

FRENCH UNIVERSITY DRESS: REGULATIONS AND CUSTOM

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When the Imperial University, created by the law of 10 May 1806, was organised by the decree of 17 March 1808, the body of teachers in the five faculties: Catholic & Protestant Theology, Law, Medicine, Science, Arts - numbered only about 200 in the whole of the French empire.

This number only increased very slowly during the C19 and it is only from 1880 that Higher Education became an important Public Service, with the faculties being grouped, under the terms of the law of 10 July 1896, into universities under the control of each *académie* (education authority). 100 years later, in 1996, the number of professors and lecturers in the universities, not to mention the similar staff in the *Grandes Ecoles* (a bit like our Oxbridge), has reached several thousand (17,536 professors, 36,053 lecturers and 6,200 professors and lecturers in medical institutions). The official dress conferred on this class of civil servants should therefore be by far the most often worn and therefore best known. However experience shows that it is amongst the most rarely worn and it was even possible to believe after 1968 that lack of interest in it would lead to it being simply abandoned. For the last 10 years or so, however, it would seem that those employed in Higher Education, which is experiencing a decrease in its status in proportion to the increase in its numbers, are hoping by the wearing of their official dress at university activities (theses (debates?), inaugural lectures, ceremonial gatherings) or at ceremonies where the University has a presence, to remind people of their status among constitutional bodies and the dignity of their office. They have all the more reason to do this because French academic dress, which at the beginning of C19 was remodelled for a good part on the sartorial traditions current under the *Ancien Régime*, has the advantage over almost all its foreign counterparts, particularly those in Anglo-Saxon countries, in the amplitude of its cut and the vibrancy of its colours. A further national characteristic is that it is covered by precise regulations, drawn up by public authorities, and therefore constitutes quite literally an official costume, administratively defined and legally protected. A university or faculty can opt to modify locally the dress appropriate to the *ordre*¹ to which it belongs - there are examples of this in the C19 - or decide upon the insignia of an honorary degree, but such a decision must be approved by the administrative authorities governing higher education.

It is precisely from an administrative perspective that I wish here broadly (and sacrificing many valuable details) to compare on the one hand the rules which fixed academic dress at the beginning of the C19 and on the other hand current practice in this matter at the end of the C20, together with the adaptations and amendments which can be seen or expected. It goes without saying that any approach to a subject so intimately bound up with tradition can only be historical. One must start with the dress appropriate to the medieval and modern universities of Europe - from Poland to Portugal - and then consider the various costumes worn in French universities under the *Ancien Régime*. This descriptive and comparative study has been excellently undertaken by the late regretted scholar Jean Dauvillier; it can be complemented on certain matters by the more general work by W. N. Hargreaves-Mawdsley.

¹ *Ordre* seems to be used as a cross between "order" (as in religious order), degree and professional register/association.

The evocation of this historical academic dress is necessary because contemporary French dress is, as I said, largely inspired by it and because certain local particularities have sometimes been retained in Law and Medicine. The universities of the *royaume* (presumably pre-Napoleon), corporate bodies completely independent both of each other and of any central administrative body, were never constrained to any uniformity in matter of dress and the difference between one place and another, for the same faculty, are considerable, even though the practice of the *alma matre parisiensis* exerted a wide influence. Furthermore one should observe that between the C16 and C18 more than one evolution took place as regards material, colour and cut. The transformation of the hat (*bonnet*) and of the bands (*rabat*) are instructive in this regard.

One can distinguish several types, all essentially descended from the cape (*cappa*) and the hood (*capucium*) with its decoration of fur (*vair* or *ermine*) and from the superimposition of the *simarre*² and the gown/robe.

The Parisian model incorporates the universities of the centre and west as well as *Reims* and *Dijon*. It is distinguished by the splendour of the rector's dress, with its square black hat (*bonnet*), very low with projecting *cornes* (literally horns, perhaps points) in C16, higher in C17 and which, in C18, takes the form of a truncated pyramid with an enormously developed tuft. The bands (*rabat*) are large-spread in C17 but get smaller in C18: sometimes in a transparent bluish-white material in the form of two joined (placed side by side) rectangles, sometimes (more rarely) in pleated cambric. The *Decret* Faculty of Paris, later the Law Faculty, in C16 adopted instead of the red cape, a great scarlet gown with a train with wide sleeves gathered at the cuffs and collar, with a black *simarre* with buttons and belt, and on the left shoulder the *chausse à bourrelet*³ edged with ermine. The belt is of black watered silk, knotted on the left and with a fringe. One can see here the similarities with the current costume. Theologians and doctors, on the other hand, have maintained a more archaic costume than jurists. Doctors of the faculty of Medicine in Paris wear over the wide-sleeved black gown, a scarlet gown with an ermine hood shaped like a *camail*⁴; doctors of secular theology of the Paris faculty wear a black silk or satin cape, which opens on a cassock, which has an ermine hood in the form of an ample *pelerine*⁵ gathered up behind. This grand costume is commonly known as "the furs".

