



Globalization and Equestrian Cultures: The case of Equitation in the French Tradition

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Résumé en anglais

In 2011, Equitation in the French Tradition was included on the UNESCO list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This listing brings not only notions of heritage and culture, but also the complex balance between global and local scales to the forefront. France, like many other countries, has an age-old equestrian culture which is still alive and well, nourished by various international and local influences and sometimes by conflicting ideas. In second half of the 20th century, both the nation and its equestrian culture were brought within the sphere of Western societies of leisure and consumption under the hegemony of the American model, upsetting the ancestral utilitarian functions of horses and riding and urging their redefinition within the prism of pleasure-oriented, sporting and emotional relationships. This in turn raised issues about what constitutes the French equestrian culture which is protected today, within the more general landscape of globalization. This chapter examines its construction and definition within a progressive society, combining both resistance to and assimilation of new national and international trends. The methodology employed conjoins diachronic and synchronic approaches, associating quantitative and qualitative data in a study based on historical bibliography, current French Equestrian Federation and the French Institute for Horse and Horse Riding (IFCE) statistics, in-depth interviews with key actors of French equestrian and cultural institutions and observations and interviews undertaken during introductory 'baucheriste' horse-riding training.

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