

**BETWEEN SALONS AND TRENCHES
SOCIAL HISTORIES AND SOCIOLOGIES OF THE
MILITARY UNIFORM**

Warsaw, March 6-7, 2025

ABSTRACTS

THE MODERN STATE AND THE MILITARY AND POLICE UNIFORMS

Tomáš Konečný

Representation through foreign uniforms at the Zeithain encampment (1730)

The military maneuvers held at Zeithain in 1730, organized by Augustus the Strong, Saxon Elector and King of Poland, were a pinnacle of monarchical military representation. For nearly a month, colourful military tents sprawled near the villages of Zeithain and Radewitz, housing approximately 27,000 soldiers. These troops became the centerpiece of attention for several hundred noble guests, among whom Frederick William I of Prussia held a prominent position. Spectators were presented not only with the martial prowess of the Saxon army but also with their new uniforms, designed to add grandeur to the event. In addition to the uniforms of the regular Saxon troops, the camp featured other, highly unusual uniforms. Augustus the Strong utilized his position as King of Poland to introduce foreign units into Saxony, such as Polish uhlans and pancerni. An even greater rarity was a unit dressed in the manner of the Ottoman Janissaries. As a result, the modern standing army of the Western type at Zeithain intersected with foreign military traditions. This paper explores the representational use of oriental uniforms at the military maneuvers at Zeithain, examining their role in the context of this great military spectacle.

Paul Bastier

*The first Regulations for the French Army's Uniforms : Enforcement and Observance,
from the Polish to the Austrian Succession (1729-1747)*

As John Lynn noted in *Giant of the Grand Siècle*, the French Army rarely resorted to formal or elaborate regulations for clothing under Louis XIV, and mostly relied on circular letters from the Minister of War and the oversight of the Inspectors of Infantry and Cavalry. The purchase of uniforms was paid partly by the *masse d'habillement*, but was mainly the responsibility of the captains of each regiment, who collectively resorted to the loans and manufacturing networks that the entrepreneurs for troops' clothing could provide them with. However, under Louis XV, the failures of this system caused for a more and more distinct intervention of the Monarchy regarding military expenses and the limitation of the relative freedom of administration that the officers enjoyed previously. These policies of reform towards military clothing contracts gave birth to the first *ordonnances* for troops clothing, which were enacted in 1729, 1736 and 1747.

This founding legislation, together with the *Abrégés du militaire de France* and rare paintings or manuscripts, give us much information about the tailoring, cloths and colors of

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French uniforms, and have been the core of many papers by René Chartrand and Michel Pétard. Nevertheless, beyond conjectures, it is rather difficult to establish how these requirements were met and how efficient was the newly appointed bureaucratic control of clothing contracts. Were these regulations to be strictly obeyed or did they remain more of an incentive ? What was the extend of the War Minister's authority over the regiments' uniforms ? According to new archival evidence – namely the business papers of entrepreneurs Puech and Sabatier and Leléal – some aspects of the application of these regulations can now be assessed.

We will therefore focus on the motives and purposes which led to such regulations and consider, through some examples of regimental contracts and cloth samples, or lists of deliveries of equipment, how the financial control exerted by the Ministry of War had some effects on the tailoring and the quality of broadcloth to be used and favored the monitoring of all types of equipment supplies for soldiers and officers, such as coats, jackets, breeches, gaiters, hats, gear and tents.

Nonetheless, these regulations met, in truth, with some setbacks as officers did not always comply with their requirements. Even though the ordonnances had a strong normative value, suppliers and officers seem to have frequently connived in order to add to their uniforms and avoid any lack of elegance, or as to prevent the disclosure of some unnecessary expenses. Then, the quantity of cloth allowed for each uniform part, their type and quality, or even their color could be often quite different from regulation when deemed unsightly. Likewise, the obligation on officers of wearing a uniform on duty in itself and their reluctance to do so should be considered from the perspective of sumptuary laws edicted against military luxury and aristocratic expenditure.

Thus, far from anachronistic bias, the scope and effects of these ordonnances requires a reassessment, as its modernization goals regarding troops clothing were part of an effort to rationalise military contracts and costs, at the expense of the self-administration and aristocratic culture of the french officer corps.