The Southern universities form a characteristic group, which perpetuates the old medieval costume: cape with hood *en forme de camail*, made of stuff and never fur. It resembles closely the practice in Spain and Portugal. In the course of C18 the University of Montpellier, in the faculty of medicine, substituted for the cape in red damasked silk, a robe with wide gathered sleeves, worn over a black *simarre* and whose colour varied from crimson to scarlet and mauve. In the C18 there can also be seen a double *camail*, also worn by jurists.

The Netherlands type is common to Douai and Louvain: a black gown with a red *épomide*⁶ in the form of a scarf (or sash) or square *camail*. The Lorrain type (University of Pont-à-Mousson transferred to Nancy in 1769) retains quite an archaic look, particularly for Law. Strasbourg keeps, as well as a black robe with wide gathered sleeves, a little red or black velvet biretta, which evokes the Germanic, Lutheran world.

² *Simarre* is described as 'under-dress of magistrates'

³ *chausse* = *épitoge*. I cannot find the full expression in any French dictionary (but *chausse* was not in most of them!). A *bourrelet* is/was a stuffed ring of material placed on the head to assist in carrying things on the head or to protect the head. Is there an *épitoge* with a stuffed circle at the end? It seems familiar.

⁴ *Camail*- described as either chain-mail hood protecting head, neck & shoulders, or short cape worn by ecclesiastics (*mozzetta*)

⁵ *pèlerine* sleeveless coat covering the shoulders

⁶ *épomide* is not even in the Dictionary of the Academie Française

One should bear in mind that the Universities of the *Ancien Régime* are sometimes 'doctoral' (all those who have graduated doctor preserve, in theory, the right to teach and determine results), sometimes 'professorial' (only those doctors holding chairs fulfil the functions of teaching and government). Our universities created in C19 know only the professorial type and academic dress, unlike in the Anglo-Saxon world, does not designate an academic degree (doctorate or masters degree) but a teaching appointment or administrative function (rector, general inspector).

In September 1793 the *Convention* did away with universities, faculties and colleges, degrees and diplomas. It was quickly realised, however, that such a vacuum would bring about within a few years a crumbling of professional ability and knowledge. It was, however, intended to entrust higher education to specialist schools and large institutes: viz the retention of the *Collège de France*, the transformation of the Royal Plant Garden into a Natural History Museum, the reorganisation of the School of Mines, creation of a Central School of Public Works (1794), which is renamed *Ecole Polytechnique* by 1795, creation of the *Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers* (Arts & Crafts), of the *Ecole Normale* in Paris, of the *Bureau des Longitudes*, of the specialist school of living Oriental languages, not to mention the three medical schools in Paris, Montpellier and Strasbourg (4 December 1794). The *Directoire* for its part decided on the creation throughout French territory of central schools for the teaching of science, humanities and arts and founds the *Institut National de France* (25 October 1795). The *Consulat* and the *Empire* tend towards a veritable restoration with the creation of the Pharmacy Schools (1803) and Law Schools (1804). Appearances are again a preoccupation: as early as 13 May 1801 the *Institut de France* is endowed with two forms of dress: the small and the great, which latter is thus described: "black *habit*⁷ waistcoat or jacket, knee-breeches or trousers, embroidered fully with an olive branch in deep green silk, French-style hat."

For the Schools, which became faculties in 1808, a return to the gown is preferred over the leafy beauties of embroidered uniforms: so the outfit proposed by the officer Barailon in the year III for the *Ecole de Santé in Paris* is not taken up: "ordinary *habit*, with facings with flaps/straps (?) in grey-blue wool, white lining; standing collar in pale red wool; waistcoat and knee-breeches with an edging in yellow cord, yellow buttons, high top hat, drawn back on one side with gold braid and a gold button; *tricolore* cocade."

The bill of 12 November 1803 decides for medicine on a much more traditional dress. For the full dress "worn at exams, theses, taking of oaths and giving evidence in court and on all feast days and public ceremonies" : "crimson satin, with black silk front facings, a cravate in hanging cambric, cap in crimson silk with a gold tassel (two tassels for the director), a crimson *chausse* edged with ermine", which costume should be worn on top of a black French-style *habit*, which one must suppose was visible. Thus the crimson - deep red - silk robe takes the place of the scarlet cape of the former faculty of medicine in Paris. The black silk front facings, which one finds on all robes, indicate the *simarre*, or rather what remains of it: we know that originally it was a sort of ample piece of clothing that clergymen and magistrates sometimes wear over their surplice, and which will continue to be worn in ecclesiastical dress. University dress in the 19th Century unites in one single article of clothing the black satin *simarre*, closed down the front by a row of buttons (usually 25), tied at the waist by a belt of watered silk, black or coloured, *simarre* of which only the front panels are visible, and the gown of crimson silk with wide sleeves, gathered at the collar and cuffs, with the vestige of a train.

⁷ *habit* can mean dress, costume or outfit. It can also mean tail-coat.. *Habit à la française* is a former court dress with upright collar and long skirts.

