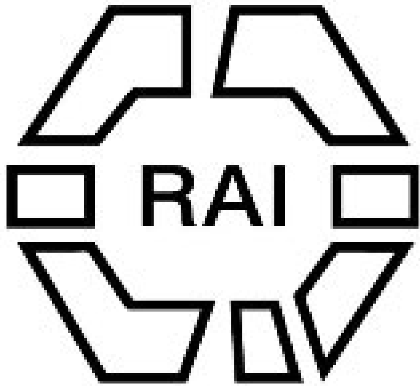

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POWHATAN HAIR

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The fact that Powhatan culture prescribed asymmetric haircuts for men of chiefly or commoner class has gone almost unnoticed, and certainly unexplained, by most commentators. In this article it is assumed that the haircut was highly significant; and an explanation for the haircut is given in terms of cultural premisses inferred from the seventeenth-century Colonial sources about these Indians. The haircut is seen to be an indication that men were by nature both male and female. It is concluded that hair itself was a symbol of creative potential, and that the style in which it was dressed indicated that potential in its wearer.

This article presents the results of the investigation of a society about which we know relatively little, by modern ethnographic standards: the Powhatan Indians of Tidewater Virginia (see figures 1 and 2). In spite of relatively sparse information, this is an analysis of the same kind as, for example, Ortiz's for the Tewa (Ortiz 1969) and Goldman's for the Kwakiutl (Goldman 1975). I have assumed that Powhatan society was systematically organised on the basis of a few fundamental premisses; that those premisses must have been repeatedly expressed in the various aspects of Powhatan life but particularly in their religious observances; and that the expression of these basic ideas was so redundant that some record of it must be present in the contemporary English colonists' accounts, and may consequently be recognised by a modern anthropological reader of those accounts.

Besides wanting, for reasons I will discuss, to understand Powhatan society generally, I specifically sought an answer to the question, 'Why did Powhatan men have asymmetric haircuts, short on the right and long on the left?' Solving this problem is the objective of this article. Before giving the ethnographic data and my analysis of them, however, I shall first explain why I chose the Powhatan, and their hairstyles, for analysis.

I

The Powhatan were discovered by the English when the Jamestown Colony was established in 1607. The colonists were intensely interested, if somewhat biased, observers and recorders of Indian life; unfortunately, while they were observing Powhatan society they were also bringing about its collapse. Today the remnants of this population live on two reservations in Virginia in a manner entirely like that of other small farmers and rural labourers, having

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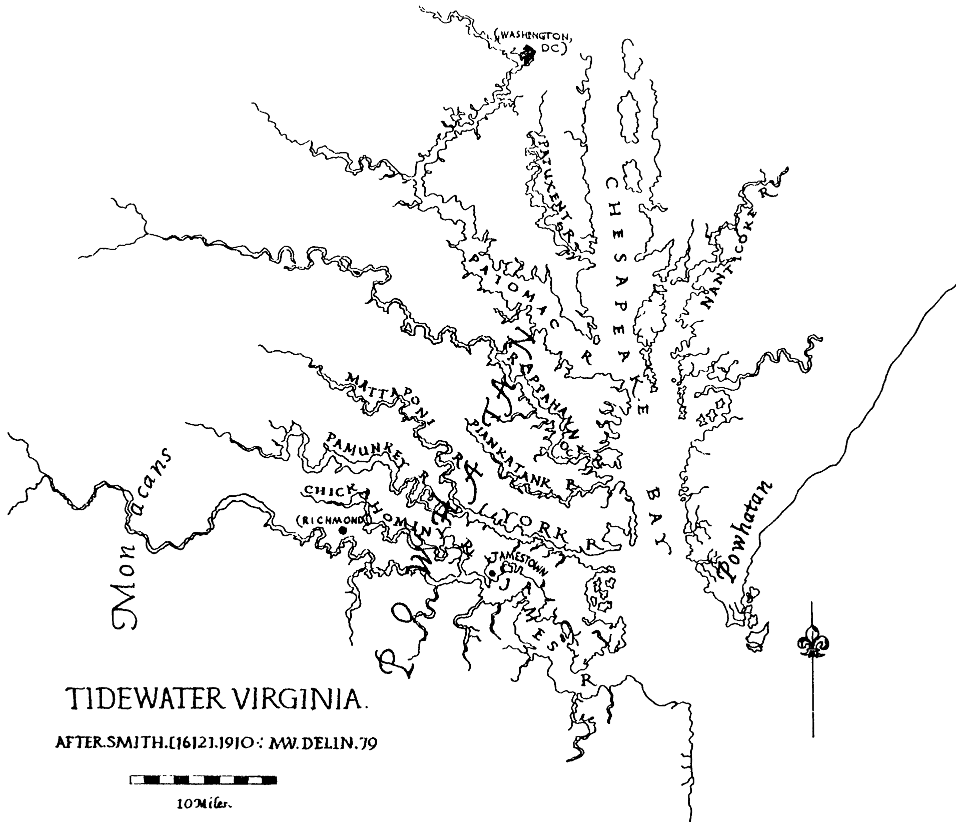

FIGURE I.

given up their aboriginal practices perhaps two centuries ago. The only means of learning about those practices is by reading the accounts of the early English colonists. These men were not anthropologists, of course, but adventurers working for a joint stock company and trying to make a profit. Their accounts are, to us, tantalisingly short, and they tend to describe politics and religion to the exclusion of kinship and marriage, exchange systems, and so on.

At this point the reader may ask, 'Why bother?' This is a fair question. There are a great many North American Indian societies, after all; and about many of them more is known than about the Powhatan. What purpose is served by extracting a system out of relatively scanty and probably biased accounts from 350 years ago? The answer is equally plain, however.

In the first place, there are comparatively few accounts of Indians living in a genuinely pre-contact fashion—in comparison, that is, to the many full accounts made in the last century or so by trained anthropologists. But more important than this is that the Powhatan are the only pre-contact Indians from the middle Atlantic seaboard to have been described in anything like a satisfactory way. Harriot ([1590] 1972)[1] gave a brief account of the coastal Carolina Algonkian, but it is not nearly full enough to permit an analysis of their conceptual system. Lawson (1709) wrote in much greater detail about

