

"Boomerang stick between past, present and future"

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Abstract:

The boomerang stick is one of the oldest weapons used by aboriginal people and ancient civilizations in many regions of the world.

It was commonly used in many areas of Australia, and was used by the Australian aboriginal, who used it for hunting, but the boomerang stick was invented by a number of hunters since prehistoric period, and it was not limited to Australia only, but was found in many parts of the world such as Europe, North America, and Africa

It had a variety of uses. It was used in hunting birds, small animals, and fishing, in addition to its use in self-defense and in wars.

It was made of different materials such as wood, ivory, and mammoth tusks, Its shape and use evolved into a funerary wand, made of faience, and decorated with plant dyes and geometric shapes that evolved to draw botanical shapes and signs from hieroglyphs, and to write the names of kings on them inside a royal cartouche, as in ancient Egyptian times.

The boomerang stick is still used until the present time, especially in Australia, which took it as its symbol, and there has been a development in its form from the past, and there is still an evolution in the shape and decorations on it, and it is currently used in sports and various matches are held for it in throwing, accuracy of return and length of distances.

It is an example of the inherited material cultural heritage that has been used since prehistoric times until the present era

Key words: Boomerang – shooting stick – killing stick – returning stick – non-returning stick – bird hunting stick

Introduction:

Primitive equipment has been diversified for thousands of years and many primitive instruments have been produced in stone ages and used by people in hunting, hobby, war and self-defense, one of the oldest tool is boomerang stick.

The boomerang stick is a piece of wood curved or streamlined with two arms that are made together with an exploded angle They are thrown by hand and circle their center and rise in the air and bounce back to the bowler, Some Boomerangs were as high as 150-200 m in range and it can break the legs of large-sized mammals and kill small animals like deer, They were also used to hunt rabbits and catch birds and either hit birds, drop them or throw them in the direction of the bird swarm to mimic the attack from a bird of prey, and the birds descend to the ground and are caught by nets.

These lightweight sticks weighed less than 200 g and winged between 40-50cm, These sticks were mainly used for animal hunting and some were used for fishing from shallow waters, as in the north-west of Australia, as well as for bird hunting. ¹

1. The emergence of boomerang stick in the world:

The appearance of the old boomerang stick was not limited to Australia but found elsewhere in the world such as Europe, Africa and North America.

1.1 The emergence boomerang stick in Europe:

The oldest boomerang stick found on southern Poland at the site of Oblazowa cave, dated with radioactive carbon to 18,300 BC. ²

The cave Located in southern Poland in the northern part of a mountain chain on the border between Poland and Czechoslovakia at the village of Nowa Biala,

Oblazowa's stick was found in layer 8, which dated to the Upper Paleolithic period. ³

The boomerang stick was found in the first season of this site's excavation in 1985 from a range of stone tools and varied animal remains, which were crescent in shape and pointed by both parties (Figure 1, 2), there was a missing part of one of the parties and fortunately the missing part was found five years later during the digs in subsequent seasons so that the final shape of the instrument was ascertained It was made of a fragment of mammoth tusk, one face was polished, flat and the other face was convex and appeared on one end of the instrument parallel shielded lines And from the other end it shows

¹ Bordes et al., 2016, p 2

² Koerper, 1998, p65

³ Valde-Nowak, 2000, p88

slanted straight lines on both flat and convex sides, These lines may have been for ornamental or use and had pointed and sharp limbs manufactured by humans. ⁴

This stick was classified as killing stick, used to kill animals or in self-defence, and as Queensland type (the type widely used in eastern Australia under the same name), was of the type of returned stick, it was about 70cm long, 6cm wide, and the largest thickness was approximately 1.5cm.⁵



(Fig. 1) Boomerang Stick - Oblazowa Cave - Poland - Europe
(Valde-Nowak, 2000, p90)



(Fig. 2) Boomerang Stick - Oblazowa Cave - Poland - Europe
(Valde-Nowak, et al.1987, p 437)

⁴ Valde-Nowak, 2000, p88

⁵ Valde-Nowak, et al.1987, p 436.

