

Comparison of Archery Traditions in Korea

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ABSTRACT

This study will compare archery in Korea between the Joseon dynasty and modern times. Archery in Korea goes back millennia and is still an important activity in the country. It was nearly uninterrupted in its history, so important traditions were passed down generation after generation. However, even though such traditions were kept through the centuries, changes still occurred. A comparison of archery in two periods of time in Korea—the Joseon dynasty and modern-day Korea—shows which traditions carried over and which ones disappeared. Also, the divergence between traditional and modern can be seen. Much of the archery equipment used in the Joseon dynasty is still used in Korean traditional archery today, but with some changes. The bow was the most important personal projectile weapon of the early Joseon dynasty, but lost its place with the introduction of matchlock firearms in the late 16th century. Until the end of the 19th century, archery was important as both a military skill and also as a ceremonial rite. From the end of the 19th century, on up to the present day, archery is enjoyed as an activity by people of all ages, genders and backgrounds. With Korean archery successes in the Olympics, international attention is given to the country's archers, both Olympic and traditional. With the continued growth of Korean traditional archery—both in Korea and internationally—its future remains bright.

Keywords: Korean, traditional, archery, Joseon, military, culture, history

1 INTRODUCTION

In the present day, when people think about the country most closely associated with archery, Korea will come to mind. Of course, it is related to Korea's strong presence in the Olympics that people are thinking about, especially in regards to its female archers who have been dominant medal winners for many years. However, Korea's dominance with a bow is much older than that, going back many centuries and even millennia.

Although much of Korea's fame with the bow and arrow may be more legendary than historical, there is much historical evidence that the overall fame Korea has in that regard is deserved. Legendarily, Koreans think about the traditional founder of the Goguryeo dynasty, Jumong, who was renowned for his skill with a bow. They also accept with pride what the Chinese centuries ago referred to them as: *Dongyi* (東夷) (literally "Eastern Barbarians"), as the second character, *yi*, is comprised of the two Chinese characters *dae* (大), meaning "big" and *gung* (弓), meaning "bow".

Probably one of the time periods Korea is most historically associated with the bow is that of the Three Kingdoms period (57 B.C. to 668 A.D.). In that period, the three ancient kingdoms on the Korean peninsula, Silla, Baekje and Goguryeo, fought with each other until Silla's ultimate victory. Of course, the victor gets to write the history, so Silla's *hwarang* warriors—young noblemen who trained to become officers in Silla's military—have received much acclaim for their prowess in things military, including archery. They are often depicted shooting their bows from horseback, such as with the statue at the tollgate of modern-day Gyeongju, the historical capital of Silla.

Throughout the rest of Korea's history—Unified Silla, Goryeo, Joseon, and on up to the present day—the bow has played some part, albeit sometimes insignificant. However, during the Joseon period (1392-1910), the bow reached its zenith during the first part and its nadir at the last part, so it is a very significant time period to look at. That is especially true when considering archery in Korea presently. This paper will compare archery during the Joseon dynasty with present-day Korean traditional archery and Olympic archery. The first part will cover the beginning of the Joseon dynasty when the main personal weapon of the Joseon military was the bow, up through the devastating Imjin War (1592-98), when the Japanese introduced personal black powder firearms to Korea, and on up to the late Joseon dynasty when the bow was removed from military testing. The second part will look at the rebirth of Korean traditional archery

as a civilian sport, its continuation on through the Japanese occupation (1910-45), and its divergence into the two separate entities of traditional and Olympic archery. This paper will answer what changed, what remained the same, what is the overall status of archery in Korea today, and what is the outlook for the future.

2 Archery during the Joseon Dynasty

The bow was, arguably, the most important personal weapon of the early Joseon dynasty and was still quite important for most of the rest of the period. It was light and easy to carry, plus it had power and speed. An archer could kill an enemy from a relatively long distance—up to a few hundred meters. With a strong bow and an arrow with a heavy shaft and point, even body armor of the time could easily be penetrated.

