

CHINESE ARCHERY

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2



The Legendary Archer Heroes

Archers are romantics. That has been no less the case in China than in the West. From China's earliest folklore, there are tales of the feats of the great archers. Like the Greek Legends, the tales from the Bible and the oral traditions of Africa and America, it is likely that Chinese folklore recalls some of the beliefs and folk culture of prehistoric times.¹

The Inventors

It is a tradition in Chinese culture to assign an 'inventor' to objects and activities which are culturally significant. Chinese society shows its respect for certain things by ascribing their invention to some character venerated in Chinese history (or respect for the person by ascribing to him an important invention). Bows and arrows have been ascribed a very distinguished pedigree.

First, though, let's have a look at how Chinese history has traditionally been set out.

The first attempt to create an organized chronology of Chinese history comes with the Great Historian Sima Qian (司馬遷) in his *Annals of History*

1. 袁珂：《中國神話通論》(成都：巴蜀書社，1993)，頁6 ff.

(史記) at the beginning of the first century BC. Sima Qian's *History* records a period of the 'Five Emperors', followed by a dynasty named Xia (夏), followed by a Shang (商) Dynasty. Over the past one hundred years or so, historians have tried to approximate the following western dates with these dynasties:

Period name	Approximate years BC
Five Emperors (五帝)	2800–2400
Xia (夏)	2400–1900
Shang (商)	1900–1100

You should not give too much credence to these dates: just note that they seek to place the period covered by Sima Qian's account into the period following the end of the late Neolithic. Although the Great Historian has passed us the names of the Five Emperors as well as a chronology of the Xia and Shang reigns, it is not until the Shang period that we have clear archaeological evidence to support the oral traditions and the records of Sima Qian.

Nevertheless, the oral traditions as well as the ancient Chinese characters which record ideas and names from the earliest historical periods, deserve our close attention as they give away clues on attitudes, cults, customs and theology that are important to our understanding of the place that the bow and archers held in Chinese culture and history.

The period of the 'Five Emperors' and the Xia have never yielded literary records:² it is over those periods in which the Chinese writing system must have developed, because by the Shang period, we have archaeological evidence³ of a mature Chinese writing system which refers directly to the Shang Kingdom.

The Chinese 'Five Emperors' are regarded by some as semi-mythical figures.⁴ Stories about them are early, possibly allegorical literary works on the creation of the world, the invention of everyday things, and the taming of evil by good. The stories contain clues that could relate them to some cultic practices, and such practices are also suggested in certain

2. Some pre-Shang forms of writing have been preserved, but they are not consistent and have never been deciphered or linked conclusively to later forms of Chinese writing.

3. 李圃：《甲骨文字學》(上海：學林出版社，1995)，頁3。

4. See for example, 袁珂：《中國神話通論》(成都：巴蜀書社出版社，1993)，頁14。

names which have been preserved in historical records. But these traces are very indistinct.

The *Yi Xi Ci* (易繫辭)⁵ says that the Yellow Emperor, Yao and Shun invented the wooden bow and arrow. These three were among the ‘Five Emperors’ whose names were:

黃帝	<i>Huang Di</i>
顓頊	<i>Zhuanxu</i>
帝嚳	<i>Diku</i>
堯	<i>Yao</i>
舜	<i>Shun</i>

You will come across Chinese history books (mostly published in the West) which put detailed dates against these five; but in fact as with the more general historical setting mentioned above, there is no way to know when exactly they lived, or whether in fact they were anything more than mythical characters, perhaps based on famous tribal leaders from the mists of China’s Neolithic past.⁶ It is just as impossible to say whether or not any one of these ever ‘invented’ the bow and arrow. The Sumerian script which predates the Chinese writing system contained words for ‘bow’ (*pana*, *pan*, *ban*: bow (*pa*, ‘branch’, + *na*, ‘pebble, stone’) and ‘arrow’ *ti* . . . *ra*: to shoot an arrow (‘arrow’ + ‘to stab’). *nis-ti-zú*: barbed arrow (‘arrow’ + ‘teeth; flint’).⁷ So maybe the earlier use of the bow and arrow was in the Sumerian culture. But having written the terms down earlier proves nothing.

However, the story I am telling in this book is about what Chinese people traditionally *believed* about the bow and arrow: not about what was scientifically true. So we should not mind whether such accounts are true or not. They are accounts which add to our understanding of Chinese archery and its place in Chinese culture and the Chinese mind, and that is enough.

The *Yi Xi Ci* goes further than saying that these three were the inventor of the bow and arrow. It claims that they subjugated their empire with

5. A commentary on the *Yi Jing* said to be by King Wen of the Zhou (周文王), and believed to have incorporated a later commentary by Confucius. See Shaughnessy, Edward L., *I Ching: The Classic of Changes*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997, pp. 204–205.

6. 袁珂：《中國神話通論》(成都：巴蜀書社出版社，1993)，頁14。

7. Lexicon of Sumerian Logograms Version 2.1 by John A. Halloran. INTERNET publication (1998) at <http://www.primenet.com/~seagoat/sumerian/sumerlex.htm>

them. Such a claim would only be made by people who thought that the bow and arrow was a particularly powerful weapon in comparison with others in the ancient Chinese arsenal. It is in fact a recognition — at least among the Zhou Dynasty generation which produced the authors of the *Yi Xi Ci* — that the bow and arrow was a powerful agent of social change. Indeed, the whole section of the *Yi Xi Ci* in which this mention of the bow and arrow occurs relates the major innovations — agriculture, hunting, harnessing of draught animals and building — which distinguished ‘contemporary’ society as understood in ancient China from ‘primitive’ society which preceded it.

Another claimed inventor of the bow is Fu Xi (伏羲). According to the Tang Dynasty *Hidden Classic of Tai Bo* (太白陰經),⁸ Fu Xi is said to have made a bent stick into a bow. Fu Xi is not just reputed for inventing bows and arrows. It was he who was said, according to the *Yi Xi Ci*, to have invented nets and traps for catching animals and fish.

Fu Xi’s powers of scientific observation led him to invent the graphical signs which form the basis for the *Yi Jing* (易經) (sometimes known as the *I Ching* or *Book of Changes*). The *Yi Xi Ci* is a commentary on the *Yi Jing*. It says that Fu Xi drew on his observations from afar of the heavens and the earth, and how the markings of birds and animals blended in with the environment, and observed his own body close-up, then drew inferences from his observations about the latent tendencies in all things. These he distilled into the ‘Eight Tri-grams’ (八卦) which ultimately became the basis for divining the future, adopted alike by Taoists and Confucians, and still practised among superstitious people (not just in China) today.

