

Photographs of republican period archery

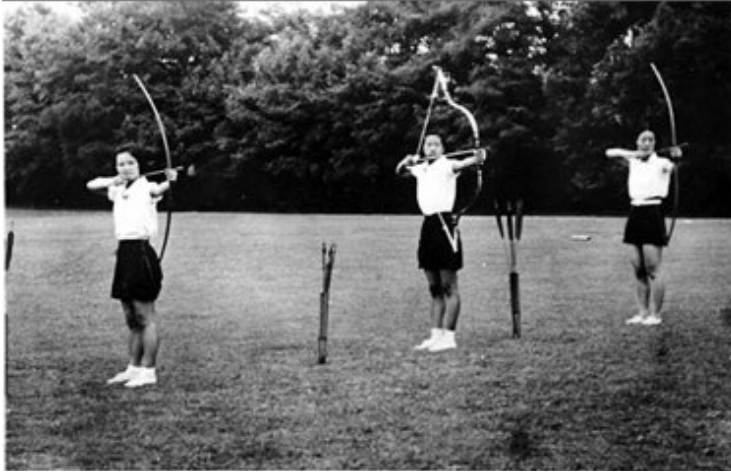
By Peter Dekker, August 16, 2013



1.) Photograph of [Kwan Tak Hing](#). Exact date and photographer unknown. Probably 1950's.

Comments:

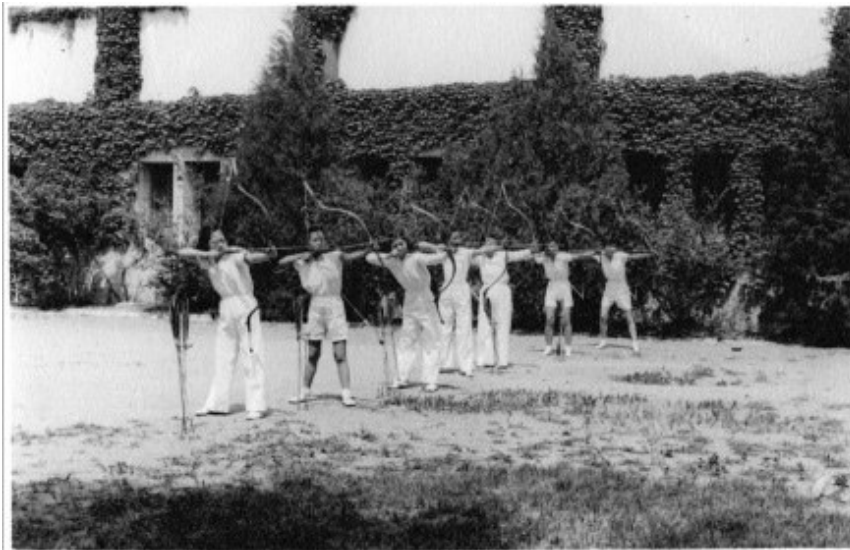
The actor who played Wong Fei Hung pulling a seemingly heavy but thoroughly patched-up old bow of the type that was used for the military strength tests up to 1908. The strings are not directly attached to the ends of the bow anymore, probably due to a twist in the limbs that makes pulling it from the ends prone to it unstringing itself. Although it looks impressive, and probably is, we don't know for sure how much force the bow may have lost in time.



2.) Jinling Women's University archers

Comments:

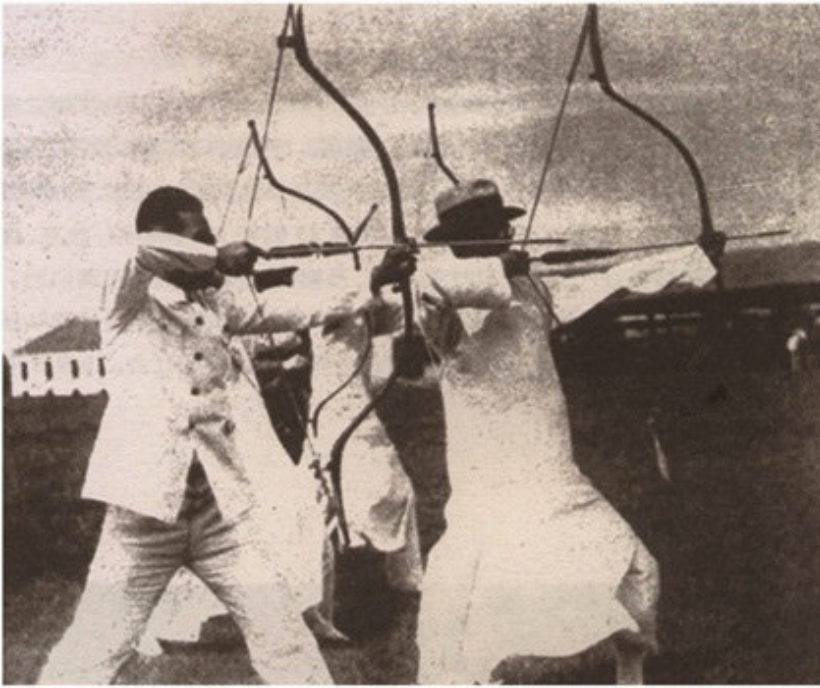
[Jinling Women's University](#) was China's first women's university, a Christian university founded in 1913 in Nanjing, China. It was the first university in China where women could get a degree. Jinling Women's University was merged with the Jinling University in 1951, known in English as the University of Nanking. See [more pictures of the university](#) including one of Western style archery practiced there with an English longbow.



