

Falconry in central Europe in the Middle Ages

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article présente les sources archéologiques, iconographiques et écrites qui permettent de documenter l'histoire de la fauconnerie au Moyen Âge dans les régions germanique et slave. On y considère l'apport des analyses archéozoologiques fondées sur le matériel osseux issu de sites slaves.

ABSTRACT

Archaeological, iconographical and written sources for falconry in the Middle Ages from the Germanic as well as from the Slavic area are described. The possibility to use archaeozoological analyses of bone material from Slavic sites for this topic is discussed.

Falconry is a special interaction between humans and wild animals. A bird of prey, which has been tamed and trained, is used like a hunting weapon. This hunting method was widespread in medieval Europe and was practised especially by the nobility, not, however, as an economic necessity in order to gain meat for nourishment, but as a sport and amusement. It is a highly developed hunting technique, where the bird captures the wild animal, and the hunter takes away the prey by giving the bird some food. In most cases a dog is involved in this hunting technique, and very often the hunter is mounted. For falconry one needs normally a vast area of open land, especially when true falcons are used. However, other birds of prey were also used for this hunting method, although falcons were the noblest ones, particularly the gyr falcon – *Falco rusticolus* –, which was brought mainly from northern countries to central Europe. The white gyr falcons from Iceland were most famous. The falcons gave the name to this hunting technique.

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