

Traditional Japanese Falconry Equipments and Application on the Conservation of birds of prey

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Falconry is worldwide heritage which has developed in various areas or countries with original cultures. In Japan, it is thought that falconry was handed down at around the fourth century from the Korean peninsula, and was then developed for a long time by the various Japanese cultures in each period.

Falconry in Japan was practiced by the ruling class in each epoch. The birds of prey were supplied as tributes from various areas, and a proportion of these were released back to nature after the hunting period. The falconers in the old days were keepers of the birds of prey owned by their lords, and they were specialists at training the wild birds for hunting purposes. In the hawking field, the lord or invited guest used the birds of prey that were trained by falconers. For this regime, the Japanese falconers developed keeping facilities, tools and training methods best suited for handling the wild birds of prey not exclusively for one's personal use.



Falconry scene in Edo Period
(Taken from 'Ehon Taka Kagami Vol. 2' by Toiku Kawanabe)

In line with changes in the social structure, the keeping of native birds of prey as a personal hobby has ended, and falconers as specialists for keeping the birds of prey for their lords have also disappeared, but the skill is still preserved by some falconers. Currently, these skills are applied to the conservation works where injured birds are returned to their natural habitat. It is very useful to handle the injured birds of prey without tame condition, and the hunting ability of the recovered birds of prey is checked before release, using training for falconry.

In The Japan Falconiformes Center, we are regularly using the facilities that had been restored based on documents dating back to the Edo Period (1603-1868) and we realize that they feature an extremely convenient and rational structure for nurturing and training the birds of prey. We have continued the conservation works for Japanese birds of prey with these traditional methods since 1964, and our activities are recognized by many Japanese agencies, corporations, ornithologists and veterinarians.

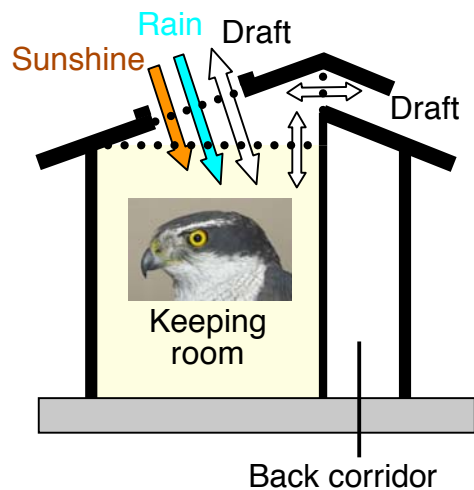
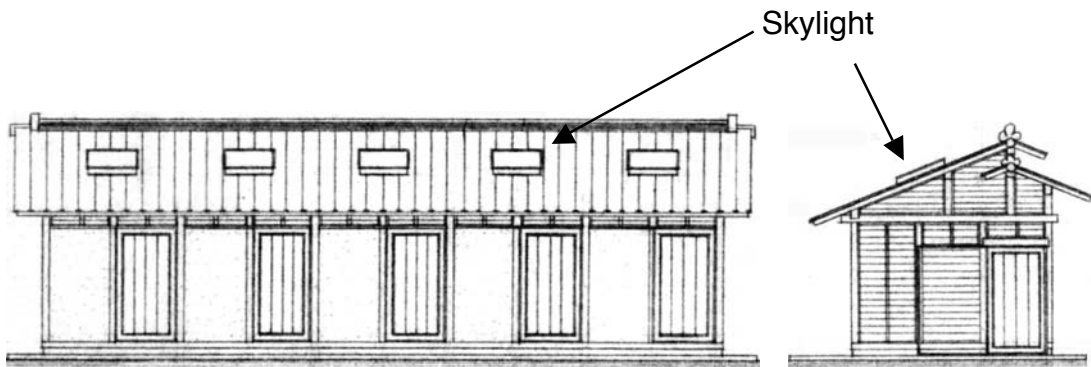
What follows here is an introduction to the Japanese falconry equipments and facilities.

TAKABEYA 鷹部屋, Hawk House or Mews

Hawk House is divided into five rooms and each room is about 4.4 meters square, fitted with shelves for eating and with perches. The hawk or falcon is allowed to move freely inside when moulting, but tied to the perch with the leash once training starts, and the skylight is closed to keep the room inside pitch dark.

