

ON THE SAMBAL AYTA CONCEPT OF BEAUTY¹

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O. PRELIMINARY REMARKS

The concept of beauty has been an enigmatic and engrossing one for man. Along with truth and goodness, it has been the subject of much rhetoric, the topic of many treatises, and the idea explored in countless artistic productions. Probably, the concept of beauty has become so complicated because we have forgotten whence we derive it — the modern situation furthering the complication by exploiting its loose use in various forms of commercial propaganda. But to the primitive mind, beauty may be something simple enough to explain, exemplify, and even argue about.

In eliciting words and phrases in Sambal Ayta which pertain to beauty, the patterns of contrast and clarification according to specific meanings show that lexically, at least, there is evidence that the concept of beauty is preponderantly centered on the human body, in its natural state as well as when modified through the few modes of ornamentation the Sambal Aytas still practice at the moment. From a conceptualization derived from the aesthetics of the human body, the more general denotation of beauty is extended to apply to the environment, or nature as it is, and to natural objects handcrafted, or nature as modified by human hands.

The polar terms *matampáq* 'beautiful' and *narawák* 'ugly' function as the guiding terms in the elicitation and analysis of the Sambal Ayta terms pertaining to beauty. It is worth noticing, though, that the Sambal Aytas have specific terms for what is neither beautiful nor ugly: *kapurít*, whether by denotation or connotation, is neither positive nor negative in the aesthetic sense, and is probably used when the speaker is not quite sure or does not care how to evaluate the object of his attention; *bəngát* and *búnak* are synonyms in this regard, although they are so used by extension of their original meanings — *bəngát* primarily functioning as an adverb meaning 'only' (Tag. *lamang*) as in *hábayti bəngát ya labáy ku* (Eng. 'this is the only thing I like'; Tag. *ito lamang ang gusto ko*), and *búnak* literally referring to the midpoint, the median or average, hence by extension meaning ordinary. These neutral terms are not an isolated case in Sambal Ayta. In the lexical area of society, specifically of social relationships, there also exist terms which are neutral between the polars of friend and foe. It is certainly premature to conclude anything from the common use of neutral terms, but it is tempting to think that their not-so-discriminating outlook, their limited experiences, or their avoidance of conflict with their fellow men for fear of retribution occasion the use of such terms.

Another idea worth noting by way of introduction is that all the terms pertaining to the beautiful and ugly are based on a contrast with the 'neutral' inasmuch as the latter may be readily referred to. Thus, the intensity of a term is interpreted as the degree of contrast it denotes. In fact, two terms elicited that were associated by the informant with beauty, upon closer analysis, turned out to be mere labels for contrast. Thus, *mandalawórəw* which literally means sparkling, also connotes famous and outstanding, and *arakərə* denotes overwhelming, or impressive; both are often used to denote the very beautiful.

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A third idea is the impression that the human being tends to perceive deviation from the norm, particularly the negative ones, more discriminatingly. If vocabulary is to be taken as an indicator of discrimination because words dichotomize into fragments and more specific aspects, then we may note that between the lexical area of beauty and that of ugliness, it is the latter which contains more terms, and necessarily, these terms are more specific. For example, while a good set of teeth is describable only by using a phrase, particular terms exist for a host of dental imperfections – *nabihbñh*, *pináka*, *nilápat*, *napánat*, and *angháp* (meanings discussed below).

Again, this correlates with other lexical areas. In the area of feelings, for instance, there are more terms for negative emotions, such as 'hate' terms, than for positive emotions, such as 'love' terms. The same situation holds for Tagalog and English, and the impression of my foreign language informants and teachers is that it is also true for the French, German, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, Dutch, and Chinese. Perhaps this indicates that we take the norms for granted – well-formedness, health, equilibrium, positive emotion, etc. – while we become sharply aware of any aberrations, in effect intensifying our feeling for the norm by negative definition and motivation.

Therefore, an analysis of the Sambal Ayta concept of beauty would appear to be overwhelmed by terms referring to the ugly, whether denoting nature or handicrafts. But such is an inevitable case, given the nature of the data, and given the fact that the native informants themselves can not readily conceptualize and abstract the sense of beauty from their own lexicon.

1. BEAUTY IN NATURE

The unadorned human body is probably the basic reference of all beauty terms, and thus functions to define the basic concept of beauty. This is shown by the fact that the majority of terms within the lexical area of beauty refer specifically to the human body, and those that do not, aside from being the minority, are also vague and difficult to define, indicating that the language (hence the culture) has not yet developed a sense of aesthetics in the abstract.

