

# The Origin of Black Smock and White Collar

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## Abstract

Although there are many empirical studies on the functions of school uniform, studies which focus on the origins of school uniform are neglected. Purpose of this study is to reveal historical origins of black smock and white collar. To achieve this purpose, a qualitative research method was adopted. As a result of the research, it was determined that the origins of black smock and white collar lie in the university and charity school uniforms in England. In France and England, school uniforms have mostly been affected by the religious tradition. Western educational system was a model for Turkey. Notre Dame de Sion and Saint Joseph which were founded in the middle of the nineteenth century in Istanbul were probably the first models of black smock and white collar in Turkey.

## Key Words

School Uniform, School Clothes, White Collar, Smock, Black Smock.

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In places where state education is available, much of a child's clothing will be school uniform. In some states, schools have no uniform at all. In some other states, school uniforms tend to be standard across the country (Donald, 2002, p. 206). Black smock and white collar have been worn as the school uniform since early years of the Turkish Republic. Even though blue is a common smock color of late years, smock and collar code has not been changed. Currently, the Republic of Turkey Ministry of National Education announced that in 2010-2011 academic year, blue smock will be abolished and uniforms will be replaced by new ones. Announcement also contains illustration of different new alternatives of school uniforms. The Ministry of National Education also sent these illustrations to each public school in the nation. Schools are going to choose students' school uniforms from among these alternatives. In this announcement, it is also emphasized that the aim of this regulation is to make students feel comfortable within school discipline (Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2008). The Ministry of National Education organized a workshop on school uniforms in June 2009 (Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2009). While the school uniform has long been a cornerstone of public schools, the interest in school uniforms have gained its first noticeable momentum in 2008 when the Ministry of National Education announced this new regulation about school uniforms. This change of uniforms in public schools has led teachers, administrators, parents, and researchers to wonder about the function of school uniforms.

Smock and collar have roots beyond Turkey. Although there are many empirical studies on the functions of school uniforms (e.g. Brunsmä, & Rockquemore, 1998; Chatterjee, 1999; Hoffer-Riddick, & Lassiter, 1996; Meşeci-Giorgetti, 2009; White, 2000), studies which focus on the origins of school uniform are neglected. Dress functions as an effective means of non-verbal communication during social interaction (Arthur, 1999, p. 3). School uniforms bear messages and symbolize values. In order to understand the messages and values, the historical origins of school uniforms have to be analyzed. The purpose of this study is to reveal the historical origins of black smock and white collar.

A qualitative research method was adopted. Official papers and other documentary sources were gathered and analyzed. Document analysis is especially essential in historical research (Mayring, 2000). Official papers, monographs, and studies on the subject are the first sources of this

study. A survey was conducted on the relevant legal acts, statutes, and regulations pertaining to the school uniform. Books and articles were used as second sources. The reviews of utilized books (Constab, 1964; Fryde, 1965; Gordon, 1980) were taken into account. Documents and sources used for the research were declared in the text. Thus, validity of the study was ensured (Marshall, & Rossman, 1994 cited in Yıldırım, & Şimşek, 2003, p. 142).

### **Dress regulations in Universities**

Modern state school uniforms are descended from the root of early academic dress. The evolution of academic costume is complicated by the secular and ecclesiastical contacts which were characterized by universities at the time of their earliest development. Hargreaves-Mawdsley (1963a, p. vii) indicated that the earliest true university in Europe was Italian. France comes next, for the University of Paris is second in seniority, England follows. Although England is not the earliest one, Oxford and Cambridge have a longer and more sartorial history than any other European universities.

In the early days of the university (*studia generalia*), masters and scholars, being at least in minor Orders, wore, as befitting secular clerks, some sober form of dress, loosely termed a *vestimentum clausum*, something closed. There was only one exclusively clerical non-liturgical garment, the *cappa clausa*. In 1222, in Bologna, Paris, and Oxford and at the subsequent universities the *cappa clausa* came to be regarded as the academic regalia (Hargreaves-Mawdsley, 1963a, p. 4-5).

Bands for legal, official, ecclesiastical, and academical use appeared in the mid-seventeenth century (Hargreaves-Mawdsley, 1963b, p. 40). University scholars were wearing white band or collar and dark coat (Cunnington, & Lucas, 1978, p. 223). Poor orphans and religious college students were wearing black attire and white collar as monks in the seventeenth century (Racinet, 1987, Plate 59). White and black could best emphasize the nature of the religious life that the monks were leading (Warr, 2002, p. 66). White has ever been accepted as the symbol of innocence of soul, of purity of thought, of holiness of life (Hulme, 1976, p. 18). As stated in Bible (Matta 28:3; 17:2), white is the color of light and associated with the supernatural. On the other hand, black is the color of darkness. For thousands of years, it has stood for

sorrow, sin, and death. Death himself appears in sable robes. Its other ancient connection is with religious asceticism, with the symbolic denial of the sensual life (Lurie, 1981, p. 189). Black and white together, symbolizes humility and purity of life (Ferguson, 1976, p. 151). Flügel (2008, p. 123) states that the appearance of priests symbolizes the reduction of masculinity.

