

Most primitive cultures have at some time used the bow and arrow. Although some cultures like the Inca of South America and the Aborigines of Australia preferred the use of the Atlatl over the bow. This is definitely the exception and not the rule. As the technology of the bow and arrow spread throughout the world, the Atlatl although much easier to manufacture, took the back seat to the much more stealthy and efficient bow and arrow.

The Iceman found frozen in an Alpine Glassier in northern Italy, had an unfinished bow that looked very similar to the English longbow used in medieval times roughly 4500 to 5000 years later. The Iceman had died from being shot with a flint tipped arrow which penetrated deep enough into his body to cut one of his main arteries. All of the Iceman's arrows were still in their quiver near his body. Most all of the arrows were tipped with stone points with evidence of human and animal blood on them.



Many people speculate why his bow was not completed. I suspect that the bow found with the iceman was a backup bow that he was working on. His finished bow was probably taken by whoever killed him or dropped when he was shot at a different location. It takes knowledge and time to manufacture a good primitive bow. This investment in time and knowledge would make a bow an attractive bit of loot on a battlefield.

Bow and arrows have evolved into many shapes and forms. The Romans designed a massive crossbow that fired massive bolts used for siege warfare. The Stone Age people of Denmark made stone points with triangle cross sections that look as if they were made to penetrate armor. The Sioux Indians of North America and the Mongols of central Asia made very powerful short bows backed with horn made to shoot from horseback. The Japanese made long laminated bows from bamboo. The list of styles and types of bows could go on forever.

