

**Culture** Takagari - Japanese Falconry

JREF · 12 Feb 2013 · Updated 24 Mar 2018 · 2 min read · falconry takagari 鷹狩

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## Takagari

**Japanese falconry (鷹狩 *takagari*) is said to have come to Japan from China around the 4th century CE and was practised by emperors, courtiers, and later by the samurai class well into the Edo period.**

**Haniwa**, earthenware figures of the **Kofun Period** (ca. 250-710 CE), show a falconer, and the **Kojiki** (古事記, "Records of Ancient Matters") mentions pheasant hunting excursions in the **Yamato** area (modern-day Nara Prefecture) with hawks or falcons. The *Shinshū Yōkyō* (818), based on Chinese manuscripts, was one of the first Japanese textbooks on falconry. In the **Heian Era** (794-1185), falconry was practised by emperors and courtiers. Later on, in the **Kamakura Period** (1185-1333), schools representing different traditions were established by the warrior class, the **samurai**, such as the Saionji and the Jimyōin schools.

In the Edo Period (1600-1868), falconry was actively encouraged by the Tokugawa shogunate, which created the official position of 'master falconer' (鷹匠 *takashō*) in the government bureaucracy. While officially patronised, falconry was restricted to the warrior class, prohibiting the *kuge* (courtiers) and common people from breeding and holding birds of prey. *Samurai* had to practice falconry on designated land only (鷹場 *takaba*).

In the **Meiji Period**, the *samurai* monopoly on falconry was abolished, but many of the old traditions were lost in the process. Nowadays, falconry is still practised in a ceremonial form in Yamagata and Akita and by enthusiasts in private clubs.

The **Tokugawa Art Museum** in Nagoya, a vast exhibition of objects belonging to the Owari branch of the Tokugawa family, displays a collection of manuscripts and artefacts on *takagari*.



Haniwa depicting a falconer from the Kofun Period; Yamato Bunkakan Museum in Nara



Drawing of falconers (takajō)



'Heian 𪗇 eagle hunting' by Kanō Shōsen'in (狩野勝川院, 1823-1880)



Japanese falconer



Japanese book on falconry published in 1873 (National Diet Library)



Japanese Sparrowhawk (雀鷹 or 雀鷲 haitaka, *accipiter gularis*)



Northern Goshawk (大鷹 *ōtaka*, *Accipiter gentilis*)



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Falcon show in Hama-rikyu Koen, January 2004

## Links:

- [The last falconry master](#) (in Japanese)
- [The Japan Falconiformes Center](#)
- [History of falconry in Japan: Woodcuts from the 19th century](#) (interesting illustrations)

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