Laurent Tatarenko

Dressing a fractured army: the troops of the Two Sicilies between diplomatic upheavals and regional localism (1815-1833)

The army of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, established in December 1816 following the fall of Joachim Murat and the end of the “French Decade” was confronted with a situation both complex and delicate. The return of King Ferdinand to Naples, accompanied by the troops that had followed him to Sicily, presented several major challenges. First, it became necessary to merge two previously opposing armies and to harmonise their notably diverse organizational structures and modes of operation. Furthermore, there was an urgent need to re-equip the army, whose matériel had been largely scattered following the defeat of Murat's forces. For example, by June 1815, at the time of the Bourbon king's return to Naples, fewer than 5% of the Neapolitan army's muskets and pistols had been recovered.

This issue also extended to military uniforms, which until then had been shaped by two distinct models: the British style for Sicilian troops and the French Imperial style for the soldiers of the Kingdom of Naples. Due to financial constraints, the various regiments retained their former uniforms, merely altering a few insignia (particularly for the gendarmes and provincial troops). Later, French models once again exerted a degree of influence on Ferdinand I's troops.

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However, the presence of Austrian contingent and the large-scale intervention of the Habsburg army to put an end to the revolutionary movements of 1820–1821 subsequently introduced Austrian military fashion to Naples.

These stylistic references also became genuine political tools. On the one hand, Neapolitan monarchs sought to demonstrate their dynastic ties with the French Bourbons, maintain their alliance with Britain, and signal their loyalty to the Holy Alliance by drawing closer to Vienna. On the other hand, both within the most prestigious units of the royal guard and among provincial forces, the rulers preserved strong local traditions to assert the prestige and continuity of Neapolitan power.

In this complex interplay, uniforms will be analysed as a marker of political choices, but also as a reflection of the challenges faced by the highly fragmented army of the Bourbon Restoration.

Laurent López

The fabric that the enforcement is done. The uniforms of french gendarmes and policemen in the late nineteenth century

The uniform of the law enforcement is the most visible manifestation in the social space, in the landscape of cities as in the campaigns of the late nineteenth century. More than a habit, it must equally distinguish the wearer from the rest of the population while promoting the integration of the security forces within the republican regime. Far from being a simple appearance, the fabric of the public force is indicative of the performance of the tasks that the police should take and how they should be performed. Differences or similarities between uniform gendarmes and police officers are themselves significant positions that each of these institutions intends to play in the public security system. Another fabric conferred on the Gendarmerie in 1913 is its emblem, which closely associates it with the martial dimension. In this respect, we'll see how the uniform and flag fit into an overall symbolic sphere with seemingly contradictory aspects.

BETWEEN UNIFORMITY AND INDIVIDUALISM

Jarosław Czuby

Uniforms, national sentiments and manifestations of individualism 1807-1815

The paper addresses the public perception of the Polish military uniform in a part of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth between 1806 and 1815. In the Napoleonic era, military uniforms provided a semiotic message rich in special signs. It reflected military hierarchy and internal divisions within armies - some elements of it indicated a particular type of weapon, military units or its internal specialization (e.g. fusiliers, grenadiers or voltigeurs etc.), or the military rank held.

There were, however, other messages and symbols associated with the uniform that were perceived by civilian audience. In the case of the inhabitants of the Duchy of Warsaw, created on a part of Polish lands in 1807 as a result of the Treaties of Tilsit, the return of the Polish state (albeit under a different name and in a different territorial shape) also meant the return of the Polish uniform to the public sphere. Many accounts indicate that it made a very positive

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impression on observers. It seems that after the fears about the future of the nation that emerged in the first years after the Third Partition, certain elements of the uniform (e.g. the cut of the uniforms, the national colours, the Polish square cap) played a symbolic role for the observers. It seems characteristic that after 1815 a similar impression may have been made by the national cut and colours of the uniforms of the Lithuanian Corps formed by Alexander I in 1817 – particularly noticeable in connection with the ruler's promises to incorporate a large part of the Russian partition into the Kingdom of Poland. On the other hand, unfavorable comments were provoked by the introduction of new, tight uniforms modelled on Russian uniforms into the Polish army after 1815.

There are also at least two separate noteworthy perspectives. The first is social reactions to the aesthetics of military uniforms and their meaning in the eyes of the broader civilian public (social attractiveness etc.). The second is unofficial practices connected with wearing uniforms reflecting the individuality and special status of those who wear them (e.g. special way of wearing a Polish square cap or a way of carrying a sabre typical for experienced soldiers and officers).

Alexandre Longer

Enhancing the uniform. The prestige of military headgear in 19th Century France

Prestige is a feeling arising from a conscious or unconscious comparison with a standard. If applied to the history of military looks, this concept has been enriched as men of war were endowed specific features that set them apart from civilians.

