

紀效新書卷十三

射法篇

Chapter Thirteen of the 'New Book of Discipline and Effectiveness': Archery

by Qi Ji-guang¹

《烈女傳》云：“怒氣開弓，息氣放箭。”蓋怒氣開弓，則力雄而引滿。息氣放箭，則心定而慮周。

According to the 'Biographies of Eminent Women', you should “draw the bow in a state of tension and release it in a state of relaxation.” The ‘state of tension’ means coming to full draw with all your might; the ‘state of relaxation’ means that your mind should be calm and concentrated.

“量力調弓，量弓制矢。”此為至要也。故《荀子》曰：“弓矢不調，羿不能以必中。”《孟子》謂：“羿之教人射，必至於彀。”學者亦必至於彀。射家要法：“持弓矢，審、固。”、審、者，詳審。、固、者，把持堅固也。凡打袖，皆因把持不定。凡矢搖而弱，皆因彀不上指也。法曰：“彀不上指，必無中理。指不知彀，同於無目。”此、指、字，乃是左手中指末。、知彀、者，指末自知彀到：不假於目也。必指末知彀，然後為滿。必箭箭皆知彀，方可言射。

“The draw-weight of the bow corresponds to the strength of the archer and the spine of the arrow corresponds to the weight of the bow.” This is of the greatest importance. That is why, to quote ‘Xun Zi’, “If the arrow isn’t correctly spined for the bow, even Yi couldn’t score a hit with it.” In ‘Mencius’, it says, “When Yi taught archery, he insisted that that [students] drew their bows fully.” Our students must also draw their bows fully. The archer’s most important technique is “Grasping the bow, concentration and firm stance.” ‘Concentration’ is minute attention [to your shooting]; ‘firm stance’ refers to maintaining a firm grip on the bow. The string slapping against the sleeve is always caused by an insufficiently steady grip on the bow. The arrow porpoising and lacking force is always due to the arrow-head failing to contact the finger. [Wang Ju’s] Manual says, “Without the arrow-head against the finger, there is no potential for a hit; if the finger doesn’t feel the arrow-head, it’s just like being blind.” ‘Finger’ here means the end joint of the middle finger of the bow-hand. ‘The finger feeling the arrow-head’ refers to the feeling the arrow-head against the joint of the middle finger – not using your eyes. You cannot achieve a full draw unless the end of your finger feels the arrowhead. You must do that with every arrow before you can really talk of shooting.

¹ Qi Ji-guang (1528–1587) was born into a military family and learned much from his father. He was appointed general in 1555 and won a decisive victory over the pirates at Taizhou (台州) in 1561. He worked effectively together with Yu Da-you to battle against the Japanese in Guangdong in 1563. He wrote two of the most popular works on Chinese military strategy and training, the ‘Substance and Discipline in Military Training’ and ‘A New Book of Discipline and Effectiveness’. (《練兵實紀》、《紀效新書》). His literary style is innovative: much of his work consists of colloquial records of lectures to his troops and commanders and reading them gives a feeling for his personality.

、審、者：審於弓滿，矢發之際。今多於大半矢之時審之，亦何益乎審者。今人皆以為審的而已。殊不知審的，審中之一事耳。蓋弓滿之際，精神已竭，手、足已虛。若卒然而發，則矢直不直，中不中，皆非由我心使之也。必加審之，使精神知易，手足安，固然後發矢。其不直，不中為何？

‘Concentrating’ is concentrating during the moment between reach full draw and releasing the arrow. Nowadays, archers start this concentrating process as soon as they have drawn the arrow over two-thirds of the way back. What good does that do them? And as for ‘concentration’, lots of people just think it’s no more than concentrating on the target. They do not realise that concentrating on the target is secondary to the issue of concentrating on how you are going to hit it. The point is, at the moment of reaching full draw, your attention is stretched to the full, your arms and legs are no longer straining. If you release without premeditation, then whether the arrow travels straight, and whether it hits is not determined by your conscious mind. You have to deepen this concentration, make your mind open,² your arms and legs firm but relaxed. After that, the arrow is released, and there is no reason for it not to fly straight, not to hit the target.

