

# JESUIT TALARS AS A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION FOR THE MANUFACTURE OF FORMAL ACADEMICAL GOWN FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB

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The founding of the University of Zagreb is closely associated with the Jesuit order. On September 23<sup>rd</sup> 1669 the Jesuit Academy received, through the diploma issued by the Roman Emperor and Hungarian-Croatian King Leopold I, the status and privileges of a university institution [1, 2]. The year of 1669 has thus been taken as the year of founding the University of Zagreb.

The diploma (Fig. 1) says, among other things, "... who win in the Academy of Zagreb the doctoral, licencship or bachelor degrees, through graduation they win the right to enjoy all the honours and privileges awarded to those of the other such universities ..., such as honorary cape (*epomis*), doctor's hat, ring and other signs of honour, together with a sceptre, seal and titles... before all the others belong to the rector of the academy and his chancellors, then to the deans of the faculty and professors of the academy" [1, 3, 4]. Although the privilege grants the right of using academical gowns, no confirmation has been found of the professors at the Academy using these rights.

For a long time Jesuits were the only teachers at the Academy and they gave lectures dressed in their official gowns, such that they habitually wore in everyday and formal occasions. As the University of Zagreb is one of the oldest universities in the south-east Europe, its worthy traditions should be respected and preserved. Through the long and interrupted years of its functioning, its excellence has had its ups and downs. However, students and professors have not worn official academical gowns and most of the time wore what was fashionable at the moment, or, if they were priests, robes of the profession.

One of the reasons why special academical gown was not introduced in the past perhaps is the reluctance of the Empress Maria-Theresia to accept academical gown as such [6]. When the University of Vienna asked the Empress in 1773 to give her permission for the manufacture of new gowns, the

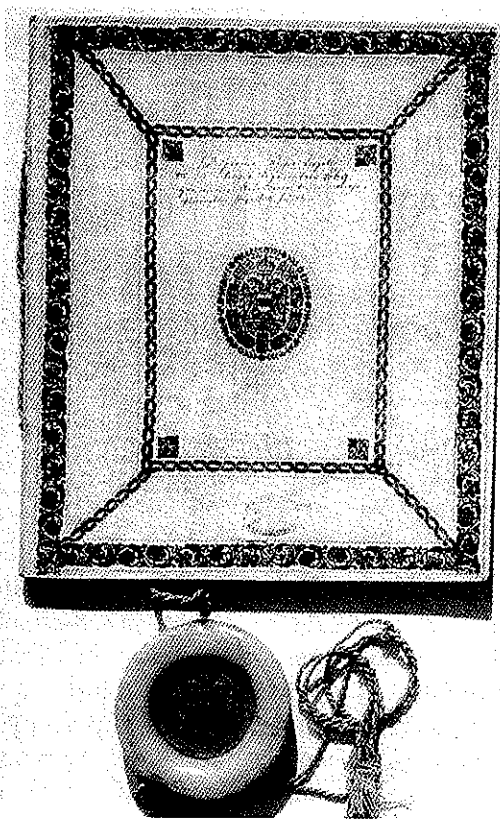


Fig. 1: *Diploma issued by Leopold I*

petition was refused. However, the University was allowed to use the old gowns, under condition they should never be worn at the court. The Emperor Joseph II banned academical gowns completely in 1784, as he considered the gowns to be a reminder of the dark ages when the pope had the exclusive right to establish universities [6].

The rules of the Royal Academy and Archigimnasium as its part [2], issued on January 31st 1826, do not say anything specific about how students should be dressed. However, "students should be decently dressed in public, should avoid exotic and clownish dresses".

More than one professorship at the Academy of Zagreb was quite often vacant at the beginning of the 19th century, and finally, in 1850, the Academy was discontinued. A few years later, however, on October 19th 1874, the modern University of Zagreb was founded by the decree of the Emperor and King Francis-Joseph [2].

A photo of the first university staff in the academic year of 1874/75 shows that all the professors wore dark suits with bow ties, or priests' talars, as was customary for the service (Fig. 2) [2].





Fig. 4: *Rector and pedel in uniform*

The garment worn by the first Rector Mesić and professors–priests cannot be considered as the first official academical gown, as the other professors wore formal laymen clothes.

The official gown was worn by the *pedel* for the occasion of graduation and some other formal occasions, while the rector and the deans had their chains. The *pedel* was dressed in a heavy gown, embroidered with gold. The dolman was red [7]; the inner coat (Fig. 3) was made of dark blue homespun, edges decorated with native silver, with silk lining. Trousers were also made of dark blue homespun.

