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## Mandate and Clothing Dynamics in Territorial Command Functions in Cameroon (1922–2022)

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### Abstract

*The mandate period in Cameroon was marked by the evolution of clothing in the administration. To what extent do these garments serve as a source of historical knowledge about Cameroon? This work analyzes, based on oral, written, iconographic, audiovisual, and sound sources, the clothing dynamics in territorial command functions in Cameroon. It reveals that from 1885 to 2022, various uniforms were introduced in territorial administration in Cameroon, from the German colonial period to 2022. These include white, navy blue, and khaki uniforms. In administrative semiotics, the uniform of administrative authorities carries multiple symbolisms and functions. It is not only a tool of protection and socialization but also an instrument of power and command. According to administrative logic, command uniforms are hierarchical; thus, they are worn by authorities during field visits, official ceremonies, and state receptions. In 1939, French administrators' attire included some variations. It became a double-breasted tunic with six buttons and a bright white shirt. At that time, the cap did not fully cover the head. The outfit was dark blue with oak and olive leaf adornments. Republican insignias were located around the edge of the left pocket. After independence in 1960, the oak and olive leaves from the French administrative authorities were symbolically replaced by Cameroonian symbols such as cotton, peanuts, coffee trees, and cocoa trees to 'Cameroonize' the uniforms of Cameroonian administrative authorities. The insignias of the prefectural function include collar patches, the cap badge, and stars. It was not until 2011 that the community of command civil servants adopted a new change in attire.*

**Keywords:** *clothing, administrator, territorial command, administrative unit.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

From 1922 to 2022, the clothing practices associated with territorial command in Cameroon exhibited a notable sartorial continuity and evolution. Since independence, there has been a clear reproduction and adaptation of clothing styles among high-ranking administrative officials, including governors, senior divisional officers, divisional officers, district heads, and traditional authorities. To fully understand the evolution of these uniforms and their significance, it is essential to trace their origins back to the colonial period. Cameroon experienced a triple colonization (Nlep, 1986: 61), which profoundly reshaped the administrative structure of the territory.

This study aims to examine the evolution and significance of clothing within the territorial command functions in Cameroon. More specifically, it seeks to analyze both the symbolism and the practical functions of the uniforms worn by administrative authorities. This raises a central question: how does the clothing of administrative authorities serve as a source of historical knowledge about Cameroon?

To explore this issue, we have structured our analysis around two main research axes. The first focuses on the historical evolution of administrative uniforms during the German, Franco-British, and postcolonial periods. The second investigates the various symbolic meanings and functional roles associated with these uniforms in the exercise of authority.

## 2. COMMANDERS UNIFORMS IN CAMEROON DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD

Three historical stages have been identified to understand the emergence and evolution of uniforms worn by administrative authorities in Cameroon: the German period, the Franco-British period, and the postcolonial era.

### 2.1 Uniforms during the german's administration

It is important to note that the German administration was not immediately established in Cameroon. In fact, initial efforts were focused primarily on commercial activities (Owona, 1996: 42). As a result, Germany lagged behind in setting up a formal administrative system in Cameroon. At the outset, the Germans adopted a relatively flexible administrative model, characterized by a small number of civil servants whose primary role was to assert and maintain German presence in the colony. This administrative framework revolved around three key institutions: the colonial governor, the governing council, and local administrative posts (Nlep, 1986: 62).

The presence of German governors in Cameroon was marked by the adoption of specific attire that symbolized their authority. It is worth noting that the uniforms worn by these governors differed from those typically worn in Germany (Nlep, 1986: 71). One such example was the adoption of the "German khaki"—a standard outfit favored by German administrators. This garment was well-suited to the local environment and became dirty in contact with the indigenous population, which was perceived as a sign of fieldwork and engagement. The khaki's dusty tone made it a practical work uniform, allowing administrators to wear it for extended periods—sometimes up to a week—without the need for frequent washing.

During this period, three main types of administrative tours were carried out: the contact tour, the socio-cultural animation tour, and the economic animation tour. To better illustrate the dynamics of uniforms during the German administration, two case studies or visual examples will be examined in the following sections.

