruous and even contradictory in the context of what has already been said about everyday Kayapo 'dress' and its underlying assumptions. First, whereas everyday bodily adornment stresses the imposition of social form upon the 'natural' energies and powers of the individual, ritual costume (such as feather head-dresses, body painting with 'animal' designs or the covering of the body with blood and feathers) seems to represent the opposite idea: that is, the imposition of natural form upon social actors engaged in what are the most important social activities of all, the great sacred performances that periodically reconstitute the fabric of society itself. Secondly, sacred costume, together with the notion that the ritual songs and dances themselves originate among wild animals and birds, seems to reverse the meaning of everyday bodily-adornment. The latter is implicitly based upon a relation between a 'natural' core (the human body, or on the sociological level, the elementary family) and a 'social' periphery (the space outside the body in which social interaction takes place, or in the structure of kinship, the more distant blood relations outside the immediate family who bestow names and ritual paraphernalia upon the child). Ritual space, in contrast, seems based on the relationship between a 'natural' periphery (the jungle beyond the village boundary, as the abode of the birds and animals that are the sources both of ritual costume and of the rituals themselves) and a 'social' centre (the central plaza of the village, where the sacred dances are actually performed).

This inversion of space and the fundamental relationship of nature to society encoded in sacred costume turns out upon closer examination to parallel two other inversions in the organisation of everyday social relations which form the very basis of the sacred ceremonial system. The first of these involves the types of kinship relations involved in the key ritual relations of name giving and the best owing of ritual 'wealth' (such as special paraphernalia), as contrasted with those involved in the transformations of family relations marked by the everyday complex of bodily adornment (penis sheath, ear- and lip-plugs, etc.). The latter typically involve immediate family relations like parent-child, husband-wife, or the key extended-family relationship of son-in-law to father-in-law. These relations have in common that they directly link status within the family, or two families by marriage; they may therefore be thought of as *direct* relations. Ritual relations, on the other hand, connect grandparents and grandchildren, uncles and nephews, aunts and nieces: they skip over the connecting relatives (the parents of the children receiving the ritual names or paraphernalia, who are themselves the children or siblings of the name-bestowing relatives) and may thus be described as *indirect* relations.

The structure of *direct* relations functions as a sort of ladder or series of steps up which the developing individual moves from status to status within the structure of the families, extended families and households to which he or she belongs in the course of his or her life. The first step in this process is the 'natural' domain of immediate family relations, within which the individual is at first defined as merely an extension of his or her parents' 'natural' powers of reproduction. The course of the life cycle from there on is a series of steps by which the individual is detached from this primal 'natural' unity and integrated in to the social life of the community. As a corollary of this process, his or her own 'natural' powers develop until they can in turn become the basis of a new family. The highest step in the socialisation process, however, comes when this second 'natural' family unit is dispersed, and the individual becomes a parent-in-law, thus moving into the prestigious role of extended family household head at home and, in the case of men, political leader in the community at large. Each major step in this process is marked, as we have seen, by modifications of bodily adornment of the 'everyday' sort. The overall form of the process is that of a progressive evacuation of 'natural' energy and powers from the 'central' sources of body and elementary family and its extrapolation into social forms and powers standing in a 'peripheral' relation to these sources in physical and social space. The result is that 'social' structure is created at the expense of the evacuation and dispersal of the 'natural' powers and relational units (elementary families) that comprise its foundation. The 'natural' at any given moment is the socially *un*integrated: embodied at the beginning of the process by the newborn infant or new family, as yet not completely absorbed into the wider community of social relations, by the end of the process it is represented by the scattered members of dispersed families, whose younger members have gone on to form new families. The integration of society made possible by this transformation is achieved at the cost of the dis-integration of the primal natural community of the immediate family and the externalisation and social appropriation of the 'natural' powers of the individual.