At any rate, the terms for the human body may be further classified into those that pertain to a judgment of physique, and those that pertain to a judgment of aroused attitude in the beholder, especially when behavior is taken into account. Those that take the physical norm are further classifiable according to whether they refer to health as a norm, or to a certain sense of well-formedness.

As far as health is concerned, it seems as if a foremost consideration is cleanliness, even though the laving habits of the Sambal Ayta are at best irregular. Still, one had to avoid becoming *mayángat* 'filthy' lest one becomes *ampakalimbúqay*, or utterly disgusting because of one's dirt.

Body volume is another consideration. The relative scarcity of food in the mountains (not because of nature per se, but because of the Ayta's lack of motivation to gather and produce more food) makes most of them lean, and yet some manage to get fatter, especially those who have lowland connections or jobs. They are categorized into merely fat, *pakalipaptús* 'being pot-bellied', *butyúg* (literally meaning 'full of food', cf. Tag. *busog*), to the worst category, being obese, for which the name of a black bloated fish is used, *burárug*. Those that do not have much body volume are either *naqəbə'ng* 'merely thin', *kutapíl* 'emaciated, especially after a bout with some sickness' or *tunggúlang* 'skeletal'. There are not many of these though, whether the fat, or thin, possibly because they actually have just enough to eat, and gather or produce only what is necessary. Feasts certainly are occasions for overeating, but these come only twice or thrice a year, after harvest, or when one villager has cause to celebrate, or a major offense to confess and atone for by offering a feast to the other villagers together with the performance of the ritual of confession.

Another aspect of health is strength, and the weak, hence ugly, range from those who are *manwálg* 'with weak balance, or whose legs are not strong enough', to those who are *agkagulápay* or *áhəq kagulápay* 'who are extremely weak they could hardly move'. The general term for weak is *makápay*, but it may also be used in other contexts where weakness operates as a discriminating category, such as in 'weak character' or 'weak in comprehension'. (By implication, *makápay* also means 'slow', although this is no longer relevant to health as an aspect of physical beauty.)

The general appearance of health is also considered. Paleness of skin is one indicator of not being healthy-looking, and because of the Ayta's dark pigmentation, it is curious that he relates paleness to terms which mean being whitish, *naqubúg*, or yellowish, *mahalyáw*, whereas the Tagalog term, *maputla*, denotes a lessened intensity of one's original skin tone. Also, being unkempt or haggard is a negative trait, and the term for it, *nakulimáq*, literally means 'bewitched or accursed'. Furthermore, the skin might look like it is drying up, *angkumdád* or *kinumdád*, or like it is already dried up, *manyangihngih*. Certainly, these are metaphorical transfers of withering, and the transfer may even be carried to one's literally 'looking dead', *lúpan natyí*.

Therefore, requisites for the kind of healthy appearance that may be considered beautiful are cleanliness, ample body volume, strength (not necessarily extraordinary), well-toned skin, neatness, and an appearance of vitality.

Given these, however, one still has to conform to the notion of well-formedness of the human body. This naturally leads to a discussion of deformities, again defining beauty by its negative. This is where discrimination to the smallest detail becomes possible on account of around fifty terms, and this list may not even be exhaustive. My informants noted deformities of the body, feet, legs, arms, head, forehead, ears, face, chin, eyes, lips, teeth, and skin, and probably other natives may remember still a few more.

Opposed to the image of the body beautiful is the *nayakyák*, short and squat. Even among a people with an average height of less than five feet, to be shorter than the average is still a negative deviation from the norm, and indeed everyone admires the *matagqáy*, or 'tall' person. In fact, *matagqáy* is also metaphorically used to refer to high learning, elevated character, (i.e., noble), and even high social status — all positive aspirations. On the other hand, *nayakyák* is limited in reference to the human body, since the more general term for 'low' is *maqaypáq*.

The body posture should be straight and upright, and the importance of this characteristic may be gauged from five terms opposed to it. *Kəlwád* refers to the bent body, whether congenital or accidental, but which is physically permanent, as distinguished from *natakuqkáq*, which refers only to a hunched posture. *Bukút* and *matikáq* both refer to the hunched back, but the latter carries the connotation that such a condition is not congenital. As one grows old, the body also tends to succumb to its own weight, and one becomes *mangkurúq*, body bent because of age.