1. 2 The emergence of Boomerang sticks in Australia:

The oldest boomerang stick found in Australia dates back to 8,000 BC., found in a Wylie swamp South Australia, within a set of tools such as a digging stick, short spears, two serrated spears, and a number of nine small-sized boomerang sticks, which were made of wood.

Two types of boomerang stick, the returned and non-returned sticks, were flung in the same way. The bounce stick was held vertically and flung straight towards the target with great strength and circled back to the bowler's side, While the non-bouncing stick was flung in the same way and was heading directly for the goal and hitting it hard. Most Australian boomerangs were non-returned stick type. The returned stick was smaller in size and lighter in weight and was considered a development of the non-returned stick.

The large-sized boomerang stick between three and four feet long was sufficient to infect a large-sized animal such as a kangaroo, along with the use of that stick for bird hunting, and the boomerang was heavily decorated with pigments extracted from plants. Boomerang was made from multiple types of wood such as Mulga wood, which existed in arid dry places and acacia wood in western Australia and mangrove wood in the east coast regions. And mangrove wood was very solid and used its bark in the armor industry for protection, which was twisted by heating it in hot ash and then put it in water.

The National Museum of Australia is preserved a collection of wooden shields and three boomerang sticks (Figure 3). The shield was found in the McDonald Mountains region of central Australia. It was made of mangrove wood. It was lighter in weight and used to protect when the boomerang returned back, while the boomerangs were made from red mulga wood.⁶

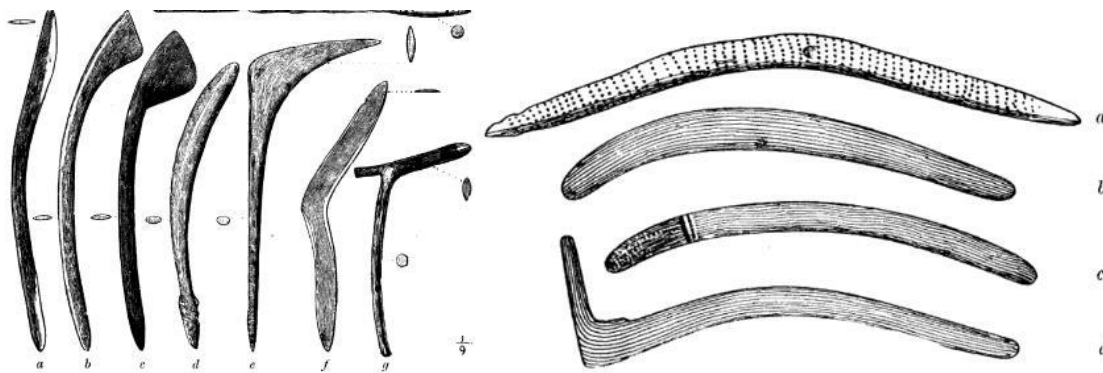
The Australian boomerang stick had two straight arms with an angle of 90 ° or more, was between 45- 60 cm long, weighing approximately 230 g, and at the arc between the arms of the boomerang in the middle there was a twist of 2 ° - 3 °. This deviation was a very important factor in the boomerang, the lower surface was usually flat while the top surface was convex and this type of boomerang was up to 45m in the air and rotated in circles and back to the thrower.⁷

⁶ Holt , 2002, p. 14

⁷ Holt , 2002, p. 14



(Fig. 3) Shield -3 Boomerang stick - National Museum – Australia
(Holt, 2002, p15)



(Fig. 4) Different models of bowling stick - Australia
British Museum Dept., 1910, p108-109

1.3. The emergence of Boomerang sticks in Africa:

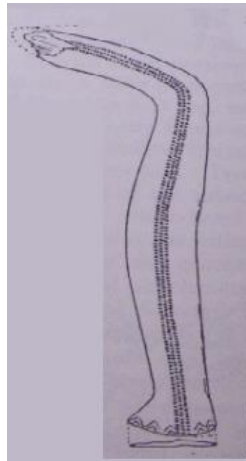
The Boomerang stick appeared in Africa, especially Egypt, where it had been used for bird hunting since the prehistoric era and consisted of a thin, curved piece of wood at the last third in the form of an exploding angle. It was used for bird hunting in the swamps, where the fisherman was usually photographed standing on a boat of papyrus in the middle of the swamp and throwing or using the stick to beat the birds. They are similar to the Boomerang that are still used in Australia for hunting.⁸