**Picture 1:** Governor Karl Ebermaier in command uniform



Source: <http://www.icsm.it/articoli/ri/camerun.html>. Accessed on 14-10-2017

This image depicts Karl Ebermaier, the last German governor of Kamerun (1912–1915), dressed in his official command uniform. Notably, the uniform lacks embroidered embellishments on the sleeves, and the shirt is a bright white. The entire outfit is devoid of decorative insignia or ornamental badges (Burger, 2015: 31). In contrast, the German Chancellor did not wear the same uniform as the governors posted in Kamerun. His ceremonial attire featured elaborate embroidery around the sleeves and the high, stiff collar. The cap, however, remained modest, with minimal ornamentation. The jacket was a six-piece garment with straight, functional buttons. From this, we can infer that the clothing style of the German governors in Cameroon was not randomly chosen. It reflected imperial authority and was influenced by the structure and objectives of colonial administration. The design, cut, and lack of elaborate decoration suggest a deliberate choice—one intended to assert control, reflect discipline, and consolidate German hegemony in the colony.

As for headgear, German colonial administrators during this period typically wore a spiked iron helmet, resembling a blade—a symbolic feature highlighted in the image referenced below (Madina, 2017: 82). The cap design followed what was known as the "Zimmer era" style. A visual representation of this uniform is presented below for further illustration.



**Picture 2:** Jesko von Puttkamer from Kamerun in his command uniform



**Source:** <http://www.icsm.it/articoli/ri/camerun.html>. Accessed on 14-10-2017

This picture shows the outfit of Jesko von Puttkamer. It is distinguished by extensive embroidery, particularly along the sleeve linings, which cover the entire length of the sleeves. Between his hands, he holds a sword. The jacket is a straight-cut design featuring seven buttons. The uniform is adorned with numerous badges, including shoulder insignia. The collar lacks traditional badges and is replaced by a simple collar trimmed with golden bands at the edges. Additionally, the governor's outfit displays medals of knights or commanders on the left side. These medals are fixed directly onto the uniform, as there is no pocket from which to hang them.

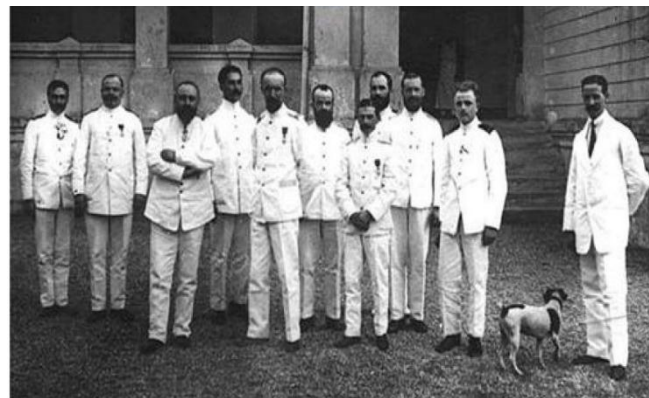
## 2.2 Uniforms of Administrators during the Franco-British Period

The Franco-British period was established under the mandate system. Under this arrangement, former German colonies were placed under the authority of the League of Nations (LN) and entrusted to powers responsible for their administration under international oversight. Cameroon's mandate was therefore assigned to France and England following the agreement of March 4, 1916. This transition brought significant changes to the clothing of administrative authorities.

From 1916 to 1960, administrative power in French Cameroon was held by commissioners and high commissioners who operated under the authority of the Governor General of French Equatorial Africa. For the twenty-three years during which Cameroon was administered as a commissariat of the Republic, the administrative divisions were organized into districts, each subdivided into

smaller constituencies. These constituencies, or regions, were headed by officials known as circumscription chiefs. These chiefs were appointed by the High Commissioner and were assisted by deputies who supported them in their duties and acted in their absence. Beyond the conventional khaki uniform inherited from the German period, the Franco-British administration introduced several other uniform styles, including the white uniform and the midnight blue uniform (Michèle, K., 2014: 52). An example of this uniform is shown in the image below.