The inventions of implements and techniques traditionally attributed to Fu Xi, including the bow and arrow, form a different category from the metal weapons or war, whose invention is traditionally attributed to an arch-villain, Chi You (蚩尤). While Chinese tradition tends to treat Chi You as an agent of disorder and destruction (although the tradition is not very consistent), Fu Xi is always regarded as a sage, and his inventions are associated with the pursuits of the literati — hunting, fishing, ritual archery and divination — rather than the warrior class.

This is a tentative clue indicating that in early Chinese society, the bow and arrow held a distinctive place among weaponry, perhaps belonging to a category of agents for more positive social change.

Other works have ascribed the invention of the bow and arrow to other characters in Chinese history:⁹

8. 唐·李荃：《四庫全書》。It was written somewhere between AD 713–779.

9. See Werner, E. T. C., *Chinese Weapons*. Reprinted by Graham Brash, Singapore, 1989.

Work	Invention ascribed to
<i>Shan Hai Jing</i> (山海經)	Shao Hao (少昊)
<i>Gu Jin Xing Zuan</i> (古今姓纂)	Zheng Guan Hu (正觀弧) Qing Yang (青陽)
<i>Sun Qing Zi</i> (孫卿子)	Chui (僇)
<i>Mo Zi</i> (墨子)	Yi (羿)

The Exponents

The folk-tale involving archery which comes to the mind of most Chinese people is the story of Yi (羿). In fact, the story is two stories rolled into one, rather as if Robin Hood and William Tell had both had the nickname 'Hood', and people had come to regard them as a single historical character. The Chinese folk tale, even from quite early times, contains elements of confusion between, firstly, the character Yi, who shot down nine rogue suns with a bow and arrows, and a second character who usurped the throne during the Xia Dynasty, only to be assassinated himself by a scheming minister.

Most Chinese scholars have, however, realized for a long time that the story of 'Yi Shooting the Sun' and 'Yi Usurping the Throne of Xia' refer to two separate personalities and events. The first story seems to belong entirely to the realm of mythology, while the second is at least clothed in the clothes of history.

An important Chinese literary work in which Chinese folklore has been distilled and set out in an organized way, the *Shan Hai Jing* (山海經), may represent fragments of records built up by officials in the Western Zhou Dynasty (1027–771 BC), because it is arranged like a geographical gazetteer covering an area which was roughly similar to the area ruled over by the Zhou kings. It contains many accounts of magic and shamanism, and describes some rites similar to those named in the 'Rites of Zhou'. The book also brings together traditions from the remnants of the Shang/Yin Dynasty, and important folk-tales of Chu (楚), which is consistent with what we would expect to find in the records of the Western Zhou kings.¹⁰ Here are three references from the *Shan Hai Jing*.

10. 李豐楙：《〈山海經〉導讀》(臺北：金楓出版社，1986)，頁3–4。

2A1

From *Shan Hai Jing*: Within the Oceans**《山海經·海內經》**

帝俊賜羿彤弓素矰，以扶下國，羿是始去恤下地之百艱。

The Emperor Jun presented Yi with a red bow and reed fowling arrows with which to support the mortal world.¹¹ Thereupon Yi for the first time concerned himself with the troubles afflicting the mortal domain.

2B1

From *Shan Hai Jing*: South of the Outer Oceans**《山海經·海外南經》**

羿與鑿齒戰於壽華之野，羿射殺之。在昆侖虛東，羿持弓矢，鑿齒持盾，一日持戈。

Yi battled with Zuochi on the plains of Shou Hua, and Yi shot and killed him. East of the settlement of Kun Lun, Yi took up his bow and arrows, and Zuochi took up a shield and they did battle for a day.

2C1

From *Shan Hai Jing*: South of the Great Wasteland**《山海經·大荒南經》**

大荒之中，有山名融天，海水南入焉。有人名曰鑿齒，羿殺之。

In the centre of the Great Wasteland, there is a mountain called Rong Tian; the sea's waters approach it from the south. There was a man named Zuochi, and Yi killed him.

These accounts from the *Shan Hai Jing* deal with Yi's battle with Zuochi. Zuochi was a semi-human being with three-foot front teeth like chisels, and he was only one of the foes defeated by Yi. Another book which contains many Chinese folk-tales is the *Book of the King of Huai Nan* (淮南子), compiled at the beginning of the Han Dynasty. Here is an extract concerning the feats of Yi, the Archer, together with an annotation by the late Han Dynasty annotator Gao Yu:

11. In early historical times, a bow and red arrows were presented like a medal as a token of appreciation for services rendered to a king or duke.

2D1

Book of the King of Huai Nan

《淮南子·氾論篇》

“羿除天下之害，死而為宗布”。漢·高誘注《淮南子·俶真篇》：“是堯時羿，善射，能一日落九鳥，繳大風，殺窳窳，斬九嬰，射河伯之智巧也；非有窮后羿也。”

‘Yi, cleared the world of all its evils: he died and became a hero.’ Gao Yu’s note on the *Chu Zhen* section of *Huai Nan Zi*: ‘This is the Yi in the Emperor Yao’s time. He was an outstanding shot, able to kill the nine birds [leaving a single sun in the sky.] He was the sage extraordinary who bound up the Great Wind, killed Yayu (a spirit with a man’s face and snake’s body), severed the head of Jiuying (a water and fire devil) and shot the Great Water Sprite. This is not [the historical character] Duke Yi of Youqiong.’

The record in the *Book of the King of Huai Nan* is probably the most well-known one about Yi, the legend of Yi shooting the suns.

2E1

堯時十日並出，草木焦枯，堯命羿射十日，中其九日，日中九鳥，死墮其羽翼。

In the days of the Emperor Yao, ten suns rose together in the sky so that the plants of the earth were parched and shrivelled. Yao ordered Yi to shoot at the ten suns. Yi hit nine of the suns, so that the nine ravens in the suns died and their feathers and their wings fell to earth.

Elsewhere, *Huai Nan Zi* just relates that Yi shot down nine of the suns, leaving one to shine in the sky.¹²

Another famous work of Chinese literature which is rich in ancient folklore is the poetry of Qu Yuan (屈原). Qu Yuan lived between 340 and 278 BC. A minister of the State of Chu (楚) under King Huai (楚懷王), Qu Yuan was renowned for his upright behaviour and outspoken opposition to self-seeking courtiers who toadied to the Chu court. He ended up being ignored by King Huai, who presumably preferred being told what he wanted to hear, and Qu Yuan went into exile in the deep south of the country, on the border with the Yue (越) tribes. There he wrote a famous cycle of poems

12. 《淮南書·說日》：“又言，燭十日。堯時十日並出，萬物焦枯，堯上射十日，以故不並一日見也。”

which strung together folklore, shamanistic beliefs and historical allusions to sing of the tragedy of his own plight, and condemn false patriots.