The extremities must also be straight and in good order. The beautiful body can not be *natugpiúq* 'broken leg' nor *bulqú* 'both legs paralyzed'. The feet should point straight forward when standing or walking, and not pointing outwards, *sapád*, nor pointing inwards, *pabəyəbhəy*. The bow-legged and the knock-kneed are also categorized, and quite descriptively. Bow-leggedness is referred to as *maláwang nga pihangqan*, literally meaning 'wide between the knees'. On the other hand, knock-knees are referred to as *baladbád*, which literally denotes the slopes of a mountain. Furthermore, they distinguish between the *baladbád ya bitaq*, knees knocking when walking though the legs may be straight when standing up, and the *baladbád ya kúrang*, knees knocking and making one's feet point inwards. A common deformity of the arm is being *nabúq a híku*, literally 'a dislocated elbow', and may mean in general 'bent arm'. If the hand and fingers are not straight and permanently form a claw-hand or fist, such is called *kətang*.

The head must also not bend to the side, or it will be labeled *tinglíq*. The ideal shape of the head is round or oval, and the Sambal Ayta's short, kinky hair makes any

deformity of the head quite obvious. Such are: *dampig*, 'head flattened on top'; *úlung tawá*, literally 'head of a ladybug' and meaning 'head flattened at the back'; *namuhgug* 'head pointed at the back'; *natandipi*, literally 'a flat fish' and meaning 'head flattened at the sides'; and *lúpan ikán*, literally 'face of a fish', and meaning 'head pointed in front, i.e. face pointing forward'. Related to the last is *tikwáq* 'with the chin long and protruding or askew'. Also closely related to these deformities of the head is the crowding together of facial features referred to as *nilúpan ugík*, literally 'face of a frog'.

The forehead must not be low, or one is *namúruq*. In fact, *yanyárgan* 'having a high forehead' is an ideal, and is the objective of one mode of beautification – a painful one – to be discussed later. The ears must not be closed, *kúpit*, neither too small, *túlin bákiq* (literally 'ears of a rat'), nor protruding at the sides, *tulin tuwáng* (literally 'ears of a giant').

The eyes must have good vision, not *buwág* 'blind, whether in one or both eyes'. Curiously, there is no equivalent for the more specific Tagalog term *pisak*, referring to the missing eyeball. *banlág* means 'cross-eyed', and is probably a borrowed term. *Kurápáy* refers to one eye being smaller than the other, whether one is half-closed, or is unusually more fully open than the other. And even if the eyes are straight, even, and functional, they should not look tired or *naláqaw*.

The lips may allow for much variation in size and shape, but must not be *bungít* 'hare-lip', or more descriptively, *binábáy káging*, literally 'lips of the fruit bat'. And as mentioned earlier, there are five terms descriptive of dental imperfection: *angháp*, referring to protruding upper teeth (which one informant humorously described as 'apparently smiling, but actually it's only the teeth naturally showing'); *napánat*, referring to missing teeth in general; *nabihbih*, literally meaning 'chopped off', and *pináka*, literally meaning 'split off', both referring more descriptively to missing teeth; and *nikápat*, referring to teeth missing at intervals (which term, incidentally, may also refer to a broken fence).

The ideal for skin is a smooth, refined quality, as in the phrase *naqəmáq a kátat* 'fine skin'. Thus one avoids having skin which is *nahaláq* 'rough' or wrinkled, referred to by the term *manlúmun* and *malumbúnga*, which originally refer to the soft, wrinkled skin of fruits but by transference are used also for the human skin. Also, one is fortunate if he or she does not have any *tarúngan* 'birthmark', or what in English is ironically referred to as a 'beauty spot' or *butáy* 'mole or wart'. Good skin care should also prevent the formation of any *piyat* 'scar' or any skin disorder that would result in the skin being *nakabád* 'pockmarked'.

The above discussion so far has brought out health and well-formedness as aspects of physical beauty. In response to them, the beholder may simply take note of the body's conformity to an ideal and by extension also any object's conformity to the ideal well-formedness. Or else, the beholder may claim to feel some psychosomatic effect on him caused by his intense attraction to the perceived object of beauty – be it the human body or something else.

As regards static, distant admiration, one may refer to the perceived object as *matampáq* 'pleasant-looking', though this also means 'beautiful' in general or as *nagámáq* 'refined'. The other related terms refer to the behavior of the person perceived, the beholder consequently mixing in ethical evaluation with the aesthetic. Thus, one may be referred to as *maháwang*, connoting clean and pure thoughts and a very moral character; as *apháw*, connoting swift and graceful movements, having a lithe body, and being industrious; or as *mapalindámay*, connoting cleanliness, nobility, and having a bright future and a fulfilled life.