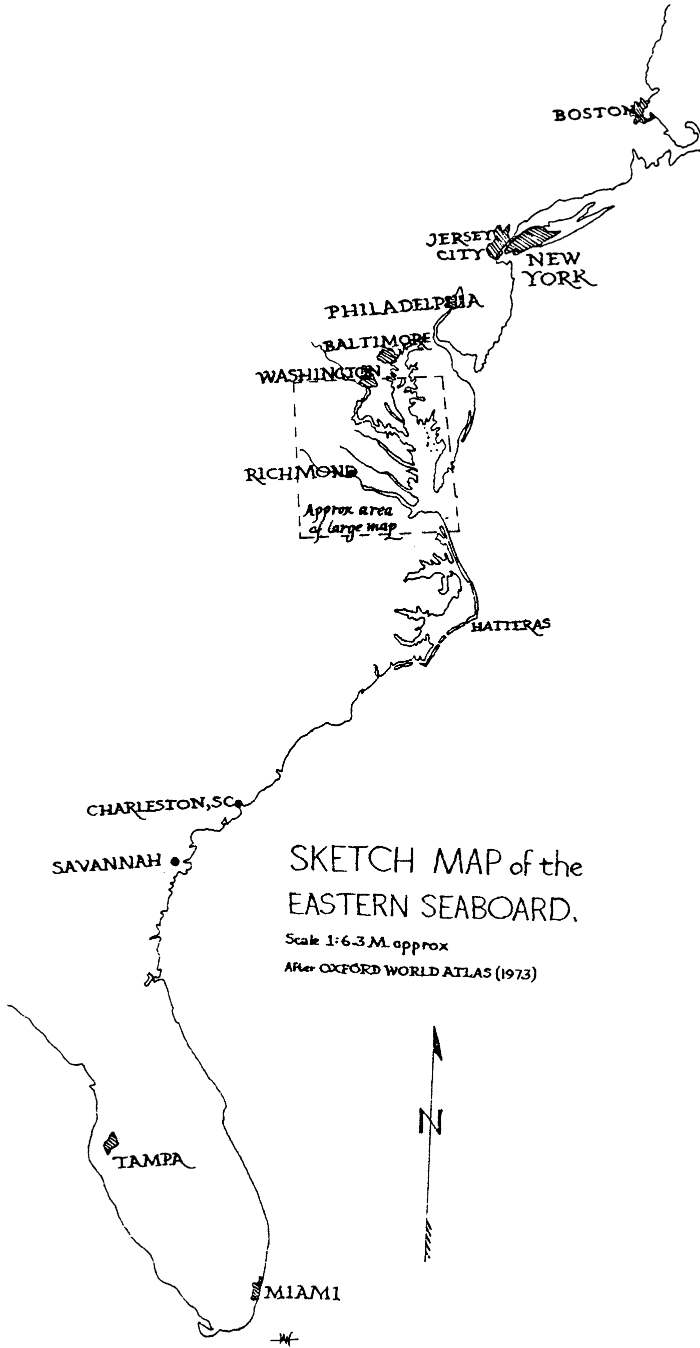

FIGURE 2.

the Indians of North Carolina; but his account is (obviously) much later, and it is seriously flawed because it never distinguishes between the customs of coastal Algonkians and those of the Iroquoian Tuscarora living inland. Thus

in a wide area that comprises most of the Appalachian Mountain areas of the present states of North Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, Pennsylvania and Ohio, as well as the Tidewater areas of Maryland and Virginia, the Powhatan are the only society about which sufficient is known to make any sort of cultural analysis possible.[2]

It is possible, using the early sources, to construct a model of how the Powhatan ordered their world. In this article I intend to present such a model, taking as my starting point a single piece of significant information: the fact that Powhatan men had asymmetric haircuts. I shall return to the ethnographic facts later; now I want to point out why it is justifiable to place such importance on their hair style.

Beginning with Leach's now classic article on 'Magical hair' (1958) there have been many accounts of the significance that hair—whether head, facial, body, or pubic—and its mode of dressing—long, short, shaven, bound, loose, dirty, and so on—may have for the members of a society, as well as attempts to account for hair having any significance in the first place.[3] One thing that emerges from these writings is that virtually every society attaches significance to head hair at least, and often to hair elsewhere on the body as well. Thus short hair on a woman is not simply short hair on a woman: it is made to contrast with, and oppose, other actual or possible conditions of hair such as long hair on a woman; long hair on a man; short hair on a man; no hair on children—and so on; and further, the short hair is held to stand for some intangible or invisible state such as being unmarried, or married, or a 'career girl.'

It is not possible, and perhaps not even desirable, to say absolutely what hair symbolises. Hershman puts this well when he writes,

> There is nothing inherent in different states of being with hair or being without hair which forms a natural system, by which sets of symbols will always be structured in a basically similar pattern. It is not until a number of 'cultural givens' are known which are adduced from the particular moral values of a society that it can be understood how a specific semantic structuring of hair behaviour will work in a particular society (1974: 295).

That hair is significant is undeniable; to assume that the significances attached to different conditions of hair are culture-specific rather than universal seems only sensible. *Why* hair should be significant is a problem less easily solved: it may be that hair universally represents, at an unconscious level, semen as the head represents the phallus (Leach 1958; Hershman 1974: 274); or simply that it is a highly visible part of the body which can be altered temporarily and so represent temporary states (Hallpike 1969). I do not propose to deal with this particular problem here. Rather, I mention these studies to justify the assumption that the Powhatan Indians' hair styles were not fortuitous or frivolous, but were charged with significance, and that if we can discover the significance by reference to others of their cultural practices we will be able to refer all their practices to a few basic premisses.

II

At the time of contact with the English, the Powhatan had three main ways of dressing their hair (see figs. 3–5). The most arresting of these is the mode for

FIGURE 3. Secotan shaman, showing shaven hair and crest similar to Powhatan (Harriot [1590] 1972, plate V).

FIGURE 4. Married woman of Secotan, N. Carolina, showing haircut similar to Powhatan (Harriot [1590] 1972, plate IIII).

adult men, described by several early writers. The boy Henry Spelman, for example, who lived among the Potomac for at least a year (Spelman [1610] 1910; civ), writes of them that

> . . . they . . . cutt ye heares on ye right side of ther heade that it might not hinder them by flappinge about ther bow [. . .] stringe, when they draw it to shoott, But on ye other side they lett it grow & haue a long locke hanginge doune ther shoulder ([1610] 1910: cxiii).

FIGURE 5. Roanoke chief, showing haircut similar to Powhatan (Harriot [1590] 1972, plate VII).

Smith ([1612] 1910: 65) reports the same style: 'Their haire is generally black; but few have any beards. The men weare halfe their heads shaven, the other halfe long.' William Strachey's report substantially repeats Smith's, but he adds that the long hair on the left is 'an ell long' and that 'they annoynt [it] often with walnut oyle, whereby yt is very sleeke, and shynes like a Ravens wing . . .' (Strachey [1610] 1953: 73). By contrast with this style both women and *quiyoughcosoughs* or shamans had their own hair styles. Women's hair, according to Smith, was 'cut in many fashions agreeable to their yeares, but ever some part remaineth long' ([1612] 1910: 65). Beverley is more informative on this point:

> The Women wear the Hair of the Head very long, either hanging at their Backs, or brought before in a single Lock, bound up with a Fillet of Peak, or Beads; sometimes also they wear it neatly tyed up in a Knot behind. It is commonly greased, and shining black, but never painted ([1705] 1947: 159–62).

Strachey describes the women thus ([1610] 1953: 114):

> There are notes to be taken, by which may be discerned a marryed woman from a Mayd, the Maydes haue the forepart of their heades and sydes shaven close, the hinder parte very long, which they wynd prettely and ymbroyder in plates [plaits], letting yt hang so to the full length, the marryed women weare their hayre all of a length shaven, as the Irish by a dish.

The shaman's hairstyle was at another extreme. Again Beverley's account is the fullest ([1705] 1947: 166):

> ... their Hair ... 'tis all shaven close except a thin Crest, like a Cocks-comb which stands bristling up, and runs in a semi-circle from the Forehead up along the Crown to the nape of the Neck: They likewise have a border of Hair over the Forehead, which by its own natural strength, and by the stiffning it receives from Grease and Paint, will stand out like the peak of a Bonnet.[4]

Shamans were bearded also, unlike other Powhatan men (Spelman [1610] 1910: cxiii).