《射法》中、審、字與《大學》：“慮而後能得”、慮、字同。君子於至善，既知所止，而定靜而安矣。又必能慮焉，而後能得所止。君子於射箭，引滿之餘，發矢之際，又必加審焉，而後中的可決。欲知、審、字工夫，合於、慮、字工夫，玩味之乃得。

The word ‘concentration’ in [Wang Ju’s] Manual is the same as ‘meditation’ found in the ‘Great Learning’³: “He meditates on it and then he is able to achieve it.” When a Gentleman is seeking to perfect himself completely, he knows at what point he should have reached that [perfect] stage, and resolves to attain it, then becomes tranquil, then at peace. And he must be able to meditate on these qualities before he will be able to totally fulfil his aim. When a Gentleman is practising archery, at the point where he has already drawn his bow fully, and in the moments before he releases the arrow, he must concentrate on his shooting stance, and then he will have the assurance of hitting the target. You need to know what is behind the concept of ‘concentration’, relate it to the concept of ‘meditation’ [in the ‘Great Learning’], get completely into it and then you will succeed.

大指壓中指把弓：此至妙之古法也。決不可不從之。馬弓，決要開至九分滿。記之，記之！若七、八分，亦難中也。馬上射，把箭須以箭二枝連弓弣把定，又以一枝中弦掛，為便其有。以箭插衣領內，或插腰間，俱不便。決要從吾言！

You grip the bow with the thumb resting on the middle finger: this is the greatest of the old shooting tricks. You must never fail to apply it. In horseback archery, always release when you are [at least] ninety per cent of full draw: Never forget! It’s difficult to hit when the bow is just seventy or eighty percent drawn. When it comes to archery on horseback, you should always take two arrows, grasping one firmly against the grip of the bow while nocking the other on the string where

² 《禮記·學記》：“和易以思，可謂善喻。”

³ 《大學》：“大學之道在明明德，在親民，在止於至善。知止，而後有定，定而後能靜，靜而後能安，安而後能慮，慮而後能得。”

it is handy. Sticking arrows into your collar or belt: neither is convenient. Always do exactly as I say!

凡箭去，寧高而過的。慎勿低而不及也。此人人之病。記之，記之！場中射，須要業業。恐不中決不可有一毫之意。設如無監射各官在上，設如平日自射一般，慢慢一枝知鐵，過一枝，一枝審，過一枝：如何不中？凡中的之前可取必者，皆自從容閒暇。未有忙忽而可取必者。忙忽而有中者，亦幸耳。

Whenever your arrow goes off, it's better for it to go high and pass over the target. Watch you don't let it go low and not reach. Everyone makes this mistake. Don't forget! When you're shooting in the examination ground, you must keep your cool. The thought of missing must never enter your mind. Carry on as if there were no examining officer watching over you, just be as you would in your daily practice: one arrow – nice and slow – feel the arrowhead with your finger – next arrow – concentrate with each arrow – next arrow: how can you fail to hit? To give you that advance assurance that your are going to hit you must always be at ease and doing things in your own time. That assurance can only come from the absence of nervousness or haste. If you are hasty or nervous and you still hit, that's no more than a lucky shot.

凡射至五矢之外，猶未中的，更要從容，審。決不可因不中而自忙。若忙，則六、七、八、九矢更無中理也。

If you have still not scored a hit after your first five shots, you must still keep yourself at ease, keep up you concentration. You must never rush your movements just because you still have not scored a hit yet. If you rush your movements, then shots six to nine have no way of hitting either.

教騎射箭，法曰：“勢如追風，目如流電，滿開弓，急放箭。目勿瞬視，身勿倨坐，出弓如、懷中吐月，平箭如、弦上懸衡，息一其心志。

Wang Ju's manual for horseback archery says,

‘As powerfully as if chasing the wind,
The eye moves like a bolt of lightning,
Draw the bow fully, immediately loose off the arrow,
The eye is fixed unblinking,
You body as solid as rock,
Don't lose your momentum’

Bring up the bow like ‘the moon rising from your breast’. Place the arrow on the string like ‘placing scales on the string.’ Your breathing should co-ordinate with the actions you are carrying out in your mind.