One of the most notable names in archery at the beginning of the Joseon dynasty was that of its founder, Yi Seong-gye, a Goryeo dynasty general who later became known as King Taejo of the Yi Joseon dynasty. He was renowned for his use of the bow and he favored its military use over that of firearms. However, such opinions were changing, as developments in firearms—primarily artillery—showed great promise. Still, the bow reigned supreme in the 15th and 16th centuries in Korea.

2.1 Archery Equipment

In order to understand more about archery in that time period, it is important to know more about the equipment involved.

2.1.1 Bows

The most well-known type of bow in Korea is the horn bow (*Gakgung*:角弓); its name comes from the horn that covers the limbs on the belly-side (the side facing the archer). Actually, a typical horn bow is made from several materials, including a bamboo core, horn belly, sinew on the back, oak handle, mulberry "ears" and a covering of birch bark over the back. It is all held together with fish airbladder glue. Its length is, typically, about 1.23 meters long (Duvernay 1996).

However, the actual distribution of this type of bow among military archers during the Joseon dynasty is, most likely, overstated. Usually, when one watches a Korean period historical drama or reads about the history of Korean archery, the horn bow is what is talked about. However, it is highly unlikely that the average Korean military archer shot a horn bow, as they were as relatively expensive historically, as they are today (The average price of a horn bow in Korea, as of this writing, is anywhere up to around 1,000,000 won, or close to \$1,000 USD); the average archer would have been unlikely to have been able to afford such a weapon. More likely, archers used simple bows made out of bamboo (*Jukgung*: 竹弓) or wood (*Mokgung*: 木弓); it is conceivable that, in many cases, they made their own bows. There were other specialized bows, such as the *jeongryanggung* (正兩弓), which was 1.65 meters long and was used to shoot a very heavy arrow called a *yukryangjeon* (六兩箭), which weighed about 240 grams. Another, which was for ceremonial use only, called a *yegung* (禮弓), was 2.5 meters long (Kim 5).

2.1.2 Arrows

The bamboo arrow was the mainstay for archery in Korea, from ancient on up to modern times. The reason being, a type of bamboo, called *sinidae* (*Sasa coreana*), is an excellent arrow material—it is even called "Korean arrow bamboo", and is very similar to its cousin, *idae* (*Pseudosasa japonica*), or "Japanese arrow bamboo". It grows throughout Korea, although the best bamboo, according to the fletchers (arrow makers) comes from the northeast part of South Korea, near the sea; their reasoning is that the colder weather makes it grow slower and the sea winds makes it grow straighter. Its diameter is very consistent (typically 8-9mm), as is the spacing of the "nodes", which are the segments along a bamboo shaft.

One cannot simply take a bamboo shaft and make it into an arrow, as it would be very uneven and of poor quality. A fletcher goes through about fifty steps to make one arrow. The basic steps are as follows (Duvernay 1997):

1. Select shafts of the same diameter and node spacing.
2. Cut the shafts to length.
3. Heat and straighten shafts.

4. Sand down nodes and take surface skin off of shaft.
5. Make nocks (rear end of arrow that attaches to the bow string) out of bush clover.
6. Attach nocks to shaft.
7. Attach points to front end of the arrow.
8. Cut pheasant fletching to length and attach to rear end of arrow.
9. Shape fletching.

As can be seen, those are just a fraction of the steps involved, but they still involve a lot of work.

There were many types of arrows used during the Joseon dynasty, for different purposes. As mentioned in the section about bows, one type of arrow was the *yukryangjeon* (六兩箭), which was a very heavy arrow, weighing about 240 grams; such an arrow, shot from a heavy draw weight bow, would hit typical targets—like soldiers, horses and armor—very hard and penetrate deep. The main drawback for such an arrow is it required a very strong archer to draw the bow back.