Medical professors wear a belt of black watered silk, which characteristic design will be followed by the other faculties: on the left a large *godronnée* rosette⁸, from which fall two pendants finished with a twisted fringe. The square hat (*bonnet*) is replaced by the round cap, a reminder of certain official costumes of the revolutionary period: it is of the same colour as the robe, with the Director of the school (later faculty) wearing two gold tassels and not one like the professors. But the medical cap doesn't have quite the same form as those of the other faculties: a *torsade* (twisted cable) of four strands of golden *canetille* (metallic twisted thread), of which the middle two are twisted round each other, joins two coils of gold twisted thread, four cm in diameter, placed one in the centre of the *calot* (cap?) and the other on the left side of the *bandeau* (head-band?). Another slight variation: for medicine the sleeve takes the form known as 'dressed', coming down onto the wrist. As for the *chausse* (later styled less felicitously *épitoge*) which is the former hood, it is still worn flat on the left shoulder, as under the *Ancien Régime*. After the creation of the imperial university, the provincial medical faculties adopt three rows of ermine *à la cornette* (on the front) while retaining one row with a fold on the *guleron* (back). Paris retains a single row of ermine on the front with no belt. Montpellier and Toulouse have retained local particularities, in contradiction of the napoleonic wish for unity; a double hood in the form of a *camail* edged with ermine, as under the *Ancien Régime*, to which Montpellier has recently added the hood flat on the shoulder, with three rows of ermine on the front which show beneath the hood *à pèlerine*.

Instead of the bands (*rabat*), composed of two rectangular pieces of transparent cloth, worn in the C18 by the clergy and magistrates, they have kept the white pleated cravate in hanging cambric, which was also current, although less than the bands (*rabat*), under the *Ancien Régime*. The presence of this cravate, commonly called bands (*rabat*) since the C19, nowadays justifies not accompanying the hard starched white collar (high or with corners broken) which men should wear with a white dress shirt, with a white bow-tie, since this would be wearing a "tie on top of a tie". But one could also consider that the wearing of the white bow-tie has been made acceptable by virtue of more than 100 years of custom, as prove many graphic representations, such as the painting by Joseph Wencker: "The laying of the foundation stone of the Sorbonne (1885) (Salle Camot in the Sorbonne) or the frescos "The Paris Academy" by J J Benjamin-Constant (1897) (Academic Council Chamber) or "The Reception of the Ecole Normale Supérieure by the Paris University Council (1903) by A V Devambez (Salon Saint-Jacques).

As for the lesser everyday dress, stipulated for medicine by the same act of 12 November 1803, to be worn "to lectures and private assemblies", it is formed of the "black muslin gown, with a back, with crimson front facings, crimson *chausse* edged with ermine, suit, cravate and cap as above."

The facings of the black robe are thus of crimson silk. There is no belt. This lesser dress, quickly abandoned by professors, was left for *agrégés*⁹ in medicine (created in 1823) and lecturers with this qualification (1949), which differs from Science and the Arts where lecturers (both senior and junior), even though not holders of chairs, have the right to the same dress as professors (circular of 18 June 1880).

The same act provides that professors in the Schools of Medicine should have at their disposal a bedell wearing a black suit with a coat of the same colour and carrying a silver mace. The gown of the *Ancien Régime* has thus disappeared and the dress is similar to that worn by ushers, while that of the mace-bearers is characterised today by a gown with bands (*rabat*) and a black cap.

⁸ *godronnée* decorated with gadrons (a series of joined convex curves)

⁹ the *agrégation* is a competitive examination of a somewhat similar standard to our PhD. One must be *agregé* in order to hold a university post.

The 'lesser dress' of professors in the Ecole de Pharmacie, set by a decree of 9 September 1804, picks up certain component elements of that of medicine: "black, French-style suit, black muslin gown, with front facings in deep red, silk cap of the same colour , cravate in hanging cambric.

The *simarre* appropriate to all *ordres* is not mentioned until 1809: Pharmacie, although not an *ordre*, follows suit, with the effect that the black French-style suit is no longer visible, since the front facings of the *simarre* join.

The incorporation of the Pharmacy Schools within the University in 1840 brought about a modification of dress, approved in 1841, whereby "the lining" - the facings - of the sleeves is also of red silk, and mentioning a Grand dress with a gown of black silk, and also a lesser dress of woollen muslin. From the creation of the School no mention has been made of the *chausse*, since there are no faculties of Pharmacy and hence no doctorates. After the incorporation of the Schools, the professors wear either the amaranthine (purple) *chausse* of Science, or the crimson *chausse* of medicine, according to the faculty of their doctorate. The setting up of the Schools into faculties in 1920 did not imply the conferment of a degree of doctor of Pharmacy: all there was at that time was the *doctorat d'Université*, simply a title, not a degree, and lower than the Higher National Diploma in Pharmacy which crowned scholastic studies, and gave no right to doctoral insignia. It was the establishment of the state doctorate in Pharmacy in 1939 which gave rise to the '*ponceau*' (poppy- coloured) *chausse* in the faculty of Pharmacy.

The organisation of the Schools of Law also includes a dress, henceforth established thus: *simarre*, over-gown with wide sleeves, belt, *chausse*, and hanging cravate. A decree of 1804 describes it briefly thus: "Teachers and doctors in Law (from the Law Schools) shall wear for classes, examinations and public business, as also for ceremonies, a similar dress to that of doctoral professors in Medicine, except that instead of the crimson colour, the red used in the dress of the Law Courts will be employed."

In Paris the Faculty quite simply took the scarlet robe of the former Law Faculty, with black silk facings and large sleeves, which also have black silk facings. On the left shoulder is the ermined *chausse*. The black silk *simarre*, with threads of scarlet silk and silk buttons of the same colour, is worn with a belt of black silk, with a rosette knot and pendants. The cap is completely scarlet red, decorated with gold braid and a band of black velvet at the base. The Director of the School, later Dean of the Faculty, has two stripes of gold braid. Certain provincial particularities persist until the end of C19. The distinctive point remains the material of the gown, which is not silk or satin as for other faculties, but fine woollen cloth (merino or cashmere) as in the appeal court and the *Cour de Cassation*. The transformation of the Faculties of Law into Faculties of Law and Economic Sciences in 1957 in no way changed the official dress.

A decree of 1805 provides that assistant professors in the Law Schools should wear "both in classes and private gatherings of these schools, and in public ceremonies, the same dress as professors."

The *suppléants*¹⁰ and *agrégés* who replaced them in 1855 therefore have the red robe, which they wear under the same circumstances as professors.

The lesser dress for Law is a black gown with red facings, with a red *chausse* with three rows of ermine and the cap. There is also a third form of dress - for doctors - a simple black gown,

¹⁰ *suppléants* - could mean supply teachers, but probably means non-appointed teachers

without *simarre*, with a red *chausse* with a single row of ermine. This is the dress which candidates for the *agrégation* ought to wear when they give their classes. The article of 1807 is no longer applied, which said that during tests and public acts required to achieve the *Baccalaureat* the candidate shall wear a black suit and little coat, in those for the degree he shall wear a robe of black muslin and a cap, in those for the doctorate he shall wear the robe and *chausse* of a graduate.

The decree of 1808 makes certain brief recommendations in the three articles of its *Titre XVII*: Of Dress:

Art 128: The dress common to all members of the University is the black suit, with palm leaves¹¹ embroidered in blue silk on the left side of the chest.

Art 129: Lecturers and professors will wear for their classes a robe of black muslin. On top of the robe on the left shoulder will be placed the *chausse*, of the colour appropriate to the degree and with a border appropriate to the degree.

Art 130: Professors in Medicine and Law will keep their current costume.

Article 129 called upon a pre-existing code without which it could not be put into practice (colour appropriate to each order, edging). As early as 27 June 1808 the Imperial University Council addressed itself to the question, as is testified by the original record of its transactions.

"The Council, at the suggestion of Mr Cuvier and in accordance with the intention of the decree of 17 March 1808, which leaves it to the University Council to determine the colours which could distinguish new faculties and to establish and conserve the dress assigned to the faculties of Law and Medicine, determined that members of the faculties of Science, Arts and Theology should wear a robe of a similar form to that worn by professors in the faculties of Law and Medicine; that *grades* (degree or rank) should be distinguished by similar marks to those employed by those two faculties; that as for the colours which should distinguish the faculties, the colour *amarante* should be assigned to Science, orange to Arts and black with ermine to Theology ."

On 30 June 1809: "On the proposal by a member of the Council, it was decided: 1) that faculty professors shall wear academic dress to the next prize-giving; 2) that the Vice-Rectors shall be responsible for having the necessary number of robes made; 3) that the expenses incurred for these robes shall be advanced by the Central Coffers of the University; 4) that to permit each individual more easily to pay without hardship the cost of this dress, it will be retained in twelve instalments from their salary."

For their part the offices had been working for several months on a project to produce a decree about dress. A note has been preserved (National Archives AF IV/394, volume 2915) from the General Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior, dated Paris, 16 November 1808: "Report to his Majesty the Emperor and King, Protector of the Confederation of the Rhine". The text is as follows:

Sire, at the request of the Grand Master (of the University), I respectfully submit to your Majesty the draft of a decree serving to regulate the dress of title holders, officers and members of the Imperial University on solemn occasions. This project is in line with the principal distinctions

¹¹ *palmes* is the French symbol for 'honours' - a bit like the laurel wreath.

which were established by your decree of last 17 March which regulates ordinary dress. I request your Majesty to send this matter for deliberation by the Council of State."

This project was forwarded on the same day - 16 November 1808 - the Interior section of the Council of State by the Lord High Chancellor, Cambacérès, who later added the following 'observations':

The Grand Master and members of the Imperial University Council have requested that the question of their costume be addressed immediately, in order that they may be able to wear it at the solemn prize-giving which they must undertake on 15 August next. The Grand Master, who did not at first wish for a long outfit, has eventually understood that this was the only suitable one for him, only to be worn for public ceremonial. As for the *palmes*, the section had at first considered that, outside their normal professional duties, this should only be worn by members of the higher grades (degrees/ranks?), but the Council recognised that article 128 of the Law of 17 March did not allow for such a distinction.

The University Council continued to be consulted. Thus on 21 July 1809, just before the decree is passed, various questions relating to the dress of the three new faculties (Theology, Science and Arts) were submitted to it.

"Should Assistant Lecturers in the new faculties wear a belt of the same colour as the *toge* or black?" Reply: "They will wear a black belt". "Should the cap, belt and *chausse* for the lesser dress be the same as for the grand dress?" Reply: "Yes". "Shall the robes - both ceremonial and everyday - for the faculty of Theology have the same shape as those for other faculties?" "Yes". "Should the colour of the ceremonial robe for the faculty of Theology be black or purple?" "It should be black". "Should a double *palmes* be embroidered on both the ceremonial and everyday dress?" "The decision on that question will be deferred until such time as the draft law submitted to his Majesty has been approved."

Note the retention of the colour black for Theology, purple being the special colour of the University. Note further that the *palmes* which at first was embroidered "on the left side of the chest" will become an insignia suspended on a dark purple ribbon, when it becomes both a title and a decoration which can be conferred on people outside the University and therefore without academic dress (cf laws of 1852 and 1866).

The fruit of the work of the *Conseil d'Etat* was the decree on the dress of title-holders and officers of the University, approved by Napoleon at Schonbrunn in 1809. It is to this decree, which is still valid, that one must always refer in the first instance: the text can be found in Beauchamp, or more easily in the "Collection of Laws and Rulings of State Education".

The decree is composed of nine articles (10 in the first draft): 1) Members of the University shall wear, for the exercise of their office and for public ceremonies the following costume:" I leave aside here article 2 concerning the *Grand Maître*, a position which disappeared in 1848 and with it the sumptuous costume worn by Fonanes in a full-length portrait by Robert Lerevre, and for the same reasons article 3 (Chancellor and Treasurer), and article 4 (titular counsellors; General Secretary). Article 5 concerns the ordinary Counsellors (disappeared today) and the general inspectors; article 6 rectors of *académies*¹² and inspectors (of *académies*); article 7 deans and faculty professors; article 8 officers of the *académies* and members of the University; article 9

¹² *Académie* - France is divided into *académies*, which are administrative districts for education.

the porters of the University and the *académies*. We shall see shortly the modifications brought about by usage on the basis of this reglementary text and those which completed it for Pharmacy, Dentistry and Theology .

Article 7, concerning deans and faculty professors is worth quoting in full:

"For the faculties of Law and Medicine, the dress already stipulated; for the faculties of Theology, Science and Arts, the same dress as to shape as the two other faculties, but the colour black shall be adopted by the faculty of Theology, the colour *amarante* by the faculty of Science, and the colour orange for *Arts*; *palmes* in silver no.4 (smallest size); *chausse* in the faculty colour, with ermine as in article 6" (8 cm) on the front.

The particular ruling for the Paris Science Faculty (1809), the statute on the faculties of Arts and Science (1810) take great care to prescribe for professors the wearing of the University dress allocated to them.

Alongside this long costume, more or less directly inherited from the *Ancien Régime*, the Imperial regime tried to introduce a short costume which would have been worn at the numerous functions of official life. On 25 November 1809 a decree was proposed whose first article declared:

"Members of the University as they undertake their duties and at those ceremonies where they do not wear the grand dress, will wear the following costume: (the Grand Master, the Chancellor and the Treasurer, titular Counsellors and the General Secretary); titular Counsellors, Inspectors and Rectors: black dress suit (French style), trimmed with the same colour (purple?), black silk coat; French hat, cravat and *palmes* according to their duties."

Article 2 set the dress of the other members of the body: "Other members of the University will wear a French suit and the decoration appropriate to their grade (degree), without a coat."

It will be seen that the Second Empire, also with no greater success, took up the principle of a short costume for officers of the *Instruction Publique*.

I should also mention the *arrête* of the University Council of 21 June 1811 which stipulates that *professeurs suppliants ou adjoints des facultés* (I think this just means non-appointed teachers) have the right to the title and decoration of officers of the University. It is based on this text that Senior Lecturers, formed in 1877, and ordinary lecturers adopted the grand dress of professors, the only difference being that lecturers who were not doctors wore a *chausse* with two rows of ermine. The statute on the composition of the faculties of Science and Arts in Paris (7 August 1812) states indeed that *les suppliants* should wear, in the exercise of their duties, the dress of doctor (article 8).

Graphic representations of academic dress after 1810, in portraits, pictures and frescos, engravings, busts, medals etc display diversity and developments in both cut and colours. Rectors and Deans of Faculties very soon adopted the use of the lace bands (*rabat*), whereas the 1809 decree specified it only for *inspecteurs généraux*. Nowadays this custom is more than 100 years old, which honourably (?) legitimises this mark of distinction within the bosom of the faculty (but not if there has been a transfer to another university).

Despite being violently attacked under the *Restauration*, the University, an imperial creation, managed to continue. The emblems decorating the faculty maces were changed - hence the

disappearance of the eagles. But academic dress was not suppressed, witness the act of 6 October 1819 concerning the teaching of the reformed liturgy (cult) at the Faculty of Protestant Theology in Strasbourg (article 6) or the edict which bestows the title of *Conseil Royal de l'Instruction Publique* on the *Commission de l'Instruction Publique*, and which contains a ruling on this matter (1 Nov 1820) detailing in art. 14: Each member of the University, in whatever function or office he may otherwise be clothed, is charged at all times to wear the distinctive insignia of his university rank.

The act concerning teaching in the Secondary Medical Schools (7 November 1800) does not omit to prescribe in article 22 that:

"...at public ceremonies (professors) wear only the doctoral robe, namely the robe in black wool faced with *nacarat* (between red and orange)."

In his "*Système de l'Université de France*", published in 1816, A Rendu includes a section entitled: XIII of Academic Dress, decoration and rank in public ceremonies. He stipulates in Art. 22:

"Current dress is (to be) maintained: *docteurs agrégés* in each faculty will have the same dress as professors, when they are present at examinations, on public occasions and when the Faculty processes. In addition there will be a lesser dress, which will be the black *habit*, to which title-holders and officers of the University may add the *coat*. The lesser dress will be purple for the *Grand Maître*, the Chancellor and the Treasurer."

The wearing of academic dress in secondary education was abandoned as early as 1838, according to Paul Gerbod, historian of "*La Condition Universitaire*", but that was by no means the case in higher education. Thus one finds a long article on the "Dress of members of the University for public ceremonies and in the exercise of their duties" published in the University calendar for 1847. There it is stated that "the description of this dress has been made either according to the imperial decrees or according to current usage where there are no specific laws. You will notice that the *recteur's* belt still has two silk tassels, that the professors' has a twisted cord fringe, that the cap for Law is in red cashmere, while that for Medicine is in crimson satin and those for Science and Arts in *amarante* or orange silk. The dress for Theology is described thus:

Gown and *simarre* in black silk, *chausse* in violet silk with three rows of ermine, the lowest of which should be eight centimetres (wide), belt in purple ribbon with two purple silk tassels, cap in black velvet, with gold braid.

This dress would be modified for Catholic Theology by the decree of 22 November 1863, probably introduced to raise the status of its professors, whose new garb resembled that of bishops:

Gown in purple *poult de soie*, *simarre* in black silk cloth, buttonholes and buttons in purple silk; facings and sleeve linings in black silk; *chausse* or *épitoge* in purple *poult de soie*, with three rows of ermine; belt in purple watered ribbon with a fringe in the same shade; square cap in purple velvet, decorated at the bottom with black velvet. Deans will wear two pieces of gold braid on their cap; professors will wear only one.

This costume was worn until the suppression of the Catholic Theology faculties in 1885. Not to be outdone the Protestant Theology faculties adopted facings and sleeve trimmings in purple

satin, on a totally black robe granted in 1809 and which moreover was reminiscent of the pastoral robe.

A complicated problem is posed by the Schools (later faculties) of Pharmacy. Light was thrown upon it in a detailed article to which we refer the reader. To put it briefly, professors of the School of Pharmacy in Paris were granted a "lesser dress" by the act of 9 September 1804: the gown, with front panels in dark red silk, was little different from that of doctors with their crimson. The three schools of Pharmacy were incorporated into the University by the ordinance of 27 September 1840 (before becoming faculties in 1920), which led to a modification of the dress in 1841: mention is then made of a "grand costume" with a black silk robe, which gave way to a "lesser costume" in woollen muslin. Robe-makers have been reduced to various interpretations of texts, which are not sufficiently precise in their definition of a colour, which is always subject to variations. It is generally agreed that the Doctors' red is *groseille* and that of Pharmacists *ponceau*, having been for a while salmon, which is far removed from the dark red of the act. The *chausse* has been *ponceau* with three rows of ermine since the creation of the doctorate in Pharmacy. The Faculty of Montpellier voted on 5 November 1846 to adopt a shrimp coloured satin silk robe, with belt of the same colour and front panels and sleeve trimmings in black silk.

The law of 8 December 1874 had established the "Mixed Faculties of Medicine and Pharmacy", where the Pharmacy departments took, without any official ruling, the dress of the Doctors. The National Schools of Medicine and Pharmacy, established by decree in February 1855, replaced the *écoles de plein exercice* and the preparatory schools: their robe remained officially of black wool with facings of *nacarat* silk (a pale red tending towards orange), whereas one should have retained the crimson. Veterinarians, following a decree of 1967, wear a heather-coloured robe and belt. Since 1970 the faculties of Odontology (Dental Surgery) at Montrouge have chosen a purple satin outfit (*robe, chausse, cap*) and, at Nancy, heather-coloured.

Thus the work of unification accomplished in 1803, 1804, 1808 and 1809 has suffered variations brought about by custom and tending in the past to a greater differentiation and today to a simplification dictated by an evolution in manners (*mores*). How do these things stand at present, as depicted in the attempted codification, not without some surprising inconsistencies, which is the "Summary Table" of the "Collection of Laws and Rulings of L'Education Nationale, where the text of the decree of 31 July 1809 is modified on various points?

The two higher offices of today's University - since the disappearance during the C19 of the *Grand Maître*, the *Chancelier*, the *Tresorier*, the ex officio members of Council, the Secretary General and the ordinary members of Council - are the *Inspecteur General* and the *Recteur*, the latter tending in practice to take precedent over the former, whereas the original hierarchy, which is still reflected in their dress, gave precedence to general inspectors. The dress of these *inspecteur generaux* is *simarre* and gown in *blackfaille de soie* threaded with purple, a belt in purple watered silk (formerly with silver tassels), purple *chausse* with 12 cm of ermine, black velvet cap with two rows of silver braid, lace cravate, (bands (*rabat*)). As for *recteurs*, their costume comprises *simarre* and gown in *blackfaille de soie* threaded with purple, belt of purple watered silk (the two silk tassels have given way to a twisted fringe), purple *chausse* with 8 cm of spotted ermine (that is, with black tails), a velvet cap with silver braid silver thread and coils of fine silver, lace cravate (bands (*rabat*)) (in 1809 cravate in cambric). In 1809 the costume of *Inspecteurs d'Academie* is similar to that of *recteurs*. In these outfits the purple belt is a reminder of the dress of the *recteur* of the former University of Paris. The cap is exceptional in its shape and its ornamentation, since it comprises two coils in fine silver, one on the top of the cap, the other at the centre of the left side, joined by a cord with four strands of silver twisted thread.

