Evidence for the Bone Being a Flute

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Ivan Turk defends the Divje Babe artefact

No counter-bite reciprocates the piercings in reverse. The holes compose a line, at equal distance, and of the bored diameters, there is but little difference. Spacing corresponds to human fingers.

Not top-to-inside marks of fangs. Furrows and striations ring the piercings, showing patience augured through with purpose: note, all traces of the spongiose were purged as proved by lack of marrow’s stain.

Unmatched by wolves’ teeth, or hyenas’—punctures, through the thickest part, unlikely for a predator or scavenger. The bone was found beside a fire pit, the ground there strewn with other bones yet none of these were perforated. Taphonomic evidence has ascertained the bone’s response to blowing produces diatonic scale. Location of a scratch below suggests a thumb-hole, partly drilled. We know the skeleton, in other cases, inspired music’s first attempts. In China, from the crane’s already hollow wing-bone earliest recorded flutes were made. This bone: taken from a cave bear’s thigh, four times as old, Neanderthal, but still the principle’s the same: endeavour and invention to bring back from the slaughtered—bird or bear—a sound before the netted snare, the blade and club, the flesh and fire. Before the word.