Other typical arrows of the Joseon dynasty are as follows (Kim 3):

1. *Mokjeon* (木箭) A wooden arrow used in the military service examination.
2. *Cheoljeon* (鐵箭) An iron arrow, which included the *yukryangjeon*; other arrows of this type were the *aryangjeon* (亞兩箭) and *jangjeon* (長箭).
3. *Yejeon* (禮箭) A 90cm ceremonial arrow, which was used in ceremonies like the Great Archery Ritual (大射禮).
4. *Pyeonjeon* (片箭) A short arrow—also called a "baby arrow" about 30cm in length—that was used in conjunction with a bamboo overdraw tube, called a *tong-a* (筒兒). *Pyeonjeon* shot from a *tong-a* had great speed and could cover a long distance; the author chronographed one at 87 meters/second and shot another one over 500m.
5. *Sejeon* (細箭) A thin arrow that would have a note attached to it to send a message.
6. *Yuyeopjeon* (柳葉箭) Also known as a "willow leaf arrow", due to the shape of its blunt point. It was used in the military service examination.
7. *Hwajeon* (火箭) An arrow with an incendiary load near the sharp iron point end. The load was made from linen soaked in beeswax and pine pitch, covering a paper "pocket" filled with black powder. A fuse, inserted in the load, was lit before firing. When shot, the point would imbed itself into its target—usually some type of wood, like timber in a

building or ship—and the load would ignite, thus starting the structure it was imbedded into on fire.

2.1.3 Accessories

There were some accessories that were important to an archer during the Joseon dynasty. Chief among them was the thumb ring (*gakji*: 角指), which was important for protecting an archer's thumb while shooting, as Joseon archers would shoot bows by means of drawing the bowstring back with their thumbs; while the thumb “ring” might be as simple as a leather tab to cover the pad of the thumb, most would be made from a hard material, such as horn, metal, wood, etc.

There were two main styles of thumb ring, the *amgakji* (female-type) and *sugakji* (male-type); the names did not refer to the gender that would use the ring, but to their shapes—the female was teardrop-shaped and the male was knob-shaped. The *amgakji* was also known as a *pyeonggakji* and the *sugakji* was also known as a *yuyeolgakji* (Duvernay 2004, 195).

Another important item was an arrow tube for carrying one's arrows, which was called a *jeontong*. They were commonly made from wood (*mokjeontong*), paper (*jijeontong*), or bamboo (*jukjeontong*). Commonly, a small purse, called a *jeontong jumeoni* would be attached to the arrow tube to hold accessories; it was also known as a *turujumeoni*. Joseon soldiers would carry their arrows in a leather hip quiver, called a *sibok* and their bows in a quiver, called a *donggae*. Other accessories included a device for pulling arrows out of a target, called a *jangjok* and an arm band to protect one's sleeve from being hit by the bowstring, called a *paltchi*. (Ibid 196).

2.2 Archery Use during the Joseon Dynasty

2.2.1. Early Joseon

During the first part of the Joseon dynasty, in the 15th and early 16th centuries, the main enemies Koreans had to face were the Jurchens in the north and the Japanese in the south. The short recurves favored by the Koreans worked equally well with both cavalry and infantry archers. Combined with devices, such as the *tong-a/pyeonjeon*

mentioned above, archers were a very formidable force against any would-be invaders of the time. Indeed, although firearms were known at the beginning of the Joseon dynasty (mainly in the form of cannons), Koreans relied heavily upon the bow for national defense. Early on in the Joseon dynasty, if one was a gunner, he would also have to use a bow, and would be responsible for carrying equipment for both positions, which could be very cumbersome (Kim 5; Duvernay 2004, 21).

2.2.2. Middle Joseon

2.2.2.1 Introduction of Matchlock Muskets

In 1543, in Japan, an event happened that would change warfare in Asia forever. Portuguese ships arrived and brought with them firearm technology from the West in the form of matchlock muskets. Before that time, the main weapons favored by the Japanese were short-range personal weapons, such as swords and spears, although they also possessed bows (the asymmetrical, long *yumi*); Korean bows and cannons were more than a match for them. However, with the introduction of the matchlock—a long-range weapon—the balance of military power was changed. The matchlock came to Japan during a very critical phase in its history, as different leaders vied for power; this new weapon not only became a deciding factor in the course of leadership in Japan, it also contributed to the battle-hardening of Japanese troops.

