Vol.3 No.1 2023
https://doi.org/10.37420/j.ssp.2021.003

Functions and values of archery in Han dynasty in China

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Abstracts
This paper explores the various values of archery in the Han Dynasty: militarily, archery was used as a key skill, providing a crucial tactical advantage in defending the state and in conquering the battlefield; politically, archery competitions were a stage for emperors and aristocrats to demonstrate their strength and leadership, as well as an opportunity to enhance their social status and reputation; educationally, archery training was regarded as an effective way of exercising courage, fortitude, and concentration, and became a part of the education of the imperial son and the nobles' education; in social and recreational aspects, archery competitions added rich colours to the social life of the time, and became a bridge to bring people closer and enhance friendship.

Keywords
Han Dynasty, archery, military value, political value, educational value, social value

Archery, one of the oldest sports, originated in ancient times when mankind needed to hunt and defend itself. The invention of archery was undoubtedly an important leap forward in the evolution of mankind from crawling to walking upright. This progress marks the ability of human beings to reform simple tools into compound tools, and it is one of the greatest achievements of human beings to change their destiny, take the initiative to fight with nature, and seek survival and development[1]. Since then, archery has left a unique mark on all aspects of human society. In the Cold War era, archery became one of the decisive weapons for thousands of years, especially in China, a country that has been multi-ethnic since ancient times and has experienced ethnic changes, intermingling and dynastic changes. Until the birth of modern gunpowder weapons, the bow and arrow had played a key role in frequent, even year-long, wars. Archery was also an important means of education in ancient China, with a popularity and number of participants unmatched by any other sport. As time passed, archery also derived from entertainment and other functions, forming a multi-cultural system of ancient Chinese archery centred on "archery".

Against this background, the Han Dynasty, as an important period in Chinese history, deserves special attention for the application and development of archery. During the Han Dynasty, archery not only played a decisive role in military warfare, but also played an important function in entertainment, politics and education[2]. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to explore in depth the multifaceted value of archery in the Han Dynasty, including its impact in four main areas: military, entertainment, politics and education. By analysing these aspects in detail, we can better understand the important position and value of archery in the Han Dynasty and Chinese history as a whole[3].

1.the military value of archery in the Han Dynasty

During the two Han dynasties, archery has been transformed from the content of pre-Qin school education to an important military training activity with strong political value and practicality. When there was no war in peacetime, in order to prevent the army's combat effectiveness from declining, the rulers usually trained the army with the help of large-scale field hunting activities[4]. Such training could not only improve the individual fighting skills of the soldiers, but also enhance the overall co-ordination and co-ordination of the army's fighting ability. In the event of a war, the whole army could quickly enter the combat state. The war against the Huns in the Han Dynasty lasted more than a hundred years. Since the Huns were a nation on horseback, horseback riding and archery were their basic survival skills, and the Historical Records describes the nomadic people in this way: "The children could ride the sheep, draw their bows and shoot the birds and rats, and the lesser ones shot the foxes and rabbits, and used them for food. The soldiers can bend the bow and ride for the armour. Their customs, wide is with the animals, because the shooting and hunting of birds and animals for their livelihood, the urgent is the people practice war attack to invade and destroy, their nature is also. Their long armament is the bow and arrow, and their short armament is the sword and collar." Huns live on horseback since childhood, when children can bend the bow and shoot arrows, when not at war, they graze livestock while shooting and hunting to make a living, when at war, they practice combat and attack techniques to invade and attack, this is the nature of the Huns, so Huns are almost everyone is the iron armoured cavalry, and their long weapons are bows and arrows[5].

Archery is an important mode of combat in the cold weapon era, the Han Dynasty has long fought with the Xiongnu who specialised in mounted archery, Du Du's "On the Capital Fugue" contains a scene depicting the battle with the Xiongnu during the period of Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty: "Verbally rattling arrows, pegging stakes to nail the deer, fast horses pitted against the bank, captured Kunya, captured , driving the mules and donkeys, harnessing Dawan horses, and using the whips to draw the horses. He opened up a distance of 10,000 miles and shook the Eight Wastelands." Here, "wuwu" refers to the rattling arrow, a kind of Xiongnu's arrow that can make sound, which is enough to see the importance of archery technology in the war of Han Dynasty[6]. Therefore, in the hunting activities for the purpose of military training, the rulers paid special attention to the training of archery skills. According to the content of this kind of training in Han Fu, it can be divided into two parts: archery technology training and tactical training[7].

