

Longbow/Traditional Archery Day

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

28 July 2012

## TURKISH ARCHERY



<http://www.tirendaz.com>

<http://www.traditional-archery.com>

<http://www.sylvanarchery.co.uk>

## Turkish Archery

Turkish Archery is a school of archery that has originated in Central Asia. Turks were formidable horseback archers. Being mobile and possessing a projectile weapon at the same time proved to be a deadly combination on the battlefield. Turks would make use of this style of fighting for centuries to come. In time, due to the migration as well conquests of Turks, this school arrived in Asia Minor and East Europe. Archery played a vital role in Turkish life; beside the obvious usage in battle and hunt, many customs and traditions appeared over time, which were in one way or another bound to archery. Many archery terms made their way into daily speech, and many still are in use in modern Turkish. Turks practiced archery even as a sport, as a display of ones skill. Flight Archery was one such celebrated discipline. There were many *Okmeydanı*'s or Flight Shooting Range' s scattered around the *Ottoman Empire*, with fierce but fair competition among its participating archers. *Sultan Mehmet The Conqueror* himself ordered the setting up of a range in Istanbul for sportive only use in 1453, right after the city fell into Ottoman hands. In the following centuries many institutions (Tekke's) were established with the sole purpose of raising sportive archers, complete

with registration books and kept records. One such famous archer was *Tozkoparan Iskender* who is known to have shot a distance of over 845 meters (around 924 yards). Flight archery was practised into late Ottoman times, long after firearms had replaced bows on the battlefield.



More info on: <http://www.tirendaz.com>

## Turkish Bows

Turkish bows are composite bows. They are made from wood, horn and sinew pasted together with glue made from fish bladder, unlike most of their western counterparts, which (with the exception of many Native American styles) were mainly 'self' bows, that is made from one piece of wood. The building process requires great skill and craftsmanship, as well as a great deal of patience. Even after everything is glued together, the bowyer has to wait for at least a year for the materials to cure. The completion of a 'flight' (distance) bow may take up to three years. Skilled craftsmen such as bowyers would therefore be revered in Ottoman society. Another major difference between most western and Turkish bows is the length. Turkish bows are much shorter. There is an on-going debate about what the reason for that may be. Some suggest that it is because of use on horseback, others point at the energy being transferred from the bow to the arrow. Turkish bows are also reflex, meaning that their limb tips point the opposite direction when unstrung. They were also richly decorated and would have amazing examples of calligraphy on them.



## Turkish Technique

As with most Asiatic archery schools, Turkish Archery is performed with thumb release and using a thumbing. Moreover, the arrow rests on the right side of the bow. This is in contrast to Western/Mediterranean/Flemish finger release, in which the arrow rests on the left. In thumb release, since the archer is pressing the arrow towards the bow with the draw hand, he/she is able to have a broader choice of shooting stances. But the greater advantage is actually hidden in the mechanics of archery. The Asiatic/Turkish release technique serves a straighter trajectory. A straight trajectory helps the war arrow to further penetrate armour and the flight arrow to reach further distances.

