

Allhallows Eve Tale Of The Bow

Marcin Malek
22/10/2021

It all started a long, long time ago in a galaxy far, far away... Or maybe not! Let's start from the beginning! That is, in Sibudu Cave of South African province KwaZulu Natal, where according to archaeologists at the University of Johannesburg, about 64,000 years ago, someone carelessly lost a bone arrowhead, very similar to ones used by Bushmen to hunt small mammals and birds.

It is as much curious to know as it indicates the journey we, as people in general, have embarked upon.

Don't worry, I'm not going to bore you with the history of the bow as an invention, nor to duplicate the widely available information as to what kinds of bows were used or how deadly they were in different historical periods. Here a quaint giggle of fate comes to the fore. Well, admit it yourself: it turns out that someone's seemingly negligent carelessness after a mere 64,000 years eventually benefited mankind. So do not worry that you have lost something, maybe in a few dozen thousand years your loss will prove to be a breakthrough point as far as the history of the human family is concerned. Or maybe not... Then woe betide you, so better preserve your recklessness for yourselves, while keeping silent about your loss, at least no one will speak of you today!

Seriously though, the advent of the bow was a huge revolution and in my opinion much more impactful than either the industrial age or the currently accelerating quantum-matter dawn. Not only did it increase the chances of our forefathers to hunt a meal, but it served as a multipurpose tool. Starting with a portable weaving workshop, as it could be used to braid the threads that would later become clothing, or it might have been used to start fires, sometimes as a kind of a cutting tool, or a drill. And who knows how many more purposes it had? So the bow is life, in the truest meaning of the word. Just like the cell phone for our children today. Admittedly, the phone won't bring food to your table - or maybe it will? Many teenagers would probably disagree with me. I won't argue when it comes to slaying the enemy with one or the other, although it seems that in this field the smartphone is a much more effective tool of destruction. Yet one thing is certain: without the bow, we would not have reached the point where someone inventive came up with the smartphone, and people as a species would probably vanish from the mother earth's surface. Or maybe not?

One thing is for sure: the good old bow is still with us and it seems that after a mere 64,000 years (although I think it's longer) the Earth still carries those who cannot do without it, for whom it is like a natural extension of their arms. So what if they can barely write a text message, or do not play on the console. but for when the zombie apocalypse comes their faithful companion will be at hand. A zombie cannot be trolled or thrown off Facebook. But an arrow with a steel tip fired from a safe distance? Oh, yeah... This will do.

Jokes aside. In medieval times, referred to as the Dark Ages, every Sunday after mass it was obligatory to give children, starting from the age of 7 and sometimes earlier, at least two hours of shooting lessons. This developed discipline, improved physique, contributed towards fitness, and most importantly made the man much more difficult to break, for the bow at that time ceased to be a tool and became a weapon. Highly effective and relatively inexpensive instrument of war, which in case of need could be used by anyone. In many cases, the bow meant independence back then, especially for those who were skilled at using it. Such people were valued and their services were sought. A good archer at that time was worth as much as a sophisticated autonomous missile system today. Nowadays, especially after the pandemic, the bow enjoys great popularity. Indeed, the motives of those who reach for it or intend to get acquainted with it are different, but this does not change the

fact that for 64,000 years at least, it is something that ignites human imagination and strangely never grows old. It is as if some unknown force has seared it into our consciousness as deeply as any other archetypal predilections or fears. There is a connection between man and the bow that is stronger than time and perhaps even exists outside of known time. For we have no idea where or when exactly we came from - all we dare to venture is a guess. So what prevents us from assuming that the bow came with us, where ever and whenever lies our beginning.

Accordingly, as you set out in a throng to snag some candy on Sunday the 31st, devote a thought or two on your journey through space and time to the countless generations of our ancestors for whom the bow was more than a thing - it meant life. It gave and took life, and all this in a literal meaning - in stark contrast to everything modernity is charging us with.