Seen in this perspective the ritual system represents a balancing of accounts. The dispersed *direct,* 'natural' relations of the parents (their parents and siblings from the family they have left behind) now become the key *indirect* relations whose identification with the children of these same parents becomes the point of the ritual. I use the term 'identification' deliberately, for this is what is implied by the sharing of personal names and idiosyncratic items of ritual costume. The point of this identification is, of course, that it reasserts a connection between, or in other words reintegrates, the dispersed, dis-integrated or 'natural' relations of the parents' previous families with the not-yet-socially-integrated relations of the parents' present family (their children). This integration, however, is achieved, not on the basis of *direct* relations as is characteristic of 'natural' groups like the elementary family, but on a new, *indirect* footing with no natural basis; in short, on a purely 'social' basis. The new integrated 'whole' that is established through ritual action is thus defined simultaneously as reintegrating and transcending the 'natural' basis of social relations. It therefore becomes the quintessential prototype of 'social' relationship, and as such, the appropriate vehicle of the basic components of individual social identity, personal names, distinctive ritual dress and other personal 'wealth'.

In terms of social space, what has happened from the point of view of the central name-receiving individual and her or his family is that 'socialisation' has been achieved through the transference of attributes of the identity of 'natural' relations located on the *periphery* of the family to the actor located at its *centre.* In terms of the equilibrium of 'natural' and 'social' forces and qualities, the prospective evacuation of natural powers from the individual and family has been offset (in advance) by an infusion of social attributes, which are themselves the products of the reintegration, through the social mechanism of ritual action, of elements of the 'natural' infrastructure dispersed as the price of social integration.

The symbolic integration of 'natural' attributes from the periphery of social space as aspects of the social identity of actors located at its centre, can now be understood as a metaphorical embodiment of the integrative ('beautiful') structural proper ties of the social relations evoked by the rituals. The regalia, of course, does more than simply encode this process. It is the concrete medium (along with names) through which the identity of the ritual celebrants is simultaneously redefined, 'socialised', and infused with 'beauty'.

The foregoing analysis should help to clarify the full meaning of the Kayapo notion of beauty as wholeness, integration or completion. In its primary context, that of sacred ritual, it is the value associated with the creation of a *social* whole based on *indirect* (mediate) relations, capable of reintegrating the dismembered elements of simpler *natural,* wholes (elementary families) constituted by *direct* (immediate) relations. 'Beauty' is an ideal expression of society itself in its holistic capacity. It is, as such, one of the primary values of Kayapo social life.

Just as the value of beauty is associated with the complex of social relations and cultural notions involved in ritual action, so the complex of relations and categories that constitutes the social structure of everyday life is focused upon another general social value. This value is in a sense the opposite of beauty, since it pertains to relations of separation, opposition, and inequality. We may call it 'dominance', meaning by that the combination of prestige, authority, individual autonomy and ability to control others that accrues in increasing measure to individuals as they move through the stages of social development, passing from lower to higher status in the structure of the extended family and community. It is doubtless significant that the Kayapo themselves do not name this intrinsically divisive value with any term in their own language, whereas they continually employ the adjective 'beautiful' in connection with the most varied activities, including those of a divisive (and thus 'ugly') character which they wish to put in a better light.

The lack of a term notwithstanding, there can be no doubt of the existence of the value in question and its importance as the organising focus of Kayapo social and political life outside the ritual sphere. It reaches its highest and most concentrated expression in the public activities of senior men, for example their characteristic activity of aggressively flamboyant oratory. The lip-plug, and particularly the senior man's lip-plug as the largest and most spectacularly obtrusive in the entire age-graded lip-plug series, is directly associated with this value as a quality of male, and particularly senior male, social identity. 'Dominance' is, however, to be understood as a symbolic attribute, a culturally imputed quality expressing a person's place in the hierarchy of extended family and community structure, rather than as a relation of naked power or forcible oppression. It is, as such, an expression of the whole edifice of age, sex, family and communal status-categories

marked by the whole system of everyday bodily accoutrements described earlier. Younger men and women can acquire this quality in some measure within their own proper spheres, making due allowance for the fact that in the context of community-wide relations they are subordinate to the dominant senior males.