Five decades after the introduction of the matchlock to Japan, that country launched an attack on Korea, sparking the 1592-98 Imjin War, also known as the Hideyoshi Invasion (after the Japanese leader who ordered it). The timing could not have been worse for Joseon, as it had been a time of relative peace and, because of that, the military, training, and weapons development had been severely cut back; the country could not withstand an invasion by a seasoned, experienced foe. Japanese forces easily flowed up the peninsula, from the southern tip on up into the northern areas. The vulnerability of the main Korean projectile weapon—the bow—was recognized very quickly; while a Japanese matchlock musketeer could hide behind an obstruction (wall, rock, tree, etc.) to shoot, a Korean archer had to come into the open to launch an arrow. Because of that, Korean archers became much more likely to be picked off by a Japanese musketeer than vice versa.

Of course, the bow had certain advantages over the matchlock. First, the matchlock was mainly only useable during dry weather, as black powder was useless when damp; conversely, a Korean archer could shoot in any weather. Another advantage the archers had was one of distance. The effective range of a matchlock musket was 50-100 meters, while a Korean bow could send an arrow 200-300 meters accurately (and further, but with diminished accuracy). However, that advantage, as the war went on, became less and less. At first, Koreans used a long-range, free-fire shooting system called *nansa*, which literally meant “random shooting”; with this method, great volleys of arrows could be sent into enemy ranks at long distances. There were two problems the Korean archers soon faced: One, Japanese armor at that distance often effectively deflected many of the arrows, and two, because of supply and demand, there was a shortage of arrows. A new strategy needed to be used, which the Koreans called *jilisa*, which meant “repeat shooting”; ten archers were divided into three groups of three, three, and four, and they would take turns shooting arrows, concentrated on enemy positions. It was an improvement over the *nansa* style, as the shots were more carefully aimed. However, even with more carefully aimed shots, the arrow supply dwindled, so it was important that each arrow was used effectively. Due to that reason, another shooting strategy—*jeolsa*—was developed. *Jeolsa* literally means “aimed shooting”, so that an archer would not shoot until the enemy was at point-blank range; it was effective in both inflicting damage on the enemy and also conserving arrows (Kang 75-76).

Eventually, Koreans started using matchlock muskets instead of the bow and, by the first quarter of the 17th century, the bow had fallen into disuse and became somewhat obsolete. There was a brief renaissance for the bow during the time of King Hyojong (r. 1649-59), but stopped after the king’s death (Kang 77-80).

2.2.2.2 Military Service Exam

Even though the bow fell out of favor militarily, it was still an official military weapon until the end of the 19th century. For that reason, skill with a bow was an important part of the Military Service Exam (MSE, or *gwageo*). According to K.H. Kim, there were three steps in the examination: local, central, and palace. The first one tested only martial arts and 190 people from different districts were chosen; the second brought the number down to twenty-eight and examinees were tested in both martial arts and their

knowledge of classical military strategy and Confucianism; in the third, those twenty-eight were tested in martial arts in the presence of the king and were placed in three different levels: three 1st class, five 2nd class, and twenty 3rd class. The martial arts tested included both ground-based and mounted archery (Kim 7).

The specific archery skills tested included five for ground-based archery: *mokjeon* (wood arrow—shooting at long distances [288 meters]), *cheoljeon* (iron arrow—strength testing [96 meters]), *pyeonjeon* (short arrow—high velocity, long-distance shooting [156 meters]). *Yuyeopjeon* and *gwanhyeok* were pretty much the same, with the main difference being the distance shot (144 meters and 180 meters, respectively); they were used to recruit many people in a short period of time.

2.2.2.3 Ritual Archery

Besides the MSE, archery was important in ceremonies in the Joseon period, known as *yesa*, or “ritual archery”. There were two levels during the Joseon dynasty: Great Archery Ritual (GAR) and the Archery Ritual of the Shires (ARS). The first was presided over by the king and was mandatory for many high government officials to participate; the second was held in local districts and presided over by local government officials. The latter was not as strictly enforced as the former. Both the GAR and ARS had the purpose of “strengthen[ing] the sense of hierarchy” between superiors and inferiors (Kim 10-14).

2.3 Late Joseon

2.3.1 The Last of Military Archery in Korea

By the end of the 18th century, the bow lost its place in the hierarchy of military weapons. From the beginning of the 17th century, the matchlock supplanted it as the main personal arm; from that time, until the end of the 19th century, the bow only had a nominal place as a martial weapon. After the 18th century, archery rituals were no longer held; the bow was still part of the MSE, until the *Gabo* Reform of 1894.