Thus, the special prestige that soldiers derived from their monopoly on the use of weapons in society was supplemented in early modern times by the prestige of the emerging uniform, when the standardisation of military clothing became widespread as a response to the requirements implied by the development standing armies (D. Roche, 1990). From the French Revolution onwards, while the militarisation of society took place through conscription, this form of dress became more easily understood in the civilian world, as a result of forced cohabitation (O. Roynette, 2012). Subsequently, the uniform's prestige increased while civilian clothing restricted itself to fashions based on monochrome combinations, leaving the military alone to stand out visually from collective looks through the exclusive wearing of shimmering outfits (P. Perrot, 1992).

My talk will attempt to demonstrate that the social separation indicated by the uniform remained imperfect until the early 19th century, as soldiers shared the same hat as common people. As soon as the State equipped its army with headgears whose design was specifically military, the appearance and prestige of the uniform kit were revolutionised. These objects took precedence over clothes and became the cornerstone of a new visual economy in which the man-of-war stood out once he was wearing his headgear. Under the headgear, which concealed his true condition in battle and on parade, the soldier's self-esteem was reinforced by the uniformity of his face and silhouette, but also by the choice, made by the State, to display systematically the symbols of its regime, therefore vesting this object with a symbolism that demonstrated the social potency of its wearer.

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Lukáš Lexa

*The triumph of individuality over uniformity? Extraordinary uniforms
of the Slovácká Brigade from 1918–1919*

The paper will outline the fulfilment of one of the basic functions of the uniform, i.e. the visual unification of its wearers, in the Czechoslovak region in 1918 and 1919. It will focus on the transformation from the embellished uniforms to their inconspicuousness on the battlefield and on the natural desire of the individual to stand out. Particular attention will be paid to the case of the South Moravian unit of the Slovácká Brigade, whose commander attempted to introduce elements of Slovácko folk costume into the uniform collection of the nascent Czechoslovak army. The impressionist and Art Nouveau painter Joža Uprka from Slovácko participated in the design of uniforms combining parts of military equipment and folk costumes. The paper will also analyse the effect of a soldier's relationship with his uniform on his willingness to perform military service.

UNIFORM AS A CLOTHING AND A SYMBOL (PART I)

Vítězslav Prchal

*Between a symbol of social status and a trophy piece: uniforms in cabinets of curiosities,
art collections and portrait galleries of the Bohemian and Moravian aristocracy, 1650-1750*

The century after the Peace of Westphalia is a period when army uniforms, as standardised military clothing enabling easy differentiation between regiments and professions, were introduced to common soldiers only slowly and gradually (compared to the 19th and especially the 20th century) to a large extent not by the decision of the state or the army command, but based on the financial and organisational capabilities of individual noblemen - owners of the regiments. However, for the nobility, whose exclusive domain was the officer corps of the gradually professionalized imperial army, the uniform soon became a significant symbol of social prestige and a visual reference to their chosen military career. In terms of memory studies, the uniform played the role of an important element of social self-identification and an intelligible reference to the heroic merits and successful career of a particular aristocrat and his ancestors. The use of a uniform in family portrait galleries, art collections, etc., co-created family memory and how the history-making role of important noble families settled in Bohemia and Moravia would be remembered in the future. This socio-symbolic role of the early modern uniform in the conscious construction of the historical image of specific aristocratic families will be shown by analysing trophy and military objects (uniforms, military booty pieces, etc.) within the microcosm of carefully constructed contemporary family portrait galleries (f. e. the Wallensteins, the Althanns), art collections (the Collalts, the Lobkowitzs), cabinets of curiosities or important castle armouries (f. e. the Colloreds and Opočno/Oppotschin, the Bishops of Olomouc and Mírov/Mürau, the Saxon-Lauenburg Dukes and Ostrov nad Ohří/Schlackenwerth).

