Chapter 1: Bow-wielding Aristocrats of Early Zhou

The bow's origin is difficult to determine as there are competing evidences of its early existence in different regions. These include pre-historic cave drawings of archers in Spain and France, as well as remnants of pinewood bows in Germany's Stellmoor site. Perhaps the bow does not have a single origin, but historians who dare to name one surmise either Africa or the Eurasian steppes.[1] Rock paintings in North Africa indicate that archery was widespread in the region by late Stone Age. This is matched by an impressive claim by a Chinese historian of a 28,000-year old arrowhead from Shaanxi Province.[2] Archery expert Stephen Selby warns, however, that Paleolithic specimens are too crude for posterity to be certain about their use. He confirms instead that the oldest known arrowheads in China date from middle Stone Age.[3]

Setting aside questions of origin, what can be said for sure is that China has one of the richest and most sustained archery traditions in the world. As in other ancient civilizations, archery in China evolved from a survival skill of primitive hunters to a status symbol of the ruling class. What is interesting in the Middle Kingdom is how the bow became deeply entrenched in the royal customs and learning institutions of its first dynasties. The matter is important for the study. The originators – writers, compilers, and editors – of the principal texts to be examined in the core chapters of this book were individuals associated with ruist tradition, that is, specialists in court rituals and manuscripts who served (or sought to serve) feudal rulers. Confucius stands as the most influential and revered figure of the tradition. Michael Nylan aptly refers to ruists as "classicists" for their commitment to preserving and transmitting the traditions of the first dynasties.[4]

This first chapter scours through historical and literary sources to reconstruct a panorama of archery in the first dynasties. A plethora of details can be brought up. For convenience, data about the bow are classified under three areas: military-athletic practice, ritual tradition, and narratives and poetry. These areas seem to capture best the bow's significance in Chinese antiquity and are background to views about archery found in the *Analects*, *Mencius*, and *Xunzi*. It will be evident from the ensuing discussion that the three areas are intertwined with some details deserving mention in more than one place. The fact is, military-athletic practices were imbued with rituals, and rituals called to mind martial ancestors. In turn, battle stories and ritual culture naturally surface in the oral and written traditions that circulated in early China.

The Bow in Warfare and Sports

"There are thirty-six military weapons, the foremost among them is the bow; there are eighteen martial skills, the leading one is archery." The prominence of archery pronounced in these words by Song dynasty writer Hua Yue 華岳 would have been true from the dawn of Chinese civilization. Even before the rise of the first dynasties, pre-historic remains of fortified dwellings in the Yellow River region indicate that fierce fighting among its inhabitants relied heavily on projectile weapons.[5] Bone and stone arrow heads – typical finds in Neolithic sites in Shaanxi Province – confirm that bows and arrows were widely used by ethnic groups which came together and in time gave rise to the Bronze Age cultures linked to the first dynasties.[6] Among the Neolithic groups were tribes resistant to the mainstream culture that was taking

shape, such as the Yi 夷 whose ideogram implies that they bore large bows.[7] The Yi are mentioned in the *Analects* as barbarians whom Confucius wished to instruct (cf. An 9.14).

What is clear from sources and cultural relics of early China is that a strong association existed between the bow and political authority. This is patent, for instance, in Zhou bronze vessels commemorating investitures of feudal lords. An early Zhou tureen, the *Yihou Ze gui* 宜侯矢簋, records a handsome reward of territory and symbols of power to an allied prince, including "a red lacquered bow and one hundred red-lacquered arrows" (Li 2013, 129-131).

Military historians observe that early Zhou culture took largely from their Shang predecessors. The Shang people were adept in metallurgy as attested by the workshops for manufacturing weapons and vessels excavated from their supposed capital.[8] Zhou conquerors continued, multiplied, and diversified the trade throughout the feudal states they created. Among the weapons inherited by the Zhou was the "horn bow," or *Jiao Gong* 角弓, whose exquisite crafting inspired verses in the *Shijing*. The horn bow was a composite reflex arc with bone or ivory string-holders (*mi* 弭) attached to the extremities.[9] "Composite" refers to the mixed material used for its manufacture – wood enhanced with metal, bone, and animal or plant byproducts –, while "reflex" refers to its powerful recurve mechanism. So superb were its parts and tedious its fabrication that only the wealthy could afford it.[10] Different types of bows can be made out from pictographs on Shang artefacts, but it was the long composite bow – as tall as a man by Zhou times – which remained widely used in succeeding dynasties.

Bows are almost impossible to recognize from Bronze Age excavations because they were mostly made of organic material. Archery archeology thus relies heavily on arrowhead specimens made from resilient material such as stones, jade, or metal. Shang custom of storing

bows with metal clamps (*bi* 柲) also facilitates the work of archeologists.[11] This accessory along with bamboo frames also used for storing bows reflect aristocratic archers' concern over keeping their precious weapons aligned or straight. The bow was thus associated with aligning and straightening, or *zheng* 正, an ideogram of derivative significance in early Confucian moral discourse. Allusions to the clamp and frame in the *Shijing* show how the bow was treated as an object of great care as well as prestige.[12]

Funerary arrangements in excavations mirrored battle formations and paraphernalia and thus give insight into Shang and Western Zhou warfare. Warfare appears to have centered around chariot-mounted fighters assisted by infantry. The prominence of chariots and abundant use of projectiles and long weapons indicate that battle formations were generally loose rather than close-combat style.[13] Famed horse breeders, the Zhou people deployed more war horses and used wider, more ornate chariots. Chariot-mounted fighters were multiplied and became the principal striking force in Zhou battle strategies.