The House has a double-structure roof to allow natural ventilation to cool down. Inside is a smooth white wall so as not to damage the plumage.

The falconer enter and exit through the front side, and during the moult, the hawk or falcon is fed by using a feeding tray from the back corridor side.



Keeping room



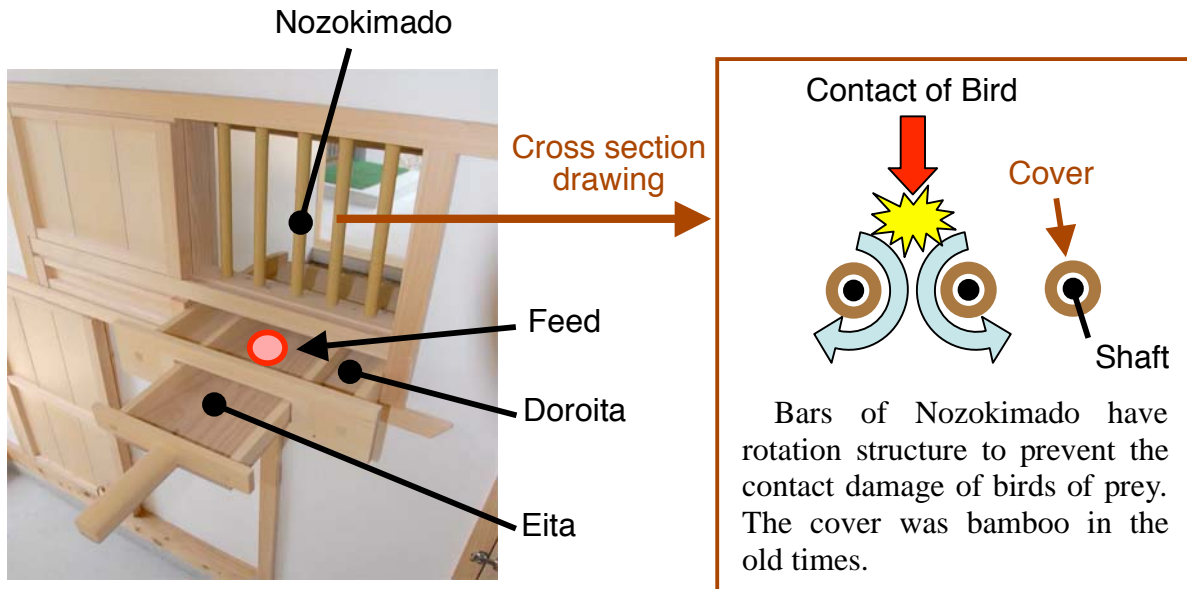
Back corridor



Tied goshawk

NOZOKIMADO 覗窓, Inspection Window

The upper part of feeding window with a sliding door for inspecting the inside of the mews. The lattice is an only vertical bar to prevent feather rub in flapping.



EITA 餌板, Feeding Tray

Wooden tray to serve feed to hawk or falcon placed in the mews. Used together with DOROITA, the drawer-shaped board.

DOROITA 泥板

Drawer-shaped board to insert the feeding tray used to feed the hawk or falcon in the mews. Set the feeding window i.e. lower section of NOZOKIMADO.



Eita and Doroita are disinfected by boiling water to prevent infectious disease.

TOBOKO 外架, Outdoor Screen Perch

Used outdoors for keeping the hawks or falcon tied.



DAIBOKO 台架, Indoor Screen Perch

Used indoors for keeping the hawks or falcons who have finished training.



HOKODARE

HOKODARE 架垂, Screen

Fabric hanging down from the perch so as to make it easier for the hawk or falcon to sit on. Gold brocade is used for the Daiboko (Indoor Screen Perch), and Tatami matting for the Toboko (outdoor Screen Perch).

MOTOOSI 旋子, Swivel

Attached to the leash so as to prevent it from getting entangled. Made of various materials such as precious metals, ivory and deer horn.