In the end, legend has it that he committed suicide by drowning himself in a river. This event is still remembered every year in Chinese folk culture at the Dragon Boat Festival.

Qu Yuan's poetry is intense and complex in the way it weaves together the themes of nature, shamanism and folklore. Here are some extracts dealing with Yi the Archer:

2F1

屈原·《天問》

帝降夷羿，革孽夏民，
 胡射夫河伯，而妻彼雒嬪？
 馮珧利決，
 封豨是射，
 何獻蒸肉之膏，
 而后帝不若？
 浞娶純狐，
 眩妻爰謀，
 何羿之射革，
 而交吞揆之？

Yi of the Yi Tribe descended from among the heavenly emperors, and
 Usurped the throne of the people of China.
 What right did Yi have to shoot the Great Water Sprite, and
 Take his wife Luopin as his own?
 Armed with his great bow with carved tips, and his powerful thumbing,
 This is how he shot and killed the Giant Boar.
 To what avail did Yi cook it and offer its meat to Heaven?
 For the Emperor of heaven did not heed his valour.
 Indeed, Zhuo took Yi's wife Chunhu (Chang E),
 And this greedy woman, [also] called Xuan Qi, plotted with Zhuo.
 To what avail Yi's power to shoot an arrow through armour?
 For those two plotters destroyed him in the end!

This passage is a good demonstration of the way that even in the time of Qu Yuan, the legend of Yi the Archer had rolled together more than one personality. (In the opinion of the commentator Jiang Liangfu, four personalities were being combined into one in this passage.)¹³

13. 姜亮夫：《屈原賦校註》（香港：商務印書館，1964），頁 314–315。

The fragment just quoted, in common with the other passages in the poems of Qu Yuan, and those of the *King of Huai Nan* and the *Shan Hai Jing*, offers jigsaw pieces of the legend of Yi the Archer. To put the whole story into a more coherent whole, I shall try to synthesize the Legend¹⁴ into a narrative which brings together the different strands, together with other pieces of the background of ancient Chinese mythology. The sources of the strands range from the Zhou to the Han dynasties; but the event of which they tell are those of the dawn of Chinese civilization, before formally-recorded history.

In my narrative, however, I will exclude the tale of Duke Yi of Youqiong. He is a separate character who deserves a study of his own later on in this chapter.

The Legend of Yi the Archer

At the dawn of time, in the days of the Heavenly Emperor *Yao*, the mortal world was visited by marauding monsters who wrought destruction and brought misery to the people of China.

The first of these disasters affected Ten Suns. Ten Suns was none other than the son of the Heavenly Emperor Jun (帝俊) and his consort, Xi He (羲和). Ten Suns resided in the great Fusang (扶桑) tree, in a valley of hot springs in the farthest east. The Fusang tree had nine side branches and one branch at the top; one head of Ten Suns lived in each branch.¹⁵ Each day, his mother, Xi He, rode out in a chariot drawn by six dragons across the heavens, carrying one of the heads of Ten Suns to bring light to the world.¹⁶

But one day, the suns became infected with nine ravens who nested in each of them. Thereupon, the ten heads of Ten Suns all came out and shone side by side at the same time. Such was their heat that plants withered and died, and the world was afflicted by drought.

The second disaster was Zuoichi (鑿齒). He was a man-monster armed with enormous, chisel teeth,¹⁷ and he could fight with weapons like a man.

The third was Jiuying (九嬰). Jiuying was a spirit of fire and water with nine mouths who was a scourge to mankind.

14. Based on the information in 袁珂：《中國神話通論》，頁 218–236。

15. 《山海經·海外東經》。

16. 《淮南子·天文篇》。

17. 高誘註：《淮南子·本經訓》。

The fourth was the Great Wind Sprite (風伯) who destroyed people's homes.

The fifth was Yayu (猰貐 also 窳羸). Yayu was a monster with a dragon's head and snake's body.¹⁸

The sixth was Xiushe (修蛇), the giant python who could eat an elephant and would regurgitate its bones after three years.¹⁹

The seventh was Feng Xi (封豨), the Giant Boar. This great brute was a glutton which devoured all in its path.

The Heavenly Emperor had pity on mankind, and so he gave his servant, the Archer Yi, a cinnabar-red bow and wooden fowling arrows with the power to defeat monsters. So it was that Yi concerned himself for the first time with mortal affairs.

He descended to earth and did battle with the monsters, defeating Zuochi, cutting off the head of Xiushe, binding up the Great Wind with a tethered arrow, and killing Jiuying in combat, slaying Yayu and the Great Boar.

Then he put on his strongest thumbing, and pointed his great bow with carved jade tips to the heavens and shot at nine of the heads of Ten Suns, the son of the Emperor of Heaven, so that the ravens shed their wings and their black feathers fell to the ground. After that, nine of the sun-heads never appeared again, and a single sun remained to light the heavens.

Now Yi's wife was Chang E (嫦娥). While on his adventures, Yi met the Empress Mother of the West, and persuaded her to give him some of the herb of eternal life. But Chang E was greedy and on discovering this, she stole the herb and made off with it to the moon, where she took on the form of a toad and lived there forever, deserting Yi.

Further on his travels, Yi ventured into the land of the Water Sprite. Usually, the Water Sprite lived as a spirit at the bottom of the Great Yellow River. From time to time, however, he would rise from there, take on the form of a white dragon and menace the people of China with great floods. It so happened that at the time Yi was nearby, the Water Sprite had transformed himself into a white dragon and was ravaging the countryside. Yi immediately took up his great bow and fired, hitting the Water Sprite in the left eye.

The Water Sprite was mortally wounded, and he called to the Heavenly Emperor, 'Yi has wronged me! Kill him for me!' The Heavenly Emperor asked, 'How did you come to get shot?' The Water Sprite replied, 'I happened to be swimming in the guise of a white dragon.' The Heavenly Emperor said, 'I commanded you to patrol the depths of the spirit world. Had you done so, how would Yi have harmed you?

18. 《山海經·海內南經》。

19. 《山海經·海內南經》。

But instead you transformed yourself into a wild beast. As such, mortals would be bound to shoot at you — what could be more natural? Can I really hold Yi to blame?’ Thereupon, Yi sought out the Water Sprite’s wife, the spirit of the Luo River, and took her as his own wife.²⁰

That is the legend of Yi the Archer. Before leaving the legend, I should like to draw some thematic threads from it.