Military historians also rely heavily on historical classics such as the *Zuo Zhuan* 左傳, a Warring States commentary of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* 春秋 which was in turn a record of events around the state of Lu in the centuries immediately before and during the lifetime of Confucius.[14] Accordingly, Zhou armies appear to have been organized in groups of warriors referred to as *ren* 人 – literally "people," that is, commoners with social status who numbered in the hundreds and were directly under the command of the army head –, and a larger group referred to as *zhong* 眾, literally "masses," folks by the thousands conscripted for war and labor. Infantry was equipped with combat weapons but also included ranks of archers. Accounts of warfare in the *Zuo Zhuan* dwell heavily on confrontations between chariot-mounted fighters with

each chariot team consisting in an archer assisted by drivers and weapons bearers.[15] Popular heroes from these narratives emerge as iconic figures in the *Mencius* and *Xunzi*.

The high social standing of chariot fighters – especially archers – can be glimpsed from battle narratives and side anecdotes in the *Zuo Zhuan*. It is curious, for instance, how chariot teams driving into hostile grounds elicit gestures of deference. There was, as it were, mutual recognition and respect for persons of noble rank between camps. Mounted archers determined the course of war by leading encounters, observing codes of conduct, and keeping fighting within reasonable limits. Ritual conduct at war was so important that battles were ignited or aggravated by failure to conform.[16]

A nuance in Eastern Zhou was the introduction of the crossbow, or *nu* 弩, an instrument which became the principal weapon of Warring States armies. The ideogram does not appear in the *Analects* nor *Mencius* but does so in *Xunzi*. A comparison between the traditional bow and the crossbow demonstrates the growing violence perceived and lamented in early Confucian literature. The crossbow required more strength than skill to handle and all four limbs were needed to load it. A trigger mechanism kept it in full draw and enabled it to fire arrows in quick succession. The same mechanism increased arrow speed allowing it to penetrate layers of hardened leather, the equivalent of protective armor at the time. The crossbow, however, did not entirely replace traditional bows. In the battlefield, it was too cumbersome for mounted archers to handle, while on ritual grounds, it was skill more than strength that mattered in shooting.

Eastern Zhou refers to the second half of Zhou dynasty when its embattled rulers moved the capital eastwards from Shaanxi to Luoyi in present day Luoyang province. Eastern Zhou is further divided into the Spring & Autumn era and the Warring States, periods of escalating

power struggle and instability which were the times of Confucius and his early followers. Apart from the proliferation of crossbows, the growing violence of Eastern Zhou is also captured in arrowhead designs: these become more fatal with longer bodies and pronounced barbs. Pyramidal tips also appear.[17] The evolution seen in archery relics echo wider developments that impacted all levels of society: chariot fighters were replaced by cavalry units, military professionals took charge of battles, cheaper and abundant iron enabled mass production of weapons, new levies were imposed to fund warfare, and peasants were conscripted through population registration.[18] The repercussions of these on common folk put in context appeals by early Confucian thinkers for rulers to have compassion for the people, or *min* 民.

Military training and athletic practice went hand-in-hand in antiquity. In China, this can be seen in the forms of training employed by Zhou feudal states to prepare soldiers, for example, wrestling, running in full armor, jumping over hurdles, and pulling boats upstream. These were emblematic feats of strength compared and contrasted with shooting skill by early Confucian thinkers.

It is evident from archeology that the aristocrats of the first dynasties were hunting enthusiasts who highly valued shooting skill. A Shang dynasty bronze turtle, the *Zuoce Ban* 作冊般, bears a bragging inscription about the monarch who aimed at a turtle during a river cruise, he "shot four arrows and none of them missed the target" (Li 2013, 73-74). Oracle-bones used for divination show rulers' preoccupation with having favorable conditions for holding a chase. Hunting was a privileged occasion for honing shooting skill, and it would seem from the *Liji* 禮記 – an early Han ritual classic with pre-Han elements[19] – that the monarch trained young nobles in military skills during royal hunts: "the son of Heaven, by means of hunting, teaches how to

use the five weapons of war, and the rules for the management of horses" ("Yue Ling 月令", *Liji,* trans. James Legge).[20] Hunts were governed by strict protocols and ritually-minded officers were in place to ensure their observance. The *zhi shi* 志士, or "scholar of resolve," extolled by Mencius would have been a ritually-minded officer in one such occasion who was not swayed by an ill-mannered king (M 3B.1, 5B.7; cf. An 15.9).

Royal hunts also served political and diplomatic purposes as opportunities for rulers to sign pacts, inspect territories, or simply showcase power. A number of poems in the *Shijing* contain rich details about the pompous organization and paraphernalia of royal hunts and processions. Ornate weapons and chariots, decorated hounds and horses were displayed by the entourage of huntsmen, officials, and various assistants accompanying the monarch. Some verses extol royal archers for shooting prowess, apparently legitimizing their ability to rule: "He discharges one arrow at five wild boars. Ah! He is the Zhou Yu!" (Mao 25), or "the males in season of very large size; the ruler says, 'To the left of them,' then he lets go his arrows and hits" (Mao 127).[21] There were sprawling enclosures for game among which large and exotic ones were reserved targets for the monarch. Rulers displayed their authority not only through their shooting ability but also in coordinating hunters for the catch: "The bows and arrows were adjusted to one another; the archers acted in unison, helping us to rear a pile of game… So did the officers conduct this expedition, without any clamor in the noise of it. Truly a princely man is the [king]; Great indeed are his achievements" (Mao 179). It is clear from Mencius' pointed encounters with royal interlocutors that hunts continued to be a favorite pastime and extravagant affair of the ruling elite of Eastern Zhou.