**Picture 3:** The governor of French Cameroon Fourneau and his officials in Douala, January 1, 1917



**Source:** [http://pedagogic.lyceesavioudouala.org/histoire-geographic/appgrande\\_war/pages/page\\_6c1.htm](http://pedagogic.lyceesavioudouala.org/histoire-geographic/appgrande_war/pages/page_6c1.htm). Accessed 15-10-2017

This picture shows the governor of French Cameroon and his officials in Douala on January 1, 1917. The administrators are wearing white jackets with five buttons, featuring shoulder epaulets. Their uniforms lack sleeve facings and collar badges. Notably, three of the administrators wear medals that distinguish them from the others. It is important to mention that none of these governors are wearing caps. All are wearing uniform black shoes.

By 1939, the French administrators' uniforms had undergone some changes. The jacket evolved into a six-button, double-breasted design, paired with a bright white shirt. At this time, the cap was smaller and did not fully cover the head. An example of the uniform from this period is shown in the picture below.

**Picture 4:** Official celebration in 1939 in the Vina



**Source:** Archives of the Sawutu Lindjila radio station, 01-08-2017 in Ngaoundéré

We can see Mr. Notary in the company of Lamido Alim of Ngaoundéré (1939) in the administrative Vina Department during an official holiday. The clothing of these administrators was modeled after military uniforms. Among the early French and British administrators, there was a tendency to combine the dual

roles of civil and military authority. Mr. Notary is dressed in a dark blue uniform, with facings decorated with oak and olive leaves. Around the left pocket are republican insignia.

Before 1960, the attire of French administrative authorities evolved to include a wider variety of uniforms, especially for governors, subdivision heads, and regional administrators. Unlike the German iron helmets, those worn during the French period were made of rubber (Michèle, K., 2014: 93). This model of helmet and uniform is shown in the picture below.

**Picture 5:** French administrators in two varieties of command outfits during a colonial party in Tibati before 1960



**Source:** Archives of the Sawutu Lindjila radio station, 01-08-2017 in Ngaoundéré

This picture was taken before 1960 on the occasion of the colonial celebration at the administrative office of the Banyo department. We observe five French colonial administrators, all dressed in white. Regarding sleeve length, discussions with some informants reveal that only the governors of French East Africa and French Equatorial Africa (based in Brazzaville) wore white clothing with long sleeves and full-length pants. In contrast, regional heads, subdivision chiefs, and district officers wore short-sleeved outfits paired with breeches. The shoes worn were black. Additionally, the practice of wearing gloves can be noted; this custom was eventually abandoned by Cameroonian administrators but retained in France (Burger, 2015:42).

This difference in attire likely reflects the varying ranks of these administrators. Their uniforms followed a strict hierarchy and were specific to their respective constituencies or subdivisions. However, by January 1, 1960, changes occurred: the cap was reintroduced, and two types of shoes—black and white—were worn. Unlike the 1939 caps, which did not fully encircle the head, the cap worn in 1960 fit snugly around the entire head. The color of shoes varied depending on the occasion. This variation is illustrated in the picture below.

### 2.3 Uniforms of civil administrators in Cameroon during The German period

The study of uniforms in Cameroon from the German period through the Franco-British mandate to the postcolonial era (up to 2022) must consider key dates that marked the history of territorial command in this Central African country. Notably, this includes the establishment of the offices of the governor, Senior Divisional Officer, Divisional Officer, and district head.

Under the regime of Ahmadou Ahidjo, the regulation of uniforms for administrative authorities was governed by two foundational texts. The first is Order No. 202 of December 29, 1965, which established the uniform for heads of administrative districts. Initially, this order applied to federal inspectors of administration, secretaries-general with federal inspection duties, Senior

Divisional Officers, Divisional Officers, and heads of divisions with federal inspections (Mvongo, 2011: 84). This text covered Senior Divisional Officers, Divisional Officers, and their collaborators. The second is Decree No. 342 of July 10, 1980, which established the uniform for provincial governors.

The 1965 order was revised in 1980, mainly concerning third-level authorities, notably provincial governors who replaced federal inspectors of administration in 1972, which created a new issue. Under the 1965 decree, all administrative authorities wore the same uniform, with distinctions made only by the facings. The renaming and changes in civilian clothing regulations are reflected in these two key texts governing the wearing of uniforms by administrative authorities (Mvongo, 2011:73). The developments in uniform regulations can be summarized in the following table :

**Table 1:** Change in civilian clothes

Outfit	Provincial Governor	Senior-Divisional officer, Divisional officer, District Heads
<b>Outfit #1</b>	<b>Grand ceremonial attire</b> -white crossed jacket -white pants	<b>Ceremonial attire (optional)</b> -midnight blue crossover jacket -same color pants
<b>Outfit#2</b>	<b>Normal ceremonial attire</b> -blue crossed frock coat night -same color pants	<b>Grand ceremonial attire</b> -midnight blue crossover jacket -same color pants
<b>Outfit#3</b>	<b>Working outfits</b> -khaki peacoat with right button or saharan -khaki pants	<b>Normal outfit</b> -white or khaki jacket with straight button -white or khaki pants

**Source:** Grégoire Mvongo, 2011: 72

In addition, in terms of the symbols of the facings, the uniform of the authorities' administrative systems has evolved (Mani, 2011:57). Indeed, the oaks and the olive tree of French administrative authorities have left room for everything at the level of principles, symbols Cameroonian crops made up of cotton, peanuts, coffee and cocoa trees in order to "Cameroonize" the uniforms of the Cameroonian administrative authorities. It is in particular with Presidential Decree No. 342/CAB/PR of 10/7/1980 that the uniforms of the authorities' administrative authorities of Cameroon have undergone this change. Because the 1965 decree will not bring any reform to these civilian outfits. The mutation of these facing symbols is shown in the photos below.

The advent of the Biya regime in 1982 gives another vision of command territorial we note an increase in the role of women in this sphere. This period was not accompanied by a big change. However, the clothing practice of administrative authorities during the reign of Biya are still governed by the same texts (1965, 1980). Indeed, the symbols made of cocoa tree, coffee tree, cotton and peanut will be maintained at the level of the facings. It should be emphasized that the introduction of the very first woman in territorial command was not directly accompanied by a change in clothing style. We will have to wait until 2011 for the community of command officials can accept a change clothing to the latter (Madina, 2017: 44). However, even if there is no had a revision of these texts, we note a taking into account of the presence of the



female in the territorial command which gives the latter the possibility of carrying either the skirt or the pants.

Moreover, the dynamics of the renewal of clothing style is not observed during this period by the introduction of ballerinas. Indeed, this mutation is observed in level of two elements of civilian clothing, notably the skirt and the wearing of ballerina's detriment of the shoes fixed by the 1980 text. Regarding full dress; notably midnight blue or navy blue, it was recommended to the administrative authorities wearing black leather shoes with thin soles. This aspect is represented in the picture below taken between June and July 2017.

**Picture 6:** Taking command in the Baré Bakem Sub-Division in the department of Moundou



**Source:** Private archives of Yacouba, 07-19-2017

A dynamic change is also evident regarding the khaki uniform. According to the 1965 regulation, administrative authorities at any level were allowed to wear either black or brown shoes. However, the option for women to wear skirts is not available for all command uniforms. This change is primarily observed in the midnight blue outfit, where women in territorial command typically choose to wear skirts only for formal occasions (Ibrahima Mohamadou, 2016: 39).

### 3. IDENTIFICATION AND CLASSIFICATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITIES' UNIFORMS

The uniforms of heads of administrative districts were originally imported from France. After gaining independence and international sovereignty, Cameroon opted to adopt the French model and institutionalized the wearing of the Cameroonian uniform (Michèle, K., 2014:76).

#### 3.1 Commanders' uniforms in Cameroon

There is a significant difference in the uniforms of various administrative bodies, including governors, senior divisional officers, and divisional officers.

##### 3.1.1 Specific features of the governor's uniform

The decoration on the governor's cap consists of palm fronds embroidered with gold thread, which encircles the entire cap. Additionally, the sleeve facings are more elaborately embroidered and thicker compared to those of senior divisional officers and divisional officers. The cap's macaron, known as the képi, features

three evenly spaced golden stars, which are also present on the chest badge, epaulets, and collar badges.

Regarding the uniform, typically navy blue or midnight blue, a golden stripe runs along each pant leg from the hip to the cuff. However, this stripe is sometimes also seen on the uniforms of officials other than the governor. The picture below illustrates this detail.

**Picture 7:** The governor's outfit during the technical handover to Ngaoundéré Senior-Divisional officer



**Source:** Picture taken by Madina on 07-22-2017 in Ngaoundéré

Installation of the Senior-Divisional Officer of the Vina Department, chaired by the governor of the Adamawa region at the Ngaoundéré Festival Square. From left to right, we see the incoming Senior-Divisional Officer Ndongo Luc and the outgoing Senior-Divisional Officer Mvondo Justin. It should be noted that the two small medals hanging on the left side at the end of the pocket are not part of the uniform required by current regulations. These medals were awarded by the State to distinguish them (Madina, 2017: 102). The governor wears two medals, while the Senior-Divisional Officer to his left has only one. However, the Senior-Divisional Officer seated at the far right wears up to three medals: two hanging at the ends of the left pocket and one around his neck. The medal worn around the neck is a commander's medal, while the medals on the chests of these three administrators are officer and knight medals.

#### 3.1.2 Specific features of the Senior-Divisional Officer's uniform

The uniforms of Senior-Divisional Officers are distinguished by the thickness of the sleeve facings and the size of the cap, which is larger than that of Divisional Officers but smaller than that of governors (Madina, 2017: 107). The cap's decoration includes a gimp, a sawtooth pattern surrounding a paalette, and another sawtooth pattern framing a leaf approximately 10 millimeters in height. The center is adorned with embroidered palm leaves featuring four leaflets and three intertwined olive leaves, followed by gold "lion's tooth" embroidery (Ibrahim Mouiche, 2007: 85). The same leaf motif appears on the cap, with the headband decorated all around by a 2-millimeter-wide gimp and, at the center, a crescent with two stars.

**Picture 8:** The Senior-Divisional's cap during official ceremony



**Source:** Archives of the Ngaoundéré II Sub-Division on 08-29-2017

The embroidery of the cap (picture 8) for the Senior-Divisional officer goes almost all the way around the head but does not cover the entire cap unlike that of the governor who takes the entire head size. In fact, these embroideries stop at a certain level for the Senior-Divisional officer. In apart from the Divisional officer's cap, recognition of his rank can also be perceived at the level of the sleeve ornaments.

### 3.1.3 Specificity of the Divisional-officer's outfit

It should be mentioned that the sleeve cuffs, cap, and tabs shoulders are less embroidered than that of the Senior-Divisional officer and the embroidery of the cap stops at the level from each ear for the Divisional-officer (Madina, 2017:111). Indeed, embroidery is composed of two palm leaves and two olive leaves followed in turn by the clearance sale we have lion's tooth », and a crescent of a star which is the insignia of the function.

**Picture 9:** Recognition of Senior-Divisional officer through the badge on their cap



**Source:** Picture taken by Madina on 07-22-2017 in Ngaoundéré

The embroidery on the Senior-Divisional Officer's cap extends almost all the way around the head but does not cover the entire

cap, unlike that of the governor, whose embroidery encompasses the full circumference. In fact, the embroidery for the Senior-Divisional Officer stops at a certain point. Apart from the cap, the rank of the Senior-Divisional Officer can also be identified by the sleeve ornaments.

### 3.1.4 Specific features of the divisional officer's uniform

It should be noted that the sleeve cuffs, cap, and shoulder tabs of the Divisional Officer are less embroidered than those of the Senior-Divisional Officer. The embroidery on the Divisional Officer's cap extends only up to the ears on each side (Madina, 2017: 111). The embroidery consists of two palm leaves and two olive leaves, followed by a "lion's tooth" motif and a crescent with a star, which is the insignia of the rank.

The facing of the cap, unlike that of the governor's which encircles the entire cap, stops just in front of both ear ends. Overall, the ranks are easily identifiable either by the thickness of the sleeve facings, as seen from the front view in the image above, or from an overhead perspective, notably thanks to the size of the cap's embroidery or the functional badge featuring a crescent and star on the cap.

## 3.2 Significance and symbolism of administrative authorities' uniform colors in the command sphere

### 3.2.1 Symbolism of the navy blue outfit

Also known as the full ceremonial dress, protocol rules often recommend dark colors for ceremonies (Ibrahim Mouiche, 2007 : 99). The navy blue or midnight blue uniform is reserved for solemn occasions such as the celebration of the national holiday (May 20), the installation of a new governor, Senior-Divisional Officer, or Divisional Officer, official handovers, receptions of the Prime Minister, the Minister in charge of territorial administration, the President of the Republic, heads of government, foreign dignitaries, funerals of administrative authorities (Mvongo, 2011:62), and other important events that require prior approval from the hierarchy (Madina, 2017:112). The picture below illustrates an occasion where wearing the midnight blue attire is mandatory.

**Picture 10:** Uniforms of Divisional-Officers during a technical ceremony



**Source:** Personal archives of Mbé's Divisional-officer, 01-08-2017

The picture was taken on June 12th, 2017, during the installation ceremony of the Divisional Officer of the Mayo Darley Sub-division at the Marching Place. The ceremony was chaired by Mayo-Banyo's Senior-Divisional Officer. From left to right, we see Mayo-Banyo's Senior-Divisional Officer, Ngal Charles, and on the right, Youssoufa, the incoming Divisional Officer of the aforementioned sub-division.



A notable observation regarding their uniforms (picture 10) is that the embroidery on the facings differs, reflecting the distinct insignia of their respective functions. Specifically, the sleeve facings' embroidery of the Senior-Divisional Officer is thicker than that of the Divisional Officer. This difference is evident both on their caps and at the circular emblem positioning: the Divisional Officer's cap features an arc of a circle enclosing a star, whereas the Senior-Divisional Officer's cap displays a horn with a star at each end (Michel Kirry, 2014 : 86). The variation in placement and number of stars directly corresponds to the administrative rank held by each official. Indeed, the number of stars influences the design and positioning of the kepi facings (Madina, 2017: 107).

### 3.2.2 Symbolism of the white outfit

Also known as the small ceremonial outfit, it is important to note that this uniform was not widely recommended for use by territorial command bodies and decentralization authorities until 2008. It was only in 2013, following a decree enacted that year, that civil administrators officially adopted this attire (Madina, 2017:103). The white outfit is therefore reserved for exceptional events such as Youth Day celebrations.

Almost all heads of administrative units wear white during the celebration of Youth Day, in mourning ceremonies for prominent personalities, on international observance days such as International Women's Day, and during receptions for the First Lady (Nzeucheu, 2013). Pictures 15 and 16 illustrate occasions when these administrative leaders were required to wear white clothing.

**Picture 11:** Kaélé's Divisional-Officer in white crossover jacket on the day of the National Youth Day



**Source:** Personal archives of Mohamadou Dabo on 02-13-2017

**Picture 12:** Mbé's Divisional-Officer in white crossover jacket on the National Youth Day



**Source:** Personal archives of Mbé's Divisional Officer

The Divisional Officer of Kaelé (picture 11) and the Divisional Officer of Mbé (picture 12) are depicted at their residences prior to departing for the Party square « *Place des fêtes* » to attend the ceremony on February 11, 2017. In these two images, we observe two distinct styles of the long-sleeved uniform worn by the officers on Youth Day. The Divisional Officer of Kaelé wears a double-breasted jacket with six buttons, sleeve facings, and shoulder tabs, whereas the Divisional Officer of Mbé dons a single-breasted jacket with four buttons, no sleeve facings, and a braid on the inside bearing the official insignia. Furthermore, the caps worn by the two senior officers differ notably. The cap of the Mbé officer does not conform to the prescribed model, lacking the white headdress, while the Kaelé officer's cap includes the white headdress matching the jacket. This discrepancy indicates non-compliance with the official regulations issued by the hierarchy, as both officers appear to wear their uniforms according to personal preference rather than standardized rules.

## 4. Symbolic Significance of the Khaki Uniform

The khaki uniform serves primarily as a work outfit, commonly worn by heads of administrative constituencies during daily routine duties. It is particularly suited for field visits and inspections (Madina, 2017: 122). Consequently, most administrative unit leaders wear khaki work attire regularly.

This uniform is traditionally worn with a white undergarment, typically white knitwear. Although there is a legal ambiguity regarding the exact color of the knitwear, white remains the preferred and customary choice (Gandouin, 1993: 306). The khaki outfit exists in two variants: long-sleeved and short-sleeved, the

latter often referred to as the safari uniform (Madina, 2017: 91). The long-sleeved jacket may be replaced by a khaki tergal safari jacket, featuring small, non-pointed cuffs, a straight front fastening with four uniform buttons, and four patch pockets. The buttons correspond in style to those on the jacket and include a false dorsal slit at waist level. The accompanying cap matches the ceremonial full-dress cap but with a khaki headdress. The trousers are made of the same fabric and color as the jacket, without vertical stripes. The ensemble is completed with a white shirt featuring a stand-up collar, a black tie, and black or brown shoes, along with a pendant badge affixed to the upper left pocket (Mvongo, 2011: 71). This pendant badge is embroidered on the midnight blue fabric and depicts a cocoa leaf, a coffee leaf, and a peanut leaf, with their peduncles intertwined. It also features stars denoting rank: three equidistant stars for the governor, two for the Divisional Officer, and one centrally placed star for the Sub-Divisional Officer.

This analysis highlights that the khaki uniform was deliberately chosen for fieldwork purposes. Given the environmental and climatic conditions, wearing white clothing during field visits is impractical, as officials are likely to encounter dirt and grime. The selection of khaki is thus coherent with these practical realities, a practice mirrored historically—such as Germany’s adoption of the feldgrau color in 1907.

**Picture 13:** Administrative authorities in long and short sleeve khaki outfits second day of the Administrative Coordination Meeting



**Source:** Personal archives of Mohamadou Laminou on 07-21-2017

Operational meeting for ordering and administrative coordination (MAC), February 2nd–3rd, 2017. The meeting took place on February 2nd and 3rd, 2017. From left to right in the accompanying image (picture 13) are the former Divisional Officer of Ngaoundéré I, Mr. Dibango Didier, and the Divisional Officer of Belel, Mr. Tene Boniface. According to protocol, heads of administrative districts are expected to wear the khaki Saharan-changeable outfit on the second day of such meetings. However, it is notable that two of the Divisional Officers—the Divisional Officer of Ngaoundéré III and the former Divisional Officer of Ngaoundéré I—are wearing their working uniforms, consisting of khaki short-sleeve shirts. Meanwhile, the Divisional Officer of Belel is dressed in plain-sleeved attire.

From this observation, it can be concluded that administrative authorities do not consistently adhere to the dress code instructions provided to them. This inconsistency suggests a lack of communication or consultation among the authorities regarding the selection of appropriate attire for official events.

#### 4.1 Khaki short-sleeve outfit

The khaki short-sleeve uniform is primarily intended for daily work and meetings. The khaki Saharan-changeable outfit is officially recommended due to its practicality and comfort during field tours, site visits, and inspections (Mvongo, 2011: 73). It is especially suited for resolving agro-pastoral conflicts, particularly those occurring in bush environments, where short sleeves offer better convenience and mobility (Mvongo, 2011: 75). An example of this outfit is illustrated in the image below (picture 14).

**Picture 14:** Sub-Divisional visit to Wack



**Source:** Personal archives of Yacouba on 10-07-2017

#### 4.2 Visit of the Divisional Officer of Mbé to Wack

The visit of the Divisional Officer of Mbé to Wack (picture 14) was conducted as part of efforts to resolve a land dispute among local populations in the area. The choice of attire—particularly the khaki uniform—was well-suited to the environment, which is characterized by dense vegetation, the use of wood for heating, and a generally dusty landscape. The color and functionality of the outfit correspond effectively to the natural and working conditions in which the Divisional Officer operated.

### 5. Conclusion

This study set out to examine “*The Dynamics of Clothing in Territorial Command Functions in Cameroon from 1885 to 2013.*” The central question addressed was the role and significance of the command uniform in the execution of administrative authority in Cameroon. This inquiry allowed for an exploration of the evolution of official attire worn by administrative authorities across three key historical phases: the German colonial period, the Franco-British administration, and the post-colonial era.

The study aimed to reveal the symbolic meanings and functional uses of these uniforms, to identify the sources of their production and supply, and to examine the challenges associated with the acquisition of uniform facings, ambiguities in regulatory texts, and the occasional adoption of civilian clothing in place of official attire.

The methodology adopted in this work involved going beyond the illustrative value of the uniform to treat it as a historical source in its own right. This historical source paradigm enabled an analysis of the shifts and continuities in clothing practices throughout the three major periods of Cameroonian administrative history. Additionally, iconographic data and images, organized in chronological order, were utilized to highlight both the enduring legacy of colonial attire and the significant breaks and changes that have occurred over time.



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