

is also dated to the second half of the 9th century AD. It has a diameter of 4.3 cm. These specimens obviously were not items of daily use for everybody. They were parts of the horse gear of a socially prominent group : the nobility is suggested. Therefore one can conclude that in the Slavic area falconry was also restricted to the nobility. Written historic sources for falconry are also known from the Slavic area, although not from as early a time as in the Germanic area. In the poem about the Russian hero Igor from the end of the 12th century, it is mentioned that « 10 falcons were thrown onto a group of swans » (Graßhoff *et al.*, 1965). In this connection falcons and swans are symbols, as one can see from the sequel. It is not a real hunt that is reported by this poem. However, the use of falconry as a symbol could only occur when falconry itself was known to the people in this region and at that time. Therefore this source is also an evidence for knowledge of falconry by the Slavs. A special form of written sources is the toponym, as for instance « Sokolnici », which can be derived from the phrase « sokolnik », that means « hunter with falcons ». They are found especially in the area of the Great Moravian Empire (Eichler, Walther, 1969). Settlements with those names were obviously the official habitations of a prince's falconers. They show us that falconry in this area was well established and was a privileged sport or amusement for the nobility. However, in the region of the northwest Slavic tribes such toponyms are not to be found.

Interpretation of osteological finds is difficult in this region. Skeletons of birds of prey among the grave goods similar to those of the Germanic area are absent in Slavic people's graves. Within the bone material analysed from medieval sites in the Slavic area west of the Oder river, however, bones from birds of prey were found in several cases. In this region bones from wild birds could be identified from 32 medieval sites. The goshawk – *Accipiter gentilis* – was found at 12 sites, the sparrow hawk – *Accipiter nisus* – at 6, and the peregrine – *Falco peregrinus* –, the hobby – *Falco subbuteo* – and the golden eagle – *Aquila chrysaetos* – at 1 site each, to name first those birds of prey which could be used in falconry. The kestrel – *Falco tinnunculus* –, which sometimes could also be used in falconry, is known from two sites. However, other birds of prey, not normally used in falconry, occurred in similar quantity. The white-tailed eagle – *Haliaeetus albicilla* – is known from 11 sites, the buzzard – *Buteo buteo* – and the kite – *Milvus milvus* – from 6 each, the hen harrier – *Circus cyaneus* – from 3, and the short-toed eagle – *Circaetus gallicus* –, the lesser spotted eagle – *Aquila pomarina* –, the black kite – *Milvus migrans* – and the marsh harrier – *Circus aeruginosus* – from 1 site each. Birds of prey, which could be used in falconry, are therefore not represented at more sites than other birds of prey. Whether the bones of birds of prey used in falconry were more numerous at these sites than the bones of other birds of prey could not be established because of the small number of bird bones at most of these sites. Thus, we can not use this as evidence for falconry. It might be that birds of prey were hunted because their feathers were needed for fletching arrows.

Some other observations, however, are of interest in this connection. First we have to look at the sex ratio. The determination of sex from the bones of the goshawk is relatively easy, because in most cases there is a gap between the ranges of variation in the measurements of male and female bones. Female goshawks, as most other female birds of prey, are larger and stronger than males, and they were therefore preferred for falconry. Consequently, their bones are also larger and stronger. If one can note a preponderance of the larger, female, bones in a material, then the conclusion that