FUSEGINU 伏衣, Cloth Jacket

Sort of constraint clothing used when fitting jesses or when applying treatment. Designed to cover the head to blindfold the hawk or falcon.



YUGAKE 弓掛, Glove

Leather glove worn on left hand when seating the hawk or falcon on the fist. Made of soft deerskin and has a long soft deerskin string at the wrist part.



ASHIKAWA 足革, Jesses

Tanned deer skin strap attached to the legs; dyed purple for use with goshawks. Jesses for falcons are same form as the jesses for goshawk, but used undyed i.e. natural tanned skin.



000 大緒, Leash

Leash for goshawk is a 3.6 meter-long silk braid. A swivel is fitted to the center, twice-folded, and both ends finished with a tassel. It is always attached to the jesses, except for releasing the goshawk. Normally vermillion, but for goshawks which hunted cranes it would be purple.

The leash for falcon is made of linen rope.



EGOUSHI 餌合子, Feed Box

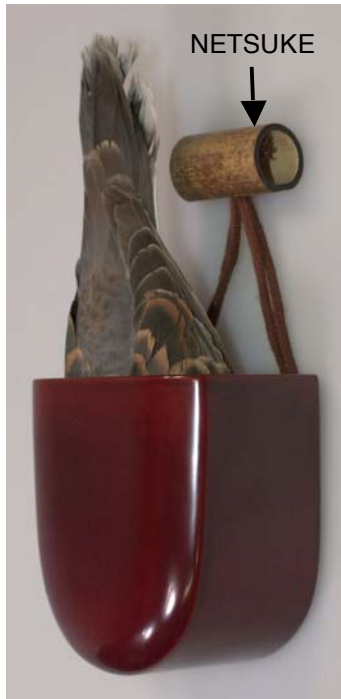
Feed Box with fresh meat cut to bite-sized pieces so that the hawk can eat at a mouthful; the falconer always carries it suspended from the waistband by using a Netsuke. Lacquered black on the outside and red on the inside. Used during the hawk training stage, the falconer raps the lid and the body to make sounds every time he feeds the hawk. The hawk remembers that sound and the red color on the inside, and flies back even from afar when called.



NETSUKE 根付

A short bamboo piece attached to the leather straps on the Egoushi or Kuchiekago or Marubatoire etc. By tucking the Netsuke under falconer's belt, he carries Egoshi etc.

MARUBATOIRE 丸鳩入, Dove Container



Contains a dove to feed the hawk or falcon, dove's entrails are removed and breast muscles exposed. The falconer carries it suspended from the waist by using a Netsuke.

KUCHIEKAGO 口餌籠, Feed Basket

Contains a dove wing with breast meat to feed the hawk, carried suspended from the waistband on a Netsuke.



HATOBUKURO 鳩袋, Dove Bag

Cotton sewn in a bag shape with string at both ends to tie a live dove with head and tail sticking out. Suspended from the waistband by using a Netsuke.



IKEBUKURO 生袋, Feed Bag

Linen bag for holding live sparrows to be fed to hawks or falcons in the field. Suspended from the waistband on a Netsuke.