When the attraction becomes intense, one may feel as if the image of the object or person has remained permanently in one's vision, constantly beckoning. The object then is *ampakapigtáq*, or literally 'magnetic'. One may also feel as if he has lost his sense of direction or his perspective after beholding the object of beauty, in which case he may rightfully call it *ampakandbuq*. If he calls it *ampakapaqalipahá*, then he feels as if he has always to restrain an impulse to move nearer the object and touch it, and when it is

ampakaməgməg, then even the throbbing of the heart is affected.

Strong though these terms may appear, the terms referring to repulsion because of ugliness are equally, if not, more, intense. From mere *narawák* 'ugly' to *bápan dawák* 'extremely ugly', the psychological effect on the beholder ranges from merely noting the object or person as unbecoming, to actually feeling pity, fear, and even hate for the object or person perceived.

Apparently, there are only two categories which fall under the category of 'unbecoming'. These are clumsiness and indecency in action. Clumsiness may be referred to by the term *mahágul* and *magburagburág*, the latter denoting mere awkwardness. Indecency ranges from being *magərəw* 'flirtatious', as when one is *pasaringsáring* 'wiggling the hips while walking', to being *mapátuy* 'downright obscene'. In between we have the terms *gabáw*, *hamúd*, and *nakədháng*, the last already referring to the crude and vulgar.

The ugly may also be regarded as pitiful or fearful. To express pity, Sambal Ayta has *maqaypáq*, meaning 'low, poor or ordinary', and *kaqingálu* or *kapaqingálu*, literally meaning 'pitiful'. The grotesquely ugly may actually arouse a little fear, from *kapakərə* 'causing one to shiver in fright', through *kapaqalikəyəd* 'causing one to have goose pimples', to *ampakapalímu* 'causing one to feel quite terrified'. Inevitably, the creatures of their lower mythology are ugly, as they are used to instill fear among children and thereby discipline their behavior.

Their hyperbolic reaction to ugliness also makes them use words denoting hate. The ugly, or 'hateful', may simply be *ampakalimbúqay* 'disgusting', especially because of someone's filth, or someone may already be nauseating, as indicated by the terms *ampakapəbhú*, *ampakadəqál*, and *ampakahúka*. The latter two already denote actual vomiting, though used in the context of ugliness may already be quite exaggerated. Or else, the ugly may be 'annoying' – *ampakapaqamút* – or 'irritating' – *ampakasúra*. Of greater degree of intensity would be using the terms *ampakapahalimuqút* 'vexatious', *ampakapahulúk* 'frustrating', and *ampakapənaháng* 'actually causing anger'.

The exaggerated affective reaction to ugliness exemplified by the above terms is in direct contrast to the psychophysiological attraction to beauty discussed earlier. As the majority of the words which fall under the concept of beauty in terms of behavioral norms are borrowed from other lexical areas, their hyperbolic nature is perfectly understandable. What does come out clearly is the Sambal Ayta's apparent readiness to use terms that indicate attraction to beauty, and repulsion to ugliness. The Sambal Aytas also tend to refer to the *Ambaláq* or Negritos of Bataan province as repulsive in appearance and generally physically ugly.

2. BEAUTY IN ORNAMENTATION

Not content with natural well-formedness, the Sambal Ayta, as all people in different times and cultures, also uses some methods of beautification, inevitably difficult, painstaking, and even painful.

For their kinky hair, the Sambal Aytas can choose from among at least four different kinds of hairdressing. *Pəhaw* is a ginger-like flower which they crush in their palms for its oil and essence, and when applied to the hair makes it seem thicker and more manageable for styling. They also use the fat of the python, *tabáq biklát*. From the coconut fruit with *buwáq*, i.e. which is beginning to grow, they get the oil called *larúq*. When cooked, the *larúq* becomes the *lána rín úngut*, also used as hairdressing.

Though the majority of the villagers I have noted do not groom themselves much, and usually let their hair stand on end with casual regard to its cleanliness, those who do groom their hair have at least three popular styles. They may keep their hair flat on top, but let it spread sideways (*apág*). They may let their hair grow long, then braid it as parted down the middle (*hinayápal*) or else form it into a bun on top of the head (*alipútung*). It is interesting to note that the Sambal Aytas' native comb is quite different

from our ordinary comb, owing to their kind of hair. Instead of a long row of teeth, they have a few long teeth which function only for teasing out the hair (the strands being generally entangled) and not for combing out the strands.