Michał Zarychta

Military uniform in the Warsaw's public space 1914-1921

There are many records on how the Polish society perceived military uniforms. Most of these sources focus on the Polish army officer uniform as a symbol of high social prestige. The aim of this article is to shed light on the process of shaping of such a view during the political

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transformation between 1914 and 1921 in Warsaw. During this time occurred important change in perception of military uniform from being a symbol of "others", even potentially hostile others to „ours” – our boys, our defenders, our heroes. Public space of Warsaw is considered a meeting place for people in civilian clothes and those in military uniforms. Article starts in 1914, with quite ambiguous situation, when "our boys" went to war wearing uniforms of "others". In 1915, after Russians had fled from Warsaw, the civilians wearing the armbands of the Civic Guards replaced Russian policeman on the streets of Warsaw and were warmly welcomed by their compatriots. Under the German occupation, society could see on various occasions an ersatz of Polish national uniforms. The article presents also reactions of Varsovians to Polish military uniforms worn by Polish soldiers defending Warsaw in 1920, and by demobilised men after the end of the Polish – Bolshevik War in 1921. The author analysed a wide range of primary sources i.e. personal narratives, central and local governments' documents, press and visual sources. The research focused on records that depicted views and reactions of people outside the social elite, especially the working class, women, youth etc. In conclusion the article aims to provide an outline of the common perceptions of the military uniform in this period.

Petr Wohlmuth

*Reenactor uniform: authentic copy or primarily means of creating historical meaning?
An oral-historical perspective*

Military reenactment is a complex imaginative collective performative activity, aiming to simulate historical acts of collective violence as authentically as possible. It places considerable emphasis on so-called testimony through the body, on affective experience, bringing, supposedly, a kind of privileged knowledge concerning past events. In the case of the military reenactment of World War II in the Czech lands, military uniforms, nowadays overwhelmingly representing historically informed copies of older models, become a necessary part of such an experience. Oral history research, which included several narrative interviews with the established manufacturer of German WWII uniforms widely used by military reenactors throughout Central Europe, has yielded a number of findings suggesting that reenactors of the German armed forces consider their uniforms to be much more than reasonably authentic artifacts. Indeed, uniforms in reenactment do not carry symbolic meanings on their own: they are quite necessarily accompanied by rank insignia and various badges and decorations around which revolves a complex production of historical meaning. The latter is focused above all on making the German reenactments of the Second World War acceptable and on diminishing discourses about their “necessary” identification with the ideology of the time. The paper will present interpretative deciphering of hierarchies of meaning within this production of historical meaning, which is closely related to contemporary politics of memory of World War II, especially its ending.

Stanisław Grabarczyk

*The uniform as an emblem of military in youth education: the case of scouting
in the Second Polish Republic*

Scouting, founded in 1911 by General Robert Baden-Powell, quickly spread to other countries, including the territories of Poland, which was not yet an independent state. In 1918, when Poland regained independence, its borders were still not clear, and the formation of the state was happening through violent wars. Scouts, as part of a youth movement with militaristic

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elements, actively participated in fights. After the wars, scouting continued as a significant youth educational movement, with its militaristic aspects. The connection between scouting and the military was symbolically strong. The scouting uniform was modeled after the military, reflecting values associated with military traditions. The "rogatywka" cap referenced the Polish military cap. Also the Scout Cross, the most important symbol, was inspired by Poland's highest military decoration, *Virtuti Militari*. The emblems of scout ranks, such as epaulet bars, also referenced military ranks.

The uniform served both practical and educational functions. It symbolized bravery, honor, discipline, to be ready to help others, and the willingness to serve - elements of the official military ethos. It also made a hierarchy, similar to the military. But moreover it were introduced to made more equality. Every scout wore the same uniform regardless of social background.

This phenomenon visually demonstrated the social influence of military values in Polish society. The uniform became a symbol, not only worn by soldiers but also by children, youth, and their educators in scouting organizations, who adopted military symbolism. It created question about its role in promoting military values and how deeply the "military uniform ethos" permeated Polish society, becoming part of the cultural consciousness. Can this phenomenon be seen as part of the issue of paramilitary uniforms, or should it be considered separately because of the specific connection between scouting and military? Was Polish scouting, as a mass social, youth, and educational movement, a unique phenomenon in Europe due to its strong focus on military-style uniforms?

Those and more issue are worth to reflect and discuss.