These two values, 'dominance' and 'beauty', inform the social activities and goals of every Kayapo, and constitute the most general purposes of social action and the most important qualities of personal identity. The identity of social actors is constituted as much by the goals towards which they direct their activities, as by their classification according to status, sex, age, degree of socialisation, etc. I have tried to show that bodily adornment encodes these values as well as the other sorts of categories; it may thus be said to define the total social identity of the individual, meaning his or her subjective identity as a social actor, as well as objective identity conceived in terms of a set of social categories. It does this by mediating between individuals, considered both in their objective and subjective capacities, and society, also considered both in its objective capacity as a structure of relations and its subjective capacity as a system of values. I have attempted to demonstrate that the symbolic mediation effected by the code of bodily adornment in both these respects is, in the terms of Kayapo culture, systematically and finely attuned to the nuances of Kayapo social relations. The structure of Kayapo society, including its highest values and its most fundamental conceptual presuppositions (such as the nature-culture relationship, the modes of expression and understanding, the character of 'socialisation', etc.) could be read from the paint and ornaments of a representative collection of Kayapo of all ages, sexes, and secular and ritual roles.

Bodily adornment, considered as a symbolic medium, is not unique in these respects: every society has a number of such media or languages, the most important among which is of course language itself. The distinctive place of the adornment of the body among these is that it is the medium most directly and concretely concerned with the construction of the individual as social actor or cultural 'subject'. This is a fundamental concern of all societies and social groups, and this is why the imposition of a standardised symbolic form upon the body, as a symbol or 'objective correlative' of the social self, invariably becomes a serious business for all societies, regardless of whether their members as individuals consciously take the matter seriously or not.

It may be suggested that the 'construction of the subject', is a process which is broadly similar in all human societies, and the study of systems of bodily adornment is one of the best ways of comprehending what it involves. As the Kayapo example serves to illustrate, it is essentially a question of the conflation of certain basic types of social notions and categories, among which can be listed categories of time and space, modes of activity (for example, individual or collective, secular or sacred), types of social status (sex, age, family roles, political positions, etc.), personal qualities (degree of 'socialisation', relative passivity or activity as a social actor, etc.) and modes of social value, for example, 'dominance' or 'beauty'. In any given society, of course, these basic categories will be combined in culturally idiosyncratic ways to constitute the symbolic medium of bodily adornment, and these synthetic patterns reveal much about the basic notions of value, social action, and person- or self-hood of the culture in question.

In the case of the Kayapo, three broad synthetic clusters of meanings and values of this type emerge from analysis. One is concerned with the Kayapo notion of socialisation, conceived as the transformation of 'natural' powers and attributes into social forms. The basic symbolic vehicle for this notion, after the general concern for cleanliness, is the form of body painting by which the trunk is contrasted with the extremities as black and red zones, respectively. This fundamental mapping of the body's 'natural' and 'social' areas is inflected, at a higher level of articulation, by hair style. The contrast between long and short hair is used to mark the successive phases of the development and social extension of the individual's libidinous and reproductive powers. Finally, the penis sheath (correlated with the shift to long hair for men) serves to mark the decisive point in the social appropriation of male reproductive powers and, perhaps more important, the collective nature of this appropriation. A second major complex concerns the distinction and relationship between the passive and active qualities of social agency. The basic indicator here is again body painting, in this case the distinction between the infantile and adult styles. This basic distinction is once again inflected by the set composed of pierced ears and ear-plugs, on the one hand, and pierced lips and lip-plugs on the other. This set adds the specific meanings associated with the notions of hearing and speaking as passive knowledge and the active expression of decisions and programmes of action, respectively. Finally, both these clusters are cross-cut by a broad distinction between modes of activity. The most strongly marked distinction here is between secular and sacred (ritual) action, with the latter distinguished from the former by a rich variety of regalia. This distinction, however, may be considered a heightened inflection of the more basic distinction between individual or family-level activities and communal activities, not all of which are of a sacred character. Secular men's house gatherings or meetings of women's societies, for example, may be accompanied by collective painting and perhaps the wearing of simple head-dresses of palm leaves, even though there is no ceremony.