### **The Emergence of School Uniforms in the Charity Schools of England**

No attempt at mapping out the historical terrain of the school uniform would be complete without a discussion of the institution of school uniform in England. The uniform has strong roots and tradition in Britain (Brunsma, 2004, p. 4). The monastic cassock worn by the pupils of Christ's Hospital in the 16th century was probably the first school uniform (Rae, 1990, p. ix). The attire of these schools was plain. Children should wear a very dark color without any relief. Dark and plain attire was mark of humility. Its clearest expression lay in color. This was often like that of the habits of monks or friars. The color of charity uniforms was comprehensively defined as sad color. Blue was the only cheerful shade often used and was only common for the women and children (Cunnington, & Lucas, 1978, p. 20).

Charity school boys have always worn an ankle-length, cassock, belted coat, breeches, and stockings. White bands have been worn since the seventeenth century. Girls wore robe and white neckwear. The most characteristic part of the outfit was the white neckwear. Necessary because of the low necklines prevailing in all dresses, and with all its overtones of chastity, it evolved. First was the band or collar. Bands vanished; tippet and neckerchief had been used by girls. Tippet was really a collar so much enlarged as to reach the shoulders. By then most tippets had developed a turned-down collar (Cunnington, & Lucas, 1978, p. 174, 37; Payne, Winakor, & Farrell-Beck, 1992, p. 343).

The early charity uniform was designed to emphasize the low status of the children who wore it. The original style as used at Christ's Hospital in the sixteenth century served as the prototype. The cassock was the mainstay of the charity school regalia. Cassock certainly looked like a monastic habit, and the children who wore it were expected to conduct themselves with the iron discipline of the monks whom they resembled

(Davidson, 1990, p. 11). Education was provided within a framework of moral and religious education and worship. Children were put into uniform and taught the ways of obedience (Silver, & Silver, 1974, p. 5). Noble or rich boys had worn a petticoat and a ruff (Cunnington, & Lucas, 1978; Lacroix, 1963). In the seventeenth century, extremely wide turned lacy white collar replaced ruff (Evans, 1930, p. 72).

### **England's Influence on Europe**

Charity school movement was copied by Nonconformists, Methodists, Jews, and Huguenots and played a significant role in extending schooling among the poor in a time of rapidly increasing population (Bowen, 2003, p. 145). In the eleventh century, the control of education passed into the hands of the secular clergy in the cathedral schools in France. The monks were displaced in education by the secular clergy, so in the thirteenth century the seculars began to be supplanted by friars (Evans, 1969, p. 122-126). In France, Jean-Baptiste De La Salle (1651-1719) founded a community of *Brothers of the Christian Schools* in 1680 that was set to open schools and orphanages for poor children (Michel, 2002, p. 15). Lasallian Brothers and other charity schools started to prescribe uniforms for their students. Lasallian schools are probably the first model of elementary schooling in modern times (Hamilton, 1989; Hufton, 1974); and are, according to Foucault (1992, p. 185), one of the most conspicuous exemplars of disciplinary power. In the *Rules for Propriety* written in 1703, Jean-Baptiste De La Salle condemned singularity in dress as a proof of madness. Uniformation was important for him. Teachers, as other brothers of the Rule, wore a capote; they had a cassock of black cloth, with a white neckband. They should deport themselves with great seriousness and have a modest demeanor (La Salle, 1703, p. 40; cited in Dussel, 2001, p.52; Coppin, 2003). In the seventeenth century also Port Royal little school students were dressing as monks (Barnard, 1913, 1918). These modest dresses were symbolizing morality (Vigarello, 1989, p. 177).

French Revolution had a big effect on school uniform and secondary school took a military character. Some new private schools were opened whose pupils were dressed in a uniform which was no longer the clerical robe of the poor scholars of the seventeenth century, but an imitation of the uniform worn by army officers (Ariès, 1962, p. 255-256). These army uniforms were also imitated by Ottoman Military Schools and

primary schools (Ergin, 1977, p. 1860; “Mekاتب-i İbtidâiyeye Mahsus Talimatname,” 1331/1915; II. Abdülhamid Album, no: 90835/31; 90835/24; 90574/5). In France, Rousseau (1956) and Dr. Bernhard-Christophe Faust were against the military uniform. The reason was a theory of the body’s humors that had to circulate freely and without impediment throughout the body. During the nineteenth century, there had been several attempts to establish a national uniform for school children in France. During the Third Republic, the smock or apron became a symbol of republican schools. Smocks were considered to be the most democratic clothes and the best way to eliminate the difference in social position (Dussel, 2001, p. 89-93).