UNIFORM AS A CLOTHING AND A SYMBOL (PART II)

Jan Błachnio

Grey rifleman's [but not only] outfit... Austro-Hungarian military uniform in the first year of the World War I

Austro-Hungarian military uniform in the first year of the World War I Austria-Hungary, one of the largest European countries, began to create its armed forces through general conscription starting in 1868. The adoption of such a path of replenishing the ranks translated into the size of the army, which in the last decade before the outbreak of World War I ranged from about 285,000 to about 400,000 people. With the outbreak of the conflict, these numbers increased significantly. Maintaining such significant masses of people in the ranks was associated with the need to cover their life needs, which included an appropriate place to rest, food and uniforms. In my planned paper, I will focus on issues related to the latter during the first year of the First World War. Thus, the paper will focus on uniforms as they were in force from 1908, i.e. from the last uniform reform before the Great War, which introduced grey (*Hechtgrau*) camouflage uniforms into the equipment of the Imperial Royal Armed Forces. The paper will address issues related to the standard of workmanship of uniforms; their adaptation (or not) to the climatic conditions in which Habsburg soldiers had to operate; the quantitative coverage of the armed forces' demand for uniforms and footwear, and methods of ad hoc filling of uniform shortages by soldiers themselves. The basis for considerations will be archival materials from the resources of the Vienna *Kriegsarchiv*, Austro-Hungarian military regulations, as well as memoirs and iconographic sources.

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Jarosław Kilias

Polish Army uniform 1957-1989, traditional and modern

The paper deals with the development of Polish army uniform, from the reforms related with destalinization and a partial return to what was perceived the national military tradition until the end of the Communist period. Military uniform is a symbol of both national military identity and modernity, in second half of the XX Century considered at least a correlate of the military efficiency. The modernity of military wear seems even more important in the times of a rapid technological development in textile and clothing industry technology. Recently the duality (but by no means an opposition!) reflects in the divergence of field and formal military wear, but this was not the case of the Polish uniform. The paper will discuss the official and unofficial discourses related with the change and persistence of military clothing in the post-Stalinist period. It will show how it developed (and stagnated) as an expression of nationalist aspirations and desires be modern, where modernity was becoming more and more identified with – the West.

Michal Cáp

*Smart-dressed democratic officers? Social and cultural role of uniform
in interwar Czechoslovakia*

The military uniform of the interwar Czechoslovak officer corps served as both a symbol of nation-state identity, social and political transformation but also an undeclared cultural continuity. Following Czechoslovakia's independence in 1918, uniforms were used to visually communicate a break from the Habsburg imperial legacy, replacing the multi- and supranational image of the Austro-Hungarian military with a nationalized force aligned with democratic values. The uniform of the new, “democratic” officer symbolized civic responsibility, nation-state loyalty, and disciplined professionalism, key values in establishing a new state.

Beyond symbolizing the ideological shift, the uniform also reinforced societal expectations of the “gentleman-officer” who upheld dignity, moral integrity, and proper conduct in both military and civilian contexts. Guidelines and regulations meticulously shaped public presentation standards, including posture, etiquette, and appropriate accessories. Uniforms thus became a tool of social distinction and a medium of socialization, where adherence to these standards protected the “good name of the army,” attempting at the same time to distance it from perceived imperial legacy, yet still wanting to project the officer corps exceptionalism.

In a society still skeptical of militarism, the uniform played a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions of the Czechoslovak army as a moral institution grounded in the values of the new republic. By merging military and civilian cultural expectations, the interwar uniform became a tool for defining the army's image, blending military identity with public presentation in line with the social and political objectives of the Czechoslovak state.

Aleksandra Jatczak-Repeć

*From underwear to casual civilian wear to the official attire of a President, the T-shirt
tells a remarkable story about the evolving role and significance of military clothing
in global fashion*

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T-shirts, rain boots, trench coats, bomber jackets, overalls, sunglasses, and elastic clothing are just a few examples of how military uniform innovations have influenced Western fashion, particularly throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. Yet, this impact is rarely acknowledged. Today, it is almost taboo to admit that the military market is closely monitored by trendwatchers to predict fashion's future. Over the course of the 20th century, thanks to the media, cinema, and shifts in culture and the market, the professional function and military associations of many garments faded as they transitioned into everyday, basic clothing. The postwar image of the American soldier and the rise of youth culture made T-shirts very popular in the 1950s and a symbol of rebellion and self-expression. In various subcultures, the T-shirt took on different visual and aesthetic forms. However, as it became increasingly ubiquitous, it started to function as a uniform for civilians. In recent years, the impact of social media has once again turned T-shirts into highly visible and meaningful garments, often featuring slogans or specific colours. When President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky began consistently wearing khaki T-shirts for both casual and official occasions around 2022, it revived the military association of this garment, making a powerful statement about how he wished to be perceived. By mapping key changes in 20th-century fashion and examining the social history of the T-shirt, this paper aims to explore the profound social transformations that occurred in the latter half of the 20th Century and the early 21st century.