

it is possible to ascertain them, or at least to suggest them, on the basis of a purely linguistic criterion. The age of the word *spinster* is further assured by the relative rarity of the agentive suffix *-ster* (compare *huckster*, *songster*, and stereotyped proper names like *Baxter*, i.e., baker, and *Webster*, i.e., weaver); this argument makes use of another linguistic criterion, of which more presently.

The application of the principle of specialization or other modification of meaning may yield interesting results as to the relative ages of two or more components of a ritual, say the Sun Dance of the Plains or the Night Chant of the Navaho. Names of rituals, dances, and other ceremonial activities are not always of clear application to the ceremonies as at present performed or understood; their analysis may not infrequently be expected to show either that one of the constituent elements, not necessarily the most prominent now, arose prior to certain others that perhaps at present give the ceremony most of its content or that a certain culture concept implied in the name is older than the ceremony as such. Thus, among the Nootka, the term *lutcha* "buying a woman" is applied to a complex of ceremonial and economic procedure which corresponds to our own marriage ceremony. Properly speaking, the term should apply only to the distribution of property on the part of the bridegroom and his supporters to the bride's family as payment for her acquisition. As a matter of fact, however, it includes all the songs, dances, and speeches that precede the "wife-purchasing" potlatch and much of which has no necessary reference to the "purchase." Thus, there is a whole class of songs known as *lutcha'yak* "for woman-purchase," whose connexion with marriage is merely conventional. Yet it is just the ceremonial procedure preceding the potlatch that is chiefly meant by the Indian when he speaks of *lutcha*. Furthermore, the fact that the bride's family immediately distributes the gifts to their own villagers and, still more important, that they may in the near future return the gifts with a dowry of privileges and a potlatch distribution of as great value as or even greater value than the property received as "wife-purchase" frequently reduces the "buying of woman" as a type of marriage to little