Archery also came in handy for entertaining guests for whom lavish receptions involving shooting performances or arrow games (*touhu* 投壺) were held.[22] The "Guest Archery," or *Bin*

she 賓射 mentioned in the *Zhouli*, was a friendly shooting competition organized for visiting princes and dignitaries. The *Shijing* sings of one such event and draws attention to the instrument and skill of the royal shooter:

The ornamented bows are strong,	敦弓既堅，
And the four arrows are all balanced.	四鍭既鈞。
They discharge the arrows, and all hit,	舍矢既均，
And the guests are arranged according to their skill.	序賓以賢。
The ornamented bows are drawn full,	敦弓既句，
And the four arrows are grasped in the hand.	既挾四鍭。
They go straight to the mark as if planted in it	四鍭如樹，
…You have made us drink to the full of your spirits;	… 既醉以酒，
You have satiated us with your kindness.	既飽以德。

(“Xing Wei 行葦”, Mao 246, *Shijing*)[23]

The ode depicts the merry, festive ambience surrounding shooting performances. Sumptuous food, music, and demonstrations of prowess contrived to impress royal guests. Other poems about Guest Archery, however, mention unflattering details. Amidst careful seating arrangements, polite greetings, and detailed shooting procedures, rounds of toasting between entertainers and guests threatened to turn such events into drinking bouts. Confucius’ remarks

against love of wine may well be imagined in the context of how fancy shooting rituals tended to end.[24] The following lines are the moralizing conclusion of an ode about Guest Archery:

Thus when they have drunk too much	是曰既醉，
they become insensible of their errors;	不知其郵。
With their caps on one side, and like to fall off	側弁之俄，
they keep dancing and will not stop	屢舞僊僊。
…Remaining after they are drunk	… 醉而不出，
is what is called doing injury to virtue.	是謂伐德。
Drinking is a good institution,	飲酒孔嘉，
only when there is good deportment in it.	維其令儀！

(“Bin zhi chu yan 賓之初筵,” Mao 220, *Shijing*)

In sum, archery in the military-athletic activities of early Zhou show a strong link between the bow and political authority. Besides, the battles, hunts, and diplomatic receptions with shooting performances were heavily vested with ritual culture. The next section turns attention to more specific ritual practices.

The Bow in Zhou Ritual Tradition

There is a necessary caveat to the three ritual classics which constitute posterity's main sources on ancient traditions, and it is that the *Yili*, *Liji*, and *Zhouli* 周禮 contain idealizations of the past and are to some extent distorted.[25] Notwithstanding, scholars also acknowledge that they contain vestiges of early traditions. Endymion Wilkinson's remark in this regard is encouraging: late Zhou archeology generally corroborate the system laid out in ritual texts (Wilkinson 2013, 690).

Before going into archery-related practices in the ritual classics, a quick recollection of Zhou dynasty's historical background is in order.[26] The Zhou era saw the beginning of feudalism in China as the new rulers parceled out the territories of their Shang predecessors to kindred and allies. Lu state itself, Confucius's birthplace in the heart of Shang territories, was created when the Duke of Zhou – a relative and regent of the dynasty's first rulers – entrusted the territory to his son Boqin. The Duke of Zhou, or *Zhou Gong* 周公, was thus regarded as the state's founder and emerges in the *Analects* as Confucius's inspirational hero. With its close connection to the dynasty's founders, Lu state became a bastion of Zhou culture with privileges to replicate court rituals. Contrary to previous belief, archeological evidences from more recent years indicate that Zhou ritual tradition was not only confined to the Central States of Zhou – Lu, Qi and Song states located around the Yellow River Valley – but spread horizontally and vertically, that is, reaching more regions and more levels of society by Eastern Zhou.[27]

Two categories of people in Zhou society deserve mention: the *shi* 士 and the *ru* 儒 whose characteristics coalesce in the figures of Confucius and early Confucian thinkers. *Shi* refers to teacher-scholars with specializations as diverse as fighting strategies, political and moral doctrines, scriptures, and rituals. Its original meaning was knight or warrior, and Confucius's own father was probably a military *shi* of Shang ancestry.[28] By Confucius's time,

the term's military connotation had softened to mean persons of talent and culture from noble lines of vanished states: these no longer possessed military skills but maintained military values of honor, loyalty, and service. Some *shi* would have specialized in ritual practice, and among them was a group particularly dedicated to preserving ancient traditions, the *ru.*[29] This group saw in the customs and texts believed to have come from the dynastic founders the formula for a humane and flourishing civilization.

Material history tells a different story and casts doubt on whether the ancient rituals promoted by ruists of Confucius' time actually originated from dynasty founders. A comparison of artefacts from Shang and early Zhou eras indicate that there was continuity in their ritual practices just as in warring customs. Archeologists working on likely sites of Shang and early Zhou palace ruins likewise note cultural semblances in the relics and arrangements of living spaces and tombs.[30] Scholars observe, however, a sweeping change in ritual regalia in the century before the Spring & Autumn era. In concrete, around 9th century BCE Zhou ritual vessels increased in volume while vessels for sacrificial food became more prominent than those for wine.[31] Lothar Falkenhausen explains the phenomenon as a ritual revolution shifting from the "Dionysian" ceremonies of the Shang and early Zhou – that is, characterized by enigmatic trance-like impersonations of ancestors and copious consumption of wine – to "Apollonian" ceremonies which were more formal and sober with abstract patterns on vessels in place of earlier animal motifs (Falkenhausen 2006, 43-48). Ceremonies of the latter type would have been presided by ritual specialists and a large group of participants chanted hymns believed to correspond to verses preserved in older sections of the *Shijing.* Late Western Zhou rituals thus transitioned from spiritualistic communal celebrations to collective liturgies with shared literature, ritual officiants, and a participatory public.[32] The implication of the ritual revolution is

as follows: that the Zhou rituals emulated by early Confucian thinkers may not have originated from the dynasty's founders but succeeding rulers of Western Zhou.[33]