There is only scant evidence of the bow being used in a military action in the 19th century. When the French came to Korea in 1866—the *Byeonginyangyo*—one French

officer by the name of M. Zuber drew many pictures of what he saw; one picture showed a Korean soldier with a recurve bow. It would seem to suggest military archers were evident, but it did not conclusively say that they were used in battle. Five years after the French incursion, the United States Navy came to Korea—the *Shinmiyangyo*—and, like French, battled with Korean troops. From the American records, there is no evidence that Koreans used bows at that time, either. There is anecdotal evidence regarding Koreans with bows being seen on distant hills at that time, but no mention of them being used in battle in 1871 exist.

2.3.2 The Beginning of Civilian Archery in Korea

The first time archery was encouraged as a civilian activity was by King Injo (r. 1623-49), and he set up the first club for that purpose, called *Ounjeong*, which was located near Gyeongbok Palace. The purpose was not so much for recreation as it was for the *hanryang*—those waiting to take the MSE—to practice. However, by the end of the 19th century, the bow was completely obsolete as a military weapon. Following the *Gabo* Reform, the bow was eliminated from the MSE, so there was no need for prospective military officers to practice archery; as such, interest in the activity declined. Fortunately, for the future of archery in Korea, King Gojong supported archery as a civilian activity. According to Kim, King Gojong decided to support it after seeing how an archery demonstration impressed Prince Heinrich of Germany in 1899. He authorized the establishment of the club *Hwanghakjeong*, also nearby Gyeongbok Palace. That initiated a surge of interest in archery and clubs appeared all across the country; some were former military archery grounds, while others were newly built clubs. The shooting distance was the same as that used in military archery—120 *bo*, or about 144 meters.

3 Archery during the Japanese Colonial Period

Between 1895 and 1910, many things happened that forever changed the course of history in Korea. The queen was murdered, Japan had a war with China, and then with Russia (with the result being the U.S. seemingly giving a green light to Japan's control over Korea), the coerced abdication of King Gojong, and Japan's annexation and later colonization of Korea. During those years, archery in Korea enjoyed relative peace and

popularity; however, from the official colonization of Korea in 1910, until the end of that decade, archery suffered along with everything else in the country (Duvernay 2004, 29). In the 1920s, when restrictions were loosened, two very important things came about; one was the establishment of the Joseon Archery Association in 1922 and the book, *Joseoneui gungsul* (“Joseon Archery”) in 1929. The former was the genesis of what would become the Korea Traditional Archery Association and the latter was the basis for all rules, regulations and tradition in Korean traditional archery (*Ibid.* 31).

One aspect of the Japanese colonial period in regards to Korean traditional archery that still exists is the name for the activity. Originally, the civilian form of archery in Korea was referred to as *gungsul*, which literally means “bow technique”. However, during the Japanese colonial period, the name was changed to *gungdo*, which means “the way of the bow”, and was comprised of the same Chinese characters as Japanese archery, *kyudo*. After World War Two (WWII), *gungsul* and the pure Korean term *hwalssogi* (“bow shooting”) were used instead of *gungdo*, as many Korean archers resented it, due to its dark relationship. However, in the 1960s, it was resurrected, as many archers felt it held a deep meaning and that the *do* in *gungdo* was different between the Japanese and Korean useage (Jeong 11-12). The author once discussed the term *gungdo* with Colonel Ki-hoon Kim (ROK Army, ret.), and he said that the term is suitable for Korean traditional archery, as it encompasses both technique and philosophy, while other terms, like *gungsul* imply only technique. Another common term, *gukgung*, which literally means “national bow [archery]”, could refer to any country’s traditional archery, depending upon where one was.

Years ago, when the author questioned older Korean archers on archery in Korea during the occupation, he was told that there were not as many restrictions as one might think, and only one was thought of at that time: a target could not be to the east, as that was the direction of the Japanese emperor.