The national educational system developed slowly. The Law of March 15, 1850, known as the *Falloux Law* contained eighty-five articles that set the terms of a major reorganization of public instruction. Three provisions were the most important of Catholic schools. The first allowed anyone with a letter of obedience from a religious order to teach; thus, nearly all religious qualified. The *Falloux Law* ushered in an era of enormous growth in French schooling at both the elementary and secondary levels. Enrolment at the elementary level increased from 3,321,423 in 1850 to 5,341,211 in 1880. Catholic schools accounted for 80 percent of all the growth in enrolment between 1850 and 1876. The number of Catholic girls’ schools in the public sector more than doubled between 1850 and 1875. Catholic schools taught a majority of French girls until the 1880s (Harrigan, 2001, p. 57-58). Prohibition against teaching by the priest was lifted. Thus, before the teacher figure acting as an agent of the state, teachers connected to the church organization prevailed in primary schools (Ozouf, 1989, p. 787). Also religious school councils and Protestant groups had great influence on primary schools in that period (HBC-SU, 2005; Zeldin, 1977, p. 156). In consequence, French public education system could be affected by Lasallian, other religious schools and their uniform. Religious clothes had formed a sacred schema in minds. This schema could be seen by Republicans as a prepared material to form public as citizen.

### **Appearance of Black Smock and White Collar in Turkey**

During the Second Constitutional Period (1908-1918) private schools pursued different uniform policies. Notre Dame de Sion Catholic School, which was founded by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Sion in

1856, was probably the first model of black smock and white collar in Turkey. Notre Dame de Sion students used to wear dark color of smock and a large embroidered collar (Özen, 2006, p. 47-120).

In 1860, Saint Joseph was founded by Soeurs de Saint Joseph in Turkey (Curtis, 1995, p. 484). This school was another model for black smock and white collar. Saint Joseph has been conducted by the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Brothers standardized educational practices throughout France and underlined the elementary school system. It can be said that they were also pioneers of school modernization in the Ottoman period. They also influenced the educational system of Turkey with regard to discipline and uniformity. Saint Joseph school teachers, as other brothers of the Rule, wore a capote; they had a cassock of black cloth, with a white neckband. They had maintained this clothing habit in Turkey until 1934. In the early years of the Turkish Republic, some schools' students wore collar which was very similar to those of Saint Joseph school teachers.

Immediately after the declaration of the Turkish Republic, important regulations and statutes about vestments have been applied. In 1925 "Private Schools Regulation" (Mekâtibi Hususiye Talimatnamesi) (Edis, 1938, p. 563-579) and in 1934 "Statute about Banned Vestments" ("Bazi Kisvelerin Giyilemeyeceğine Dair Kanun," 1934) were made. These regulations and statute adopted some restrictions on school uniforms and symbols. School uniforms were simplified; therefore, black smock and white collar became the most common school uniform in Turkish Republic. In 1915, "Elementary School Regulation" ("Mekatib-i İbtidaiyye Mahsus Talimatname," 1331/1915); in 1925 "Formal Dress Regulation" ("Resmî Elbise Talimatnamesi," 1341/1925); in 1929 "Elementary School Regulation" (İlk Mektepler Talimatnamesi) (Kültür Bakanlığı, 1938); in 1942 "Circular about Clothing" ("Giyim Eşyası Hakkında Tamim," 1942) were published by the government. These legal arrangements were important steps to homogenize students' dress. In 1981, "Students' and employees' uniform code in schools of Ministry of National Education" ("Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı ile Diğer Bakanlıklara Bağlı Okullardaki," 1981) were made. According to this regulation, black smock and white collar have been adopted as mandatory school uniform in Turkish elementary schools. Nevertheless, biographies (Nesin, 2006; Öymen, 2002) and reports on education (Parker, 1939) show that black smock and white collar had been used as mandatory school uniform since the early years of Turkish Republic.

## Discussion

The present study points out that the shape and color of school uniforms have been affected by religious tradition and religious habit. Modern state school uniforms, black smock and white collar are descended from the root of early academic regalia in England. Charity school uniform of the sixteenth century was probably the first elementary school uniform. This uniform was often like that of the habits of monks or friars. English charity schools uniform became widespread in France. These uniforms were brought to Turkey and became a common school uniform by means of Notre Dame de Sion and Saint Joseph Schools which have religious connections.

Black smock and white collar which have religious roots became a symbol of progress, modernization, and egalitarianism in France. In the Republican period, these uniforms were used for creating obedient and loyal bodies with a strong sense of belonging to their nation. Many social scientists agree that the type of dress, such as a uniform provides social feedback that can contribute to a sense of belonging (Fosseen, 2006; Goodenow, & Grady, 1993; Tanioka, & Glaser, 1991; Voelkl, 1996) and improves order and discipline (Hughes, 2006, p. 70; Huss, 2007; Stanley, 1996). The most sustained and highlighted theme has been that uniforms reduce the effects of social and economical inequality (Caruso, 1996). On the other hand, some research point out that students are keenly aware of economic status, regardless of uniformity of clothing (Kim, & DeLong, 2006; Wilkins, 1999). As a matter of fact, Firmin, Smith, and Perry (2006) indicate that in the cases of private schools, the uniforms became a means of defining status, and in the case of public schools, uniforms often provided an equalizing effect for the poor who otherwise came to school looking underprivileged. This phenomenon can be easily observed in Turkey. Today in Turkey, while private schools have their own uniforms, socio-economically disadvantaged elementary school students wear a smock with white collar. Therefore, it can be said that, in the case of Turkey, school uniforms are no longer socioeconomic class equalizers.



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