1.3.1 Boomerang stick in Badarian culture: (5000 B.C)

The Badarian people used the boomerang shooting stick to catch water birds, a wooden swastika stick, which they used on bird hunting trips and two of which were found in El

⁸ سليم حسن ، 2019 ، ص 156

Badari. (Figure 5.6) They were made of wood and found on top of the other near the cemetery owner's hand. Their wood was decomposed and subsequently restored. One was decorated with small triangles and many adjacent dots. The stick was missing parts and decomposed. The boomerang stick was also used for small-scale animal hunting, dating 5000 B.C ⁹



(Fig. 5) Boomerang stick – El Badari - Egypt
(Petrie,1939, P.13 66)



(fig. 6) Boomerang stick – El Badari – Egypt
Presently reserved at British Museum (No. EA59703)

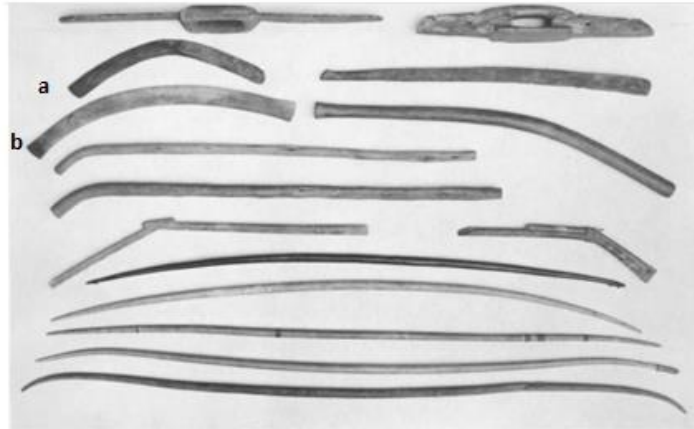
1.3.2 Middle kingdom - Beginnings of New Kingdom (1981-1550 B.C)

Two boomerang sticks were found in the Middle kingdom era, the 11th dynasty in Thebes (Figure 7 - a, b), they were the type of boomerang made of wood, Flat from one face and convex from the other, the corner of the détente was about 140 °, they used boomerangs to catch birds, especially wild geese, in swampy areas.

And they were thrown in the direction of bird populations and they got caught, another stick belonging to the Middle kingdom era was found in the Jabalin region, Thebes, Sheikh Abdul Qurna, made of wood, dating back to the Middle kingdom era and the beginnings of the New kingdom is preserved at the British Museum¹⁰, (Figure8, 9)

⁹ Ginex, 2010, p33

¹⁰ Jones , 1996, p 8



(fig. 7) "The Boomerang Stick – Middle kingdom- Egypt
(Hayes, 1990, p. 279)



(fig. 8) Boomerang stick- Middle kingdom- 12th dynasty- Jabalin
(Jones, 1996, p. 8)



(fig. 9) "The Boomerang Stick – Middle Kingdom - Thebes
Currently preserved in the British Museum"

1.3.3. New Kingdom era – 18th dynasty

(Reign of King Tutankhamen) (1336–1295 BC),

Numerous boomerang sticks were discovered in the tomb of Tutankhamen. They served both practical and ritual purposes. The collection found inside the arches box (Fig. 10) was used primarily for bird hunting. The boomerangs found were of the returning type

as well as non-returning type. Some were in the shape of a curved sickle, while others consisted of two straight arms with an open angle between them.