The Powhatan thus present a spectrum of hairstyles, from mostly long (women), through half long/half short (men), to almost entirely shaven (shamans). The styles indicated, however redundantly, that the wearer was male, female, or shaman. Of special interest is the marked asymmetry of the men's hair. This way of dressing hair is highly unusual. The neighbouring Algonkians of what is now North Carolina do not seem to have shared it, although the shaman's and women's hairstyles appear to have been similar to those of the Powhatan.[5]

Why did the Powhatan find it necessary, or reasonable, for men to wear their hair in this way? As I have said, the hairstyle is but one of a great many expressions of the basic assumptions according to which the Powhatan organised the world. One could begin an analysis at any of a number of points, such as the initiation of shamans, the form of burial for chiefs, the annual cycle of hunting and gardening, or the nature of Powhatan warfare, and reach the same conclusions. The same logic governs the forms of all of these, or the significance attached to them. I take the hairstyle as a point of departure, although this is an aspect of Powhatan culture to which almost no attention has been paid,[6] because it promises a rewarding line of enquiry. In the course of the discussion I shall mention all of the customs just listed, as well as a good many more, in order to demonstrate why the Powhatan haircuts 'make sense'.

The Powhatan themselves are reported to have offered an explanation of the haircut, that is, that the hair on the right was kept short to prevent it from fouling their bowstrings (Spelman [1610] 1910: cxiii). Following Turner we may label this an exegetical explanation (V. Turner 1967: 50). It is practical and even obvious. But it does not explain why the other side of the head was not so shorn; and on closer examination we find that it is not even a necessary reason for cutting the hair on the right since a similar effect could be gained by binding the hair back. Strachey remarks indeed that the long left hair was often wound into a knot and decorated with 'coloured Gewgawes, as ... the hand of their Enemy dryed, Croisetts of bright and shyning Copper ...' and so forth ([1610] 1953: 74). In spite of the Powhatan explanation we are left with the question: why did the men wear their hair this way?

I suggest that the reason is to be found in the Powhatan conception of males; or, to be more specific, of male commoners and *werowances* or chiefs.[7] I suggest that these two kinds of men were considered both male and female; while women were never other than female, and shamans (always of the male sex) were never considered to be other than male.[8] If we consider long hair to be an attribute of females (as the evidence suggests) and short or shaven hair to be that of males (again suggested by the evidence), then it is plain that any person with both attributes must have both kinds of hair. It is of course necessary to

show that the Powhatan did have this attitude towards men, and in the following sections I show the evidence that, in my view, supports that conclusion. This evidence comes from a wide range of Powhatan customs as reported by the English; and while some of it may seem at first irrelevant, I hope to show that it is all useful for a proper interpretation of Powhatan culture.

III

The Powhatan in 1607 may have numbered as many as 9,000, spread over the 8,000 or so square miles of what is known today as Tidewater Virginia (Kroeber 1939: table 18; Mook 1944: 197). They were divided into some thirty named tribes (Smith [1612] 1910: 75; Swanton 1952; Mook 1944; Jefferson [1787] 1854), each within its own territory (Smith [1612] 1910: 66, 81; Strachey [1610] 1953: 102). In spring and summer the population lived in permanent villages where they raised corn, beans, squash and tobacco; fished; hunted; and gathered tuckahoe roots, the staple food (Smith [1612] 1910: 58–70).[9] The villages were all in the more easterly part of the territory, no more than a quarter-mile from a stream or river. In the autumn, after harvest, the Powhatan left their villages and moved to the westerly part of their territory, near the fall-line, where they spent the autumn and winter months hunting deer and raiding the neighbouring Sioux-speaking Monacans, who raided them in return. The Powhatan formed nomadic bands during these months, living in tent-like houses made of mats transported from place to place by the women (Smith [1612] 1910: 69–70; Spelman [1610] 1910: cvi–vii). In the spring they returned to their villages, and the yearly cycle began again.

I have mentioned that the Powhatan recognised certain men as chiefs, or *werowances*. There appears to have been one *werowance* for each village as well as a supreme *werowance* for each of the thirty tribes (Strachey [1610] 1953: 64, 66, 69; Beverley [1705] 1947: 174; cf. Spelman [1610] 1910: cvii; Smith [1612] 1910: 50). Powhatan himself was such a person; he was also, of course, the ruler of all thirty tribes (Smith [1612] 1910: 79). The position was inherited matrilineally (Smith [1608] 1910: 22, [1612] 1910: 81; Strachey [1610] 1953: 77). While a discussion of Powhatan politics is not relevant here, some aspects of the *werowance* are. For example, it appears that he had rights to a good deal of what was produced or acquired by his subjects. He was given food by every household as well as valuables such as copper beads[10] and trade goods. Some of this tribute seems to have been for his own use, but the rest was stored for the entertainment of visitors. The English describe such vast quantities of food presented them on their visits to Powhatan villages that we may assume the *werowance* to have had command of extensive resources (Smith [1608] 1910: 38, [1612] 1910: 98, 103, [1624] 1910: 306, 397; Spelman [1610] 1910: cxiii; Hamor 1615: 43). Besides dispensing hospitality for his village, the *werowance* welcomed visitors outside the village with food and tobacco before inviting them into it (Beverley [1705] 1947: 186–7; Smith [1612] 1910: 73).

These duties of a *werowance*—welcoming and entertaining visitors—suggest

that the *werowance* was a mediator for the Powhatan, at least to the extent of representing his own people to outsiders. There is evidence that the *werowance* was a mediator not only of a social kind but also of a conceptual kind. Powhatan society appears to have recognised three kinds of person: shamans, *werowances*, and common people (both men and women). The *werowance* had qualities of both the shaman and the commoner. In that he spent his life in the village; that he gardened, hunted, and fished; and that he had wives and children, he was like the common people (Smith [1608] 1910: 37, [1612] 1910: 73; Spelman [1610] 1910: cviii, cxii; Strachey [1610] 1953: 112). His physical appearance was not unlike theirs either. Spelman says, for example, 'The king is not known by any difference from other of ye chefe sort in ye cuntry ...' ([1610] 1910: cxiii). The only article of dress peculiar to the *werowance*, and distinguishing him from common men, seems to have been an interesting headdress composed of a 'Crown of Deares haire colloured red, in fashion of a Rose fastened about his knot of haire, and a great Plate of Copper on the other side of his head' (Percy [1625] 1910: lxv). The deer's hair, that is, was worn on the left, and the copper on the right. A certain ceremony was extended to the *werowance* in recognition of his rank (Archer [1607] 1910: xliv, xlix–x; Smith [1612] 1910: 73; Beverley [1705] 1947: 188; Spelman [1612] 1910: cxiii).

