

# *The Misunderstanding about Traditional Japanese Archery is Caused by the Influence of Chinese Culture*

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**Abstract:** This paper mainly studies people's misunderstanding of Japanese traditional archery because of the influence of Chinese culture and the substantial influence of Chinese culture on Japanese traditional archery. This paper adopts qualitative research methods to compare and study the literature. With the development of research, I found that the origin of Japanese traditional archery has nothing to do with China, and it exists in an independent bow species. Moreover, the substantial influence of Chinese culture on Japanese traditional archery lies in ritual culture, architectural style, sacrificial way and inner thought. This study confirms the independence of the origin of Japanese traditional archery, refutes the idea in Chinese society that Japanese culture is entirely derived from China, and discovers the real influence. This study contributes to the current knowledge base, that is, the relationship between Japanese traditional archery and Chinese culture, which is helpful for the spread of Japanese traditional archery in China.

**Keywords:** Japanese Archery, Traditional Chinese archery, Misunderstanding

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

When I was watching a documentary about Maya, I saw that some Chinese people thought that the Maya civilization came from Chinese civilization, and the statue of the Maya corn god was a Chinese dragon. But in fact, it is only seemingly, but there is no direct correlation. I realized that many people believed that traditional Japanese archery was the result of sending Tang envoys to China to study. However, I think the emergence of bows and arrows is the inevitable outcome of history. Every primitive tribe would make bows and arrows for hunting and fighting, and there is no place where they were handed down [1].

#### **1.1.1. Definitions of Traditional Japanese Archery**

Now traditional Japanese archery is called Kyudo, and the bow used for archery is called Yumi (Wakyu). The original word for archery in Japan was kyujutsu, not Kyudo. Kyujutsu is the archery skill and technique that archers need to learn and master. These different archery techniques are called Ryu for the original purpose of hunting, war, and so on. These ancient genres survive in Japanese school promotions, rituals, and games. However, today, the purpose of Japanese archery is no longer simple survival and sacrifice but transformed into a spiritual symbol. This transformed Kyujutsu into

Kyudo. *Modern Kyudo is practiced primarily as a method of physical, moral, and spiritual development. Kyudo's essence is said to be synonymous with the pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty* (Meishin Kyudojo) [1, 2].

## 1.2 The Topic and Research Question

Today, with the revival of traditional Chinese culture, Chinese culture is becoming more and more influential in the world, and Chinese people's cultural confidence is becoming stronger and stronger. This powerful culture has led many people to believe that many historical things in the world originated in China, which has led to a trend called "Japanese and Tang" (This word refers to the fact that all Japanese culture originates from China). I doubt the idea, therefore, I hope to test this idea through traditional Japanese archery. And this is my research question "Is it true that traditional Japanese archery originated in China? Why do people have this misunderstanding about traditional Japanese archery?"

## 1.3 Method

I will use the qualitative method to solve my question. Because the topic I'm investigating is the question of origin, which is rarely answered in the modern world. This question needs to be analyzed on the basis of a large number of historical facts and logical reasoning before it can be concluded. I intend to verify the authenticity of the origin of Japanese traditional archery from China by means of a literature survey and explain the origin of most people's ideas by studying the influence of Chinese culture in Japan.

## 2. The Misunderstanding About Traditional Japanese Archery

### 2.1 Most People's Views on Traditional Japanese Archery

Many Chinese think that the birth of the Chinese bow and arrow precedes the birth of the Japanese bow and arrow, and it had more advanced archery and bow-making technology than Japan. Therefore, the traditional Japanese archery was brought to Japan from China by the Ambassadors of the Tang Dynasty.

### 2.2 Historical Analysis

The original Japanese bow appeared around the inception of the Jomon Period (13,000 to 10,000 years ago) and was mainly used for hunting. Some of the bows were painted and decorated, possibly for sacrificial purposes. After entering the Yayoi Period, Japanese society began to transform from hunter-dominated to agriculture-dominated, and bows were used as a weapon to fight with people. The Yumi, which is the bow used in Kyudo was also prototyped during this period. (Chen Shou, The second half of the third century). During the Asuka Period, Emperor Jomei sent the first tang envoys to China to study. At this point, the shape of Yumi is almost formed. In an ancient Chinese text called (The Chronicles of The Three Kingdoms, The Book of Wei and the Biography of the Japanese people), it is recorded that the bottom of the wooden bow from Japan is short, however, it is long at the top. And the arrows are made of Bamboo, arrowheads are made of bones or iron, which is completely different from the arrows and arrowheads from 儋耳 and 朱崖 (which is an ancient minority living in the present Hainan area). It can be seen that the Bows and arrows of Japan are completely different from those of Central China and even stranger than those of ethnic minorities, which surprised the ancient Chinese [2, 3].

