

*A Girl's Puberty Ceremony among the Nootka Indians.\**

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Puberty ceremonies, both for boys and girls, are widespread and characteristic features of the life of primitive peoples. Among the Nootka Indians of the west coast of Vancouver Island, as among so many Indian tribes of western America, it is the arriving at maturity of girls rather than of boys that is signalized by a definite ceremony and by the observance, on the part of the girl, of various chiefly restrictive measures or taboos. The point of time that determines the maturity of a girl is naturally considered to be the first appearance of menses. Soon after this, generally about two months later, the father or guardian of the girl gives a feast or potlatch, the essential part of which is a religious ceremony, but which is also meant to give the girl a new status in the tribe, that of one entering upon womanhood. This first ceremony is termed *'aitst'ōlā*,† which may be translated as "menstrual potlatch," from *'aitsciL* "to have a menstrual flow." Though the Nootka Indians, particularly those about Alberni, B.C., are in many respects losing hold upon the traditions of their past, they still cling tenaciously to the observance of girls' puberty ceremonies, although the rigor of the taboos formerly enforced for a length of time upon the matured girl seems to have been allowed to fall away. During a stay of about two and a half months in the fall and early winter of 1910 among the two

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†Somewhat simplified phonetic orthography is here used. *a, e, i, o, u* have typical continental (Italian) values; *e* and *o* are close, *u* open, *i* close or open; *ā* as in *father*; *ī, ō, ū* are long and close; *ē, ē, ō, ū* are long and open. <sup>4</sup> as final vowel (after *m* or *n*) is weakly articulated open *i*; <sup>u</sup> represents *u*-timbre of breath release following preceding consonant. Some consonants may need explanation. *c* as in English *she*; *t* as in *church*; *q* voiceless velar stop, i.e. *k* pronounced as far back as possible; *ʃ*, voiceless spirant of *k*-position; *ʈ*, voiceless spirantal *t*, somewhat like Welsh *ll*; *l*, affricative, of *l*-position, generally heard as *tl* or *kl*; <sup>ʔ</sup> represents glottal stop or "catch." † following consonants indicates that they are glottalized, i.e., pronounced with simultaneous glottal closure but with glottal release subsequent to their own release (their acoustic effect is of cracked or broken stops). *h* and <sup>ʔ</sup> are difficult consonants that are peculiar to Nootka; they differ respectively from *h* and <sup>ʔ</sup> in sounding rougher and more strangulated. Breath releases and stress accents are not indicated here.