The *werowance* differed from commoners not only in rank but also in spirit, however. It would probably be an exaggeration to say that the *werowance* was a shaman; but there is no doubt that he knew more about the mysteries of Powhatan religion than the common man, and that he participated in religious performances on occasion (cf. Smith [1608] 1910: 29, [1612] 1910: 75, 78, [1624] 1910: 400–1; Strachey [1610] 1953: 99).[11] A *werowance* was, significantly, not required to avoid the shamans' houses in the forest, as commoners were; nor did he have to throw an offering into the water when he passed near such a house in a canoe (Strachey [1610] 1953: 95). Commoners made this offering to avoid offending the spirit *oke* (see below). The most telling evidence comes from what the Powhatan said about their funerals and notions of an afterlife. Strachey sums up their comments about the latter:

> Concerning the ymortality of the Sowle, they suppose that the Comon people shall not live after death, but they thinck that their Weroances and Priests indeed, whome they esteeme also half Quioughcosoughes, when their bodies are layd in the Earth that that which is within shall goe beyond the Mountaines and travell as far as where the Sun setts into the most pleasant feilds, grownds and pastures ... ([1610] 1953: 100).

This account agrees with that of Smith ([1612] 1910: 78). In this pleasant land the *werowances* and *quiyoughcosoughs* (shamans) had a plentiful supply of valuables such as tobacco and hatchets. Their heads were covered with red paint and trimmed with feathers, so that they resembled the spirit *oke* (Smith [1612] 1910: 78). No work was done by the dead. They sang and danced all the time in the company of their predecessors, until they grew old as they had done on earth. They then dissolved and entered as spirits of foetuses into living women, to be born as children (Smith [1612] 1910: 78; Strachey [1610] 1953: 100, 103).

Strachey's account of the afterlife is misleading in one regard—chiefs were

not buried as common people were. A dead *werowance* was flayed and disembowelled and the bones were stripped of flesh. When the flesh had dried it was put into a pot. The entrails were replaced with copper, beads, and other valuables, and the bones were tied together and put into a skin so as to resemble the original body. This was wrapped in fine mats and hung with strings of pearls. Such a bundle was placed beside similar remains of previous *werowances* on a platform in the shamans' house, together with the dead man's valuables in baskets, his pipe and tobacco, and his single most cherished possession. The shamans had as part of their duties to maintain a watch over these bodies (see fig. 6) (Smith [1612] 1910: 74–5; Spelman [1610] 1910: cv; Strachey [1610] 1953: 94; Beverley [1705] 1947: 214–16).

In life the *werowance* was primarily of the village; in death he joined the shamans, who were, as I shall show, already dead in a social sense. A living *werowance* was a potential (and occasionally actual) shaman; no commoner ever had such a potential. The *werowance* could and did visit shamans; commoners could not approach the shamans' houses. In a physical and a conceptual sense the *werowances* mediated between commoner and shaman, who were opposites. What then was the nature of the shaman?

The Powhatan word which I translate as 'shaman' is usually written *quiyoughcosough*, probably pronounced something like 'kwiyokosuf'. Smith ([1612] 1910: 46) translates this as 'pettie Gods, and their affinities'. This word is cognate with a word meaning 'black boys' (Tooker 1904: 673); the Indians called the novice shamans 'black boys' (Smith [1624] 1910: 374). The *quiyoughcosoughs* performed many services for the villages and tribes they served: they cured illness, found lost objects, discovered thieves, predicted the future, and advised about hunting and warfare (Smith [1608] 1910: 21–2, [1612] 1910: 65, 76–7; Strachey [1610] 1953: 96–7, 104; Whitaker 1613: 26; Spelman [1610] 1910: cix; Beverley [1705] 1947: 217). Their spirit aid was named *oke*, sometimes written *okeus*.[12] Many commentators mention this being, whom the early colonists associated with the Devil. Smith, for example, writes ([1612] 1910: 75):

> But their chiefe God they worship is the Diuell. Him they call *Oke* and serue him more of feare than loue. They say they haue conference with him, and fashion themselues as neare to his shape as they can imagine. In their Temples, they haue his image euill favouredly carued, and painted and adorned with chaines, copper, and beades; and couered with a skin, in such manner as the deformity may well suit with such a God.

(See also Strachey [1610] 1953: 88–9; Spelman [1610] 1910: cv; Whitaker 1613: 24; Beverley [1705] 1947: 198). *Oke* was the great punisher. No man could hope to get away with theft, adultery, murder, or impious behaviour, because *oke* would know about it and send punishment in the form of illness, storms, drought, or wifely infidelity. Strachey's comments ([1610] 1953: 89, 105, 76) are especially valuable in understanding the relation between *oke* and mankind:

> ... only the displeased Okeus looking into all mens accions and examyning the same according to the severe Scale of Iustice, punisheth them with stormes, and thunderclaps, stirrs vp warre and makes their women falce vnto them....

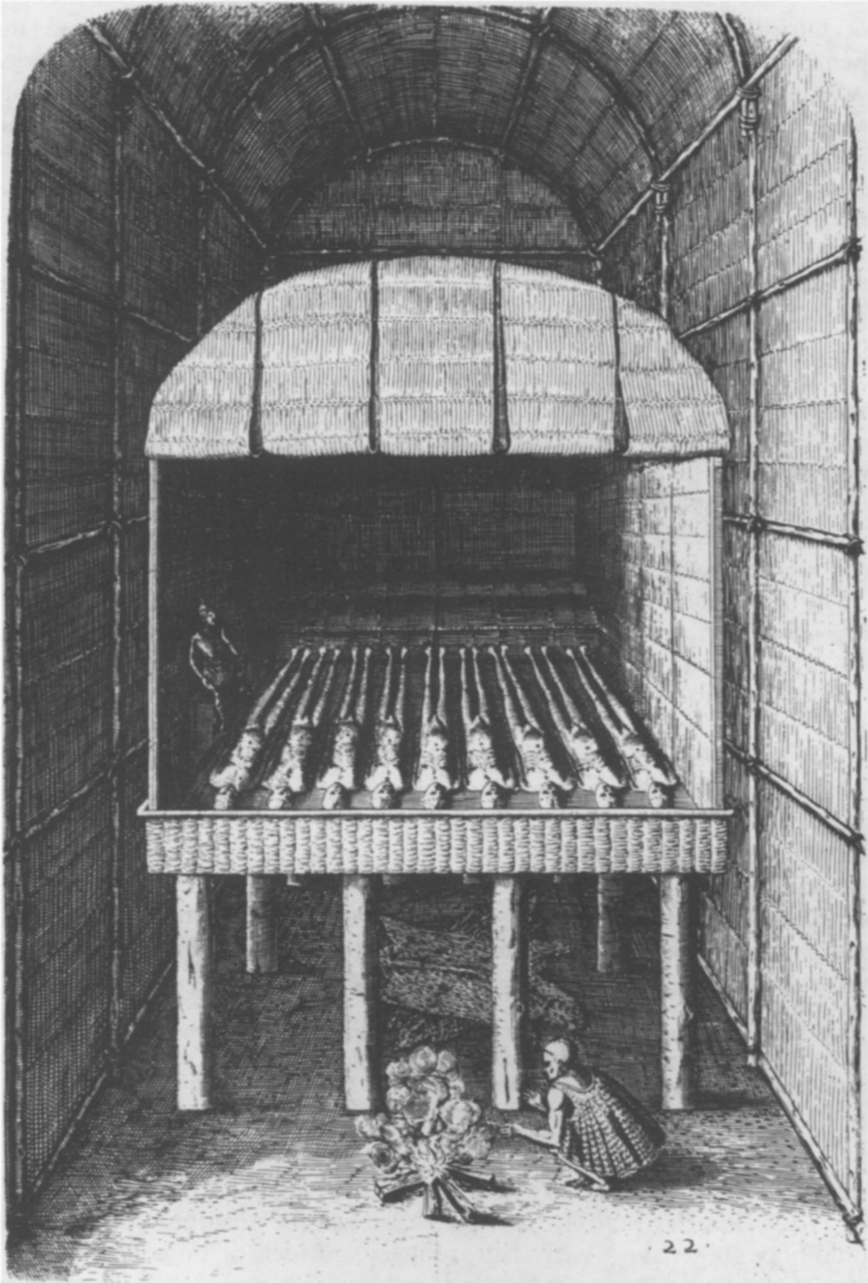

FIGURE 6. Bodies of dead *werowances*, attended by a shaman; an image of *oke* at left (Harriot [1590] 1972, plate XXII).