4 Modern Korean Traditional Archery

4.1 Post-WWII

Following WWII, traditional archery in Korea underwent frequent changes. In 1946, the name was changed from *Joseon Gungdohwe* to *Joseon Gungdohyeophwe*; two

years later, in 1948, “Joseon” was changed in the name to “Daehan” (*Daehan Gungdohyeophwe*), its present name. In 1962, Olympic-style (FITA—International Archery Federation) archery was introduced in Korean schools. In 1983, Korean archery split into two groups: *Daehan Gungdohyeophwe* for traditional archery and *Daehan Yanggungheophwe* for FITA archery (Duvernay 2004, 34). It should be noted that the first Korean Olympic archers came from traditional archery and brought with them the philosophy and training from that style—in FITA archery, it became commonly known as the “Korean Method”. Ronald McCormick (2002) shared a story told by Korea’s Olympic archery coach Kyung-rae Park: “When we formed our first team of five or six archers we had nothing. We funded ourselves and practiced on our own. The first year we were shooting at world record levels in practice. We approached the Sports Federation for recognition and they refused to consider our request because they could not believe our scores!” So right from the start they were on the right track. Coach Park said, “ When we first started we had no coaches at all, we went to the Korean Traditional Archers and ask[ed] for information on how to shoot. They instructed us on stance, form and technique. We used this as a base to build and develop”. The Korean archers’ traditional archery roots helped lead them to several Olympic medals, along with many other international awards. As of this writing, the Korean Olympic team received a total of three gold and one bronze medals in archery at the 2012 London Olympics (World Archery). Other top archery countries, such as Mexico, Italy and the United States have hired Korean coaches to help improve their archers’ results (Rutherford 2012).

4.2 Post-Korean War

The end of WWII and the years during and after the Korean War (1950-53) were very hard on both the people of Korea and the country itself. On up through the 1960s, Korea experienced its own version of a Great Depression; money was hard to come by and had to be used for the basics of life, such as food, shelter and clothing. Activities, such as archery, would have been considered to be a waste of time and money to families just trying to survive; because of that, archery was the purview of the wealthy. At that time, the only equipment available for Korean traditional archery was the traditional horn bow and bamboo arrow—both of which have always been expensive, so they were luxury items. The author once noted that, before the introduction of Western golf, that

traditional archery was Korea's traditional "golf", as it was practiced by those with discretionary time and money. It is also interesting to note that those who today practice Korean traditional archery also like Western-style golf.

4.3 Present-Day

With the stabilization of Korean society and economy in the 1970s, K.H. Kim noted that the popularity of Korean traditional archery increased. While in 1947 there were only twenty-four clubs nationwide, by 1970 they had grown to 124. The trend continued with more than 200 clubs in 1986 and over 300 clubs by 2002 (Kim 18).

As mentioned earlier, one impediment to the proliferation of Korean traditional archery was the cost of equipment. However, from the 1980s, bows and arrows made from modern materials, such as carbon and glass fiber, started to become widely available; their prices were a fraction of those for the traditional horn bow and bamboo arrow, so, together with the improvement of the standard of living in Korea, practicing archery became more affordable to the average Korean. As of K.H. Kim's paper in 2003, it was estimated that the number of Korean traditional archers was more than 30,000 (Ibid.).

When the author first became involved with Korean traditional archery, back in 1993, modern laminated traditional bows and carbon arrows were still in their beginning stages. The bows were inexpensive, generally costing under 100,000 won (about \$70 at the time), while a traditional horn bow cost three to four times as much. The bows were easy to use—one just strung it up and could immediately begin shooting, while the traditional horn bow required being warmed up, carefully strung, adjusted, and frequently readjusted. Carbon arrows were only a couple thousand won each, while bamboo arrows were two to three times as much. Today, the prices are considerably more for all of the above, but the traditional ones are still more expensive than their modern counterparts. At the same time, the modern-material bows have greatly improved in quality; their looks, feel and performance are very much like those in the true horn bow, so the price increase for the laminated bows is understandable. There are reasons for the large price difference between the true horn bows and their laminated counterparts—first, the number of traditional horn bowyers (bow makers) and bamboo arrow fletchers (arrow makers) are decreasing, plus, it takes a great amount of time and effort to make

