

# EQUINE EMPATHY ESSENTIALS

## RESEARCH PROJECT: WOMEN IN THE SADDLE OF EUROPEAN HISTORY

Between the world wars, women riders seamlessly inserted themselves into a societal evolution dominated by men. Little attention has been paid to their own history in the saddle. My research project deals with the historic reappraisal of the role of European women in the saddle.

There are few if any scientifically based statements on this topic. Reliable sources were either not accessible or so rare that no plausible conclusions could be drawn from them. Instead, from the 19th century onwards, popular quasi-scientific assumptions, traditions and clichés were put down on paper, which often simply reflected the image of women of a particular era. In the absence of new, well-founded publications, these often incorrect impressions still persist in research to this day. However, by consistently compiling only primary sources, new conclusions may be drawn which allow a much more reliable and differentiated view of the reality of women on horseback in the last millennium.

For example, the use of horses to represent and emphasise social status comparably played role as large as it did for men. However, politically successful women have been successively degraded in historiography since the late 18th century. This is reflected in the reporting on women in the saddle.

I am currently working on a publication to document not only riding equipment but also the change in riding technique shedding light on the social role of women on horseback. This will include a catalogue of important ladies' saddles from the 7th to the 18th century, preserved in museums and private collections.

A small taste of this is found in the scientific essay: "Die Frau in der höfischen Reiterei", published in 2019, in: Hippomanie am Hofe, Jahrbuch der Stiftung Thüringer Schlösser und Gärten, vol. 22, Michael Imhof Verlag.

Advance notice 2021: Bonner Jahrbücher 2021: "The seventh-century saddle find from Wesel-Bislich and the cross-saddle in early history".