. . . many things (whilst they observe vs) are suffred amisse amongst themselues, who were wont to be so servilye fearefull to trespasse against their Customes as yt was a chief point of their Religion not break in any . . . the great Tirant himself [Powhatan] nor his priests are not confident in their wonted courses. . . .

... that [the shamans] are thus feared yt is certayne; nor let any man doubt but that the devill cann reveale an offence actually committed.

I think it likely that the word *quiyoughcosough* is more properly translated 'image of *oke*'; that is, *oke* and *quiyoughcosough* are but two aspects of the same being, the former being spirit and invisible, and the latter being body and visible. For example, Smith reports, in the passage cited above, that the *quiyoughcosough* tried to make himself resemble *oke*. The English wrote that the Powhatan worshipped *quiyoughcosough*s, but it is noticeable that the active being is always *oke*; the men who commune with him, called *quiyoughcosough*, do no more than relay his motivations or desires (Smith [1608] 1910: 22; Strachey [1610] 1953: 100; Whitaker 1613: 24; Spelman [1610] 1910: cv). The neighbouring Carolina Algonkian called their gods *mantoac*, but called the images *kewas* (pl. *kewasosok*) (Harriot [1590] 1972: 25–6).

I mentioned that the *quiyoughcosough*s were considered 'dead' in a social sense. The Powhatan made no statements to this effect, or if they did those statements were not recorded. There is a mass of evidence, however, that leads us inevitably to this conclusion. The initiation of the shamans as young boys is particularly significant in this regard.[13] Smith observed such a ceremony, and he describes it as follows ([1612] 1910: 77–8):

Fifteene of the properest young boyes, between 10 and 15 yeares of age, they painted white ... the people spent the forenoone in dancing and singing about them with rattles.

In the afternoone, they put those children to the roote of a tree. By them, all the men stood in a guard, every one hauing a Bastinado in his hand, made of reeds bound together. This ... made a lane between them all along, through which there were appointed 5 young men ... to fetch these children. So every one of the fiue went through the guard, to fetch a child, each after other by turnes: the guard fearelessly beating them with their Bastinadoes, and they patiently enduring and receauing all; defending the children with their naked bodies from the vnmercifull blowes they pay them soundly, though the children escape. All this while, the women weepe and crie out very passionately; prouiding mats, skinnes, mosse and drie wood, as things fitting their childrens funerals.

After the children were thus passed the guard, the guard tore down the tree, branches and boughs, with such violence, that they rent the body, and made wreathes for their heads, or bedecked their haire with the leaues. What else was done with the children was not seene; but they were all cast on a heape in a valley, as dead: where they made a great feast for al the company.

The *Werowance* being demanded the meaning of this sacrifice, answered that the children were not al dead, but that the *Oke* or *Divell* did sucke the blood from their left breast, who chanced to be his by lot, till they were dead. But the rest were kept in the wildernesse by the yong men till nine moneths were expired, during which time they must not conuerse with any: and of these, were made their Priests and Coniurers.

This sacrifice they held to bee so necessarie, that if they should omit it, their *Oke* ... would let them haue no Deare, Turkies, Corne, nor fish: and yet besides, hee would make great slaughter amongst them.

By means of this 'sacrifice' the children were removed from their ordinary lives to the wilderness, where they were taught by older shamans (Strachey [1610] 1953: 99).

The removal to the forest for a period of time was also part of the *huskanaw*, described by Beverley ([1705] 1947: 206–9). During that seclusion the boys were dosed with a drug causing wild behaviour followed by forgetfulness. On being returned to their normal life the young men were supposed to know

nothing of their previous lives—they could not talk properly, they knew none of their relatives, and so on. Gradually they became socialised again. The *huskanaw* however differs from shamanic initiation in one important regard: the novice shamans never returned to the village. From the day of his removal from the village a *quiyoughcosough* lived entirely in the wilderness (Whitaker 1613: 26). The only time that entry into a village was permitted was to cure a sick person. (It is likely, however, that the five or so young men mentioned in the ceremony described above were apprentice *quiyoughcosough*s.) Otherwise there was almost total separation of *quiyoughcosough* from commoner and from village. Whitaker cogently remarks, 'The manner of their life is much like to the popish Hermits of our age....' (1612: 26).[14]

*Quiyoughcosough*s were supported by the *werowance* of a locality and by the common people. There could be several *quiyoughcosough*s for one tribe. *Werowance*s seem to have gone to some lengths to attract good *quiyoughcosough*s, and Strachey remarks: '... yet happie doth that Werowance accompt himself who can deteyne with him a *Quiyoughquisock* of the best graue luckye well instructed in their misteryes, and beloved of their god....' ([1610] 1953: 88). One of the inducements was a house built by the *werowance*. It is possible that the *quiyoughcosough*'s house and what the English repeatedly call a 'temple' are two different buildings; but the point is immaterial since both were erected outside the village and both were maintained by *quiyoughcosough*s.[15] I think it likely that they were the same (see Strachey [1610] 1953: 94–5). The house or 'temple' was perhaps 100 × 20 feet in size. It was always built so that the door faced the east, and a partition separated the main part of the interior from a smaller space at the western end. Behind this were the platform with dead *werowance*s, the wooden images of *oke* painted black and hung with pearls, and various presumably sacred objects such as tomahawks, feathers, etc. At the eastern end a fire burned continuously (Beverley [1705] 1947: 196; Strachey [1610] 1953: 88–9).

Food was supplied by the population, especially the *werowance*, in a silent trade, as the *quiyoughcosough* made no garden, and hunted or fished only as a recreation (Whitaker 1613: 26; Beverley [1705] 1947: 213).

There is no mention anywhere of a married *quiyoughcosough* and I assume that they did not marry. It is not certain whether they were homosexual or celibate; but as feminine behaviour or dress is never reported for them, it appears that celibacy was the rule.

If we accept the interpretation that the *quiyoughcosough* was socially defined as dead, we can explain the nature of their initiation. The women wept as at a funeral, and the boys were painted white and then turned 'black' by means of the ceremony. It is not uncommon for initiates' mothers to go into mock mourning at their sons' separation from themselves; but it is commonly understood that the mourning is for the boy that was, rather than for the total loss of the individual; and the boys always come back although they have become men in the interval. In the case of the novice *quiyoughcosough*, the return was never made—he stayed 'dead', outside, in the wilderness. That the *quiyoughcosough* was indeed classified as dead is further suggested both by the colour black associated with him, and by his identification with the spirit *oke*.

