

THE NASKUK, OR MAKER OF THE FEAST.

The maker of the feast is known as the *nāskuk*, or head. With this feast in view, he saves for years, as he has to feed the entire tribe of visitors during the first day of the festival. But although he often begs himself, he gains great fame among the Eskimo, and lays all his guests under lasting obligation to him. In this respect the "Inviting-In" Feast resembles the potlatch of the Alaskan Indian; and is often confused with the same by the white population.

The *nāskuk*, having announced his intention to the villagers assembled in the *kázgi*, a messenger is chosen—usually at the nomination of the *nāskuk*—to carry the invitation to the visitors. There is considerable rivalry for this position among the young men, as the messenger is newly clothed from head to foot. In a new squirrel-skin parka, plentifully trimmed with wolverine, reindeer boots, and sealskin leggings, he presents a brave appearance.

In his hand he bears the *aiyáguk*, or asking-stick¹ (Fig. 3). This is a long slender wand with three globes, made from strips of wood hanging from the end. When the messenger delivers the invitation, he swings the globes to and fro in front of the person addressed. The asking-stick as the symbol of the wishes of the tribe, is treated with scrupulous respect by the Eskimo; and it would be a lasting disgrace for anyone to disregard it. During the ceremonies it is hung up over the *kázgi* entrance. The messenger receives the asking-stick from the hands of the *nāskuk*, together with an intimation of what presents would be acceptable to his tribe. As most Eskimo festivals result in more or less trading, it is usually some skins or other article of which the tribe is in need. In this case it was a request for *úgrūk* (bearded seal) skins, which are general in use for *múkluk* (boot) soles.

Having arrived at the visiting tribe, he enters the *kázgi* on hands and knees, and presents the asking-stick to the village headman, with the message from his tribe. If the answer is favourable he is raised to his feet, and after he has learned the

¹The asking-stick is also used in a local festival of the same name. See Nelson, *The Eskimo About Bering Strait*, p. 359, 18th Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology.

wishes of his visitors, is feasted to his heart's content, and sent home loaded with presents.

In the meantime, the home tribe gathers nightly in the *kázgi*, awaiting his return. When it is rumored that he is near,

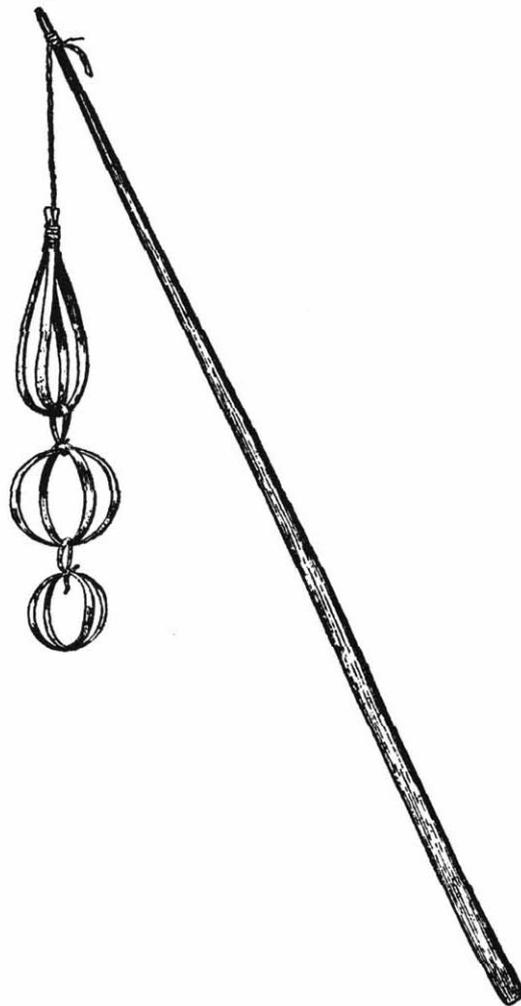


Fig. 3. The Asking-Stick (*aiúáguuk*).

the vigil continues day and night. On his arrival, he crawls into the *kázgi* and presents the asking-stick to the *nāskuk*, with

the answer. If the answer is favourable, preparations begin immediately, and the village is scoured for the necessary gifts. It is a point of honour between the tribes to exceed the requests as much as possible. The visiting tribe also has the privilege of demanding any delicacy of the *nāskuk* during the first day's feast which fancy may suggest. This usually takes the form of meat out of season, or Eskimo "ice-cream"—a concoction of reindeer tallow, blueberries, and chunks of whitefish kneaded in the snow until it is frozen. Sometimes the *nāskuk* is hard put to it, but he must produce the necessary articles, or be disgraced forever.

THE DANCE SONGS.

When the feast has been decided upon, the people gather

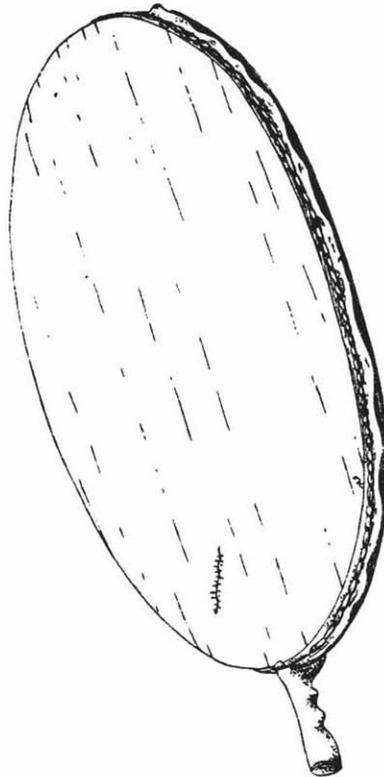


Fig. 4. Eskimo drum (*chūuyak*).