

## CHAPTER VI

### Summary, Conclusions, and Implications

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 were eighteen anthologies containing 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 248 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.

Conducting historical research is exciting but presented challenges, as few extant records exist. This type of research is like a puzzle. The researcher attempts to find many little pieces and puts them together to create a whole picture of a past culture. The process can be frustrating, especially when researching primary documents, such as poems, letters, and portraits, yet the researcher was unable to speak to the writers and artists to know what they were really thinking or to ask them to explain or clarify terminology. There were not many sources available on Highland dress during the time period under investigation. The Highlanders were more worried about preserving their culture and daily subsistence, than preserving information on their dress. However, the Highlanders did use poetry as a form of entertainment and a means of communicating their political opinions, which provided information on their dress, although often unwittingly. However, most Highlanders were illiterate and Lowlanders transcribed their poems. In addition, Lowlanders wrote poetry about the Highlands. Many editors of the anthologies provided definitions or footnotes for some of the dress terminology. Most of these editors were living during the same period of time as the poets; therefore, the

editors would have primary knowledge of the terminology. More information exists on Lowlander dress as they were more affluent and had fewer threats to their way of life than the Highlanders. The Highlanders were often fighting just to sustain a household and feed themselves through the harsh winters. In addition, the Highlanders' way of life was threatened by many uprisings and the Act of Proscription which banned their dress, weapons, and music. Therefore, this study used poetry as the major source of dress information and triangulated that source with portraits and letters, in order to create a clearer picture of Highland dress.

Highland dress between 1603 and 1830 was unique due to the geographic isolation of the population. The Highlanders developed a form of dress unlike the rest of Europe, particularly the rest of Scotland, during this time period. Lowland Scotland followed the dress styles of the English, while the Highlanders continued to wear traditional dress (Maxwell & Hutchison, 1958; Dunbar, 1979; Tortora & Eubank, 1998). The Highlanders also continued to have a traditional clan system of government, unlike the Lowlanders who followed the English system of government (Brander, 1980; von Furstenberg, 1996). The Highlanders appear to have been assimilated into the English government through the Act of Proscription, which banned the unique dress of the Highlanders and dismantled the clan system (Dunbar, 1979; Bennett, 1980). The Highlanders had a simple lifestyle (Bain, 1954; Smout, 1969), which included poetry as a form of entertainment and/or a forum for public opinion on the social, political, economic events that occurred (Bain, 1954; Smout, 1969). Scottish poetry contained dress references, as well as references to the social, political, and economic events that occurred in the Highlands between 1603 and 1830. Little documentation exists that describes the changes in Highland dress over the time period being studied; therefore poetry was used as the source to determine the impact of events on Highland dress.

A conceptual framework was developed that sought to illustrate the relationship between time, economic, social, and political environments, historic dress, and literary works. Five research questions guided the research. The first question examined whether or not dress references were present in Scottish poetry between 1603 and 1830. The second question looked at gaining an understanding of what Highlanders wore between 1603 and 1830, as depicted in poetry and if changes over time could be determined for dress for men and women. The third question was used to gain an understanding about how changes in dress were attributed to the social, political, and economic environment. The fourth question was used to determine the significance of

sumptuary laws that banned Highland dress from 1746 and 1782. Finally, the fifth question determined whether or not triangulation of various historic sources provided similar depictions of Highland dress between 1603-1830.

Both poetic analysis and content analysis were used to analyze the dress of Highlanders between 1603-1830 in poetry. Triangulation was performed using costume books, portraits, travel accounts, and letters. The study was validated through the triangulation of poetry with portraits and letters, which added value to the study.

Question 1: How many dress references appeared in Scottish poetry between 1603 and 1830?

Question 1 was analyzed by obtaining a count of the total number of poems by Scottish authors examined and the total number of poems with dress references. The analysis found that there were 3,501 poems examined with 639 poems containing dress references. Approximately 18% of the poems in this study had dress references; however, the poems with dress references provided a multitude of references. A total of 1531 dress references were identified in the 639 poems on both males and females. There were 915 dress references for men and 626 dress references for women. There were more references to male dress items than female dress items. Europe was a patriarchal society and this may be an indication that Scottish society followed suit. Additionally, men were considered the “peacocks” in European society and tended to dress more extravagantly than the women. Due to this extravagance, men’s dress appears to have been more important in society and may be the reason men’s dress was discussed in poetry more often than women’s dress. The findings indicated that poetry was a source of knowledge on historic dress.