There can be no doubt that *oke* was, in one aspect, a god of death. I have mentioned already the connexion of *oke* with dead *werowances*, whose bodies were placed in his house and who were said to resemble him in the land of the dead. *Oke* presided over this spirit-land. Another striking resemblance is that of the images of *oke* to corpses. *Oke*, or *quiyoughcosough*, is often mentioned as being very ugly (Smith [1608] 1910: 22; Whitaker 1613: 24). An image found in one religious house is described as being black and hung with chains of pearls (Strachey [1610] 1953: 89). One carried into battle by the Indians at Kecoughtan against the English is described as '... an Idoll made of skinnes, stuffed with mosse, all painted and hung with chaines and copper....' (Smith [1624] 1910: 393). These items remind one of the materials required for a child's funeral, mentioned above.

The colour black is repeatedly mentioned in connexion with both *oke* and death; as well as with shamans. In addition to the instances cited above, the female mourners of a common man painted themselves black and sat wailing in their houses for 24 hours following his death (Smith [1612] 1910: 75).

The *quiyoughcosough*'s life was the inverse of that of a *werowance* or commoner. Commoners never lived alone, and they inhabited the wilderness only in bands in the winter (a dead season). Commoners and *werowances* married and had children; they gardened to some extent; they used red rather than black paint as a rule; they never wore beards. A *quiyoughcosough* had clothing made with the hair outside, while everyone else wore his winter clothing with the hair next the skin. It is well known that death is commonly represented as the inverse of life (cf. Hertz 1960; Needham 1963: xxxix); it is no surprise to find a 'dead' person behaving in a manner opposite to that of a 'live' one. The Powhatan shaman's behaviour no longer seems enigmatic when these circumstances are taken into account.

Let me sum up what I have suggested so far. Powhatan society recognised at least three classes of person—*quiyoughcosoughs* or shamans, *werowances* or chiefs, and common people. The *werowance* was a mediator between *quiyoughcosough* and commoner, conceptually at least and probably literally: a *werowance* was less secular than a commoner, less spiritual than a *quiyoughcosough*; he conveyed information and food to the *quiyoughcosough*, whom he had in a sense 'hired' to give advice to the people, himself included; he could visit the shamans' house, and was placed there after his death, but in life he lived permanently in the village like ordinary men, with wives and gardens. The *werowance* was, significantly, the villager who welcomed visitors into the village, first treating them to tobacco and food at the entrance. He alone could legitimately invite the unknown into the domestic circle.

This may seem unrelated to the matter of hair, but I hope to show its relevance. The structural relations among these classes of persons must be shown before proceeding, because the conclusion depends on establishing that the *werowance* mediated between the *quiyoughcosough* and commoners, the wild and the ordered.

The conclusion that the Powhatan considered ordinary men to be both male and female is based also on their division of labour. They depended on hunting and gardening as well as on fishing and collecting wild plant foods. The first

two activities would appear to have been most important for them. Beverley ([1705] 1947: 180) remarks that 'when they eat their Bread, they eat it alone, and not with their Meat'; and that 'They never serve up different sorts of Victuals in one Dish' ([1705] 1947: 178). We may also say definitely that the hunting was a male activity while gardening was female. Strachey says, for example ([1610] 1953: 81):

> The men bestowe their tymes in fishing, hunting, wars, and such man-like exercises without the doores, scorning to be seen in any effemynate labour, which is the Cause that the women be very paynefull, and the men often idle.

Of the gardening Smith says,

> The women and children do the rest of the worke.... pound their corne... plant their corne, gather their corne... ([1612] 1910: 67).
>
> Their women and children do continually keepe it [the corn] with weeding, and when it is growne midle high, they hill it about like a hopyard ([1612] 1910: 62).

The insistence on this division of labour would appear to have at least two logical consequences: first, that men are associated with killing while women are associated with growing; and second, that it is a woman's responsibility to supply food, especially garden produce, for her husband.

We find then a curious custom with regard to what Spelman ([1610] 1910: cxii) calls 'the settinge of ye Kings corne'. The day of planting was a special day. On it all the people of 'the country' came to the *werowance*'s house and planted all his corn at once. The *werowance* then broadcast handfuls of beads to the workers as a reward. A similar communal effort was made at harvest time, when all the corn was gathered and rubbed off the ears in the course of one day.

Feest remarks (1966: 75), perceptively, that it is odd to find men as well as women participating in these decidedly female activities. I suggest that it is not odd if we consider the men in this context to be socially female: as a wife to her husband, so a commoner to the *werowance*. The analogy may be taken further, and account for the *werowance* having the same haircut as a common man: as wife to husband, and commoner to *werowance*, so *werowance* to *quiyoughcosough*. The *werowance*, as well as commoners, supplied the *quiyoughcosough* with food; the latter hunted and fished only as a recreation, and never gardened. The relations can be shown as a diagram:

male *female*
quiyoughcosough——*werowance*——man——woman

Any person in this 'spectrum' is more 'male' than the person(s) to his right. The *quiyoughcosough* was always male, a woman always female;[16] but the *werowance* or commoner might be defined as one or the other by the context. We begin to understand why these men had hair that was both male and female. This also explains why shamans alone grew beards: beards are particularly masculine.

IV

The argument outlined above may answer my original question—why did

Powhatan men have asymmetric haircuts—but it leaves unanswered the question of why the hair was used to convey the message; and it raises several points that need further elaboration. If we accept that a *quiyoughcosough* was both wholly male and socially dead, we may suppose that maleness and death are inseparable; and that the same is true of females and life. Such associations are unusual but not unheard of. In this last section I hope to show that the Powhatan associated hair with fertility or generation, and that they associated these qualities or activities with women. A good deal of evidence supports this interpretation.

First let me remind the reader of two geographic facts: Powhatan villages were eastward in their territory, and gardening was necessarily carried out there; westward they gathered in bands to hunt and make war. Add to this that the winter was the hunting season, and spring and summer the gardening season. (It would, of course, be ridiculous to try to grow things in the winter. I do not suggest that there was anything but environmental necessity in the seasonal economy of the Powhatan, but that they took these basic facts and attached significances and associations which are not necessary.) There seems a clear association among the notions East, villages, and gardening, on the one hand; and West, wilderness, and hunting, on the other:

West	*East*
wilderness	village
hunting	gardening

As hunting was a male, and gardening a female, activity, we may properly assign males to the western half of the dichotomy and females to the eastern. We know also that one's kin lived in one's own village, while enemies inhabited the forested Piedmont to the west: these two classes of person can be appropriately assigned.

The land of spirits, including *oke*, lay to the west—significantly, where the sun sets. In the houses of the *quiyoughcosough*s the images of *oke* and the remains of dead *werowance*s were kept at the western end, behind a partition. This is fairly clear evidence that death should be assigned to the western dichotomy, and the fact that the deadly activities of hunting and warfare took place to the west supports this view. We might then say that to the east belong life and generation, if only by default. A creation myth recorded by Strachey gives evidence that the Powhatan explictly associated the East with life.