their products. Also, in the case of the horn bow, two important materials are becoming increasingly hard to obtain: waterbuffalo horn and backstrap sinew. In the case of the former, Korean customs has virtually prohibited its importation and it is only available from outside the country; bowyers have had to rely upon private sources for horn. In the case of sinew, bowyers have to arrange with local abattoirs, but that can be costly, as the sinew needs to be kept in long lengths, which requires special efforts—and more expense—by butchers. Korean fletchers often rely upon broken horn bows as their source for sinew, which is used to secure nocks (the rear part of the arrow that the string attaches to) to arrows.

So, what has disappeared and what has stayed the same from the Joseon dynasty to today? The distance between the shooting line and the target are very nearly the same; while in the late Joseon dynasty, civilian archery used the old military distance (*yuyeopjeon* test in the MSE) of 120 *bo* (144 meters), in modern times the distance was set at 145 meters. The number of arrows shot per archer—five—are also the same as the *yuyeopjeon* exam. As discussed above, the equipment has been changing; while horn bows and bamboo arrows are still used (In national competitions, they are required; also, those who have the rank of 5th *dan*, or above, are also required to use only horn bows and bamboo arrows), more and more people are using the modern types, due to their relative low cost and ease of use. Back in the Joseon dynasty, archers had to contend with the billowing sleeves of their *hanbok* clothes, so they had a *paltchi* (sleeve strap) tied around the sleeve of their bow arm, to keep it from getting caught up in the bowstring; today, that is not an issue with most archers, who either wear short sleeve shirts or have long sleeve shirts that fit tight to the arm. Also, due to the way the bow is shot with a thumb ring, the string naturally angles away from the bow arm.

When one thinks about Korean traditional archery, the word “tradition” tends to stand out and puts various images in one’s mind. So, what traditions have carried over from the Joseon dynasty to the present? First, the hierarchy and general atmosphere of a Korean traditional archery club tends to be Confucian, such as in deference to elders, manners, and adherence to traditional philosophy and etiquette. That is not to say that it is strictly Confucian, as many things are not, such as women in positions of authority and seniority not necessarily belonging to the older member. Regarding the former, more and more members tend to be women (Often called *yeomusa* in Korean archery parlance) and they often take a leading role in the operation of the clubs. Regarding the

latter, rank and length of membership often supersedes age. That is not to say that one would treat an older member without deference, but there would be a recognition that a more experienced member had functional seniority. As an example, the author joined the club *Horimjeong*, in Gyeongju, back in 1993. Within a couple months, he passed the first major step in archery, in that he achieved a perfect score of five hits out of five arrows shot, called a *molgi*. After that, he was inducted as a *jeopjang*, or “veteran archer”, and was listed as the 53rd member of the club to attain that level. The next two members who achieved that level were older than the author, but the author was still their senior. Other rank that carries with it seniority is the *dan*; archers may compete in ranking competitions to achieve 1st through 9th *dan* rank. When one achieves 5th *dan*—along with requisite time in previous ranks—that archer is considered a *myeonggung* (master).

Core to traditions dating back to the early days of Korean traditional archery are its nine precepts, the *gungdo gugyehun*. Included in it are: *jeongsim jeonggi* (Keep one’s body and mind straight), *inae deokhaeng* (with generosity and love, act virtuously), *seongsil gyeomson* (With sincerity and honesty, act with humility), *jajung jeoljo* (Put value in your dignity and uphold your integrity and honor), *yeomjik gwagam* (Be straight, honest, brave and decisive), *yeeui eomsu* (Show manners and keep strict watch of your behavior), *seupsa mueon* (Do not talk when shooting), *bulweon seungja* (Do not resent those who win), *makman tagung* (Do not draw another person’s bow). When one has been involved with Korean traditional archery for any length of time, he or she realizes that the precepts are not just empty words or slogans, but are ideas that are strongly believed in and adhered to. There are also rules of technique (*jipgung jeweonchik*) that are important regarding shooting.