The first is that the archer, with a cinnabar red bow, had the power to fight supernatural monsters. This cinnabar-red bow (彤弓) and reed fowling arrows come up in other tales and early songs, and seem to be potent magical implements.

The second thread is the linkage between the archer Yi and the controlling of natural calamities. The first is a drought caused by the ten suns in the sky at the same time. The second is floods caused by the Great Water Sprite. The marauding white dragon might indeed be an allusion to the frothing billows of a raging flood torrent. The Chinese word for unstringing a bow is *mi* (弭); it is based on the symbol for a bow. Even in modern times, the word for warding off drought is *mi han* (弭旱).

The third thread is that the ultimate authority, the Heavenly Emperor, regards getting shot by an arrow is a befitting fate for someone such as the Water Sprite, who changes his colours and fails to perform his assigned duties. The Emperor refuses to punish Yi for shooting the Water Sprite in such circumstances. Shooting uncompliant officials with a bow is another cultural thread that we shall be able to pick up later.

The fourth thread is that Yi the Archer is not an easily-controlled entity. His activities sail very close to the wind. He shoots at the errant son of one of the heavenly emperors whose own command he is fulfilling. He goes off on an escapade of his own to obtain the herb of eternal life, and loses his scheming wife in the process. He goes on another escapade hunting down the Water Sprite, and then ends up going off with the Water Sprite’s wife, having lost his own. If this is heroic behaviour, it is certainly ambiguous in parts.

This last thread might seem at first sight like a modern attempt to moralize. But I would not be alone in throwing doubt on Yi’s heroic character. The main content of Qu Yuan’s famous poetic cycle of songs is allegories from tales of those who appear to be one thing but in fact are quite another. This was his oblique way of chiding his patron, King Huai, for favouring toadying courtiers while distancing himself from honest but outspoken ministers. Qu Yuan asks:

20. 王逸註：《楚辭》。

《楚辭·天問》：“羿焉殛日？烏焉解羽？”

What was achieved by Yi's shots at the suns? What was gained by making the ravens shed their feathers?

Qu Yuan poses this rhetorical question at the end of a section of his poem 'Some Questions for Heaven' (天問), underscoring the strangeness of these events. In the following section, he answers his own questions (in the passage I previously quoted) drawing out the negative aspects of Yi's behaviour (consciously or unconsciously combining two separate stories for the purpose of pushing home the point). Qu Yuan's literary strategy here is to play up the ambiguous nature of Yi's character: an apparently trustworthy servant who is, nevertheless, not under sufficient control to carry out his tasks reliably. Ultimately, Yi himself falls prey to actions just like his own: failing to control those around him properly and falling victim to a false minister he had wrongly trusted, who finally makes off with his wife.

These themes will recur.

Duke Yi of Youqiong (有窮后羿)

The second of the stories of Yi is put within the framework of historical fact. No evidence has come to light that the events in the story are true: but unlike the legend we have just looked at, the tale of Duke Yi of Youqiong contains no elements of the supernatural. It therefore has the potential to belong to historical fact.

The tale is set in the Xia Dynasty. This is an enigmatic period: Chinese writers have from the earliest times treated the Xia as a true historical period, yet clearly it predated the invention of a consistent writing system. There are therefore no contemporary records of it, and scientific evidence of the period is indirect. Chinese archaeologists are not able to say for certain that sites that have been excavated belonging to the *Erlitou* (二里頭) and *Yueshi* (岳石) cultures, which span the same historical period as the Xia Dynasty, directly relate to it.²¹ The final link to the traditional historical record remains to be made.

21. 劉茂功編：《中國古代兵器》(西安：陝西人民出版社，1995)，頁 18–19。

The earliest literary work to give details of Duke Yi of Youqiong is the *Zuo Zhuan* (左傳), a commentary on a very terse history of the state of Lu.

2H1

The *Zuo Zhuan*: Fourth Year of Duke Xiang
 《左傳·襄公四年》

“夏訓有之，曰有窮后羿。”公曰：“后羿何如？”對曰：“昔有夏之方衰也，后羿自鉏，遷於窮石，因夏民以代夏政。恃其射也，不修民事，而淫於原獸。棄武羅、伯因、熊髡、彪圍而用寒浞。寒浞，伯明氏之讒子弟，伯明后寒棄之。夷羿收之，信而使之以為己相。浞行媚於內，而施賂於外，愚弄其民，而虞羿於田。樹之詐慝，以取其國家，外內咸服。羿猶不悛，將歸自田，家眾殺而亨(烹)之以食其子。其子不忍食諸，死於窮門。靡奔而鬲氏，浞因羿室，生豷及豷，恃其讒慝詐偽而不德于民……”

‘In the annals of Xia it is recorded that there was one Duke Yi of Youqiong . . .’

‘What about Duke Yi?’ asked the Duke (Zhuo of Jin).

[‘At that time,’ (Wei Feng) replied,] ‘the Xia Dynasty was in recession. Duke Yi left Chu and moved to Qiong Shi. He usurped dominion over the people of Xia, and took up sovereignty over Xia. But he relied completely on his mastery of archery, and never steeped himself in civil affairs. He lost himself in the joys of the hunt. Thus he disregarded the virtuous officials such as Wuluo, Boyin, Xiongkun and Mangyu, and instead took into service Han Zhuo. Han Zhuo was a minor functionary of the house of Boming, and Lord Boming had demoted and then dismissed him. Yi of the Yi tribe took him in, trusted him and then made him into his personal minister. Zhuo ingratiated himself with the ladies of the Court, and was liberal with rewarding people outside it. He gained the confidence of the people, while continuing to encourage Yi to devote himself to hunting. In time, his confidence tricks bore fruit, for he had the whole state under his sway: all were taken in by him both domestically and internationally. Yi remained oblivious to all this, and returning from a hunting trip one day, his family retainers assassinated him and cooked his flesh, intending to force his sons to eat it. But they could not bring themselves to do so, and were put to death at the gate of Qiong. Thus the reigning line of Xia lost control and the remainder escaped to shelter with the house of Ge. Zhuo took up with Yi’s wife and fathered Ao and Yi. He relied on trickery and deception and was not virtuous towards the people . . .’

Here is an archer of a much less heroic character than the Yi of the previous legend. It is easy to see which parts of this account Qu Yuan

adopted for his poetic allegory. The ‘hero’ of this tale has no more to commend him than his mastery of archery. He has no civil administrative skill, was easily hoodwinked by an evil minister and lacked any self-discipline.