> We haue . . . 5. godes in all our chief god appeares often vnto vs in the likewise of a mightie great Hare, the other 4. haue no visible shape, but are (indeed) the 4 wyndes, which keepe the 4. Corners of the earth . . . our god who takes vpon this shape of a Hare conceaved with himself how to people this great world, and with what kynd of Creatures, and yt is true . . . that at length he divised and made divers men and women and made provision for them to be kept vp yet for a while in a great bag, . . . that godlike hare made the water and the fish therein and the land and a great deare, which should feed vpon the land, at which assembled the other 4. gods envious hereat, . . . and with hunting poles kild this deare drest him, and after they had feasted with him departed againe east west north and sowth, at which the other god in despight of this their mallice to him, tooke all the haires of the slayne deare and spredd them vpon the earth with many powerfull wordes and charmes whereby every haire became a

> deare and then he opened the great bag, wherein the men and the women were, and placed them vpon the earth, a man and a woman in one Country and a man and a woman in another country. and so the world tooke his first begynning of mankynd . . . (Strachey [1610] 1953: 102).

This creative Hare[17] lived in the East. It is interesting that the Powhatan specifically mentioned the sunrise in connexion with this being, since they associated sunset with *oke*, the god of the dead.[18] This myth supports the view that the East brought new life for the Powhatan, and the West—as I have shown—held death.

We can now see that the following complementary oppositions existed in Powhatan society:

West	*East*
wilderness	village
hunting	gardening
men (male)	women (female)
quiyoughcosough	*werowance* & commoners
death/destruction	life/creation
black	red/white
oke	the Giant Hare
warfare	peace
enemies	relations and friends

Undoubtedly there were others, but these sum up the main ones mentioned in this analysis.

What then was the significance of head hair for the Powhatan? I suggest that it represented the creative potential of its wearer.[19] Thus we find the dead and uncreative shaman—childless and gardenless—with virtually no head hair at all; and the lively and procreating woman with long head hair. Strachey's report ([1610] 1953: 114) that unmarried girls had short hair at front and sides supports this: unmarried girls had no babies, and they had no gardens of their own. Ordinary men, as I have said, were both male and female—that is, both death-dealing and life-giving.

The story of the creation of deer from the hairs of the primeval Deer is suggestive in this context. One may hazard a guess that if deer hair could, or did, produce deer, so human hair could produce humans. Unfortunately nothing is known of the Powhatan theories of procreation, so this remains merely a speculation.

The fact that the Powhatan man wore his hair long on the left implies that they viewed the left side of the body as feminine.[20] If we assume that the left side was indeed 'feminine' we can make sense of Smith's previously puzzling statement (quoted in full above, p. 403): 'The *Werowance* . . . answered . . . that the *Oke* or *Divell* did sucke the blood from their left breast . . ., who chanced to be his by lot, till they were dead' (Smith [1612] 1910: 78). Shamanic initiation was intended to produce beings who were entirely male as well as 'dead': only by removing 'feminine' blood, apparently, could this be accomplished. Such blood came from the left side of the body. Once it was removed the initiate became completely male; and, in the process, died. It may

be that *oke* was held to suck blood from all the initiates, but to drain some of them more thoroughly than others. Those most rigorously treated died physically as well as socially, whilst the rest became *quiyoughcosoughs*; this would suggest that *quiyoughcosoughs* themselves were more feminine than dead men. I think it more likely that the *werowance*'s comments were misunderstood by Smith, who (I would suppose) could not see how a man could be dead and a 'priest' at the same time. In any case realising that left was feminine for the Powhatan makes comprehensible their notion that *oke* took his own to himself by sucking blood from their left breasts.

This demonstration of the relationships among various aspects of Powhatan culture, relationships finding expression in the different hair styles, by no means exhausts our information about the Powhatan. An analysis of their kinship and marriage system would be feasible with the available information; likewise re-examination of their political organisation (the so-called Powhatan Confederacy) would be interesting and valuable.

If this demonstration is judged successful, it might be of interest to apply the same principles of analysis to the quasi-ethnographic accounts of other early Indian societies such as the Huron or the Natchez about whom much more extensive information survives.

NOTES

[1] When sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth century sources have been consulted in a later edition, the original date is in square brackets.

[2] See Driver (1961), Maps 1–45. In every map this area is left blank because there is insufficient information about the Indians to classify them.

[3] The writers that have chiefly influenced this article are Leach ('Magical hair', 1958), Hallpike ('Social hair', 1969), Hershman ('Hair, sex, and dirt', 1974), Derrett ('Religious hair', 1973), Firth ('Hair as private asset and public symbol', 1975), T. Turner ('Tchrikin: a Central Brazilian tribe and its symbolic language of bodily adornment', 1969), and Douglas (*Natural symbols*, 1970).

[4] The illustration in Beverley's book shows this style also. The engravings illustrating his text were copied from those of de Bry, who based his on the paintings made by John White during his stay at Roanoke Island in 1585 (Wright 1947: xxxv). See also Harriot ([1590] 1972), whose book was illustrated by de Bry's engravings. Four of these engravings are reproduced as illustrations of this article.

It is possible that Beverley based his description of a shaman on this drawing, but I doubt that since he indicates consistently that he actually saw what he describes. Spelman's account of hair is however contradictory: 'The preest[s] are shauen on ye right side of their head close to the scull only a litle locke leaft at ye eare and sum of thes haue beards ...' ([1610] 1910: cxiii). He makes no mention of the left side of the head, as he does with common men; this may mean that the shamans' heads were shaven all over and that he forgot to mention it, or that the left side was allowed to grow but was not very long. In any case Beverley's account, although later, is the more trustworthy.

[5] Harriot writes of these men: 'They [the chiefs] weare the haire of their heades long and bynde opp the ende of the same in a knot vnder thier eares. Yet they cutt the topp of their heades from the forehead to the nape of the necke in manner of a cokscombe....' Ordinary men wore their hair in the same manner. No man allowed a beard to grow unless he was of ripe years; even shamans seem to have been clean-shaven, though Harriot does not say so explicitly. The women had long hair, sometimes cut short over the forehead, but never with the 'cockscomb' (Harriot [1590] 1972: 46–54; plates III–XI).

Asymmetric haircuts for men are reported for the Cheyenne and the Huron also (Grinnell 1924: 61; Trigger 1969: 8); but in neither case is it prescribed, and there is no evidence as to which side of the head was uncut. To my knowledge the Powhatan are unique in having asymmetric haircuts for all secular men.

[6] There have been many studies of Virginia's Indians, from the time of their discovery to the present. Obviously they cannot all be listed here. My analysis is based largely on the original

writings of the colonists Smith ([1608] 1910; [1612] 1910; [1624] 1910), Spelman ([1610] 1910), Strachey ([1610] 1953), Whitaker (1613), and Beverley ([1705] 1947). Recent anthropological writers include Feest (1966; 1969), Kroeber (1939), Lowie (1967), Mook (1944), Mooney (1907), Speck (1924; 1928), Swanton (1935; 1946; 1952), and Wissler (1938). These writers are concerned almost entirely to place the Powhatan culture within some culture area, usually the Southeastern (cf. Swanton 1946: 654; Wissler 1938: 239; Lowie 1967: 78). None of them attempts, therefore, to determine the significance of Powhatan hair. The interested reader may like to know that the National Museum of Natural History (Smithsonian Institution) has a display representing John Smith trading with the Powhatan; the men are all correctly shown with short right-hand hair and long left-hand hair.

[7] I use this rather stilted way of referring to men and women because of the chance that the word 'men' may unconsciously be taken to mean 'people,' and cause confusion.