Question 2a: What specific dress items were worn by the Scottish people, particularly the Highlanders, between 1603 and 1830?

Question 2a was analyzed by calculating the frequencies for each item of dress, the time period the item was worn, the location the item was worn, and the situation the item was worn. Cross-tabulations were used to determine the relationship that time, situation, and location had on dress. The findings for Question 2a indicated that the most frequently mentioned Highland male dress items for the upper body were the plaid and the coat. The plaid was usually created from tartan fabric. The plaid was an item of dress that would attract attention of a viewer and may be the reason why do many poets wrote

about the plaid. There were several different lower body items that were frequently mentioned including the kilt, breeches, and hose. The kilt and hose were usually worn together and left a portion of the leg bare. European men tended to cover their entire leg during this time period and likely thought that it was odd to show the leg bare. Breeches were the usual lower body covering for European men; however, few Highlanders wore this garment until they were forced to wear breeches due to the Act of Proscription. Many poets bemoaned the necessity of wearing breeches, as they believed that breeches were unmanly. The fiber mentioned most frequently was silk. Tartan fabric was the most frequently mentioned cloth by poets. Many male characters were discussed as wearing shoes rather than going barefoot. Although poets discussed many accessory items, only the belt, purse, and tassels were mentioned with a high degree of frequency. The purse is likely the sporran, which was the Highland equivalent of a purse. Finally, the bonnet was the major headdress mentioned for males. There was little information on color or other descriptive adjectives. Only 57 of the 394 poems made reference to the dress for men as a complete ensemble. British garments were noted on a few occasions, usually when war or the Act of Proscription was the subject of a poem. The British garments were always referred to in terms of disgust or dislike.

The findings for Question 2a also indicated that female garments for the upper body were most frequently mentioned as the gown and the coat. The gown would have covered the entire body and been this first item of dress noticed by many upon encountering a woman. The most frequently discussed lower body items were the hose and the kirtle (skirt). The main fiber was silk, which would have been considered a luxury item. Most women probably did not have silk garments because Highlanders tended to be poor. However, silk garments were often discussed in terms of marital bribes. The major fabrics discussed in relation to women were lace and linen. Women were mentioned going barefoot while the husbands had shoes (Maxwell, 1959). Although the literature indicated that women did not wear shoes, the poetry analysis revealed that shoes were mentioned with a higher degree of frequency than going barefoot, which was an unexpected finding. However, poets mentioned shoes as an item to be given to someone when you were trying to win a woman's hand in marriage. Shoes may have been a sign of bettering or improving a woman's condition through marriage. Poets discussed many accessory items. The ring was the most popular accessory item mentioned in social situations with a love setting. Other popular items mentioned were brooches and gloves, which were given to a woman during courting. The typical

headdress mentioned was the snood, which was worn by maidens as a sign of their maiden hood. Some poets mentioned that when a woman's maidenhood had been taken from her, that she could no longer wear her snood. Another headdress item mentioned with a high degree of frequency was the curch, which was an indication of a married woman. Color and other descriptive adjectives were mentioned with a very low degree of frequency. The poetry analysis identified only 35 references to dress for women as a complete ensemble.

Question 2b: What differences existed in Highland dress for males and females between 1603 and 1830?

Cross-tabulations were created to examine the differences between dress items and time, dress items and settings, and dress items and location. The analysis of poetry for Question 2b revealed that the frequency varied across time periods; a consistent rise, peak, and decline pattern could be identified. The 17<sup>th</sup> century began with a small percentage of poems. There was a dramatic increase in the number of dress references in the 18<sup>th</sup> century followed by a dramatic decline in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Male dress that appeared in poetry across time were the coat, sark, robe, gown, breeches, hose, shoes, belt, tassels, gloves, bonnet, and crown. The male dress items that appeared only in the 18<sup>th</sup> century were hodden gray and plain colored fabrics. The female dress items that appeared in poetry across time were the gown, coat, mantle, sark, plaid, robe, and shoes. The only female dress item to appear solely in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was the crown. Note that many fewer female dress items than male dress items were mentioned across time.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century was a time of political upheaval for the Highlanders, particularly with the banning of their dress under the Act of Proscription in 1745. Nearly all of the garments mentioned in the poetry were mentioned most often during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Also, there were many more dress items noted in the 18<sup>th</sup> century portraits than any other time period. This finding is similar to the findings in the poetry analysis. There were more dress items noted because there were more portraits and poems found during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which indicates that artists flourished during the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Scotland.

