

age in certain definite lines of descent and was formerly jealously guarded; in other words, it forms what the Nootka Indians call a *topāti*. The "torches" should be distributed in order, according to the rank of the persons receiving them. Among the Nootka Indians of Alberni it is customary for the holder of a "torch" *topāti* to return the value of the gift with 100 per cent. interest to the donor at a second and more elaborate potlatch given by the latter for the girl some time after the puberty ceremony. This is in accord with the general practice of the West Coast Indians to return potlatch gifts, generally with 100 per cent. interest, at some future time. It is anomalous, however, insofar as it nullifies, from a purely economic point of view, the value of the inherited privilege or *topāti*. There are several other such ceremonial privileges among these Indians that bring with them not emolument, but net loss. However, the Indians say that they are proud in this way to make public their claim on the *topāti* and that they count the trifling loss of no moment in comparison with the upholding in this way of their prestige. The paying back of gifts obtained by virtue of one's right to a *topāti* is quite likely, however, to turn out to be a comparatively recent development among the Nootka of Alberni, for other Nootka tribes, such as the Ucluelet of Barkley Sound, do not practice the custom. These last, as I was informed, laugh at the Alberni Indians on this account; they do not see the use of having a privilege that nets one a loss.

When the "torches" had been distributed, the girl's uncle and others of the family got together in a small group near the door of the house, ready to arrange a performance that was intended to be a feature of the puberty potlatch. Among them was the young chief Louis of the *Hō'ai'atn* tribe of Numakamis Bay, who was related to the family of the girl and who had recently come up to Alberni on a visit; he placed himself on a low improvised platform on the left side of the house above the rest of the group and, like the others, stood facing the guests in the rear of the house. Mrs. Frank and another woman, who formed part of the group, each sang a *ts!tga* song, thus giving all to understand that a *topāti* performance of the hosts was to take place immediately. Then the girl's uncle started a song without drum accompaniment, which was very soon taken up by the others in the group, one of them now beating an accompaniment on the hand drum. This song was the property of the girl's father's family and none outside of the small group joined in the singing. Often a family song of this type, sung at a girl's puberty ceremony, was composed for that special purpose and kept secret until it was sprung as a surprise on the guests at the ceremony itself. A few women danced to the song; they held one arm under their shawls, while the other was bent outward