The functional types were made of solid wood, such as birch trees, with some being tied in the middle or at the ends with tree bark (Figure 11).¹¹



(fig. 10) Wooden Box containing the discovered Boomerang sticks in the tomb of king Tutankhamen
Western bank – Luxor- Egypt
(jones, 1996, p.6)



(fig. 11)" Boomerang Stick - Tomb of Tutankhamen - Luxor - Egypt
"Currently preserved in the Grand Egyptian Museum"

As for the ritual or ceremonial boomerang sticks, they had a votive purpose. Some of them were made of ivory and adorned with gold at the ends (Figure 12), while others were made of faience or wood covered with a layer of gold, with faience ends. Some of them were decorated with cartridges, often engraved with the name of the king for

¹¹ Carter, 2010, P142

whom they were made. They were also embellished with the eye of Horus, lotus flower, geometric patterns, and multiple colors (Figure 13).

A boomerang stick of the ceremonial type was also found in the reign of King Akhenaten, made of faience and decorated with the eye of Horus and lotus flower motifs (Figure 14).¹²



(fig. 12) "Ceremonial Boomerang Stick - Tomb of Tutankhamen - Luxor - Egypt
Currently preserved in the Grand Egyptian Museum"



(fig. 13) "Ceremonial Boomerang Stick - Tomb of Tutankhamen - Luxor - Egypt
Currently preserved in the Grand Egyptian Museum"

¹² Carter, 2010, P142



(fig.14) "Boomerang Stick - Reign of King Akhenaten - 18th Dynasty - Amarna
Currently preserved in the British Museum (Number EA34213)"

It is worth mentioning that the ancient Egyptians depicted numerous scenes of boomerang throwing on the walls of funerary temples and tombs, especially showing the tomb owner on a lightweight papyrus boat navigating through swamps and thickets, holding a boomerang in his hand and engaged in bird hunting.

1. 4. **The emergence of the boomerang in North America:**

The discovery of the boomerang in North America took place in 1893 by an exploratory expedition in the Great Natural Bridge area in San Juan, Utah. It was donated to the American Museum of Natural History.

The boomerang was made of wood with remnants of plant fibers tied to one end, along with bark and plant resin. It had notches along its length and holes, indicating its use for hunting. Its approximate dimensions were 62 x 15 x 3 cm, and it was dated to the Basket Maker II period, around 300 BC. ¹³



(fig.15) Rabbit stick – North America
National Museum of the American Indian - Catalog no. 5/1490

¹³ National Museum of the American Indian



(fig.16) Rabbit stick – North America
(Jones , 1996, p 8)

2. Current Use of the Boomerang Stick:

2.1 Traditional Art Symbols in Australia:

The boomerang stick has been used as a symbol for Australia until the late 1940s and early 1950s. It was widely popularized by the arts, crafts, and design community, especially by the Australian tourism industry. By the 1960s, the tourism industry expanded its scope to include branding Australia, particularly for foreign and local tourists, as souvenirs and gifts representing the culture of Aboriginal Australians. They have also been preserved as artistic symbols, where people used to draw and carve designs related to myths and traditions on boomerang sticks. Additionally, they continue to be used in some religious ceremonies as a symbol of ancient traditions (Figure 17).¹⁴



(fig.17) Modern Boomerang sticks

<https://wikiimg.tojsiabtvt.com>

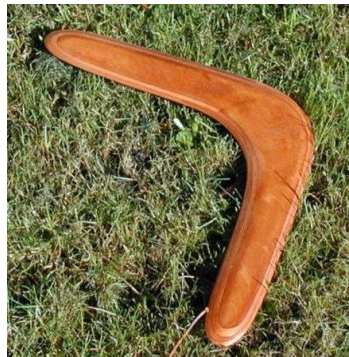
2.2 In sports and entertainment:

Currently, boomerang is considered a sport, and there are international tournaments where judges assess various characteristics such as accuracy, speed, gripping technique, number of catches, maximum airtime, and distance for long throws. Today, boomerangs

¹⁴ <https://stringfixer.com/ar/Boomerang>

are manufactured and thrown as a hobby. In addition to the curved or Australian style, there are other main types of boomerangs, such as the cross-stick boomerang and the boomaplane, each with several modern variations developed from the traditional design