故曰：“莫患弓軟，服當自遠。莫患力羸，引之自徑。”但力勝其弓，必先持滿。射之先近，而遠：此不易之法也。大底還要學扯滿，射遠及到，然後

自近，求準。非如一人自未開弓，便止射三、二十步起也。如此，一爲所局，豈能遠耶？

So [Wang Ju's] Manual says: "Don't worry that the bow's [draw-weight] is light: get used to it, then you'll still get a good distance from it. If you're worried that a bow's draw-weight is weak: draw it and it will naturally fire crisply." But to get sufficient strength to draw your bow you must draw it fully. Starting off by shooting at short range, then getting further away is not an easy method. Basically you still have to learn to pull the bow back to full draw and be able to cover a long distance, then you come back in and start working up your accuracy. It's not as if someone who has never pulled a bow just restricts himself to twenty to thirty paces. That's just holding oneself back. How can you ever achieve any distance?

凡射，或對賊，或對把，站定觀把子或賊。人不許看扣：目稍瞬，則不及避而制於人。此眼法也。

Whether you're shooting at an enemy or at a target, you must take a firm stance and keep your attention on your target or your enemy: don't look at the arrow while you nock it. If you blink for a moment, you may be unable to dodge in time and someone would get the better of you!

凡射，前腿似槪，後腿似癩。隨箭改移，只在後腳。左肩尖直對右腳尖，
“丁字不成，八字不就。”射右改左，射左改右，二句正中的之妙。此足法也。

Whenever you shoot, your forward leg position should be as if you were stepping on something and the rear leg should be bowed. Any movement to follow the aim of the arrow should only be with the rear foot. The bow-harm shoulder and the hip should be directly opposite the toes of the right foot, "not quite at right-angles and not quite in a 'V'". If you are shooting the right, move onto the left foot; if you are shooting to the left, shift onto the right foot: these two phrases express the knack of scoring a direct hit. That covers foot position.

凡射，前手如推泰山，後手如握虎尾。一拳主定，前、後直正。慢開弓，緊放箭。射大：存於小，射小：加於大。、存、：壓其前手。、加、：舉其前手。務水平：前手撒，後手絕。二句射之元機。、一撒一絕、：正相應之妙。一齊著力，使兩臂、膊伸。合則箭疾而加於尋常數等矣！此手法也。

Then you [push forward] your bow-hand as if pushing away Mount *Tai*; and your string hand is like hauling on a tiger's tail. One fist keeps control, keep the front and back fists level and straight, draw the bow slowly then release with your hands held tense. If the target is big (close), drop the hand to the small [area of the target you are aiming at]. If the target is small (distant), raise your hand to aim at the whole of it. 'Dropping' the hand means dropping the bow-hand, while 'raising' means raising the bow-hand. These two phrases are fundamental to archery. The bow hand 'thrusts' and the string hand 'snaps': this is the knack of co-ordination. Take up the strain evenly [in both arms] and make both arms and shoulders extend. If you do this right, the arrow will go fast and will reach sever times further than the normal way. That wraps up hand technique.

凡射，頤惡榜引，頭惡卻垂，胸惡前凸，背惡後僵，乃身之病。此身法也。

“Positioning the cheek next to the string, the neck arching back, the chest jutting out, the spine arching backwards — all of these are error of stance. That wraps up stance.

凡射，箭搖頭，乃是右手大、食指扣弦太緊之故。其扣弦太緊之故，是無名、小指鬆開之故。學射者有此病。射時，用小草梢一寸，用無名指、小指共掐於手心。箭去而草不墜，即箭不搖擺矣！

If the arrow doesn't fly straight, the problem stems from the draw-hand thumb hooking the string too tightly. This is in turn caused by the ring finger and little finger being open and relaxed. This is a beginner's error. When you shoot, try pressing an inch or so of straw between your ring finger/little finger and the base of the palm of your hand. The straw mustn't fall when you release, and then the arrow will fly straight.

