

Falconry tradition in ancient and medieval Greece: From Homer till to date

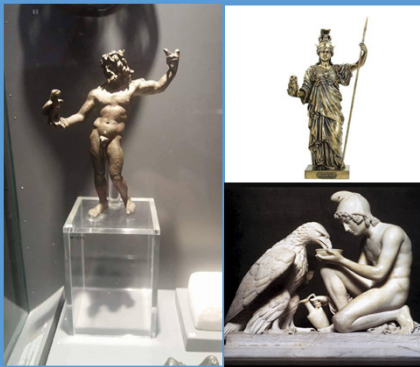


4th International Falconry Festival Abu Dhabi 2017

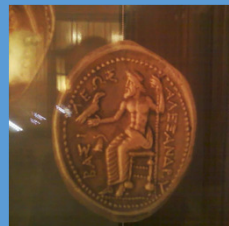


Falconry was known, but not much practiced in Ancient Greece. Aristotle makes two references to this habit in Thrace (NE Greece) according to which the falconers were men or boys who when they used to practice falconry in the marshes summoned their birds by name. When the raptors heard the falconers' voices they swooped on the quarry, which took refuge in the nearest bushes. There they were knocked down by sticks and captured. The raptors laid the catch by the falconers' feet and they shared it with them (Pollard 1977).

In Homer's *Odyssey* it is reported that Greeks have learned much for falconry during the Trojan War. After the end of the war, Ulysses carried back to Greece among his trophies trained falconry falcons (1300 BC)



The love of ancient Greeks to the raptors is represented in different statues and myths. Zeus often seen holding an eagle, Athena the goddess of wisdom carries a little owl, the story of Ganimedes and his eagle.



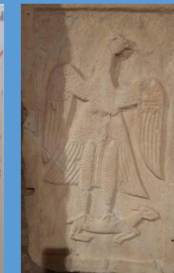
Coin from the Hellenistic period 323 BC showing man (Zeus) sitting with a raptor



Floor mural in Argos (500 AC). In Argos was based one of the two falconry schools of the byzantine empire



Falconer on Patmos Island (1300 AC)



Marble sculpture depicting an eagle with hare (1250 AC)



Balkan falconer 18th century



Travelers also give evidence about falconry in Greece. I.e. the British archaeologist Richard Chandler who came to Greece in 1764 notes that he took part in a falconry organized on Mount Hymettus in the Athens area of Attica (East Central Greece), (Sidiropoulos *et al.* 2016). Even if the tradition of falconry is not anymore alive in Greece, remnants still exist as i.e. in the bells of the bow of the Cretan lyra, a three-stringed bowed musical instrument, central to the traditional music of Crete and other islands in the Dodecanese and the Aegean Archipelago, in Greece that are called *gerakokoudouna*, literary the falcons' bells (Kamilaki 2009), or in aphorisms that refer to falconry (Chatzidakis 1923)

In modern Greece hunting is allowed only with the use of shotguns, while the use of falconry as well as this of traps or attracting devices are illegal (Handrinos & Akriotis 1997). Our association has as primary goal the revival of old byzantine techniques in Greece under the modern guidelines of IAF.