It is worthwhile to notice one feature of this tale which arises in other contexts later: Yi, the great hunter, becomes the hunted. He is ambushed and killed by his own retainers just as he himself would hunt down a wild animal. And just as a hunter of his time would cook his prey and sacrifice it as an offering to Heaven, Yi’s own killers, in a horrible parody of the hunter’s meat sacrifice, cook him to serve to his sons. Such a fate, which cut off ancestral protection for his successors, appears from time to time in ancient Chinese literature. It signifies in this case that the Great archer came to one of the most repugnant ends that traditional Chinese society could then devise.²²

Added to this misery is that his own sons were murdered for refusing to eat his meat, thus cutting off the lineage. It is this tragic tale which Qu Yuan combined with the heroic deeds of the mythical archer Yi, to create a parallel to his own plight.

Into this story, another great archer is injected. The Song Dynasty classical scholar Zhu Xi (朱熹) (1130–1200) claimed that the ambush in which Yi was murdered was led by his star pupil, Pangmeng (逢蒙).²³ Mencius (孟子) records Pangmeng as follows:²⁴

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逢蒙學射于羿，盡羿之道。思天下惟羿為愈己，於是殺羿。孟子曰：“是亦羿有罪焉”。

Pangmeng studied archery under Yi, and absorbed everything that Yi could teach him. But he became consumed with the idea that only Yi in the whole world could shoot better than him, and so he killed Yi. Mencius said, ‘Yi must also share some blame in this.’²⁵

22. For more on this theme, see Lewis, Mark Edward, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*, Albany NY: University of New York Press, 1990, pp. 207–209. But another interpretation is that the cannibalistic consumption of part of the corpse of a dead father in order to absorb his potency and establish a son’s right to succeed him was a normal social custom. See Granet, Marcel, *Chinese Civilization*. English translation. London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1930/1950, p. 217.

23. Also written from the Song Dynasty on as ‘逢蒙’.

24. 《孟子·離婁下》。

25. Presumably because Yi had taught Pangmeng archery technique but not humility and non-competitive spirit as demanded by Confucius.

Little more is recorded about Pangmeng; but despite the fact that his name went down in Chinese cultural history as a man who murdered his own teacher, books on archery bearing his name in the title continued to be published into the Han Dynasty. A famous classic work, the *Lu Shi Chun Qiu* (呂氏春秋) quotes Yi and Pangmeng as examples of consummate archery skills, to exemplify that it is useless to possess great skill in the wrong circumstances.²⁶

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今有羿、蠡蒙，繁弱於此，而無弦，則必不能中也。

Supposing a pair like Yi and Pangmeng stood before us with the great bow named *Fanruo*, and they had no bow-string, then they couldn't hit a thing!

Archery and Folklore

The folklore fragments I have quoted above all come down to us through literary works either dating from, or heavily revised during the Han Dynasty (207 BC – AD 220). So they are records of folk memories originating perhaps as many as 1500 years before the time they were recorded in the form (more or less) that I have quoted. Seen like that, we can say that they represented to the Han Dynasty authors what the Greek legends represent to Western culture.

But then, there is no reason why they should not have been as potent a cultural force among the Chinese of the first century BC as the Greek legends are to authors of our own time.

The legend of Yi is very close in content to a folk legend of Mongolia: the Tale of Erkhii Mergen, the Archer.²⁷ Similar stories also exist among the national minorities of Guizhou in south-west China. In all these folktales, a bird is present (infecting the sun in the Chinese legends and blocking one of the archer's arrows in the Mongolian one.) The connection of a bird with the sun is also reflected in the 'sun-bird' (陽燧鳥) which brought the fire of the sun to earth, and could be attracted by the use of

26. 《呂氏春秋·具備》(臺北：三民書局，1995)，頁1101。

27. See Metternich, Hilary Roe, *Mongolian Folktales*. Boulder CO: Avery Press, 1996, p. 51.

believed to be the familiar of the Queen Mother of the West (西王母) and is often depicted in Han Dynasty funereal art.

A possible explanation for this crow/bird-sun relationship may be sunspots. There has been speculation (mainly among non-scientists) of a link between sunspot activity and warm climate. In September 1997, the 'Columbia University News' reported: 'Satellite measurements of solar brightness analysed by a Columbia University researcher show an increase from one cycle of sunspot activity to the next, indicating the Earth is absorbing more energy from the sun over the long term. The finding could well mean the sun is contributing to global warming.' [*sic*]

It is possible to speculate that maculae on the sun's surface, which might have coincided (randomly or otherwise) with severe droughts, were thought at some early time to have been caused by a bird getting between the sun and the earth. The only way to get rid of a flying bird was to shoot at it; and so the imagination would quickly connect to a mighty archer armed by the Sage King Yao with fowling arrows.

Another thread linking the archers in the Yi legend was unpredictability and irresponsibility. Both in the legendary Yi story and the story of Duke Yi, the archer is represented as a person without restraint. Later, we shall see that archery became connected with a process of developing self-discipline and restraint. Furthermore, there was a tradition linking archery 'black magic' and lack of restraint.

The overall image, then, left in the mind of the archer at the start of the first millennium was heroism tinged with danger. Of course, we must beware of the trap that Confucian writers have left for us: precisely that undisciplined heroism is tinged with danger. That is one of the very messages that the Confucian philosophy would like to impart.

My view is that the versions of the legends which have come down to us other than through the Confucian filter — for example the south-west Chinese minority folk-tales and the Mongolian version which features the bragging Erkhii — suggest that the legend already inherently contained the component of lack of restraint and irresponsibility. This in turn formed fertile ground for sowing the seeds of Confucian philosophy to the effect that great power in the hands of one man is a dangerous phenomenon that needs strict control.



Epilogue

I apologize. I have dragged you through three thousand years of Chinese history, across battlefields, through philosophers' backyards, over thickets of Chinese characters. Here you are, bruised and scratched, dragged backwards through half-a-dozen different styles and fashions of archery — mostly inconsistent with each other (and some not even consistent with themselves). Yet I have still not shown you how to shoot in the Chinese style, or any other style for that matter.

You have every right to be bitter.

At one point, I had thought of concluding this book with my own synthesis of Chinese archery: a nice series of drawings or photographs (of me, of course), clearly explaining every movement and finer point of technique.

Had I done so, I would have been defrauding you on two counts.

First, we have already encountered several styles and theories of archery at different times and different places. Who am I to say which one is right? In the thick of battle, with the sky black with dust from the hooves of horses and the air ringing of the thunder of drums and cymbals, which style would I pin my life to? The answer is 'none'. I'd run away.

Second, I am a rotten shot. If I had the cheek to teach any method, I would be encouraging high expectations about my own level skill. My fraudulence would very quickly be unmasked.

So what are we to do? I hate to leave you dissatisfied. Somehow, we need to listen to a proper Chinese archery lesson given by a good teacher.

Impossible? Nearly!