凡對敵射箭，只是箇膽大，力定，勢險，節短，則無不中人：無人能避矣！此狀形容不出大端。將弓扯起，且勿盡滿，且勿輕發。只是四平架手，立定，則勢自險矣！必待將近數十步約我，一發必能中敵，必能殺人至死。

When you fire in the face of the enemy, as long as you keep up your courage, keep the level of your strength stable, keep your potential energy high and restrain it on a short leash, then every shot will strike home and no-one will be able to get away from you. To achieve this, you need to keep all of your actions short of the maximum: draw but do not pull the bow to the full extent of your strength; and make sure every shot counts. Only with your arms straight and even can you take a firm stance: this will naturally make you potential energy high. You need to wait until the enemy is within a few dozen paces so that you are sure of hitting with a single shot you are sure to make a kill.

或患將切身，或爲賊先鋒，一中而收利十倍，節自短矣。馬上之賊，只當看大的，射不可射人。諺云：“射人先射馬，擒賊必擒頭”是也。

If you are worried about being at close quarters or the enemy's blades are nearly upon you: this way each shot will be rewarded ten-fold. When you are involved with the enemy in cavalry warfare, shoot the largest target on the field: don't just shoot at people. The famous poem goes:

*[“When you pull a bow, then pull a bow that's strong,
And when you fire an arrow, fire the one that's long!]
Before you shoot the rider shoot the horse,
First take the leader, ere you take the rebel throng!”*

凡馬，須要平日適飼養，時調度，縱躡，聽令，進止，觸物不驚，馳道不削。前兩腳從耳下齊出，後兩腳向前倍之，則疾且穩，而人可用器矣。馬者，人之命。胡馬慣戰數倍中國。居常調度之功也。

Always attend to your horse's appropriate feeding and seasonal rota. Train her to pace correctly, to be obedient over moving on and stopping, not to panic when she encounters obstacles, and not to cut corners at the gallop. The forelegs should move forward together from the level of the ears, and the rear legs need to come forward co-ordinated with the front legs. This makes the movement both quick and stable, allowing the rider to use his weapons. A man's life depends on his horse. The steppe-land horses are used to warfare much more than those of the Chinese. This is the fruit of regular training.

[Note: the following text and illustrations make little sense. They may have been misprinted in the woodblock printed version. There are insufficient differences between the two illustrations to judge what the text is meant to mean.]

實握射圖

此法，弓滿左肱直如弦，而弓斜如月，前平奶頭。

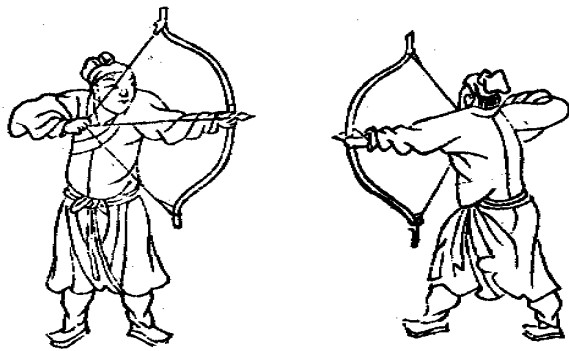


Illustration of the 'Firm Grip' Archery Method

According to this method, when the bow is fully-drawn, the left forearm is straight like the bowstring and the bow tilts like the moon. The bow-arm is level with the nipple.

掌心推射圖。

此法，弓滿則肱之曲心對下，肘平如衡，而弓須兼八分平勢。

Illustration of the 'Pushing with the Flat of the Palm' Archery Method

According to this method, when the bow is fully-drawn, the outside of the elbow points down and the elbow itself is straight like the arms of a balance. The bow must be held at the eighty per cent of level position.