Falkenhausen further believes that a second, subtler ritual revolution took place in early Eastern Zhou, around 7th century BCE, that is, in the century before Confucius' birth. The change this time consisted in a reorientation of beliefs concerning the divine sanction of political authority. The so-called Heavenly mandate (*Tien ming* 天命) to rulers evoked by early Confucian thinkers began to put more weight on the monarch's correct behavior in rituals and human relations. Accordingly, it was less expedient to impress ancestral spirits with extravagant sacrificial offerings and more important to nourish virtuous dispositions and conduct before ancestors and men. The implications of the supposed second revolution are two-fold. On one hand, it puts in context "Confucian advocacy of ritual for the sake of ensuring social order… as well as for self-cultivation" (Falkenhausen 2006, 297); on the other hand, it suggests that the humanistic turn seen in the *Analects* was not instigated by Confucius – as philosophers are wont to think[34] – but was already in the air, so to speak. The claim, however, is based exclusively on Falkenhausen's analysis of funerary artefacts. Other scholars see a humanistic, moral approach to the Heavenly mandate already present in early segments of Zhou classics believed to predate articles examined by Falkenhausen.[35]

The ubiquity and centrality of rituals in Zhou tradition is well-known and corroborated by both material and literary sources. As speculations about the evolution of Zhou rituals show, however, it is difficult to recover from sources within posterity's purview exact details and performative aspects of once lived traditions. Past rituals can only be known with limited degrees of certainty and foundation. Still, substantial things can be discussed about archery rituals.

The most solemn Zhou ritual would have been the Great Sacrifice (*di* 禘), a ceremony mentioned with awe in the *Analects* (cf. 3.10, 11).[36] The sacrifice was offered exclusively by the monarch but events surrounding the sacrifice saw the monarch honor ancestors with a group dance which young nobles screened through previous archery rituals were privileged to join. The dance imitated battle movements – including shooting and charioteering – reenacting heroic battle deeds of Zhou founders. The Martial dance, or *Wu* 武, admired by Confucius would have been a battle-inspired "song-and-dance suite" and some verses from the "Zhou Odes" of the *Shijing* were probably lyrics of chants that accompanied the dance.[37] The imitation of victorious ancestors in ritual dances was a special exercise of archery different in nature from military-athletic practices. Richard Rutt puts it well in writing that Zhou archery "was practiced with stylized stance and gestures, a kind of chivalric choreography, lyrically described in the *Book of Odes*" (Rutt 2002, 13).

Sacred dances with archery elements are only the tip of an iceberg in a tradition which gave much import to self-cultivation and considered the bow instrumental for that purpose. The ritual classics name four major archery performances whose markedly ceremonious nature curiously did not remove elements of real competition. Guest Archery was mentioned above. The three other types are District or Village Archery (*Xiang she li* 鄉射禮), Banquet Archery (*Yan li* 燕禮), and Great Archery (*Da she* 大射). These three rituals are explained in the *Yili*, a text whose minute details about official Zhou customs betray its special relation to court ritualists.[38] Banquet Archery was a standard shooting celebration by aristocrats. Like Guest Archery, it was an elaborate event with sumptuous meal and an orchestra whose music accompanied shooting performances. Participants took wine between shooting rounds.[39]

Great Archery was presided by the monarch and held in the capital where young aristocrats from different circumscriptions gathered for a test in competence. A humbler version, Village Archery, was held periodically in smaller locales. It is evident from intricate procedures laid out in the *Yili* that archery rituals demanded more than shooting skill. Participants needed to have proper bearing, master protocols, and move in time with music while executing standard shooting steps. These may well be components of shooting criteria mentioned in the *Zhouli.* The latter enumerates five points for judging shooting performance in Village Archery, which roughly consist in harmony, bearing, hitting the mark, grace, and rhythm.[40] The complex nature of ritualized shooting sheds light on Confucius' remark that archery is not a mere matter of hitting the mark (cf. An 3.16).[41] Stephen Selby explains Village Archery as a kind of graduation event, that is, a culminating exercise from schooling in Chinese feudal society.[42] We do not know much about Zhou education and how archery training formed part of it, but archery together with charioteering are counted among the so-called *Six Arts* (*Liu Yi* 六藝) which Zhou nobles learned. Mencius, as we shall see, names archery as a key component of education in antiquity and claims that the chief objective of this education was to nourish human relations (M 3A.3).

A section in the *Liji* entitled "She Yi 射義," or the Meaning of Archery, ascribes utmost importance to ritual archery as means for the monarch to select officers and mete out rewards or penalties in the feudal system. Thus, "princes and lords put their best efforts in shooting through which rituals and music were cultivated." The *Liji* further connects ritualized shooting with moral character: "archery is the way of benevolence" (*she zhe ren zhi dao ye* 射者仁之道也). The idea that the archer's abilities and dispositions can be observed from how he shoots (*shejian*

guan de 射箭觀德) underlies archery-themed sections of the *Liji* and was a widespread belief in Warring States and Han societies.