Let me introduce you to a young woman, Su Alan, an archery teacher and poet in the best tradition.

Alan is also fictional. In fact, she is a character in the Qing Dynasty novel *A Chance Encounter* written in about 1820 by Li Ruzhen.¹ The novel is set in the Tang Dynasty in a period when the Empress Wu Zetian, founder of the Chinese imperial examination system, overthrew the Emperor and set herself up as China's one-and-only female Empress with her own dynasty, the Zhou (周) Dynasty. (That part is true: she did so from 690–705). But from this point on, Li Ruzhen takes us on a fantasy in which Wu Zetian allows women to compete in the Imperial Examinations, and one hundred 'talented women' (in fact incarnations of flower sprits released after a drunken prayer uttered by the Empress Mother of the West) pass the examination with flying colours.

In the author's fantasy, the women celebrate their success by throwing a series of parties and taking part in other sports and pastimes normally reserved for men.² In each activity, the author displays his breadth and depth of knowledge of Chinese sports as they existed in his own time, the early nineteenth century.³

So here is your archery lesson from your very capable instructor, Alan. What could be better than to have three thousand years' worth of male-dominated Chinese experience in archery elegantly distilled by a woman.

Good shooting!

14A1

清·李汝珍《鏡花緣》第七十九回

次日把卷交了，陸續到卞府，彼此把詩稿看了，互相評論一番。用過早麵，仍在園中各處散步。遊了多時，一齊步過柳陰，轉過魚池，又望前走了幾步，紫芝手指旁邊，道：“這裏有個箭道，卻與玉蟾姐姐對路。諸位姐姐可進去看看？”

1. 李汝珍：《鏡花緣》。

2. Li was no great feminist, although he did have some ideals of equal opportunities in the examinations and abolishing foot-binding. He still saw the world exclusively through a man's eyes.

3. Many readers associate *A Chance Encounter* with tales of a visit by one of the women to numerous strange countries from Chinese mythology. That indeed is the plot of the first fifty chapters. Here I am talking about the second half.

A Chance Encounter by Li Ruzhen, Chapter 79

The next day, after they had handed in their assignments, they went one-by-one over to the Bian's residence. They exchanged the drafts of their poems and did a critique of each other's efforts. Then they had some noodles for breakfast and went out for a walk in the grounds of the house. After a long walk, they ambled together around the fish pond under the shade of the willows. As they walked a few steps further, Zizhi pointed off to one side and said, 'There's an archery range over there, just over the other way from where Yuchan is walking. Do you girls want to come and have a look?'

I4A2

張鳳雛道：“此地想是老師射鵠消遣去處，我們進去望望。”一齊走進。裏面五間敞廳，架上懸着許多弓箭，面前長長一條箭道，迎面高高一個敞篷，篷內懸一五色皮鵠。蘇亞蘭道：“這敞篷從這敞廳一直接過去，大約為兩而設？”香雲道：“正是。家父往往遇着天陰下兩，衙門無事，就由這裏射鵠消遣。恐濕了翎花，所以搭這敞篷。”

'This must be the place where Teacher goes to do some archery to relax,' said Zhang Fengchu, 'Let's go and take a look.' So they went in together. Inside were five spacious pavilions and on a rack there were several sets of bows and arrows. In front was a long, long archery range leading to a very high canopy inside which was hung a five-coloured leather target face.

Su Alan said, 'The canopy stretches all the way from this pavilion: it must be to provide cover from rain, right?'

Xiangyun said, 'That's right. Often when it's cloudy or rainy and there's not much happening in the Magistracy, father shoots off a few rounds from here at the target for relaxation. He doesn't want to get the fletching wet so he put up this canopy.'

I4A3

張鳳雛見這許多弓箭，不覺技癢，因在架上取了一張小弓，開了一開。玉蟾道：“姐姐敢是行家麼？”鳳雛道：“不瞞姐姐說：我家外祖雖是文職，最喜此道。我時常跟着頑，略略曉得。”紫芝道：“妹子也是時常跟着舅舅頑。我們何不同玉蟾姐姐射兩條舒舒筋呢？”瓊芝道：“蘇家伯伯曾任兵馬元帥，亞蘭姐姐自然也是善射了？”亞蘭道：“妹子幼時雖然學過，因身體過弱，沒甚力量，所以不敢常射，但此中講究倒知一二。如諸位姐姐高興，妹子在旁看看，倒可指駁指駁。”紫芝道：“如此甚好。”當時就同玉蟾、鳳雛射了三箭；紫芝三箭全中，玉蟾、鳳雛各中了兩箭。

Zhang Fengchu saw all the bows and arrows up on the racks and felt a sudden urge to get some exercise; so she took down a small bow and drew it. Yuchan said, 'You look pretty professional to me!'

'I won't make a secret of it,' answered Fengchu, 'Although our relatives on my mother's side are literary people, they're dead keen on archery. I'm always going shooting with them, so I know a little bit about it.'

'I often go for a spot of shooting with my uncle too,' Zizhi said. 'Why don't we and Yuchan shoot off a couple of rounds to give our joints a bit of a stretch?'

Qingzhi said, 'In the Su family, uncle has served as a military commander, so Alan must be a crackshot too, aren't you?'

'Although I learned when I was little, I was weak and short on energy so I didn't dare to shoot too much.' Alan replied. 'But if we are just discussing it here, I know enough about it. If you all think it would be fun, I could stand on the sidelines to watch and give you one or two tips.'

'That would be great!' Zizhi said. Then Zizhi, Yuchan and Fengchu each shot off a round of three arrows. Zizhi scored a hit with all three of hers, while Yuchan and Fengchu scored two hits each.

I4A4

紫芝滿面笑容，望着亞蘭道：“中可中了，但內中毛病還求老師說說哩。並且妹子從未請人指教。人說這是舒筋的，我射過之後，反覺胳膊疼。人說這是養心的，我射過之後，只覺心裏發跳。一定力用左了，所以如此。姐姐自然知道的。”

Grinning broadly, Zizhi turned to Alan and said, 'OK, so I can score some hits! But let's hear from the expert what mistakes I made when I was doing it. Actually, I've never employed a trainer. They say archery is good for stretching the muscles; but after shooting, my ribs and shoulders are aching like mad. And they say shooting is good for keeping down your heart rate; but all I feel after shooting is my heart racing. I must have done something wrong in the way I expended my energy to feel like this. I'm sure you know what the problem is.'