There is a tradition in many clubs across the nation that seems like it came from the time of the Joseon dynasty, but it actually only goes back as far as the 1960s. It is regarding the *jeonggan* sign found in many clubs, which has the Chinese characters (正間) literally meaning “upright/straight” and “space/interval”. The exact meaning varies from region to region and even its original intention is not clear. As one would bow to the sign upon entering the club each day, some believe it harkens back to the old days when members would bow to their elders upon entering the club.

4.4 The Future of Korean Traditional Archery

As mentioned above, Korea has excelled in international archery events, such as the Olympics. The lure of gold medals, along with a feeling of connection to ancient heritage, has influenced many young Koreans to take up the bow. Not only have Korean archers—both FITA and traditional styles—influenced their own country's youth, but have also had an impact on people in many other countries as well. The author is privileged to have been part of Korean traditional archery's internationalization over the past twenty years, having produced two videos, one book and a popular website on the subject. Along with that, the author has taken part in international traditional archery events since 1996, when he first attended the Eastern Traditional Archery Rendezvous (ETAR) near Coudersport, Pennsylvania, in the USA. For the next several years, he gave lectures and demonstrations on Korean traditional archery, and was occasionally assisted by other archers, including his son (a *dan*-level Korean traditional archer). For a few years, the author could not attend the event, due to scheduling, but started attending again from 2010, assisting the Korean bow company, Kaya Archery; he has also helped Kaya for the past two years at several other events in the U.S.

From 2007, Korea reached out to international traditional archers with the establishment of the World Traditional Archery Festival. From its start, it included around two dozen countries and one hundred archers, showcasing many different styles of traditional archery. The traditional archery world learned more about Korean traditional archery and Korean archers learned more about other archery cultures. It has been an annual event and has the continued interest of archers from all around the world.

Another archery activity enjoyed in Korea—and also popular in countries around the world—is that of horse archery. Back in the time of the Three Kingdoms of Korea, archers on the peninsula were renowned for horseback archery. In 1998, horse archery was reborn in Korea, with the establishment of the Korean Equestrian Martial Arts Association by Kim Young-sup. He not only brought back horse archery, but also other mounted martial arts, including those involving swords, spears, flails, and even a type of polo. Since that time, other countries have also rediscovered their horse archery past, and they all formed the World Horseback Archery Federation, with Mr. Kim as the current chair. Competitions are held in different countries, including Korea (at the Korean association's site in Sokcho, in the northeast part of South Korea).

Also, Korean cinema has added interest in the subject, both domestically and internationally, with movies such as, *Musa* and *Bow: The Ultimate Weapon*, along with television drama series, such as, *Jumong*. Although not always historically or technically accurate, the shows certainly gained the interest of people world-wide.

There have also been international shows featuring archery that have instilled a renewed interest in traditional archery. Besides many versions of the old *Robin Hood* story, there have been more recent movies, such as the *Lord of the Rings* series, *The Hunger Games*, and the animated movie, *Brave*. Having talked with traditional bow manufacturers—both Korean and international—the author found that there has been a great impact on traditional archery, as orders for traditional bows increase markedly when those movies are released.

5 Conclusion

Korean traditional archery has its roots going back millennia, and is famous for it both historically and legendarily. The bow played important military roles throughout Korea's history, from the Three Kingdoms period, on up through Unified Silla, Goryeo, and Joseon. The bow was the dominant weapon in Korea on up until the Imjin War with Japan from 1592-98, when it was supplanted by black powder firearms—specifically the matchlock musket. After that point, its position in the military hierarchy of weaponry steadily declined, until it was finally removed as a military weapon in 1894.

Fortunately, the bow's demise as a military weapon did not finish it off completely, as it was soon after revived as a civilian activity at the end of the 19th century, with support from King Gojong. After that, although there were rough times due to the Japanese occupation, WWII, and the Korean War, Korean traditional archery not only survived, but later flourished. On top of that, an amicable division was made between those practicing traditional archery and Olympic (FITA) archery; because of that, Korea's archery culture became internationally known. Although Korea no longer has martial archery, like it did in the Joseon dynasty, its legacy has influenced the archery the country has today and, thus, will live on through Korea's living archery heritage, both in Korea and also throughout the world.

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