An important structural principle emerges from this analysis of the Kayapo system—the hierarchical or iterative structure of the symbolic code. Each major cluster of symbolic meanings is seen to be arranged in a series of increasingly specific modulations or inflections of the general notions expressed by the most basic symbol in the cluster. A second structural principle is the multiplicative character of the system as a whole. By this I mean that the three basic clusters are necessarily simultaneously present or conflated in the 'dress' of any individual Kayapo at any time. One cannot paint an infant or adult in the appropriate style without at the same time observing the concentric distinction between trunk and extremities common to both styles.

The conflation first of the levels of meaning within each cluster, secondly of each cluster with the others, and finally of the more basic categories of meaning and value listed above that are combined in different ways to form each cluster, is what I mean by 'the construction of the cultural subject' or actor. (It is sometimes necessary to speak in terms of *collective* subjects, such as the class of young men, or of workers, but for the sake of simplicity I shall leave this issue aside here.) It is, by the same token, the construction of the social universe within which he or she acts (that is, an aspect of that construction). As the Kayapo example suggests, this is a dynamic process that proceeds as it were in opposite directions at the same time, towards equilibrium or equilibrated growth at both the individual and social levels

(it goes without saying that in speaking of equilibrium I am referring to cultural ideals rather than concrete realities, either social or individual).

In the Kayapo case, the externalisation of the internal biological and libidinous ('natural') powers of individuals as the basis of social reproduction, and the socialisation of 'external' natural powers as the basis of social structure and the social identity of actors otherwise defined only as biological extensions of their parents, are clearly metaphorical inversions of one another. Each complements the other, just as the social values respectively associated with the two aspects of the process, 'dominance' and 'beauty', complement each other; a balance between the two processes and their associated values is the ideal state of Kayapo society as a dynamic equilibrium. It is also, and equally, the basis of the unity and balance of the personality of the socialised individual, likewise conceived as a dynamic equilibrium.

The point I have sought to demonstrate is that this balance between opposing yet complementary forces, which is the most fundamental structural principle of Kayapo society, is systematically articulated and, as it were, played out on the bodies of every member of Kayapo society through the medium of bodily adornment. This finding supports the general hypothesis with which we began, namely that the surface of the body becomes, in any human society, a boundary of a peculiarly complex kind, which simultaneously separates domains lying on either side of it and conflates different levels of social, individual and intra-psychic meaning. The skin (and hair) are the concrete boundary between the self and the other, the individual and society. It is, however, a truism to which our investigation has also attested, that the 'self' is a composite product of social and 'natural' (libidinous) components.

At one level, the 'social skin' models the social boundary between the individual actor and other actors; but at a deeper level it models the internal, psychic diaphragm between the pre-social, libidinous energies of the individual and the 'internalised others', or social meanings and values that make up what Freud called the 'ego' and 'super-ego'. At yet a third, macro-social level, the conventionalised modifications of skin and hair that comprise the 'social skin' define, not individuals, but categories or classes of individuals, (for example, infants, senior males, women of child-bearing age, etc.). The system of bodily adornment as a whole (all the transformations of the 'social skin' considered as a set) defines each class in terms of its relations with all the others. The 'social skin' thus becomes, at this third level of interpretation, the boundary between social classes.

That the physical surface of the human body is systematically modified in all human societies so as to conflate these three levels of relations (which most modern social science devotes itself to separating and treating in mutual isolation), should give us cause for reflection. Are we dealing here with a mere exotic phenomenon, a primitive expression of human society at a relatively undifferentiated level of development, or is our own code of dress and grooming a cultural device of the same type?

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