Question 3: What impact did the social, political, and economic environment have on Highland dress in poetry between 1603 and 1830?

Cross-tabulations were used to determine if changes in dress were attributable to social, political, or economic situations. Cross-tabulations were performed on dress, environment and time. Findings from the analysis of poetry for Question 3 indicated that dress was mentioned in poems in relation to the Highlands nearly as often in relation to Scotland in general. Few poems were examined that dealt with the dress in relation to the Lowlands. In addition to location, the analysis of poetry revealed the impact on dress as it related to the social, political, and economic situations that occurred in the poetry. Poetry with male dress references focused nearly equally on social and political situations likely because Scotland was a patriarchal society. Men were expected to find a wife, create a home, and then defend their home and family (or clan). Poets seemed to focus more on the plaid and the kilt during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and when the setting was war. The social setting that occurred most often was love, while war was the most frequent setting in political situations. Very few poems were set in economic situations. The researcher had initially expected more poems with economic situations; however, the Highland people were poor and knew there was little likelihood of becoming wealthy. Rather than dwell on the bleak economic situation of the Highlanders, poets chose to discuss the political and social situations that people feel they have some control over. Poetry with female dress references nearly always focused on social situations, particularly love, and the references to garments did not change with the situation. The remaining poems focused more often on political situations than on economic situations.

Question 4: What references were made about the Act of Proscription in poetry from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century?

A cross-tabulation was used to determine the frequency of poems written in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century about the Act of Proscription. The poetry was also examined qualitatively to assess the mood in regards to dress. The findings for Question 5 indicated that sumptuary legislation did affect Highland dress, by banning traditional dress. The ban forced people to wear English style garments, which they were unaccustomed to wearing, creating a change in lifestyle. There were only 11 male poems and 2 female poems that specifically mentioned the Act of Proscription. Poets discussed the banning of the typical Highland garments. The poets mentioned the English style clothing or the “black dress” that they had been forced to wear. The Act of Proscription was imposed from 1745 through 1783. The results of the poetry analysis identified the most frequent references to dress occurred in poems dated during the first

half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Scotland, particularly the in Highlands, was in political turmoil most of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. The turmoil culminated in the Rising of 1745 and the Act of Proscription. The second most frequent references to dress occurred during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, after the ban had been in place for a while and the process of assimilation had begun. It appears that poets referred to dress more often when the Highland traditions were being threatened and when the dress ban was in place. Though the Act of Proscription was not specifically mentioned, poets seemed to use poems as a support to express pride in their apparel. Dress references were much less frequent during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries when the Highland lifestyle was not threatened.

Question 5: What are the similarities in dress references found in Scottish poetry, other written documents (i.e., travel accounts in the form of letters), and visual documents (i.e., portraits) from 1603 through 1830?

All of the sources, including poetry, letters from travel accounts, and portraits, were triangulated by comparing dress items, time, and location. The findings for Question 5 indicated agreement through triangulation between the poetry, letters, and portraits for most items of dress. The findings from the analysis of letters revealed agreement with the poetry on the plaid, kilt, trews, shirt, tartan fabric, stockings, garters, shoes, and bonnet for Highland males. Agreement was found between the letters and poetry on items such as boots, plaid, coat, and breeches for Lowland males. Agreement was found between letters and poetry for Highland female garments including the plaid, coat, smock, and petticoats. The information on children's dress found in the letters, although limited, added to the knowledge base since no information on children was found in poetry. The portraits also supported the findings in the poetry since there was agreement between poetry and portraits. Male dress items that appeared in poetry and portraits were the plaid, kilt, trews, coat, hose, garters, tartan fabric, bonnet, and shoes. Female dress items that appeared in poetry and portraits were the gown, plaid, tartan fabric, and shoes. Children's garments in portraits appeared similar to their parents' garments in portraits, which contradicts the information about children in the letters; there was no information on children in the poetry. The portraits provided visual documentation (and sometimes written documentation accompanied the portraits) for the terminology identified in poetry. Triangulation of the three data sources confirmed the use of many garments mentioned in poetry with references to Highland and Lowland dress. In

addition, new information, such as the manner of wearing plaid when abroad, in letters or portraits that was not found in poetry added to the knowledge base on Highland dress. Further, the letters often added descriptions of items found in the poetry.