3.) Yanjing University students shooting in 1941.

Comments:

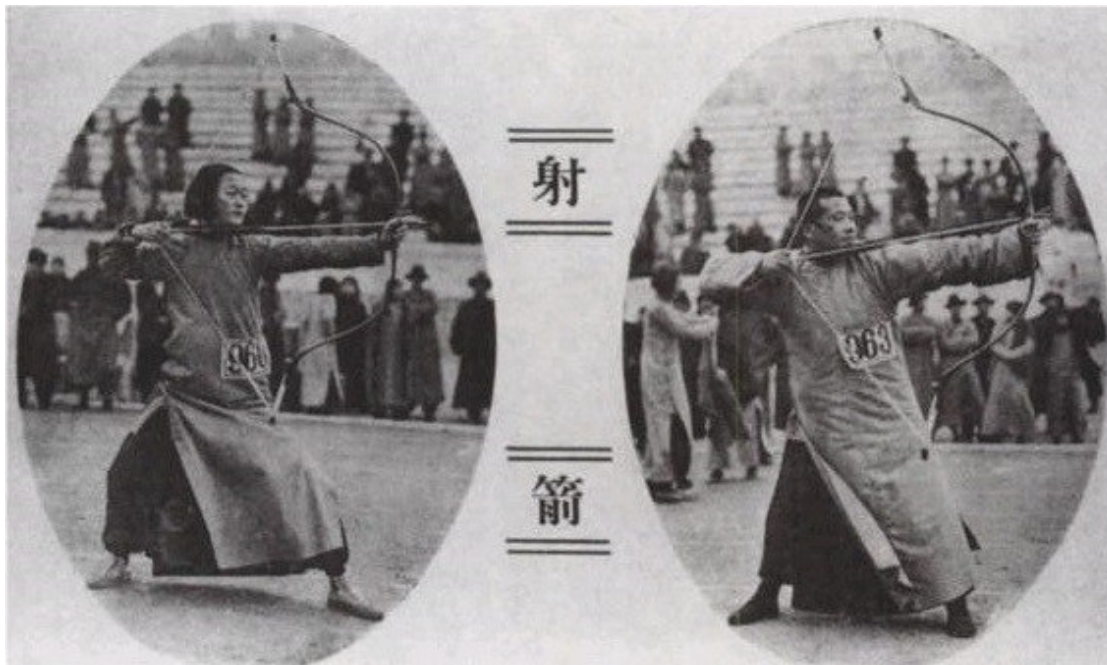
[Yenching University](#) was a Christian university in Beijing, founded in 1919. It offered classes with traditional Chinese bows and arrows as part of their athletic program.



4.) Archers of the "Wuhan Riding and Shooting Club", 1934.

Comments:

Some archers, in quite fancy dress, of a group that called themselves the "[Wuhan](#) Riding and Shooting Club, or 武汉骑射会. They don't use the traditional thumb draw but alternative draws with the fingers. You see this more often in the republican period where the art of using the thumb ring was dying out and archery was slowly shifting towards Western olympic styles.



5.) Two archers at the Chinese archery championships, 1933.

Comments:

Two Chinese Archery Champions in 1933. Source: Photo reprinted in [Morris \(2004\)](#). Originally published in *Qingdao shi tiyu xiejinhui*, eds., *Liang zhounian gongzou zongbaogao*. From Ben Judkin's article [Through a Lens Darkly \(21\): Chinese Archery's Troubled Republic Era Revival](#)



6.) Archery and pellet bow shooting at the 5th National Games in 1933. Contributed by Zhang Lifei.

Comments:

Rare photographs of Chinese pellet bow archery which according to Qi Jiguang was the summit of

instinctive archery. It is so difficult because there is no arrow to aim past and the release requires a flick of the wrist for the pellet not to hit the hand.



7.) A scan from micro film of a special issue about the 1933 National Games. Contributed by Zhang Lifei.

Comments:

It contains portraits and names of archers from the Republican era. The portrait on the right is the

winner of game, called Zhou Jie Chen, from Beijing. The right middle shows the second of the game, Nan Hai Lian's posture of shooting. He is also from Beijing. The three Gentlemen in the bottom are archers from Henan province, all at elderly age.



1935年，旧中国第6届全运会女子射中冠军王家桢（湖南）

8.) Hunan archer Wang Jia Zhen, shooting in 1935. Contributed by Zhang Lifei.

Comments:

Sporting a really nice bow in typical 19th century style. Take note of her special technique with thumb

pointing upwards against the grip. This is also seen among Tibetan archers.



9.) Henan archer Ma Ruilan, performing in 1953. Contributed by Zhang Lifei.

Comments:

Note the stance reminds of Chinese martial arts forms and the draw hand shows a three finger draw instead of a thumb draw.





10.) Demonstration of a heavy bow puller. Hedda Morrision. Published in: "A Photographer in Old Peking".

Comments:

It seems he might be part of a demonstration that goes with a trades person. Judging from the sign, they seem to be promoting a medicinal herb called 牛茂 or "oxen herb" from their company Sheng Tang, or "Hall of Life".



11.) Heavy bow pulling, unknown place, time or photographer.

Comments:

A puller of a heavy bow, notice how he really puts his back muscles into it. The foreign onlooker is interesting. I wonder whether someone can link his uniform to a specific country and period.

Comments, questions? Discuss Manchu archery in our Facebook group:

