

## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

Dress is a natural extension of one's identity due to the personal nature of clothing, accessories, and body modifications. According to Roach-Higgins and Eicher (1992), "dress of an individual is an assemblage of modifications of the body and/or supplements to the body" (p.7). Dress would, by this definition, include garments, jewelry, accessories, headdress, hairdress, mutilation, and scarification. Dress is both an individual and a societal means of communication. The dress of an individual must be understood within its socio-cultural and historic (time) boundaries. Understanding the meaning of dress within a society, culture, and specific time period can aid researchers in understanding the social, political, and economic events and changes that take place in dress.

Dress is just one feature that can distinguish subcultures from society at large. Subcultures are small groups that share common values and behaviors that distinguish them (Evenson, Eicher, & Lutz, 2000; Horn & Gurel, 1981). They often can form for various reasons including opposition to the dominant culture (Brake, 1974; Waugh, 1999); however, subcultures may also exist as a result of isolation (physical or social) from a dominant culture (Issenman, 1997; Jirousek, 1996). For example, the Comlecki people during the 1960s lived in an isolated Turkish village and wore traditional Turkish garments while urban Turks wore Westernized dress in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Jirousek, 1996). The Inuit people from various arctic regions continue to wear traditional garments due to their strong ties to tradition and their geographic isolation. The Scottish Highlanders, like the Comlecki and Inuit people, were a group of people living in an isolated portion of Scotland and maintained their traditional way of life, while the rest of Scotland (known as the Lowlanders) and Europe continued to evolve as a society through contact with other people. The Scottish Highlanders were considered a subculture within Scotland, and Britain as a whole, due to their geographic isolation and traditional dress. The study of subcultures, such as the Highlanders, can provide a greater understanding of the evolution of the dominant cultures and the events that shape the development of civilization.

The Scottish Highland culture has held the fascination of people worldwide for several centuries due to its unusually dressed inhabitants and their way of life. The tartan, plaid, and kilt of the Scottish Highlanders have been studied by numerous researchers (e.g., Bennett, 1980; Cheape, 1993; Freiling, 1981; Norman, 1972-73;

Trevor-Roper, 1984; Wilson, 1990) but other daily garments, footwear, accessories, and headdress have not been studied in great depth. In addition, Highland garments have not been studied in relation to social, political, and economic events that occurred within a particular time period. Highland dress has been difficult to study because few extant garments exist before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The traditional garments were banned in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century (Bennett, 1980; Dunbar, 1979), which may have led to the wearing less of the traditional style garments. Also, most of the records that exist about Highland dress deal with the upper classes, rather than the dress of the average person. While the Highlanders still exist in present-day Scotland, the dress and traditional customs are mainly limited to formal situations. The unique dress of the Highlanders was an adaptation to their isolated surroundings and the customs of their forefathers.

The dress of the Scottish Highlanders differed in the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries from that of the Scottish Lowlanders (i.e., people of Scotland below the Highlands) due to differences in culture and geography (Devine, 1994; Grant, 1934; Pryde, 1962). The Lowlanders dressed more like the English because of their close proximity to England. The Highlanders were isolated from both the Lowlanders and the English; therefore they continued to wear more traditional dress of their Celtic forefathers. Scottish Highland dress experienced slow evolution over many centuries, while the dress of the Scottish Lowlanders evolved at a quicker pace similar to the rest of Europe. Distinct change in both the Highlands and Lowlands occurred only in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century when Scottish nationalism was threatened by a forced union with England that caused much dissent throughout Scotland. Late in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Scotland united under a distinctly Scottish symbol, the Highland tartan.

The tartan has been the focus of most of the research on Scottish dress, in general, and Highland dress in particular. The tartan is a check-type patterned cloth originally used by clans in their Highland dress and later as a sign of Scottish nationalism (Amos, 1983; Bain, 1954; Freiling, 1981; Trevor-Roper, 1984). The kilt, one of the most notable Highland garments, was usually made of tartan. The researcher became interested in clan tartans because of my family heritage, namely the Douglas clan, and began searching for information on our tartan and our history. There has been discussion among scholars and the general public about the origins of the tartan as well as the origin of clan specific tartans. Cheape (1995) contends that scholars have focused on defining, categorizing, and classifying the tartan, while the origins, pedigree and antiquity of the tartan has concerned the larger public. Researchers have continued