First, archery technology training. Archery is all about precision and lethality, and there are a lot of descriptions about the precision and lethality of archery in Han Fu. Sima Xiangru in the "Shanglin Fugue" in the Han Dynasty, trying his best to the son of heaven in the Shanglin Garden hunting grand scene, not only shot the target, and is as long as the shot out must be straight to the vitals: "bow not false hair, should be sound and fall." To shoot can be shot to crack the neck, shot through the head, its lethality is enough to see. Second, archery tactics training. Battlefield with courage without strategy, just rushing to fight, the lack of battle plan, no tactics is certainly difficult to achieve great things[8]. Especially in large regimental combat, individual combat skills is the foundation, and the level of tactical coordination is the key to victory. The combat tactics on the battlefield in the Han Dynasty were more diverse, and many classic cases were recorded in the history books[9]. In addition, the Han Fu also mentioned the assessment of military training. According to the description of the hunting process in the Han Fu, the imperial hunting of the Han Dynasty can be

summarised as the process of preparation before hunting, travelling of the large troop, inspection by the Son of Heaven, hunting and killing, and feasting and amusement after the hunting. During the shooting process, the Son of Heaven would ride in a car and wander around, observing the advance and retreat of the ranks of the soldiers and the demeanour of the generals and commanders in response to the situation[10]. Sima Xiangru's Shanglin Fu depicts the actions of the Son of Heaven during the shooting process: "So he rode the moped and hovered around, soaring to and fro, looking askance at the advancement and retreat of the troops, and looking at the general's and marshal's metamorphosis." By the end of the hunting process of banquets, to count all the prey hunted in the hunt, for the Son of Heaven to review the front, middle and back of the three armies. In order to motivate the morale of the army, the Son of Heaven would also reward the generals at the end of the examination. The Western Han Dynasty rhetorician, Meixian, describes the Emperor's rewards in his Seven Hair: "Harvesting the palms of merit, rewarding them with gold and silk." It can be seen that at the end of the hunting activities, the Son of Heaven would reward according to the amount of prey harvested, and the rewards ranged from gold and silk to wine and food. This point in the Ban Gu "Xidu Fu" in the "and then collect birds will be crowded, on the merits of the grant." This is also confirmed.

2.Recreational Value of Archery in the Han Dynasty

In the Han Dynasty, with the development of agriculture, handicrafts and commerce, social culture also flourished. Sports, as an important part of social culture, also underwent significant changes. In 140 B.C., Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty implemented the policy of "dismissing the hundred schools and revering only the Confucians", which led to the gradual formation of the ideology of "valuing literature over martial arts"[11]. This created the conditions for the development of recreational sports, which gradually became recreational and performative. Against this background, archery changed from a single military training to a popular recreational activity, becoming a favourite sport for emperors, ministers and even ordinary people. The sporty and ornamental nature of archery made it occupy an important position in recreational activities. People played archery in games, celebrations, and recreational activities, which not only exercised their physical strength, but also increased the fun of entertainment. The Book of the Han Dynasty records that during his reign, Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty used to order archery competitions to celebrate major festivals. These tournaments not only included the participation of court nobles, but also invited ordinary people, making archery tournaments a popular entertainment[12]. In these competitions, both emperors and common people could show their archery skills and enjoy the happiness brought by the competitions.

Since archery required both individual skill and teamwork, it also became an important part of social activities in the Han Dynasty, and archery competitions became an effective way to improve social interaction and teamwork. In archery competitions, people could demonstrate their skills while interacting with others, enhancing friendship and teamwork among people[13].

3.The Political Value of Archery in the Han Dynasty

Archery was part of military technology, which played a key role in defending the country and conquering the battlefield. Moreover, emperors and nobles often held archery competitions to demonstrate their strength and courage, and thus win the respect and support of the people. Archery competitions also had a special place in the political life of the Han Dynasty. Emperors and nobles often held archery competitions to demonstrate

their military strength and leadership. In these competitions, the winners would not only receive rich rewards, but also gain higher political status and prestige. Therefore, archery competitions were regarded as an opportunity for promotion and a stage to display one's political talents[14].

In archery competitions, contestants were not only required to demonstrate their skills but also their courage and determination. In this process, a leader's performance often affects his status and reputation[15]. A good leader should have the courage to face challenges, be highly skilled and be able to win in the competition. Such a leader will win the respect and support of the people, thus consolidating his political position. According to the Records of the Grand Historian, during the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty, he often held archery competitions to which he invited the nobles and the people to participate. In these competitions, Emperor Wu of Han demonstrated not only his archery skills, but also his courage and leadership skills. His performance won the respect and support of the people and consolidated his position. At the same time, these competitions also provided him with the opportunity to observe and select talents. Through the archery competitions, he found some excellent military leaders who contributed to the development of the country.