Some still subject themselves to *hibít*, tattooing or scarification by burning or lacerating the skin. This is already rare at present; however, published pictures taken by American soldiers shortly after 1900 show most parallel lines, curves, and a few geometric designs for *hibít*. Some Sambal Aytas also have their teeth sharpened to a point by chipping off the enamel with a machete placed against the tooth and struck by a piece of wood. While such process is going on, a piece of sugar cane (*panguhán*) or a kind of cane weed is heated, and the newly sharpened teeth — all front ones — are bitten into it, as if for tempering. The process gives the Sambal Ayta a set of sharpened teeth (*táyad*) which he says enables him to bite better, and which may even be used in fighting an enemy, as it is thus possible to bite deeply into his flesh, especially the neck. But the process is painful, and by tradition, only the brave and intelligent aspire to become handsome in that way.

Even more painful is *yangyáng*, the process whereby one acquires a high forehead. The forelock, from the hairline to round the top of the head, is shaved off with a *tulipá* 'machete', or pulled out in bunches, with big, lateral tweezers made of bamboo, or worse, burned out with burning flax (actually palm fibers) or cotton. The hair not to be burned is covered by sections of a banana stalk. Burning makes the *yangyáng* permanent; thus those who submit to shaving or plucking may also have the exposed skin burned, to destroy the hair roots permanently.

To adorn themselves, the Sambal Aytas sometimes put on a comb decorated with the feathers of the *labúyu* 'wild cock'. They also have necklaces (*kulintáq*) made of seeds of the *gúguq*, *kalatíwaq*, or *kalambúgaw* strung together with *dangay*, an abaca-like fiber. They also use the vertebrae of snakes for necklaces. A further elaboration on the basic necklace is the addition of a *pagamúy* — the skeletal head of a monkey or of a bird, especially the *taliktík* 'hornbill' or *gahálaw* 'kalaw, another kind of local bird'. They note, however, that these are for beauty as well as for striking fear in the beholder. These also function as protection against curses. A special necklace is the *únuq* which has gold pieces and other valuable stones. This is an heirloom piece, and aside from being used as an ornament, is also used for curing. The necklace is usually long, extending beyond the navel.

As far as clothes are concerned, the women wear basically a wrap-around skirt called *inagwá*, while men wear the G-string called *lubáy*. The preferred color for cloth is anything dark, like grey or black, because dirt does not easily show on it according to my informants. They get their cloth from the lowlands because they do not practise the craft of weaving. It is reported that the Sambal Aytas used to make bark cloth, but my informants do not know how; no specimen could be found, and even accounts by early researchers have not associated the Sambal Ayta with any means of cloth production.

A special kind of *lubáy* is the *lummagáy*, which has an additional sash around the waist, of red, white and blue. The *lubáy* may be worn with a longer tail in front (*iyúma*) or behind (*íkay*). The literal reference to such as a 'tail' has probably given rise to the folk belief among the lowland Sambals that there are Aytas with tails still existing in the mountains. Of course, those who have settled close to the lowlands have begun to wear western clothes, even jackets for men, most of which came from relief goods brought in by American servicemen and charity workers from the Subic Naval Base.

The need to decorate the human body suggests that plainness, no matter how attractive, will not suffice for full beauty, even if such decoration is painful. The fact remains that beauty is a value and is culturally defined, then, as part of the Sambal Ayta's Weltanschauung. Thus, it controls and gives reason to his behavior, even if, as in the case of elaborate ornamentation, the process of beautification does not add any practical value to the object.

This can be seen from the way the Sambal Aytas have decorated their implements

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for food gathering. Their water container, *bayangyáng*, has remained simple in design. It is only a piece of bamboo with the internodes punched out, with a strap of vine for slinging on the shoulder. Their gourd hat, *takukúq*, has also remained unadorned. However, their baskets and arrows have become extensively elaborated.

Different patterns of weaving are manifested in the Sambal Aytas' basket-work. The Sambal Ayta deliberately uses different designs in his baskets to prevent a monotony of design, which is discerned as ugly, although all of these baskets are sturdy. The more common patterns are *matamatá*, which leaves circular spaces between the rattan slats, and *ginayáman*, literally meaning 'patterned after the centipede', because of the V-shaped design akin to centipede tracks. The Sambal Aytas make at least three common types of baskets: the *lubún*, a basket with a long strap, carried by the head — the strap on the forehead and the basket at the back — and generally used for food gathering; the *kampípiq*, which is like an attache case and used for carrying implements, clothes, and other things when travelling; and the *hápaq*, a small, wallet-like basket for carrying a fire-making tool (*pantíng*).