I4A5

亞蘭道：“玉蟾、鳳雛二位姐姐開放勢子，一望而知是用過功的，不必說了。至妹妹毛病甚多，若不厭煩，倒可談談。”綠雲道：“如此甚妙，就請姐姐細細講講，將來我們也好學着頑。倒是與人有益的。”亞蘭道：“妹子當日學射，曾撮大略做了一首‘西江月’。後來家父看見，道：‘人能依了這個，才算會射；不然，那才算個外行。’今念來大家聽聽——

‘射貴形端志正，寬襠下氣舒胸。
五平三靠是其宗，立足千斤之重。
開要安詳大雅，放須停頓從容。
後拳鳳眼是宜豐，穩滿方能得中。’

Alan said, ‘You just have to look at the style Yuchan and Fengchu used to shoot just now to know that that they were doing it properly. But as for you, you made quite a few mistakes. If you don’t mind, I can tell you about them.’

‘That would be great,’ said Lüyun. ‘Go on, Sister, tell us all about it. Then we can be good students when we try. Actually, we’ll get a lot out of this!’

‘When I was learning,’ said Alan, ‘I had a go at writing a poem in the *Xi Jiang Yue* style.⁴ After I’d written it, Father said, “No one should talk of being able to shoot without using these verses; and if they don’t they’ll be no more than amateurs!” This is how it goes:

*To shoot with upright mind and stance is best,
Your breath draw deep and long to fill your chest;
With five points level, three points close, you draw,
Your feet as if to bear ten tons or more.
Bring back the string with ease, your mind at peace,
And calmly pause for thought before release.
The “phoenix eye” for draw-hand style is fit;
A full and steady draw ensures you’ll hit.’*

I4A6

“剛才紫芝妹妹射的架勢，以這‘西江月’論起來，卻樣樣都要斟酌。既要我說，諒未必見怪的。即如頭一句：‘射貴形端志正’，誰知他身子卻是歪的，頭也不正：第一件先就錯了。”

‘The form Zizhi used when she was shooting a moment ago could be criticized from every angle, if you look at it from the point of view of that *Xi Jiang Yue* poem. You’ve asked me to explain, so I hope you don’t take it badly. Take the first line for example, “*To shoot with upright mind and stance is best,*” what do you know? — her body was bent and her head wasn’t level: so she fell at the first hurdle!’

4. A form of poem which originated in the Tang Dynasty. It had a total of fifty words without a rigid rhyming scheme.

I4A7

“至第二句：‘寬襠下氣舒胸。’他卻直身開弓，並未下腰。腰既不下，胸又何得而舒？胸既不舒，氣又安得而下？所以三箭射完，只覺嘔嘔氣喘，無怪心要發跳了。”

‘Then as for the second line, “*Your breath draw deep and long to fill your chest*”, she stood straight upright to shoot and didn’t come down at the hips. If she doesn’t come down at the hips, how can she expand her chest? If she doesn’t expand her chest, how can her breath get down into her diaphragm? So when she had shot off all three arrows, that’s why she was panting away: no wonder her heart was racing.’

I4A8

“第三句：‘五平三靠是其宗’：兩肩、兩肘、天庭，俱要平正。此之謂‘五平’；翎花靠嘴、弓弦靠身、右耳聽弦：此之謂‘三靠’。這是萬不可忽略的。以五平而論，他的左肩先已高起一塊，右肘卻又下垂，頭是左高右低，五平是不全的。以三靠而論，翎花並不靠嘴，弓是直開直放，弓梢並未近身，所以弓弦離懷甚遠，右耳歪在一邊，如何還能聽弦？三靠也是少的。”

‘Then the third line, “*With five points level, three points close, you draw.*” Her two shoulders, two elbows and the point between her eyebrows all have to be level. That’s the “five points level”. Then the fletching has to be close in to the mouth, the string close in to the body and the ear close, “listening” to the string: that’s the “three points near”. It’s absolutely vital to remember them. But from the point of view of the “five points level”, her left shoulder was all hunched up and then her right elbow drooped down, and the left side of her head was higher than the right, so she short-changed herself on the “five points level”. And then in the “three points close”, the fletching wasn’t anywhere near her mouth; the bow was straight at the draw and straight at the release. The limbs of the bow weren’t close in to her body, so the string was much too far from her chest and her ear was tilted over to one side, so how could she be “listening” to the string? So we were short on the “three points close” as well.’

I4A9

“第四句：‘立足千斤之重’，她站的不牢，卻是我們閨閣學射通病，這也不必講。”

‘The fourth line was: “*Your feet as if to bear ten tons or more.*” Her stance

wasn't firm — that's an error we all make in our women's dormitory, needless to say.⁵

14A10

“第五句：‘開要安詳大雅’，這句紫芝妹妹更不是了。剛才他開弓時，先用左手將弓推出，卻用右手朝後硬拉。這不是開弓，竟是扯弓了。所謂開者，要如雙手開門之狀，兩手平分，方能四平，方不吃力。若將右手用扯的氣力，自然肘要下垂，弄成茶壺柄樣，最是醜態，不好看了。”

“The fifth line is: “*Bring back the string with ease, your mind at peace.*” Well, just now there was nothing peaceful or easy about Zizhi's draw. When she started to draw the bow, she pushed it out forward first, then hauled the string back with her right hand. That wasn't “drawing” the bow; that was “wrenching” the bow. “Drawing” means drawing the bow and string apart with both hands like opening a sliding door, with both hands moving apart at the same time. That's the only way to get the draw symmetrical, then you don't need to expend so much energy on it. If you let your right hand use a wrenching action, naturally your elbow is going to droop down, then it'll look like the handle of a teapot: hardly an attractive position — rather ugly really.”

14A11

“第六句：‘放須停頓縱容’，我看他剛才放時並不大撒，卻將食指一動：輕輕就放出去。雖說小撒不算大病，究竟箭去無力，樣子也不好看。射箭最要灑脫；一經拘板，就不是了。況大撒毫不費事：只要平時拿一軟弓，時時撒放，或者手不執弓，單做撒放樣子，撒來撒去，也就會了。若講停頓二字，他弓將開滿，並不略略停留：旋即放了出去，何能還講從容？”

“The sixth line is: “*And calmly pause for thought before release.*” Just now I saw that when you released, you didn't fling your arm back; you just lifted your index finger and let the arrow slip out. A very small release is not a serious error, but what happens is that the arrow leaves without enough power. It doesn't look as good either. More than anything, shooting needs a smooth release, but if the string gets hooked behind the thumbing, you won't achieve one. And a big release doesn't take that much effort to learn either; all you have to do is to get hold of a bow with a light draw-weight when you normally practise and keep on releasing with it. Actually, you don't even have to hold a bow — you

5. This is a reference to the foot-binding demanded by the masters of Chinese households in the Qing Dynasty. Li Ruzhen was very opposed to the custom.

could just pretend to do it and after releasing time and again you'll get the knack of it. As for a pause for thought, she brought the bow to full draw without any pause at all — just drew and released. How can that be called “calm”?