Shijing verses about archers and hunters likewise attribute more than muscle power to shooting ability. One poem extols a young prince dedicatedly rehearsing stylized shooting. Multiple elements of the performance are contemplated: actions, bodily appearance, grace, dexterity:

With what skill in the swift movements of his feet!	巧趨蹌兮，
With what mastery of archery!	射則臧兮！
… His beautiful eyes how clear!	… 美目清兮。
His Manners how complete!	儀既成兮，
Shooting all day at the target	終日射侯，
… His dancing so choice!	… 舞則選兮，
Sure to send his arrows right through!	射則貫兮。
The four all going to the same place!	四矢反兮。
One able to withstand rebellion!	以禦亂兮！

(“Yi Jie 猗嗟,” Mao 106, *Shijing*)

The final line is interesting inferring as it does from the young archer’s shooting performance the idea that he will be an able ruler. The flow of thought confirms yet again the association of the bow with political power.

Other customs of the ruling elite reinforce the relation of the bow with authority. Bows and arrows were typically among gifts accompanying feudal investitures. Along this line, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* mentions "the precious jade and great bow" as prized treasures of Lu State, the bow having been a gift to its first ruler by dynasty founders.[43]

Archery elements also appear in burial rites. It is telling, for instance, how ritual bows and arrows are among precious objects such as jade, pottery, vessels, and rolled texts interred with the dead. The "*Gu Ming* 顧命," a section of the *Shujing* which probably dates from early Western Zhou[44], mentions a bow and arrows among the heirlooms of King Cheng's funeral exhibit. A Song dynasty scholar interprets the significance of the items displayed: they were, as it were, a testimony to the filial piety of the deceased, "showing that he was able to preserve in his lifetime… and pass on in death" (*shi neng shou ye* 示能守也… *shi neng chuan ye* 示能傳也) that which he received from his ancestors.[45]

Other explanations of archery-related customs in the *Liji* manifest similar moral views of filial piety and conscientiousness around the bow. When a male heir was born, a bow and six arrows were presented and a shooting ritual held. Later, the grown up son took part in an initiation rite in which the bow and arrows were used to shoot at six directions – heaven, earth and the four corners – representing areas in which he would seek to fulfill his duties as an adult.[46]

Bow Narratives & Poetry

Impressions and beliefs about archery from oral and written traditions are consistent with the panorama derived from military-athletic history and ritual traditions. The bow emerges in the narratives and poetry of early China as part of the Heavenly-sanctioned legacy of ancestors. An instrument of privilege and power, it must be wielded with reverence and propriety.

Various stories circulated in early China about the bow's origin. According to the *Wu-Yue Chun Qiu* 吳越春秋, a later Han compilation recounting Spring & Autumn era relations between two southern states, the bow originated from the stone-bow (*dan* 彈) which the "Pious Son" (*Xiaozi* 孝子) invented to drive predators away from the mortal remains of his parents.[47] A different story is told in the *Da Zhuan* 大傳, or "Appended Statements," commentaries of the *Book of Changes* which became part of the classic itself sometime between the Warring States and former Han. The *Da Zhuan*'s version is that the bow was crafted by the early sage kings who "strung pieces of wood to make bows and whittled others to make arrows, creating an instrument suitable for subjugating the world."[48]

Earlier parts of the *Book of Changes* contain cryptic line statements (*yao ci* 爻辭) and judgments (*gua ci* 卦辭) for interpreting hexagrams, probably used by Western Zhou court scribes for divination. Archery images surface in interesting ways. For instance, retrieving a bronze arrow from sacrificial meat is auspicious (21st hexagram *Shihe* 噬嗑, line 4), so are laying the bow to welcome rain (38th hexagram *Kui* 睽, line 6), and finding an arrow after hunting (40th hexagram *Xie* 解, line 2). These sketchy images seem insignificant but moralizing commentaries in the *Book of Changes* associate them with qualities needed to rule. Accordingly, retrieving a bronze arrow means "exercising constancy in the face of difficulties," that is, being hard like the metal tip of an arrow and straight as its shaft. The arrow found after hunting symbolizes

straightness as well as constancy: "arrow signifies the straight… one who so succeeds at not deviating from the straight and narrow is someone who can perfect his righteousness." Meanwhile, laying down the bow to welcome rain signifies determination in the face of opposition which brings about union. As the core chapters will show, constancy, straightness and determination are qualities displayed through archery imagery in early Confucian texts.

Scholars identify in the bow-armed figure who meets rain of Hexagram 38 an allusion to ancient mythology about a legendary archer, Yi 羿, who ended a great drought by shooting down parching suns. Rain was and still is closely monitored in agricultural societies. This is reflected in entries in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* which sometimes fear flooding and other times lament droughts with terse entries such as *bu yu* 不雨 or *da han* 大旱. Early Zhou traditions thus included seasonal rain dances (*yu* 雩) for favorable weather, a custom which Confucius appeared to enjoy (cf. An 11.24). The rain dance called to mind heroic deeds by Archer Yi, a recurring figure in early Confucian texts.[49]

There were, however, contrasting stories that circulated in pre-Qin China about legendary archers bearing the same appellation Yi. The *Shanhai jing* and *Huainan zi*, both sources on early Chinese mythology, present Yi as a hero for ridding the world of calamities. Another Warring States source, however, the *Chuci* 楚辭, or "Songs of the South," regard Yi as a hideous character: descending from the Yi tribe – bow-bearing barbarians mentioned earlier – he used his shooting skill to overthrow the ruler of Xia and indulge in violence until fate dealt him similar blows. The *Chuci* echoes stories in the *Zuo Zhuan* about Duke Yi of You Qiong (有窮后羿) who usurped the Xia throne and was a profligate ruler. A hunting fanatic who squandered time and resources on long chases, he neglected the people and finally met a gruesome end in the hands of

a devious minister (cf. *Zuo Zhuan*, Xiang, 4). The ambivalent regard for an extraordinary archer – or archers – called Yi is reflected in the *Mencius* where the hero is both praised (for shooting prowess) and criticized (for neglecting morality). In the *Analects* and *Xunzi*, Archer Yi is an epitome of strength or physical skill.