An unexpected finding was that the petticoat was mentioned for women in poetry and for women and men in letters. For example, Burt's (Jamieson, 1974) letters referred to the Highland man's kilt as a petticoat. This term lacked clarity and may have been due to the translation of this particular word from one culture to another. The authors of the letters were visitors who applied terminology from their own culture to Highland dress. To understand references to dress items, it is important to know the context and culture of the author. The petticoat was a European term for a woman's underskirt (Calasibetta, 1998; Tortora & Eubank, 1998). However, both the poems and letters indicated that Highland dress for neither men nor women contained any underwear. Authors of letters often described the nakedness beneath outer garments as someone exposing their "indecenty." Both men and women were described by authors of letters as "tucking up their coats" thereby exposing their indecenty. Poets used the term "kilting up their coats" in reference to women. Scottish poets rarely used the term "petticoat;" however, English visitors, such as Burt, Ray, Kirke, and Morer, frequently used the terms "coat" and "petticoat" which appeared to describe either the kirtle or an underskirt. Kirtle was a term for a Highland woman's outer skirt. The terms gown, kirtle, and petticoat were mentioned in Scottish poetry, rarely together, which suggests that the terms were interchangeable. The term "coats" is unclear and no stylistic conclusions could be drawn about this term. However, I believe that the term refers to some type of outer garment, perhaps the kilt and kirtle, rather than an undergarment. It seems that when petticoat was used in reference to Highland men, the term referred to the kilt, which was a skirt-like garment. The distinction between "coat" and "petticoat" is not clear. It appears that coat was an abbreviated version of the term "petticoat" for women.

#### Implications

This study provided information on the use of poetry as a source of knowledge on Highland dress between 1603 and 1830. The study of Highland poetry, letters, and portraits expanded the knowledge base available on Highland dress. The poetry appeared to be focused on garments that were more distinctly Highland dress. This study demonstrated that the possible influence of social, political, and economic situations and settings (i.e., love, war, money) on Highland dress could be obtained through the study of dress references in poetry. Research on other historic dress may be

able to ascertain social, political, and economic influence on dress using other culturally specific forms of literature from a given time period. Dress terminology was explored in association with the particular social, political, and economic situations that occurred during the time period under investigation. Dress was affected by the situation and setting during particular time periods. The poetry analysis revealed that sumptuary legislation did have an affect on the manner in which men dressed in Scotland between 1746 and 1782. Highland men were uncomfortable wearing English garments and mourned the loss of their traditional garments. Surprisingly, the portrait during the ban showed the wearing of Highland dress. There were no letters examined for the time period during the ban. One implication of the study was a new source in the form of poetry for the study of dress in a social, political, or economic context. The social and political context were much more frequently used by poets than the economic context. This study illustrated that poetry, as a cultural artifact, was a source to study historic dress and demonstrated the influence of social, political, and economic events on dress in terms of how it was viewed by the authors of poems. Travel accounts in the form of letters have been used as a source of knowledge on historical dress; however, the letters were written by foreigners whose perspectives differed from native perspective on dress wrote these letters. In addition, foreigners tended to use their own terminology to describe items they observed, rather than the dress terminology used by the natives. Also, foreigners only reported what they observed and did not place the items in a social, political, or economic context. Poets, on the other hand, were natives and had an insider's perspective on the culture and the dress terminology within that culture. The poets also discussed dress within the social, political, and economic context. Poetry, in this study, was triangulated with 332 portraits and 41 letters from the same time periods. Triangulation with these letters and portraits validated poetry as a source to study historic dress and assisted in creating a more complete understanding of Highland dress between 1603 and 1830.

#### Future Research

The implications for future studies are great. The current study focused on the use of poetry as a source to understand Highland dress in social, political, and economic situations between 1603 and 1830. Future studies could also use poetry of a specific culture to understand dress in a social, political, and/or economic situation during a specified time period. Dress terminology could be traced over a long time period to understand the evolution of dress in a specific culture. The visual descriptions were used

as a means of triangulation with written documents. Further research can focus on matching written descriptions with visual descriptions of different cultures or time periods. A future study could focus solely on the dress for specific occupations during a specified time period or for a specified culture. Finally, the instruments (A-D) could be modified to fit the dress terminology of any culture. The portrait instrument (E) could be used without modifications to research any culture or time period.