



IAF President's Address to the World's Falconers on World Falconry Day.



We have no dispute that falconry is an age-old practice. It is a hunting art, developed, essentially, to put protein on the table and it is often practiced by a solitary hunter and his or her hawk, possibly with a dog or a horse. It is a complex and absorbing practice and so it has developed cultural significance in different societies. In Elizabethan England, it had a popularity similar to that which football enjoys in that country today. In the modern Gulf States, it is of huge significance and certainly eclipses football. In the Gulf region it is an important cultural link to past values and provides essential cultural identity. Indeed, this is true of many people around the world who perceive falconry as part of their personal or national identity

Even with this insight, the average falconer may be surprised to find that respected academics will find it necessary to gather, from around the world, to discuss the historical and cultural implications of this hunting method. That is exactly what is happening at the Conference at the New York University in Abu Dhabi where academics are gathered to discuss “Falconry in the Mediterranean context” from 15th to 17th November. This is of enormous significance to the Art of Falconry. It demonstrates the depth and texture of this art and gives the lie to those of the Animal Rights movement who would portray falconers as brutal sadists bent on the destruction of small fluffy creatures. But, more than this, it puts the passion of practicing falconers into perspective. It demonstrates the rich cultural and historic roots of our practice and provides an added value to our lives.

Falconry is an activity which has enriched the lives of humans for millennia and it continues to do so, providing an absorbing recreational activity to many people in many parts of the world. It continues to contribute to the cultural fabric of peoples' lives and to the conservation of biodiversity. So, it is correct that this pursuit should be the subject of scholastic contemplation and research. It is also more than fitting that we will be engaged in this conference while falconers from every corner of the globe will be celebrating World Falconry Day on 16th November.

Adrian Lombard.

IAF President: November 2015.