Deans and faculty professors vary according to the different *ordres*. The summary talks of black silk for Theology, as in 1809: in reality the two Theology faculties of the University of Strasbourg adopted different designs in purple (tending to blue, so quite distinct from the colour adopted for Theology). The Catholic Faculty wears the dress established by the decree of 1863 quoted above, the Protestant Faculty wears a gown of *black faille de soie*, with facings and sleeve lining in purple satin, purple *épitoge*, black silk *simarre* with buttonholes and buttons in purple, belt in purple watered fabric, cap in black velvet, with squared sides and a black silk *bandeau* (head band). For Law, the Summary speaks of *ponceau* silk for the gown and cap whereas in fact scarlet woollen cloth is used. The belt of black watered silk is rarely worn. For Medicine the cap, as for general inspectors and rectors, is badly described since the presence of the cord with four strands of golden twisted thread and of the coils is not mentioned. Nothing need be said of the *amarante* of Science and orange of Arts, but as mentioned previously, the salmon of Pharmacy is very much open to debate. There is no Dentistry. It would be preferable to rely, not on this decidedly inaccurate summary, but rather on the descriptions provided by J Dauvillier and by the great collection of Smith and Sheard.

It would seem that the regulations currently in force are lacking in precision. They do not provide entirely certain indications to the administration, to those obliged to wear an official dress - a circular of May 1888 reminds members of the University that they, by regulation, have a duty to appear in costume at public ceremonies - and above all to the suppliers and robe-makers, who are free to introduce and imperceptibly impose regrettable modifications. Unnoticed practices of everyday life and university custom both equally contribute to increasingly visible changes.

By unnoticed practices of daily life should be understood, along the lines of the analyses presented on several occasions by M Guy Thuillier, objects and customs subject to changes usually imperceptible at the time, but progressive and irreversible. This gesture, that clothing accessory, the other verbal expression, all understood by all within a certain social group, large or small as the case may be, insensibly becomes obsolete, before descending into oblivion one day with the last user or the last witness. Usage which in former days was as ordinary as wearing a wig, powdering one's hair or taking snuff, or more recently the wearing of gloves or a hat, with the polite behaviour associated with it, has become unusual and finally incomprehensible.

Being a question of dress and fashion, such developments are particularly noticeable. Articles of clothing remain as mementoes, disproportionately lengthened or shortened. The wearing of shoes fastened by buckles with tongues, then simply decorated with silver buckles, was normal while the *habit français* was the usual form of dress; it has long since disappeared in civil dress, although it was maintained among the high clergy until the 60s. Important modifications have taken place in the fabrication, coloration and cut of materials. Cambric, prescribed in 1809 for the hanging cravate (later bands (*rabat*) for University dress) is almost impossible to find commercially nowadays. Starching and glazing, even fine ironing, are arts on the way out, which even convents no longer practice. Hence the alterations, to the increasing ramifications of which the robe-makers (themselves reduced to a handful and therefore in a position of quasi-monopoly) intentionally contribute. One cannot over-emphasise their responsibility in this matter. If certain modifications are dictated by necessity, when the material is too rare (ermine almost universally replaced by rabbit - even for the spotted *chausse* of rectors; cambric replaced by lawn), others are dictated only by a desire of simplification or economy, which one should resolutely oppose: belt fastened by adhesive band rather than hooks and eyes; impoverishment of the trimmings by forsaking the practice of threading (oversewing?) buttonholes, the replacement of buttons covered in silk by buttons in coloured plastic; the bands (*rabat*) in pleated nylon; replacement of satin,

faille de soie or woollen muslin (Law) by synthetic fabrics. The most strange remains the practice, introduced at a date which is difficult to pinpoint (but before the turn of the century) of changing the orange colour laid down for Arts to a most uninteresting shade of daffodil or buttercup. It is only too clear that these practices encouraged or even imposed by the suppliers or robe-makers are all a backward step: they render less beautiful a distinguished costume made for the pomp of ceremony, equal to those of the *Institut de France* or of French ambassadors, which time has rendered more costly but has not modified.