Even the way things are tied together also becomes elaborated. The *sinawáliq* is what is regarded as the ordinary way of tying with rattan, as when the spoon of a ladle is tied to its handle. *Inbáibál* refers to the thread wound tightly around the connection, and *gamít* combines thread and rattan with a more complicated patterns, used only for spear and arrow head connections.

The bow (*báyiq*) is not decorated and is merely kept to its minimal parts — the wood coming from the *takípan*, *bayúg* 'young bamboo' or *andhaw*, and the string or *dáa* coming from the roots of the balet tree or from a water vine. The shaft or *ulungán* of the arrow also remains unadorned, and even the feathers or *púwal* are not elaborate, for probably here elaboration would hinder the more important function of stabilizing and directing the flight of the arrow. It should be noted that all of the ornamentation is kept within the limits of the functional, and as such, ornamentation has not developed any form of artistic creation that is solely for beauty's sake. This is probably due to the Sambal Ayta's not having transcended the concept of life as basically a struggle for survival, and thus his not conceiving of the possibility and desirability of human activity that is not necessarily functional.

Still, even the functional can be beautiful, as evidenced by the development of different kinds of arrowheads for specific purposes. The *túliqu* is diamond-shaped, the *pahúiq* is more elongated, and the *binulungbúmuq* even more elongated. These three are in general used for hunting any kind of game. Specifically for birds, however, is the *páháq*, a pointed four-sided shaft with serrated edges. Intended for wild pigs, monkeys or deer is the *hawál*, a pointed shaft with short intermittent branches; the entire arrow is usually tied to the bow with a long, light but strong string, so that even if the animal just struck still runs, all the Ayta hunter has to do is let the bow get entangled with the undergrowth and prevent the animal's escape. The *balangát* is the most elaborate looking — fine branches forming a diamond shape, themselves having tiny branches, appearing like a miniature tree. This arrowhead is intended for smaller game, such as small birds and fish, especially used with the *bakabák*, or smaller bow and arrow set (the bow being about a yard in length, as against the arm-span length of the ordinary bow). But the most elegant design is that of the *dumpíl* or *biníling*, which is shaped like a thinner version of the fleur-de-lis, and which is appropriately used only for ceremonies, gift-giving, or for revenge.

The only graphic art the Sambal Aytas have developed is engraving on wood called *bátak*, and even this is used only for decorating their utensils and other implements. This is limited to geometric designs, commonly *gíslit*, or parallel straight grooves, and diamond-shaped patterns. The engraving is rubbed with charcoal mixed with the fat of a wild pig or snake in order for the design to stand out against the light background. Curiously, the Sambal Aytas have not developed a taste for the representation of natural objects,

particularly the human body. Thus, though they have some designs that are imitative of nature, the geometric designs are more common.

When asked about what makes a beautiful landscape or scenery, my informants seem to be rather vague about this and uncertain as to what I meant. One informant offered the impression that his people usually think of nature in terms of its life-supporting capabilities. By this reasoning, a beautiful mountain would to them be more meaningful as a mountain abundant with food and materials for shelter and other necessities.

The analysis of the terms in the lexical area of beauty in fact leads to the interpretation that as these terms mostly deal with the human body, then it is from the human body that the Sambal Aytas base their concept of beauty, necessarily involving the sense of regularity, balance, and symmetry in the more general notion of well-formedness. On this is built the sense of elaboration and contrast against the average as added requisites for beauty. Such elaboration, however, is kept within the limits of practicality. In effect, this makes function or utility provide the extra-aesthetic rationale as well as limitation for elaboration. Even the apparently useless ideal of sharpened teeth is rationalized as being actually functional.

Beauty, then, to the Sambal Ayta, is basically well-formedness (vs. deformity) as it induces a positive behavioral response – attraction (vs. repulsion). The object thus evaluated is never perceived disinterestedly. Because of this, the Sambal Ayta has not developed any aesthetic distance from any object perceived, for the act of perception immediately involves the questions ‘Does it attract me?’ and ‘Is it useful to me?’ Neither has the Sambal Ayta developed a view of art for art’s sake, and probably never will develop it for as long as the psychophysiological response and the object’s utilitarian value, are still considered important criteria for beauty.

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