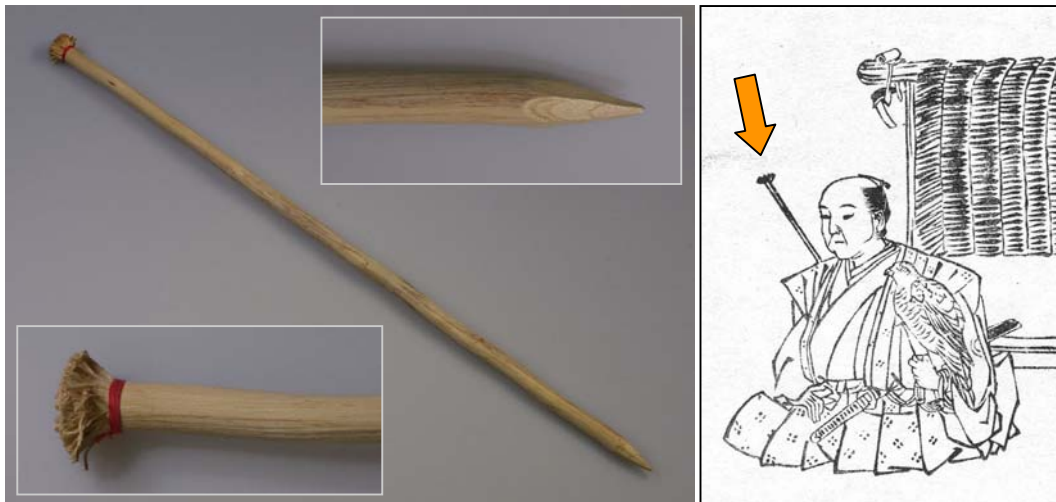
UCHIITA 打板, Droppings Tray

Tray to gather droppings, placed to the left side of the falconer when sitting in the room with the hawk resting on his fist. Finished to black lacquer so as to clearly show the status of droppings.



BUCHI 策

Made of wisteria vine, the tip end is finely torn like a writing brush, while the other end is sharpened. Used for washing the hawk's or falcon's beak and tidying up plumes so that the falcon gets used to man's handling.



ZUKIN 頭巾, Hood

Blindfold cap used for keeping the falcon quiet. Made of cloth with Japanese paper inside.



ZAI 采, Lure

White Japanese paper bundled around the tip of a bamboo stick, used for guiding the falcon flying high up in the sky i.e. waiting on. The Japanese paper is supple and easy to replace after use. The bundle is always kept clean by new paper and the falcon does not get a cut by the edge of the paper.



OKINAWA 忍繩 or 置繩, Creance

About 70 m long silk creance. Attached to the jesses to prevent the hawk from flying away during training, and also used for keeping the hawk at a suitable distance when flying in a confined place after finishing the training period. Wound around the wrist by using the string of the leather glove, rolled around a bamboo tube when not in use.

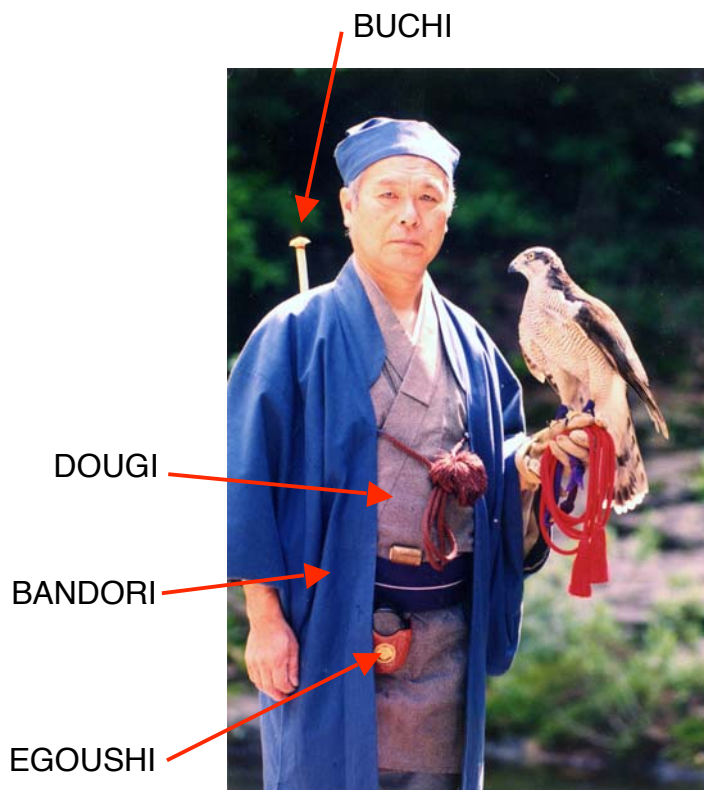


BANDORI 袷取, Falconer's Coat

Haori (Japanese coat) with the length longer than the Kimono (Japanese clothes). Made of plain indigo-blue cotton. Small neck and slits on both sides and the back to allow swift movements.

DOUGI 胴着, Falconer's Uniform

Short clothing reaching only up to the kneecaps, with slits on both sides and the back for allowing swift movements. It is normally dark gray with a white fine polka-dot pattern.



Traditional falconer's uniform in Edo period