Up to this day, boomerangs are used by Australians, as well as some other tribes around the world, including the Navajo Indians in America. Currently, these sticks are used in sports such as throwing and target competitions across Europe, North America, Australia, and Japan. They are made from similar materials as in the past, such as birch wood, hardwood, plastic, or composite materials, and are available in various shapes and colors. Boomerangs are also used for entertainment, with different types of throwing competitions focusing on accuracy of return and distance ¹⁵



(Fig. 18) The boomerang in the modern era – Australia

<https://wikiimg.tojsiabtv.com>

2.3 In addition to their use in sports and recreation, boomerangs serve multiple purposes:

1. **Multi-purpose Tools:** Boomerangs are used as versatile tools by Indigenous populations and are a traditional symbol of their country. Besides throwing, they can be used as digging sticks, friction fire starters, or even as percussion instruments when two boomerangs are struck together, producing a resonating sound

2. **Artistic Expressions:** The use of modern materials like plywood and synthetic plastics has greatly contributed to the success of diverse boomerang designs. These designs range from animal-inspired shapes to humorous themes, intricate patterns, symbolic forms, and even pure abstract shapes. Boomerangs have been utilized as artistic objects that may not possess the desired aerodynamic properties for returning.

¹⁵ Holt, 2002, p. 14

3. Boomerangs, in their various artistic forms, are often created as decorative pieces, showcasing the creativity and craftsmanship of the makers. They can be displayed as cultural artifacts or used as decorative elements in homes and public spaces.
4. It is important to recognize that boomerangs have cultural significance beyond their functional uses, and their artistic representation reflects the rich heritage and traditions of Indigenous communities.



(fig. 19) modern boomerang

<https://stringfixer.com/ar/Boomerang>

Results:

- 1- The boomerang is a curved or flat piece of wood with two arms forming an open angle. It is thrown by hand, spinning around its center and soaring into the air before returning back to the thrower, reaching heights of 150-200 meters in range.
- 2- Its appearance was not limited to the continent of Australia alone but also emerged in Europe, Africa, and North America.
- 3- These lightweight sticks weighed less than 200 g, and their wingspan ranged from 40-70 cm.
- 4- Two types of boomerangs emerged: non-returning and returning boomerangs
- 5- . They were usually made from materials such as ivory or hardwood like mangrove, mulga, or birch
- 6- . Various decorative techniques were used for boomerangs. They were decorated with plant-based dyes, parallel incised lines (as seen in Poland), or adorned with small triangles and adjacent dots (as seen in ancient Egypt). Over time, the decoration styles evolved significantly, with the 18th dynasty witnessing the use of gold foil, faience, and cartouches bearing the name of the king, in addition to colorful geometric shapes and patterns.
- 7- Boomerangs were also known by other names such as "killing stick," "hunting stick," or "bird-hunting stick."
- 8- In the past, boomerangs were used to kill small animals like deer, and they were capable of breaking the legs of larger mammals. They were also used for hunting rabbits and birds. Boomerangs either collided with the birds and brought them down or were thrown towards flocks to simulate a predatory attack, causing the birds to descend to the ground and then be caught with nets. Some boomerangs were used for fishing in shallow waters.
- 9- Indigenous Australians and other tribes around the world continue to use boomerangs to this day
- 10- Boomerangs are currently used in sports such as throwing and throwing competitions across Europe, North America, Australia, and Japan.
- 11- Nowadays, boomerangs are also made from the same materials used in the past, such as birch wood or hardwood, in addition to the use of plastic. They are available in various shapes and colors.
- 12- Boomerangs have also been preserved as artistic symbols representing the culture of Indigenous Australians and as a traditional symbol of the country. In the past, people used to draw and carve designs related to myths and traditions on boomerangs. Furthermore, their use continues in some religious celebrations as a symbol of ancient traditions
- 13- In addition to throwing, boomerangs are now used as multi-purpose tools by Indigenous populations. They can be used as sticks, for digging, and for creating friction fire. When two boomerangs strike each other, they produce a ringing sound.

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