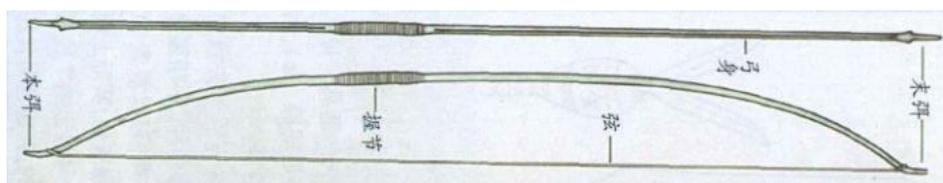


Figure 1. The maru wooden bow is a type of Japanese bow, admin, 2020, Yumi long at the top and short at the bottom.

At the same time, according to the records of (Da-Tang-Liu-Dian), there are four types of bows in the Tang Dynasty of China. One is the Chang bow (160cm to 170cm long, used by infantry), the other is the Jiao bow (used by cavalry), the third is the Shao bow (for close shooting), and the fourth is the Ge bow (decorated with feathers, used in sacrificial scenes). Yumi is famous for its length, which was over 195 cm in the Asuka period. The longest bow in Tang density was only 170 centimeters at that time. This once again proves that Yumi did not originate in China [4, 5].



Figure 2. Chang bow, Yi Wei Map, 『仪卫图』 in Chang Le Princess's Tomb.

### 2.3 Chinese and Japanese have Different Archery Styles

The traditional Japanese archery method is unique. Not only is the bow used in traditional Japanese archery extremely long, and people draw their bows at what's called super-large firing distances. Traditional Japanese archery arrows are 85 to 100 centimeters long. Mete/Kate (The name given to the right hand in traditional Japanese archery) has even reached the point where people need to drop their elbows. The archer usually defines the draw distance from the full bow. Small pull distance in the bowstring but lips or strings at the corners of the mouth; However, in the long distance, the bowstring will be located at the ear side, and at the most, it will reach the zygomatic side of the face. In traditional Japanese archery, the bowstring can extend beyond the head, usually, the bowstring does not extend beyond the corners of the mouth [6].

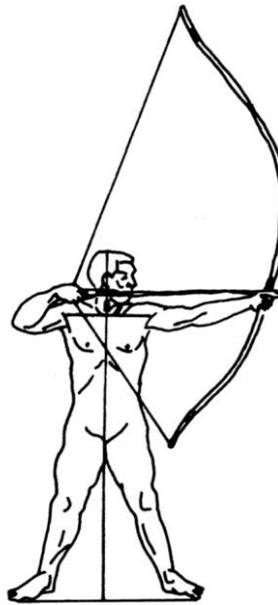


Figure 3. The super-large distance of traditional Japanese archery, MATTHIEU CASALIS, 1998.

In the Tang Dynasty, the small distance was popular. All the traditional bows of the Tang Dynasty mentioned above were drawn with a small distance. No matter what kind of traditional bow of the Tang Dynasty, it can be seen in the Murals of the Tang Dynasty that the way of drawing the bow is small [7].



Figure 4. Dunhuang murals record the small distance of archery map of the Sui and Tang dynasties.

If you've ever seen a video of shooting a traditional Japanese bow, you'll see that it's not fired like any other bow. Both the competitive recurve bow and any traditional bow are drawn on the side of the body. Traditional Japanese archery is completely different. The archer should raise the bow directly in front of the body (this is called uchi-okoshi), then with all the stretching power of the left arm push the bow, establish the grip of the left hand (Tenouchi) at the intermediate stage of the draw (Daisan). (International Kyudo federation) In the final part of shooting, the traditional Japanese bow that the archer used can reach the right side of the body, which can be considered a way to draw the bow from the front [8].

This also proves that traditional Japanese archery did not originate in China. They have their own unique bow, with a unique way of archery.

### 3. The influence of China

#### 3.1 The Culture of “Lei” (礼)

China is a country of rites, rites and music culture is the symbol of ancient Chinese civilization. This culture also gradually spread to east Asian countries, Japan is also extremely far-reaching influence. Around the 4th and 5th centuries, Japan began diplomatic relations with China under the emperor of Tianjin. At that time, many Chinese classics were spread to Japan, among which the Book of Rites (礼记) had the greatest influence on the cultural core of Japanese traditional archery. It is recorded in the Book of Rites: Benevolence is like archery competition: the archer should first correct his posture and then release the arrow. If you miss, you don't hate those who win, you can only find the reason for yourself. (射者，仁之道也。射求正诸己，己正而后发。发而不中，则不怨胜己者，反求诸己而已矣。孔子曰，君子无所争，必也射乎。揖让而升，下而饮，其争也君子。) This has influenced the internal thought of traditional Japanese archery, in the 4th century, the integration of the Book of Rites with the native Japanese ideology of ITO (dignity and virtue) led to the birth of another archery model called Sharei (射礼) [9, 11].

Sharei has always been ritualized shooting performances to celebrate religious ceremonies or other formal occasions. At the same time, it is based on etiquette to regulate some daily rules of behavior. *In the classical writings of the Raiki, which says, "This shooting is the bequeathed teachings of the sage, in which the round of moving forward or backward can never be without courtesy and propriety.* Under the solemn ceremony that begins with ceremony and ends with ceremony, archery is no longer a tool for Japanese people to survive, but a higher state of mind with grace and solemnity. This was a major change, and traditional Japanese archery was split from Kyujutsu into Kyudo. The core thought of ritual culture is also consistent with the truth, goodness and beauty in modern Bow Taoism, and the goodness in it is similar to the thought in the book of Rites in the preceding text. The archer should shoot with a common mind and an undisputed mind, and if they fail to hit the bull's eye, they must have some other thoughts in their mind.