The battle narratives of the *Zuo Zhuan* are helpful not so much for their historical accuracy – a good period of time would have elapsed between the actual events and their commitment to writing – as for social values reflected therein. As mentioned, battle narratives of the *Zuo Zhuan* dwell on chariot-mounted fighters. Some of these narratives paint rosy stories of noble archers who were not only skillful but also well-mannered, dutiful, loyal, and courageous. To cite some anecdotes, Xizhi showed respect to a wounded prince from the enemy side by walking slowly and bowing, while Tanggou stayed behind to fight preferring to die that his lord may escape (Cheng, 16). Another archer, Yugong zhi Si, refrained from seriously injuring an older archer in the opposite camp (Xiang, 14), an anecdote which evidently impressed Mencius (cf. 4B.24).

Finally, this survey of archery phenomenon in the first dynasties would not be complete without mentioning poems about the bow in the *Shijing.* These figurative verses contemplating the bow show how it was a powerful metaphor in classics invoked by early Confucian thinkers. The "Red Bow" (*Tong Gong* 彤弓, Mao 175) celebrates the investiture of a faithful subject who receives the instrument as token of land and office awarded to him. As in vessel inscriptions commemorating investitures, the bow in the poem symbolizes delegation of power from the sovereign who, in turn, holds the mandate to rule from Heaven. Another poem, the "Horn Bow" (*Jiao Gong* 角弓, Mao 223), makes a more explicit link between political authority symbolized by the bow and the Heavenly mandate. The poem focuses on the recoil mechanism of the bow.

The ideogram for recoil, *fan* 反, also connotes "rebellion" which early classics warn befall unworthy, negligent rulers. There is thus double meaning in the verse, "Well fashioned is the bow adorned with horn, and swift is its recoil. Brothers and relatives by affinity should not be treated distantly." In other words, just as the archer strenuously draws the bow close to himself when shooting, so too must the ruler exert himself in staying close to relations lest they turn against him in opposition.[50]

Another poem takes the pliability of the recurve bow which when strung bends backwards without breaking. This quality of the bow is compared to those who harken to wise counsel:

The soft and elastic wood can be fitted with the silken string.	荏染柔木，言緡之絲。
The mild, respectful man possesses the foundation of virtue.	溫溫恭人，維德之基。
There is a wise man – I tell him words,	其維哲人，告之話言，
And he yields to them the practice of docile virtue.	順德之行。
There is a stupid man – He says my words are not true:	其維愚人，覆謂我僭，
So different are people's minds.	民各有心！

("Yi 抑," Mao 256, *Shijing*)

The poem makes for an overt admonition of an obstinate ruler and captures a common grievance of worthy ministers in early classics.

<break/>

<break/>

Comparison with ancient Greece will help us appreciate better the singular esteem which archery enjoyed in the first dynasties of China. Perceptions of archery in Greece were mixed. While objects of art depicted the bow as a sacred instrument of gods and deities, actual society disdained archers as cowardly soldiers whose light weapon and strike-and-run tactics were no match for heavily-armed hoplite warriors ready for face-to-face struggle. In contrast, a special awe consistently surrounded the bow in early China. Its material and literary sources both corroborate the instrument's close association with Heavenly-sanctioned authority and much revered ancestors.

Pre-Qin texts of more heterogeneous nature stress views about archery different from ruist sources, in concrete, its usefulness for harnessing internal powers or for training subconscious spontaneity. One can think, for instance, of the legendary power of concentration of Yang Youji who, according to the *Lü Shi Chun Qiu* 呂氏春秋, could shoot an arrow through a rock, or of Liezi learning to shoot with ease by the edge of a precipice.[51] Stephen Selby characterizes these episodes as a "mental approach" to archery prominent in Daoist and later Buddhist sources and contrasts it with the "moral approach" found in Confucian classics and texts. It is important to note, however, that the two approaches are not mutually exclusive and would not have been clearly delineated from each other at a time when classical philosophical schools were only taking shape. As will be seen in succeeding chapters, phrases like "fixing oneself upon (*zhi yu* 志於)" learning, or the Way, or benevolence, use archery jargon to explain the kind of interior focus and self-exertion which the gentleman should commit towards moral ends.

[1] Gad Rausing, *The Bow: Some Notes on its Origin and Development* (Manchester: Simon Archery Foundation, 1997), 32-35, 113, 143; Edmund Burke, *The History of Archery* (London: Butler and Tanner, Ltd., 1957), 9-11; Chris Peers, *Battles of Ancient China* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2013), 2-3, 7.

[2] Yang, Hong, *Weapons in Ancient China* (New York: Science Press, 1992), 9.

[3] Stephen Selby, *Chinese Archery* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2000), 5-6.

[4] Nylan, *The Five 'Confucian' Classics,* 2-3.

[5] Philip De Souza, *The Ancient World at War* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2008), 243; Robin Yates, "Early China," in *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds,* edited by Kurt Raaflaub and Nathan Rosenstein (Massachusetts: Center for Hellenic Studies Trustees for Harvard University, 1999), 9-10; Yang, *Weapons in Ancient China*, 9-18.

[6] Li Feng, *Early China: A Social and Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 15-40; Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 662-664.

[7] For a study of how Zhou culture was embraced in the native lands of Confucius and of Mencius, see Edwin Pulleybank, "Zou 鄒 and Lu 魯 and the Sinification of Shandong," in *Chinese Language, Thought, and Culture: Nivison and his Critics,* edited by Philip Ivanhoe (Chicago: Open Courts Press 1996). Warring States texts such as the *Zuo Zhuan* and *Zhuangzi* mention these two states as principal places where ruists dedicated to ancient rituals could be found, see A.C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao* (Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 1989), 9, 31.