[8] Cf. Ortiz writing on the Tewa: '... the qualities of both sexes are believed present in men, while women are only women'; there are a number of contexts where this principle is expressed (Ortiz 1969: 36). I cite this example not to suggest any genetic connexion between Tewa and Powhatan but to show that the idea of men as male and female is by no means impossible.

[9] I describe the tuckahoe for the benefit of those unfortunates not familiar with Tidewater Virginia and Maryland, where this plant abounds. Smith observes, 'It groweth like a flagge in low muddy freshes.... Raw it is no better then [sic] poison ...' ([1612] 1910: 58). It is a water plant with a broad green leaf growing about six inches above the water, rather than floating on it like a water-lily. While it keeps clear of deep channels, it thrives in shallower water and is therefore a great nuisance to modern boatmen. Smith reports that the irritating qualities of the root were removed by thorough roasting, and then it could be used 'ordinarily for bread' ([1612] 1910: 58).

[10] The copper, which the Powhatan valued highly, unquestionably came from the south shore of Lake Superior, where it was available in pure form (Jennings 1968: 145). The Powhatan mentioned a tribe they called the Pocoughtronack, and described them as cannibals and enemies (Smith [1608] 1910: 20); Swanton (1952: 247) suggests that these may have been the Potowatomi. The Powhatan were of course familiar with the Iroquois (Smith [1612] 1910: 116–17; Spelman [1610] 1910: cxiv; Morgan 1954: 13). I think it possible that they also had dealings with the southern Huron, calling them Atquanahuck (comp. Attingueenongnahac, the southern-most Huron village; Trigger 1969: 16–17). The Atquanahuck were said to live on a 'river of Cannida' (Smith [1612] 1910: 71). The copper could have come from any of these peoples.

[11] This is similar to the relationship between chiefs and shamans among the Kwakiutl: 'Chiefs are not true shamans. [...] Throughout the year they are the official patrons of shamans, as though they were in charge of the shamanistic arts' (Goldman 1975: 47). Again, I imply no cultural diffusion, but cite the Kwakiutl because such a well-documented example lends support to my interpretation.

[12] Compare Lenape *ochre*, an 'imaginary spirit' (Brinton 1885: 28); Huron *oki*, referring to any spirit having greater control over human activities than humans themselves, or to 'human beings who possessed unusual powers or characteristics, such as shamans and witches, valiant warriors, unusually successful traders, or lunatics....' or to any kind of charm (Trigger 1969: 90). Also compare *quiyoughcosough* and the Carolina Algonkian *kesas*, *kewasosok*, 'idol, image' (Harriot [1590] 1972: 26). The Powhatan are not reported to have had any word resembling *manito*, used by many Algonkian-speakers to refer to spirits; e.g., the Lenape *patamaunos*, Musquackie *manito*, Ojibwa *manito*, Carolina Algonkian *mantoac*, etc. (Zeisberger 1887: 85; Owen 1904: 35; Landes 1968: 9–10; Harriot [1590] 1972: 25).

[13] Beverley ([1705] 1947: 206–9) mentions a ceremony called *huskanawing*, and equates it with that described by Smith for initiating *quiyoughcosoughs*. I think that Beverley is mistaken in his identification, though both are undoubtedly rites of passage; it is noteworthy that he noticed their resemblance. The *huskanaw* was 'an Institution or Discipline which all young men must pass, before they can be admitted to be of the number of the Great men, or Cockarouses, of the Nation; whereas by Captain *Smith's* Relation, they were only set apart to supply the Priesthood.' *Cockarouse* he defines as 'one that has the Honour to be of the King or Queens Council, with relation to the affairs of the Government....' (Beverley [1705] 1947: 226). The *huskanaw* was simply a ceremony for making adults of boys (cf. Wright 1947: xxvii); the outcome was very different from that of shamanic initiation, as I discuss below.

[14] The Rev. Alexander Whitaker was a Puritan clergyman at Jamestown. His small book about the Colony is full of startlingly generous and very useful information about the Powhatan, especially their religion. In a more general vein he says that 'they are a very vnderstanding generation' (1613: 25).

[15] De Bry's engravings of the Carolina towns of Pomeiooc and Secotan show the 'temples' very near to the other houses of the village. At Pomeiooc indeed the 'temple' is shown inside the palisade. Harriot remarks in both cases though that such buildings are separated from the others. De Bry may have been indulging in artistic licence; or the Carolinians may have defined 'separate' differently than did the Powhatan (Harriot [1590] 1972: 66, 68, Plates XIX, XX).

[16] It has been suggested by several writers that women are invariably anomalous (cf. Rosaldo 1974: 31–4; Strathern 1972). This scheme suggests that women need not be so regarded. It is possible that Powhatan women were considered anomalies in other ways, however; Spelman reports, for example, that marriage was patrilocal ([1610] 1910: cvii), implying that women formed part of two families and households while men formed part of only one. This change of residence may have been regarded as a mediating between households; and it may have served, consequently, as a basis for classifying women as anomalous in every regard. There is no means of telling whether the Powhatan made such an elaboration on this custom or not. At the theoretical level, it is possible that too much attention has been paid to the anomalous nature of women, and not enough to the possibility that men may be anomalous also.

This analysis also implies that for the Powhatan women are not 'natural' or 'wild' but 'cultural' and 'tamed'; for example note that in the winter women carried the tents to the woods and set up camp there, turning the wilderness into a 'village' (Smith [1612] 1910: 70; Spelman [1610] 1910: cvi–cvii). Men by virtue of their hunting and association with *oke* must be thought of as 'wild,' if not 'natural.' This is unusual (cf. Ortner 1974; Burridge 1969; Williamson in press), but not at all impossible. American men, for example, have long been considered far 'wilder' than American women, who are thought to be the 'civilising' sex. The theoretical position of the writers cited above was suggested by ethnographic evidence; the interpretation of the evidence was not guided by the theory. The Powhatan evidence would seem to imply that the relations female:male/nature:culture, although common, are not universal.

[17] It seems at first a little curious that the Powhatan would attribute their origins to so timid and inconspicuous an animal. The Hare, or the Rabbit, is noted for the number of its offspring, however (see Caplow & Williamson in press), and it may be that its fecundity made it a suitable Creator for the Powhatan.

[18] The Powhatan are reported to have worshipped the Sun also. One description reads:

> '... the Sunne (which they ... worship as their God) ... at the rising and the setting of the same, they sit downe lifting vp their handes and eyes to the Sunne, making a round circle on the ground with dried Tobacco; then they begin to pray, making many Deuilish gestures, with a hellish noise, foaming at the mouth, staring with their eyes, wagging their heads and hands in such a fashion and deformitie as it was monstrous to behold' (Percy [1625] 1910: lxxi).

Unfortunately the accounts of Powhatan religion are so mixed that one cannot integrate them satisfactorily.

[19] It is certainly possible that long head hair symbolised sexuality as well as creativity (cf. Hershman 1974; T. Turner 1969), but there is insufficient evidence in the literature of the Powhatan to justify making such an equation.

[20] Many societies consider the left hand feminine; cf. Hertz (1973: 14) and the volume of essays on laterality edited by Needham (1973a), especially those by Needham (1973b; 1973c) and Weischhoff (1973).

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