14A12

“第七句：‘後拳鳳眼最宜豐’，他將大指並未挑起，那裏還有鳳眼？縱有些須鳳眼，並不朝懷，弦也不擰，因此後肘更不平了。”

‘The seventh line is: “*The phoenix eye for draw-hand style is fit.*” But she didn’t bring up her thumb, so what sort of “phoenix eye” was that? Well . . . she had a bit of a “phoenix eye” but it didn’t face her chest and the string didn’t get a twist put on it. That made her draw-arm shoulder even less level.’

14A13

“第八句：‘穩滿方能得中’，就只這句，紫芝妹妹卻有的。因他開得滿，前手也穩，所以才中了兩箭。但這樣射去，縱箭箭皆中，也不可為訓。”

‘The eighth line is: “*A full and steady draw ensures you’ll hit.*” This is the only one that Zizhi managed to get more-or-less right. She got the bow drawn fully and her bow-hand was quite steady, so two of her hits can be put down to that. But shooting the way she did, even though she could get all three arrows onto the target, you shouldn’t do it like that yourself.’

14A14

紫芝道：“姐姐此言，妹子真佩服！當日我因人說射鴿子只要準頭，不論樣子，所以我只記了：‘左手如托泰山，右手如抱嬰孩’這兩句，隨便射去。那裏曉得有這些講究？”

‘I really admire what you just said!’ said Zizhi. ‘Those days, when I was learning, everybody said, “When you do target shooting, all you need is accuracy: you don’t need to fuss about how you look.” So all I remembered was the two phrases: “Left hand like propping up Mount Tai; right hand like cradling a baby.” Otherwise, I just shoot however I like. Who’d have guessed all this other stuff is so important?’

14A15

亞蘭道：“妹妹：你要提起‘左手如托泰山’這句，真是害人不淺！當日不

知那個‘始作俑者’。忽然用個托字，初學不知，往往弄成大病，實實可恨！”瓊芝道：“若這樣說，姐姐何不將這托字另換一字呢？”亞蘭道：“據我愚見：‘左手如托泰山’六字，必須廢而不用才好。若按此句，托字另換一字，惟有改做攥字。雖說泰山不能下個攥字，但以左手而論，卻非攥字不可。”

‘Sister, that saying you just mentioned: “The left hand like propping up Mount Tai” has really caused people a lot of harm in the past,’ said Alan. ‘In those days, no one could have guessed what a load of trouble it would cause in the future. Suddenly you come across this word, “prop up”, and a beginner won’t know that it will lead you into a major shooting error. It’s really horrible!’

‘If it’s like that, Sister, why don’t you just use another word instead of “prop up”?’ Qingzhi asked.

‘In my humble opinion,’ answered Alan, ‘we’d be better off throwing the whole of “the left hand like propping up Mount Tai” out of the window. If you insist on keeping it and replacing “prop up” with something else, then I suppose “grasp” would be best, though I don’t see how you could “grasp” Mount Tai. But if you’re talking about the left hand, then “grasp” is the only word which will do.’

14A16

“若誤用托字，必須手掌托出；手掌既托，手背定然彎曲；手背既彎，肘也因之而翻，肩也因之而努。托來托去，肘也歪了，肩也高了；射到後來，不但箭去不準，並且也不能執弓，倒做了射中廢人。這托字貽一至於此！你若用了攥字，手背先是平正，由腕一路平直到肩，毫不勉強，弓也易合，弦也靠懷，不但終身無病，更是日漸精熟。這與托字迴隔霄壤了。”

‘If you make the mistake of using “propping up”, your hand is bound to push forward to prop something up. As soon as you push forward to prop up something the back of your hand is bound to be bent and when that happens, the elbow will turn in as a consequence and it follows that your shoulder will be strained. All this “propping” will leave you ending up with your elbow bent, too, and your shoulder will come up. In the end, not only will your arrows get less accurate, but you’ll stop being able to hold the bow properly. You’ll actually turn into a sharp-shooting cripple! That’s what would come of leaving that word “prop up” in the end. If you use “grasp”, the back of the hand has to be straight and level — level from the wrist all the way to the shoulder. You don’t have to strain at it at all: the bow-tips will come together easily, the string will be close in to your chest, and you won’t just be permanently error-free, you’ll actually get better and better the more you do it. That’s far better than having your form ruined by “propping up”.’

14A17

玉蟾道：“妹子也疑這個托字不妥。今聽姐姐之言，真是指破迷團，後人受益不淺。”綠雲道：“據妹子意思：只要好準頭，何必講究勢子，倒要費事？”亞蘭道：“姐姐這話錯了。往往人家射箭消遣，原圖舒暢筋骨，流動血脈，可以除痼疾，可以增飲食，與人有益的。若不講究勢子，即如剛才紫芝妹妹並不開弓，卻用扯弓，雖然一時無妨，若一連扯上幾天，肩肘再無不疼。倘不下腰，不下氣，一股力氣全堆胸前，久而久之，不但氣喘心跳，並且胸前還要發疼，甚至弄成勞傷之症。再加一個托字，弄的肘歪肩努，百病叢生，並不是學他消遣，倒是討罪受了。”

‘I was afraid there was something wrong with the word “prop up” as well,’ said Yuchan. ‘Hearing what you said about it has really cleared up the mystery for me. From now on, everyone will be much better off.’

‘I still think it’s all down to accuracy,’ said Lüyun. ‘Who needs all this fuss about form? It’s just a waste of time, isn’t it?’

‘No, Sister, you’ve got that wrong,’ Alan replied. ‘All along people have been doing archery for relaxation, to stretch their muscles and joints and improve their circulation. It can keep away chronic illness and increase your appetite. It’s healthy. But if you ignore proper form, like Zizhi just now wrenching the bow instead of drawing it, you might not come to any harm at first; but if you keep wrenching away for a few days your elbows and shoulders will ache all over. If you don’t get your hips down, then you can’t get your breath down to your diaphragm either, and the air pressure will build up at the front of your chest cavity. Then after a while, you’ll start panting and your heart will race and you’ll get a stitch in your chest, too. In the end, you finish up with a strain injury. Add the word “propping up” on top of all that, you’ll get a bent elbow and strained shoulder to boot, and then all sorts of injuries will crop up. Instead of learning archery for relaxation, you’ll end up sentencing yourself to punishment.’

14A18

張鳳雛道：“姐姐這番議論，真可算得‘學射金針’。”

Zhang Fengchu said, ‘This theory of yours is really a sort of “Key to Archery”.’



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