The repetition of ritual culture and the similarity of thought make people think that traditional Japanese archery originated from China [10].

#### 3.2 The Culture of “Feng Shui”

The ancient Chinese paid attention to feng shui, whose history can be traced back more than 5,000 years. Yin-yang and five elements, the eight diagrams and so on have become the name cards of China and spread around the world. During the Sui and Tang dynasties, feng shui was introduced to Japan by ambassadors, monks, and koreans. Later, on this basis, combined with the local architecture and culture, Japan developed the family physiognomy similar to the Chinese yangzhai feng shui, and the geomognomy similar to the Chinese yinzhai feng shui. This also influenced the architecture of modern Kyudojo (One of Japan's traditional archery venues). Since the introduction of guns in Japan during the Warring States Period, the traditional Japanese archery was basically abolished in the war and transformed into a tool for sacrifice and self-cultivation of the warrior class. At this point Kyudojo is set up in large numbers, Kyudojo is ideal for the direction of south or southeast, because the ancient Chinese emperor sat north to south, so there is the saying that the bow to the south.

Similarities in architectural mores might also suggest that traditional Japanese archery originated in China [14].

### 3.3 The Influence of Religion

Archery has been used for exorcism and sacrifice since ancient times. Japanese bows and feathers painted in the Jomon period may also be evidence of sacrifice. The emperor of The Shang and Zhou dynasties also had the habit of offering sacrifices and controlling princes through ritual shooting. In the Book of Rites, it is recorded that "the emperor's great shot was called 'marquis of archery'. If the people hit the target, he can be the feudal prince; if the people missed the target, he cannot be the feudal prince. He who hits the target can participate in the sacrifice, but not the one who misses." (《礼记》) 故天子之大射，谓之‘射侯’，射中则得为诸侯，射不中则不得为诸侯。射中者得与于祭，不中者不得与于祭。” This shows the importance of archery in religion. With the development of ritual archery in Japan, Chinese influence could also be seen in religious rituals [11].

#### 3.3.1. The Influence of Exorcism

Traditional Japanese shrines hold exorcisms. Esteemed archers use the azisayumi (あずさゆみ), a special exorcism, to shoot whistling arrows that purify ghosts wherever they reach. This ritual, which has been carried down from the Heian period to modern times, is actually influenced by China. According to the Sacred Scriptures, it's said "There is a monster in the mountains of the West. It's huge and doesn't afraid of people. People called the monster afraid mandrills. later, people found that the noise made by gunpowder can scare away the mandrills." (《神异经》“西方山中有怪，非常巨大，性不怕人，名曰山魈惊惮，随后人们发现使用火药发出的响声可以吓走山鬼。”) The custom of exorcising ghosts through sound was brought to Japan through the dispatch of tang envoys. And Japan has developed its own unique cultural style of archery.

It is also possible to believe that traditional Japanese archery originated in China by means of exorcism through sound [12, 13].

#### 3.3.2. The Influence of Zen Na Buddhism and Taoism

Since Taoism and Zen Buddhism were introduced into Japan successively, Japanese traditional archery also derived new ideas, which entered the field of philosophy. Zhuang Zhou, one of the representatives of Taoism, once said, "I dream of butterflies, or butterflies dream of me." Taoist ideas about the link between nothingness and reality influenced the Kyudo's relationship between bow, arrow, target and archer. Zen in the Art of Archery says, "Am I drawing my bow full, or is the bow pulling me?" Did I hit the target or did the target hit me? Among them, the idea that bow, arrow, target, and man are in fact one extends the viewpoint of Tai Yi (太一) of Taoism.

There is another point in Kyudo that cannot be ignored, that the ultimate goal of archery is to achieve the state of Zen, not just to hit the target. This idea was influenced by Zen Buddhism, which is a way of not forgetting that everything is impermanent and not allowing yourself to be careless and loose. Kyudo also mentions that each arrow is a unique time, takes each shot seriously, and focuses on the shot itself [15-17].

### 4. Conclusion

There are cultural similarities between China and Japan, but it doesn't mean that all Japanese culture comes from China. Japanese traditional archery has its own unique bow, archery method, and historical origin, which are completely different from Chinese traditional archery, which can prove that the origin of Japanese traditional archery has nothing to do with China. However, in the course of history, it was inevitably influenced by Chinese culture, mainly developing in ritual shooting, architectural style, religious ceremony, and inner thought. It is an undisputable misconception that

Japanese culture is completely influenced by China. Every nation has its own unique cultural style, even though Japan is partly influenced by China, it also extends its own cultural style. For example, the modern Kyudo is a unique and unique archery sport in the world, as well as a unique way to cultivate one's morality.

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