[8] Yang, *Weapons in Ancient China*, 36-37; Burke, *The History of Archery*, 23-24.

[9] Gad Rausing refers to Shang composite bows as the "Qum-Darya type," named after a burial site of Chinese soldiers excavated in Xinjiang in 1934. He compares this with the Scythian "cupid" bow common in classical age Greece: the two had similar contours, but Chinese bows were longer and Scythian bows had more curled ears, see Rausing, *The Bow: Some Notes*, 115-116.

[10] Peers, *Battles of Ancient China*, 7. The process and materials for making bows is described in the "Dongguan Kaogong Ji 冬官考工記" section of the *Zhouli* 周禮.

[11] Bi clamps were attached to the mid-section of the bow and were embellished with carved designs and bells, cf. Yang, *Weapons in Ancient China*, 37.

[12] See Mao 128 and 175.

[13] Except, perhaps, for the Battle of Muye (1045 BCE) where outnumbered Zhou forces probably used close fighting strategy against the Shang army, Peers, *Battles of Ancient China*, 8-11, 16. The landmark battle leading to Zhou conquest is alluded to in early classics. *Shijing* Mao 236 and *Shangshu* "Oath at Mu" (*Mu shi* 牧誓) are examples of early though perhaps not contemporary accounts, see ECT, 378-379; Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A New Manual*, 294-295; Nylan, *The Five 'Confucian' Classics*, 133-135.

[14] As a Warring States text, the *Zuo Zhuan* was written or compiled centuries after the events it narrates. It is nonetheless a basic source on Western Zhou history and reflects ideas about moral governance found in early Confucian texts, cf. Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A New Manual*, 599, 612-3. Meanwhile, Confucius' supposed hand in the compilation of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* has neither been verified nor refuted, but he was evidently familiar with it, ECT, 67; Nylan, *The Five 'Confucian' Classics*, 256-9.

[15] De Souza, *The Ancient World at War*, 243-245.

[16] Peers, *Battles of Ancient China*, 27; Yates, "Early China," 8-21.

[17] Yang, *Weapons in Ancient China,* 91-92.

[18] De Souza, *The Ancient World at War*, 246-247; Yates, "Early China," 21-28, 35.

[19] ECT, 295; Nylan, *The Five 'Confucian' Classics*, 175.

[20] Unless otherwise indicated, English translations of verses from the *Liji* and *Shijing* are from James Legge. See his *Li Ki. A Collection of Treatises on the Rules of Propriety or Ceremonial Usages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885); and, *The She King, or Book of Ancient Poetry* (London: Trubner & Co., 1876).

[21] For more poems about the chase in the *Shijing*, see "The Elder Hunter," Mao 77; "Agile," Mao 97; "The Hound," Mao 103; and, "Lucky Day," Mao 180. Rulers boasting of military-athletic skill is common in ancient relics. For example, a 9th century BCE engraving from Mesopotamia records a ruler claiming, "I killed 30 elephants with the bow and arrow, I shot 257 wild bulls, I killed 370 gigantic lions with my spear," Rausing, *The Bow: Some Notes*, 29.

[22] The *touhu* consisted in tossing arrows into a vase. An entire section is dedicated to it in the *Liji*.

[23] In view of the importance of text and context in literary metaphor approach, major citations from primary sources will be in bi-lingual. The *D.C. Lau Research Centre for Chinese Ancient Texts Database* (CHANT) (http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/ics/rccat/en/database.html) is a valuable resource for up-to-date scholarly versions of classical texts. Two open resources have also been useful for quick referencing: *Chinese Text Project* (https://ctext.org/), and *Chinese Notes* (http://chinesenotes.com/) by the Fo Guang Shan Nan Tian Institute, Australia.

[24] "Sang Hu 桑扈" (Mao 215) is a comic poem in the *Shijing* that describes the intoxication of guests as the archery event unfolded. Wine typically flowed in major rituals, including the

solemn “Great Sacrifice” discussed in this chapter, and these thus ended in drunken orgies. This reality may be behind Confucius’s comment that “at the Great Sacrifice, after the pouring out of the libation, I have no wish to look on” An 3.10.

[25] Lothar Falkenhausen warns how naïve focus on ritual tradition can influence our view of Zhou society: “Given that the nature of ritual as a performance, not of how things are but of how things ought to be, we must remain aware that our view of Zhou society is likely to be to some extent distorted and idealized,” Lothar von Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000-250 BC): the Archaeological Evidence* (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, University of California, 2006), 418. Paul Goldin also calls attention to the need to use ritual sources critically considering early Chinese’s “aesthetic priorities” and “overriding interest to convey moral truth” over actual facts, cf. Paul Goldin, “Appeals to History in Early Chinese Philosophy and Rhetoric,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy,* 35, no.1 (2008): 79-96.

[26] For a concise summary of Western Zhou history and sources, see Edward Shaughnessy, “Western Zhou History,” in CHAC, 292-351.

[27] Michael Nylan, “Toward an Archaeology of Writing: Text, Ritual, and the Culture of Public Display in the Classical Period (475 B.C.E. – 220 C.E.),” in *Text and Ritual in Early China*, edited by Martin Kern (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2005), 5-6; Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius*, 402.