What is more, it is academic practice in *res vestiaria* which has preceded or provoked some of these regrettable changes. Few professors have their own gown - apart from the faculties of Law and Medicine - although it is tax deductible, as are the costs of cleaning it. Even more rarely do they wear the starched collar, upright or winged, which should be the rule for men, women having the right on this article of official costume, to modify normal usage by wearing a white blouse with a high or turned down collar on which the bands (*rabat*) are buttoned or otherwise attached. They wear the costume provided for them by their university - when it has one - often too short, and it is not unheard of for this calf-length gown to lead to mockery rather than reverence, particularly if it is accompanied by badly-fixed bands (*rabat*), a *chausse* put on back to front, a belt too loose, even a coloured shirt or stockings. Not to mention decorations put on in the wrong order. Far from having gained in decorum, one has lost in dignity. Hence the refusal by many professors to rig themselves out in a dress which they judge from what they have seen, as a cast-off. It is to be hoped that universities will stock their wardrobes with a greater variety of sizes and that interested parties will be give instruction before and during their robing. In this manner, which does not seem excessive, one would manage to preserve in public duties and ceremonial, the splendour which the wearing of official dress to a very large extent provides.

I spoke earlier of the circular sent by the Vice-Rector of the *Academie de Paris* (Octave Greard) to the *doyens de ressort* in June 1888. It would be best to give the text:

"Mr Dean, one of your colleagues asked me what costume could be worn at official ceremonies by lecturers and senior lecturers in the faculties. The Minister, whom I (had to) consult(ed), replied: It is appropriate for them to adopt the same dress as for titular professors, with the difference that, if they do not have a doctorate, they should only wear two rows of ermine on the *épitoge*."

These days the former Senior Lecturers have been granted the grade of second-class professors. But it would seem blatantly obvious that the current Senior Lecturers, former assistant lecturers, should not imagine that the circular of 18 June 1888 authorises them to wear the professorial dress. They should wear a gown of black muslin, without a *simarre*, with a *chausse* with three rows of ermine if they have a doctorate from one of the faculties. If they were designated President of their university, they would add to this outfit, during the exercise of their duties, lace bands (*rabat*).

The special schools and grand literary and scientific institutions which remained outside the University never adopted university dress nor had a dress of their own.

In its early years the *Second Empire* did indeed try to establish something of this sort *en reprenant* the act of the University Council of Nov 1809 quoted above. Drawing on the decree concerning official dress of civil servants belonging to the Ministry of Public Instruction and *Cultes* dating from 24 December 1852, followed by the ministerial circular of 22 January 1853 putting this into effect, a short dress was set up, which was basically composed of: a suit of black cloth, single breasted with tails and a notch (?) in the collar, the front having nine buttons, a white

single breasted waistcoat with six buttons; black trousers; embroidery of *palmes* interlaced with olive branches; a French hat in black felt with braid, a sword.

The members of the Council for Public Instruction had a particularly luxurious treatment, as did rectors, with silk embroidery and gold on the collar, the facings, at the waist, on the beading (?) around the suit and the edging across the chest, with a purple silk brocade stripe on the trousers, a feathered hat and a sword with a mother-of-pearl handle with a gold hilt. Deans and faculty professors and the directors of large institutions received 'purple silk embroidery on a black background on the trousers, hat with black feathers, sword with mother-of-pearl handle with gold hilt. Art. 3 specifies that "the foregoing measures are not applicable to civil-servants working for the Ministry of Public Instruction and Religious Cults for whom a different costume is assigned according to other titles or offices, and the circular reminds the reader that this decree does not abrogate the former rules which said that members of the teaching body should wear a gown for classes and grand ceremonial. These rules should continue to be observed."

The short suit envisaged for all professionals in the service of the Ministry of Public Instruction - secondary school teachers were to wear a black town suit with *palmes* embroidered on the left side of the chest - was never really taken up, no doubt because of its high cost and, for faculty members, out of an attachment to the long gown, part of the heritage of old France. It was worn for a few years under Napoleon III for receptions and civic ceremonies. Although the right to wear it still exists, it is very unlikely that it will ever reappear, the more so since it is uniquely masculine.

Having suffered from being deprived of an official costume, similar or related to that of the *Université de France*, teachers attached to the *grands établissements*, often illustrious, have ended up glorying in their situation, as for its part does the *Conseil d'Etat*. Thus the teachers of the *Collège de France*, who until 1775 wore *la cornette*¹³, the stole inherited from jurists, nowadays do not have their own dress. At the moment, however, some of the *grands établissements* do have doctoral schools: they confer degrees after the fashion of universities, hold *viva voce* examinations, and solemnly confer honorary degrees. The status of their teaching staff is identical to that of universities. This is the case for, among others, the *Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes*, of the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales* and of the *Institute d'Etudes politiques*, and the *Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers*. What costume, when circumstances demand, should the professors and Senior Lecturers in these institutions wear? Short of envisaging the creation by ministerial authority of dress particular to these bodies, it will be a question there too of progressing by assimilation, determined by deliberation by the governing bodies of the institutions and authorised by the Ministry. But who will assimilate the individual or the institution?

In any case, all that would then remain would be to clear and protect the official dress of French Higher Education from the alterations brought about by negligence, and to accord it the symbolic place in French public life which is its due.

Further reading for those interested:

"Origine et Histoire des Costumes Universitaires Français" par Jean Dauvillier dans "Annales de la Faculté de Droit de Toulouse", 1958 pp 3-41.

"Le Costume Universitaire" par Georges Dilleman, Doyen Honoraire de la Faculté de Pharmacie de Paris

¹³ cornette is a head-dress worn by nuns (cornet)