to debated the question of the tartan being associated with the clans since ancient times or being a more recent phenomenon (Bennett, 1980; Cheape, 1993; Freilinger, 1981; Maxwell, 1976; Maxwell & Hutchison, 1958; Trevor-Roper, 1984) and have focused on the tartan (fabric), while the dress items were of secondary importance in the research. Travelers' accounts in the form of letters and portraits (Bennett, 1980; Maxwell & Hutchison, 1958; Maxwell, 1976; Norman, 1972-23; Trevor-Roper, 1984) have been used to document the use of the tartan as well as the use Highland garments; however, other forms of evidence, such as poems, ballads, and songs, though rarely used, are also available to document dress.

The Scottish people in general and the Highlanders in particular (which will be referred to as the Scottish and the Highlanders throughout the rest of this paper), have a rich literary history that could be used to understand dress. Their literary history evolved as a result of the limited social life of the Highlanders, whose primary form of entertainment was listening to or singing poetry (Bain, 1954; Craig, 1961; Geddie, 1896, Wittig, 1972). Bold (1979) remarked, "For them [Highlanders] the narrative medium was a message...always there was a point to the story, something that engaged the attention in a worthy manner. The ballads mattered to the people" (p. 64). Researchers have essentially ignored poetry as a source of knowledge on dress, other than occasionally inserting a few lines from a poem to illustrate a point on dress. Although history books and other past documents, which are frequently biased, provide some descriptions of Highland dress, poetry and other literary documents can provide another perspective on Highland dress. Cheape (1993) maintains that the tartan and Highland dress would not be mentioned in poetry and song so often if the subject were not so important to the Scottish people; therefore, studying poetry from or about the Highlands, as well as the rest of Scotland, would be an appropriate means to understanding their lifestyle. Scottish poetry (i.e. poems, ballads, and songs) has not been used to specifically document Scottish, particularly Highland, garments over time, nor to document the impact of the social, political, or economic environments on dress behavior.

Historically and culturally specific dress of many different cultures has been documented a variety of ways by clothing and textiles researchers. Researchers have used extant (i.e., still existing) garments, extant pattern pieces, paintings and portraits, catalogues, magazines, letters, household accounts, travelers' accounts and written works of a time period to document dress (e.g., Bennett, 1980; Dunbar, 1979; Hamilton, 1991; Harris & Owens, 1997; Maxwell & Hutchison, 1958; Pannabecker, 1991; Paoletti,

1987; Tortora & Eubank, 1998). The specific subject matter and data sources for documenting dress have varied considerably but the studies have been found to be valid and/or reliable means of studying dress. Payne (1965) and Russell (1983) contend that extant garments are the best examples of historic dress and provide more information than other sources. Tortora and Eubank (1998) countered this argument with the fact that extant garments are usually only representative of the upper classes and of special occasions, rather than ordinary dress of the masses. On the other hand, extant garments are useful for studying construction techniques and fabrics (Tortora & Eubank, 1998).

Paintings are also a useful source of information on dress (Payne, 1965; Tortora & Eubank, 1998); however, problems exist when using paintings, particularly portraits, for the study of historic dress. Marshall (1981) discussed three difficulties in using portraits to study dress. First, some artists invented garments by intertwining different garments or parts of garments from different time periods. Second, some portraits were painted after the death of a person and the image represented the dress of the time of the painting. Third, some artists painted purely imaginary (fantasy) dress on a subject. Although some problems exist with the use of portraits to study dress, portraits are still considered a valuable source of information (Payne, 1965; Tortora & Eubank, 1998). Few studies (Gordon, 1992; Harris & Owens, 1997; Pannabecker, 1991) have used literary documents as a source for the study of historic garments.

Literary documents, particularly poetry, may be a rich source of information on dress, especially when triangulated with other sources, such as portraits or letters, for additional support. Poetry, which may encounter some of the same artistic biases as the portraits, is an obtainable source when other sources may not be as plentiful. In addition, poetry is often written for and about laymen (Craig, 1961), while portraits tend to be created for the upper classes. In general, poetry represents a written record of dress for the average person, while portraits represent a visual record of upper class dress.

Literary documents, including poetry, have existed in various forms for many centuries. Brooks and Warren (1976) contend that poetry and ballads have existed since the emergence of the human race in order to facilitate the transmission of information from one generation to the next. Oral tradition has provided a means for the illiterate to hear the stories and pass them down to the next generation until the story can be written (Fielding, 1996). In addition to poetry's lengthy existence, poetry acts as a reflection of the life and times of the poet. Writers and orators have told fictional and

factual stories (i.e. poetry, prose, and drama), while knowingly or unknowingly documenting the events of their lives and times. Perry (1926) stated that “the lyric [poetry] reflects a situation or desire” present in an author’s life (p.232). Greenfield (1980) also noted that poetry reflected situations in an author’s life in his study on the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. He concluded that Shelley used social and political events in his own life to connect with his perceived audience. Kelly (1974) concurred when he stated that “literary works [including poetry]...are said to be deeply, even uniquely expressive of the society, or the “culture,” in which they were produced” (p. 141). Geddie (1896) also believed that poetry was a reflection of life, stating that “the process of purging and refining the ballad [helped the poet to create]... a reflection of the history and character of the race itself [Highlanders]” (p.14). Poetry, according to Geddie (1896), is a type of literary document that is at the heart of Scottish national character, Scottish national life, and the history of the Scottish people. Poetry was used by the lay people to express their opinions on the social, political, and economic events that took place during their life. Poets provide very vivid descriptions of the settings, which includes the garments that the real or imagined people were wearing. Poetry, therefore, can be a valuable reference for providing knowledge on garments within a social, political, or economic context, as well as a specific culture and time frame.

Little information is available on Highland dress as it related to the political, social, and economic changes that happened in the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, except for the knowledge that traditional Highland dress was banned between 1746 and 1782. The Scottish writers of this time period created an enduring legacy of poetry, which could be a valuable source to study historic dress. Prior to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Highland culture had remained undisturbed by the Lowlanders and the English, and the Highlanders were able to practice their traditional way of life. Therefore, items of Highland dress in the 17<sup>th</sup> century were culturally specific to the upper regions of Scotland (Brander, 1980; Dunbar, 1951; Dunbar, 1979). During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Highland dress was banned (Dunbar, 1979; Hamilton, 1991) and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a revival and spreading of Highland dress throughout Scotland after the ban was lifted (Dunbar, 1979; Stewart, 1974). These three major time periods reflect the different cultural ideals and situations that may have impacted Highland dress and may be expressed through poetry.

Researchers have used many different sources, such as extant garments, portraits, and travel accounts, to document dress of the Highlands. However, few extant

garments exist before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most portraits show the upper classes rather than the middle and lower classes (lay people), and travel accounts may have a skewed view, as the writers were strangers to the Highlands. The use of dress terminology in poetry of 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in the Scottish Highlands can lead to knowledge of how dress was influenced by the social, political, and economic events of the time period. The purpose of this research was to determine whether or not poetry (i.e., poems, ballads, and songs) could be used as a source of knowledge on historic dress in a social, political, or economic context, using the dress of Scottish Highlanders from 1603 through 1830 as an example, and to triangulate the findings with other sources that portray dress through the written word or visual image. This research cross-referenced the items of dress with social, political, and economic events that occurred in the lives of the Scottish and Highland people. Poetry was a major source of expression for the Scottish and Highland people and represents a valuable resource for studying historic dress; therefore, the main source of documentation for this research was 3,501 literary documents written from 1603-1830 in the form of poetry (i.e. poems, ballads, and songs). The researcher examined these literary documents and identified 394 poems with male dress references and 245 poems with female dress references over time. The researcher also examined the relationship between dress references and the social, political, and economic events and the contents of the poetry. Finally, the researcher examined the impact of sumptuary laws (i.e., the banning of Highland dress due to The Act of Proscription) on the dress behaviors of the Scottish people during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### Objectives

The objectives of the research were as follows:

1. To determine the number of dress references in anthologies of Scottish poetry written between 1603 and 1830.
2. To use dress references to document what the Scottish, in general, and the Highlanders, in particular, wore between 1603 and 1830.
3. To determine whether or not the social, political, or economic environment impacted dress behaviors of the Scottish, in general, and Highland, in particular, as reflected in Scottish poetry from 1603 through 1830.
4. To examine Scottish poetry from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century for specific references to the ban (i.e., The Act of Proscription) on Highland dress.

5. To compare dress references identified in Scottish poetry with dress references in other written (i.e., travel accounts in the form of letters) and visual (i.e., portraits) documents to validate the findings.