[28] Lu Xing, *Rhetoric in Ancient China Fifth to Third Century* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 61. Arthur Waley makes a fine point in preferring to translate 士 as “knight” to Legge’s “scholar,” see his widely used translation *The Analects of Confucius*, (New York: Random House, Inc., 1989), 33-34. Li Feng’s explanation of the term’s background is also helpful: “the rise of the Shi status, variously defined as ‘officials’, ‘warriors’, and ‘stewards of

noble households', must be understood in the context of the fierce political struggle and the profound socioeconomic changes… When the lineages had demised, with their land and people annexed by other lineages or incorporated into countries by the conquering states, it was their aristocratic heritage, most importantly education and warrior spirit, that they could rely on in their future, as the states and rulers were looking for talented and brave young men to serve in their governments" Li, *Early China*, 174.

[29] For a full monograph about the ru in relation to the development of Confucianism, see Nicolas Zufferey's *The Origins of Confucianism: The Ru in Pre-Qin and during the early Han dynasty* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2003).

[30] To cite an example, the ruins of Zhouyuan, an early Zhou capital, revealed "palace buildings… close to those of the Shang in structure, layout, and other aspects," including oracle bones and a temple devoted to Shang kings, see Du Jinpeng, "A Typological Study of the Palace Buildings at Zhouyuan and Related Issues," *Chinese Archaeology* 10 (2010): 164-171.

[31] For the enlargement of Zhou vessels and its implications on ritual practice, see Jessica Rawson, "Statesmen or Barbarians? The Western Zhou as Seen through their Bronzes," *Proceedings of the British Academy,* 75 (1989), 71-95; also the chapter entitled "Western Zhou Archaeology" by the same author in CHAC, 352-449. Li Feng explains the same phenomenon with reference to differences in the kinds of vessels used: "Almost all types of bronzes fashioned in the late Shang survived into early Western Zhou, but the centrality of such wine vessels as *jia*-pitchers, and *gu*- and *jue*-cups seems to have been lost, giving way to a new emphasis on the set of food-serving vessels including *ding*-cauldron and *gui*-tureen," Li 2013, 124.

[32] Nylan 2001, *The Five 'Confucian' Classics*, 84-88; see also, Edward Shaughnessy, *Before Confucius: Studies in the creation of the Chinese Classics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 165-166, 182.

[33] Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius*, 403-4.

[34] A widely held idea expressed among others by Wing-tsit Chan in his scholarly compendium *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 14.

[35] For instance, the "Zhou Odes*"* (周颂) of the *Shijing*, see Nylan *The Five 'Confucian' Classics*, 87. Edward Shaughnessy detects contrasting views about the Heavenly Mandate present in a section of the *Shujing* which he believes originate from early Western Zhou. Accordingly, one view purports the ruler's virtue to come from Heaven while the other view represented by the Duke of Zhou emphasizes the merits and responsibility of human subjects, see Shaughnessy, "Western Zhou History," 292-295, 315-317.

[36] Qing commentators disputed about specific details of the *di* ceremony, such as whom it was offered to (Heaven, cosmic deities, or first ancestors?) and the frequency or occasion for the sacrifice (triennial, quinquennial, or to conclude periods of mourning?), see Chow Kai-Wing, *The Rise of Confucian Ritualism in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 137-139.

[37] Shaughnessy, *Before Confucius*, 165-169; Nylan, *The Five 'Confucian' Classics*, 84-87.

[38] ECT, 234-237.

[39] According to the chapter "Sheyi 射義" of the *Liji* the Yan li was the wine ceremony preceding actual ritual shooting by feudal lords. A similar ceremony, Village Drinking (*Xiang yinjiu* 鄉飲酒), preceded ritual shooting by officers. Further, both wine ceremonies were intended to demarcate the difference in status between young and old.

[40] The translation is tentative. The original text reads: 一曰和、二曰容、三曰主皮、四曰和容、五曰興舞, see section entitled "*Xiang Da Fu* 鄉大夫," or Village Officials.

[41] The "Sheyi*"* chapter of the *Liji* thus quotes Confucius saying, "How difficult to shoot! How difficult to listen (to the music)! To shoot in time with the note (given) by the music and without missing the target: only an archer of superior virtue who can do this!" It further narrates an episode where Confucius takes part in ritual archery paired with the disciple Zilu 子路.

[42] Selby, *Chinese Archery*, 50, 53.

[43] The bow's origin is commented by James Legge in *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, *The Ch'un Ts'ew with the Tso Chuen* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960), 770. The story of how the bow was stolen and then recovered is recounted in *Zuo Zhuan*, Ding, 8.

[44] Shaughnessy, "Western Zhou History," 296.

[45] See Yang Shi's (楊時) *Zhong Yong Zhuan* 中庸傳, or Commentary on the Doctrine of the Mean.

[46] From the sections "Nei ze 內則," or Pattern of the Family, and "She Yi."

[47] Mythic origins of the bow are also found in Warring States or Former Han encyclopedic works such as the *Shanhai jing* 山海經 – according to which it was invented by Shao Hao 少昊 – and the *Huainan zi* 淮南子 which attributes it to the legendary archer Yi 羿.

[48] This and other English translations of lines from the *Yijing* are from Richard John Lynn (New York: Columbia University, 1994).

[49] See explanation of the ideogram *yu* 雩 in the *Shuowen Jiezi* 說文解字.

[50] James Legge's explanation is helpful: "When the bow is drawn, all its parts are brought near to the archer; when he lets the arrow go, it returns to its former state, and is far off from him. So it

is between the Head of a House, and his relatives. He should draw them to himself. If he relax the hold of his kindness upon them, they recoil from him," *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 4, *The She-King or Book of Poetry* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960), 404-405.

[51] Yang Youji also appears in *Zuo Zhuan*, Cheng, 16. For Liezi's adventures with the bow, see *Liezi* 列子, "Huangdi Pian 黃帝篇," also *Zhuangzi* 莊子, "Tianzi Fang 田子方" and "Shuo fu pian 說符篇."