One of the rare evidences of the way the members of the academic community were dressed in formal occasions is a photo of the rector of the University, Prof. Edo Lovrić and the University Senate, taken at the funeral of dr. Ante Bauer (December 13th 1937), a university professor and one the rector of the University from 1906 to 1907. He was buried with all the honours. The rector was dressed formally, with a top hat and rector's chain round his neck. On his left–hand side is the *pedel* in the uniform and with a sceptre (Fig. 4) [8].

Sceptre and chains were the official insignia of the University, preserved to this day.

The rector Prof. Šeparović introduced academical gowns, often colloquially called togas. They did not carry any specific symbolism of the historical development of the University, and were mostly the sign that the wearer plays an official role in the ceremony in question, whether as a conferrer of a degree, dean, rector or the person to receive the degree. The gowns varied in cut, fabric, etc. The rector Prof. Šunjić, on the initiative of the academic secretary Milić, accepted the idea to design official gowns of the University of Zagreb, with special signs for various academic degrees, for the rector, vice-rectors, deans etc. The Faculty of Textile Technology took the task and designed the gowns. The design was accepted at the University Senate, headed by Prof. Jeren, in 1998.

### *1. Basic idea*

General idea in designing a formal academical gown was to respect the traditions of the University of Zagreb [9], as well as to incorporate national Croatian symbols into the gowns, as for centuries it was the only university that nurtured Croatian culture, science and arts and transferred newly acquired knowledge to younger generations.

Since Jesuits were the founders of the University, and as their talars are formal and official garment of the order, the talar was taken as a basic model in designing the gown. The idea was that the new design of the academical gown should preserve historical symbols, as well as something of the simplicity and modesty characteristic for the Jesuits. At the same time, the gown should be dignified, elegant and solemn, as is appropriate for a university fulfilling the honourable task of promoting science, arts and enlightenment. The Jesuit talars were completely adequate for the purpose, not only from the historical point of view.

The other task, implementing general Croatian symbols, was realised by incorporating decorative bands with the symbols of Croatian tradition embroidered. Variants were designs to distinguish rectors, vice-rectors, deans etc.

Fine wool woven fabric was selected as the basic fabric for the gown, to remind of the first days of the University, when there were no man-made fibres. Besides, wool fabrics are comfortable both in winter and summer, they drape fine and do not crease and lustre-free colours enhance elegance of the gown. Caps of the same fabric were also designed, decorated with the same symbols.

## 2. *Development of the idea*

The Jesuit talar, the gown of the founders of the University of Zagreb, was chosen as a starting point in the design of formal academical gowns, based on the data obtained through the investigations of the history of ways of dressing at the University, with a general idea of taking as a designer's inspiration a form closely associated with the history of the University. Jesuits, as opposed to other orders, wear only black talar, with a girdle of the same fabric, a simple gown, ankle-long, buttoned in the front high up the neck. The sleeves are narrow and the gown has a small button-up collar (Fig. 5) [10].

The Jesuit talar as a basic idea has been modified following the accepted characteristics of modern academical gowns. The gown has been shortened somewhat to facilitate walking, bulk is enhanced, the sleeves are wider and bell-shaped, as is conventional for most doctoral gowns in the world. Embroidered tapes have been incorporated on the front and back sides of the gown. They have multiple function. As folds, they enhance the bulk of the garment, while the embroidery is decorative, but also denotes academic degree and the faculty of the wearer (Fig. 6).