Sima Xiangru's Shanglin Fu is a piece of writing with strong colours of Huanglao Taoism, whose basic propositions include reflections on authoritarian politics and criticisms of socio-political ideas. In one of the passages, it is written that the emperor suddenly had an epiphany after three rounds of drinking, and he was very worried that his descendants would be extravagant and obscene, and would not restrain themselves: "Contempt, this is a great extravagance! I to see and listen to the rest of the time, nothing to abandon the day, along with the way of heaven to kill and destroy, when resting in this, fear of the future generation of extravagance, so to go and not return, not so for the heir of the business to hang the lineage also." It is also recorded in the fugue that later on, the emperor ordered to remove the banquet, and from then on, no longer hunting, so that the officials in charge of all the land that can be reclaimed into farmland, will be on the forest garden walls are pushed down, will be filled with trenches, so that the people planted rely on the livelihood[16]. This kind of compassionate governance ideas in today's view is also commendable.

4.Archery education in the Han Dynasty

In the Han Dynasty, archery was widely regarded as a useful educational activity. It not only enhances physical fitness and strengthens the body, but also exercises the individual's mental strength and develops one's courage, tenacity and concentration. The practice of archery requires a high degree of concentration, precise calculation and strong self-control, all of which contribute positively to an individual's growth and education. Firstly, archery builds courage[17]. This is because archery involves pressure, both in competitions and in improving one's skills, which requires toughness and courage to face. Secondly, archery requires persistence and perseverance in training, and this state of mind has an important influence on one's growth and the shaping of one's attitude towards life[18]. In addition, archery requires concentration and accuracy, which play an important role in developing one's attention and concentration. According to the Records of the Grand Historian, archery training in the Han Dynasty was usually carried out as part of the education programme for royalty and nobility. For example, royal sons would receive archery training when they came of age, through which they learnt how to control and focus their power, as well as develop their courage and

determination. This kind of education not only strengthened their bodies, but also their spirits, preparing them to take on the heavy responsibility of the country in the future[19].

After the Han Dynasty, due to wars and other reasons, the rulers gradually focused on the practical rather than the ceremonial aspects of archery, but this did not mean the demise of the archery rites, which still existed intermittently in the Han Dynasty and in the various dynasties that followed it to a greater or lesser extent, or by following the traditional rites or by simplifying the rites. Because Confucianism believes that the shooting rite contains the way of benevolence and generosity, the move was supposedly made in the hope of enhancing the quality of hunting through rites and music. Therefore the shooting rites of the Han Dynasty still existed in many cases. Ban Gu elaborated in Dongdu Fu that hunting should follow certain principles and etiquette: "If you collect and hunt in accordance with the season, and if you speak of martial arts in a simple way, then you will be presented with the King's Rule. Then, we must be in the presence of the "King's System", examining the "Wind" and "Elegance". We will visit the Zouyu, see the Teams of Iron, commend the Car Attacks, and adopt the Auspicious Days. The ceremonial officials rectify the rituals, and the mikoshi is taken out." This passage contains two aspects: on the one hand, we should go hunting in accordance with the season. Guided by the naturalism of the unity of man and nature, the ancients attached great importance to the balance of the biological chain in nature and the law of cultivation and harvesting in the four seasons, so the hunting must be in accordance with the characteristics of different seasons[20]. For example, spring is the season of all living things, when all kinds of birds and beasts are reproducing in large quantities, so it is not appropriate to kill them, or pay attention to hunting birds and beasts that are not pregnant when hunting. Summer is the time when the crops in the fields are at their peak, so hunting at this time is a kind of protective practice to prevent a large number of birds and animals from breeding and spoiling the crops. And in winter when everything is silent and the weather is too cold, the animals seldom come out to move around[21], which will affect the hunting harvest. After the autumn harvest is relatively more suitable for hunting, because at this time the fields are usually just harvested, hunting will not affect the crops, in addition, at this time the beasts are preparing food for the winter, go out more activities, and fatten up more. On the other hand, a series of ceremonial activities have to be held before the hunting, and then the ceremonial officers have to tidy up the army's manners, and the vehicles can only go out to hunt[22].

Conclusion

Archery had a diverse range of values in the Han dynasty, from military to political, from educational to social and recreational. Archery was not only a tactical skill, but also a way to demonstrate strength and leadership, and an opportunity to enhance an individual's social status and reputation. It was also an educational activity, exercising courage, fortitude and concentration through archery training, as well as a social and recreational activity that added richness to the social life of the time. Overall, archery played multiple roles in the Han Dynasty, both practical and symbolic, reflecting the diversity and complexity of society at that time.

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