Fig. 5: *Jesuit talar*



Fig. 6: *Academical gown as modified Jesuit talar*

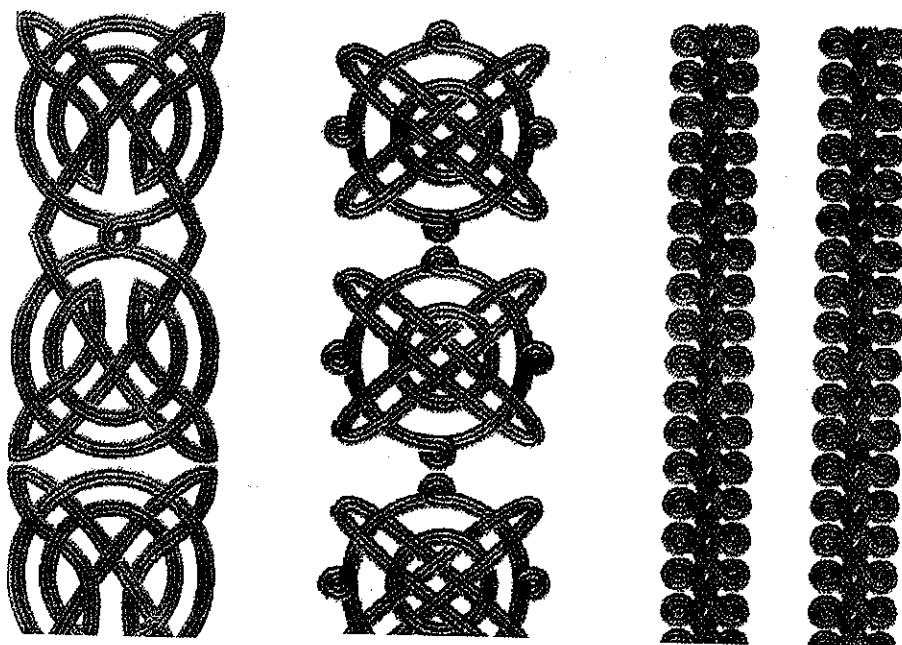


Fig. 7: Rector's, vice-rector's and dean's ornamental braids

Embroidered tapes are decorated with ornamental braids (Fig. 7). It has been selected as one of the most characteristic Croatian motifs, beautiful in its geometrical simplicity and mysterious rhythm of interlacing strands. Embossed embroidery is used to supply third dimension to the braid, while simplicity and modesty of the gown are preserved by selecting proper thread. The idea is that the gown should be completely black, so that the signs and symbols can only be recognised by the play of light and only from near-by. The gowns all look the same from a distance, which gives a sense of uniformity, togetherness, elegance and harmony. However, some of the faculties asked the embroidery to include their official colours. It proved not too harmful for the harmony, simplicity and elegance, while the peculiarities of the faculties were stressed, e. g. dark green for the foresters etc.

Coats of arms of the faculties (Fig. 8) have also been used as simple and clear symbols of the faculties. They are embroidered on the tapes and help identify the area of the wearer's speciality. As the decorative tapes contain the coat of arms of the University and the coat of arms of the faculty in question embroidered below it; the unity of the University is preserved, as well as the identity of each of the faculties. The gowns belonging to the rector and vice-rectors have the coat of arms of the University only. These coats of arms can, in the same way as the braids, only be seen as the play of light and in no way do they inhibit the harmony of the gown and the majestic appearance of the rector's or dean's chain.



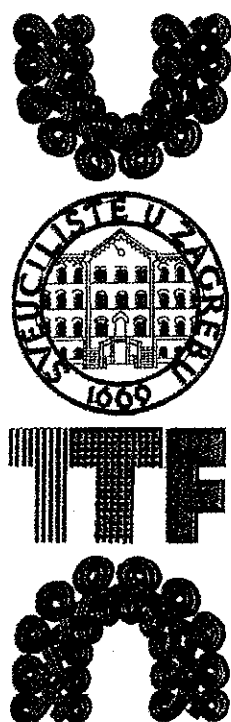


Fig. 8: Coats of arms of the University and Faculty of Textile Technology

Special attention has been paid to the rector's and dean's chains with a medallion, as they are a precious insignia of the University. It is of key importance to design the gown so that it does not cover the chain and/or draw attention from it.

The colour of the academical gown is symbolic in itself. Colours are arche-symbols, ancient signs, remnants of long-gone cultures, common to many nations.

Black usually symbolises troubles, death, seriousness, declining the worldly vanity, and has been extensively used for priests' gowns, to be transferred from the priests' to the academical gowns [11]. Black is also the colour of the Jesuit talars, and was a logical choice for the academical gowns of the University.

Red is the colour of fire, blood and wisdom. It used to be the colour of generals, nobility, patricians, emperors, and finally the colour of the knowledge the wise men hide under their cloaks [11]. Red is also an ancient symbol of the doctoral degree in numerous countries. This is why various shades of red have been used for the cuffs of the rector's, vice-rector's and Ph. D. 's gowns.

The cuffs of the deans' and vice-deans' are in official colours of the University — dark blue, or in the official colours of their faculties.

Using history of the University on one hand and contemporary form of the academical gowns at other universities on the other, the academical gown for the rector of the University of Zagreb is designed (Fig. 9), for the vice-rectors (Fig. 10), deans and vice-deans (Fig. 11), Ph. D. s (Fig. 12), M. Sc. s (Fig. 13) and for the university graduates (Fig. 14). Historical talar of the founders of the University was used as the basic form, symbolism of the colours, visual power of the ornamental braid and play of light and shadow are used to achieve optimal design. Academical gown is manufactured that has its links with the oldest tradition of the Academy. At the same time it follows the trends of the design for academical gowns of most European universities, being characteristically simple, elegant and recognisably national.

### *3. Conclusion*

The purpose of designing academical gowns is fulfilled if in every formal occasion the tradition of the University, its founders and the task of the University are pointed out, no matter whether the participants are aware of it or not. Through it the gown gets its full meaning and importance.