

French Influence on the Dress of Scottish Doctors of Medicine

Two paintings may show how sixteenth-century Parisian academical dress influenced that of King’s College, Aberdeen, in the seventeenth century, writes Jonathan C. Cooper

Introduction

An early sixteenth-century French illuminated manuscript and an early seventeenth-century Scottish painting are compared in order to illustrate the influence of the academical dress of the University of Paris on that of King’s College, Aberdeen. The former source is referred to in a standard text on academical dress but was hitherto unpublished; the latter was discovered in a remote church as part of an extraordinary and rare example of a ceiling painting of this period.

Primary Source

*Wherein a Fellow’s
expertise and the
outside world meet*

French Source

Le Chapelet de Jhesus et de la Vierge Marie is a metrical devotional book executed for Anna of Bohemia and Hungary (1503–47), consort of Ferdinand I (1503–64), Holy Roman Emperor; later it seems to have come into the possession of Margaret Tudor (1489–1541), wife of King James IV of Scotland.¹ Folio 15 contains a representation of Christ among the doctors² and has been used as a source for the dress of Doctors of Medicine and Doctors of Both Laws at the University of Paris during the early sixteenth century (see Fig. 1).³

Hargreaves-Mawdsley identifies the first figure from the right as a Doctor of Medicine and describes him as wearing ‘a light green, tight-sleeved robe with an opening in the breast, a pale orange “shoulder piece”, and a mid-blue “turban” bonnet.’⁴ The second figure from the left is identified as a Doctor of Both Laws and described thus:

1 *Le Chapelet de Jhesus et de la Vierge Marie*, London, British Library, MS Add. 25693.

2 Luke 2.46. Other artistic representations of this scene may be useful as sources for academical dress at other universities contemporaneously with the artworks, for example: *Christ Disputing with the Doctors* by Bernardino Butinone, c. 1480–90, Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh, NG 1746; *Christ among the Doctors* by Master of the Catholic Kings, c. 1495–97, National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1952.5.43; etc. Illuminated manuscripts may also prove to be useful as sources, for example in the collection of the National Library of the Netherlands, at <<http://manuscripts.kb.nl/search/simple/christ+doctors>>, accessed 24 March 2016.

3 W. N. Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *A History of Academical Dress in Europe until the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. 42–43.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 43. The breast opening is not apparent. The author uses the term ‘shoulder piece’ to refer to the cape of the hood; see: A. Kerr, ‘Hargreaves-Mawdsley’s *History of Academical Dress* and the Pictorial Evidence for Great Britain and Ireland: Notes and Corrections’, *TBS*, 8 (2008), pp. 106–50 (p. 110).



FIG. 1 Christ among the Doctors.
Detail from MS Add. 25693, fol. 15.

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He wears a scarlet robe, closed, with tight sleeves. If we notice the opening in the breast of the robe we shall realize that this is the same type of *supertunica* such as may be seen in the later dress of English judges. The head-dress of this doctor is a blue-grey Ulysses cap, this part of his dress representing the Canon Law half of his double degree.⁵

The first figure from the left is not identified by Hargreaves-Mawdsley but he appears in a blue-grey *supertunica* and a brown hood lined with white fur; he does not wear a head covering.

Scottish Source

At Grandtully in Perthshire lies the early sixteenth-century Church of St Mary which was restored by Sir William Steuart of Grandtully in 1636.⁶ A new ceiling, thought to have been

⁵ Hargreaves-Mawdsley, p. 42. He also appears to be wearing a blue hood lined in white which opens to reveal a light garment, possibly a *subtunica*, covering his chest. A Doctor of Both Laws studied both canon and civil law.

⁶ W. Fraser, *The Red Book of Grandtully* (Edinburgh, 1868), Vol. 1, pp. xxi-xxiv; J. Gifford, *The Buildings of Scotland: Perth and Kinross* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 405-06.



FIG. 2 Saint Luke.
Detail from
SC 1242546.

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constructed at the same time, is decorated with paintings including a representation of Saint Luke (see Fig. 2)⁷ wearing a green over-garment with false sleeves, a tight-sleeved under-garment visible at the wrist, a red-orange hood or scarf, a light belt and a red cap lined with white.⁸ Saint Luke is referred to as ‘most beloved medical doctor’ (*medicus charissimus*),⁹ he is frequently symbolised by a bull or ox¹⁰ (as seen in this particular painting) and he is often depicted in Renaissance art as a physician.¹¹ It is possible that this repre-

Sir William was sometime Gentleman of the Bedchamber to King James VI (Fraser, p. xlvii).

7 Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 1242546.

8 A. Graham, ‘The Painted Ceiling in the Church of St Mary, Grandtully’, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 77 (1942–43), pp. 147–54 (p. 152). Such sleeves led to the Commoner’s gown at Oxford and the cape-style sleeves of doctors/professors in the Scottish universities later in the seventeenth century (with thanks to Dr Alex Kerr). See: Hargreaves-Mawdsley, p. 191, image 7.

9 Colossians 4.14.

10 C. E. King, *Representing Renaissance Art, c. 1500–c. 1600* (Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 151.

11 *Ibid.*, pp. 152–53, 163, 166. He is also represented as an artist. Other saints have been

sensation of Saint Luke shows him in the dress of a Doctor of Medicine, perhaps of King's College, Aberdeen.

A royal endowment of King James IV established a chair in medicine at King's College in 1497 and the first incumbent was active from about 1504.¹² In a charter of 1505 it is ordered that Doctors of Medicine (and Doctors of Canon Law) of King's College were to dress in the style of those of the University of Paris.¹³ The first recorded Doctor of Medicine graduated from Aberdeen in 1630 but it seems likely that the degree had been granted before this time and that records have been lost.¹⁴ Other Scottish universities did not grant this degree until much later.¹⁵ Although the use of academical dress likely declined in the years following the Reformation of 1560, it seems that it was given importance during the two periods of Episcopal government (c. 1606–38 and 1661–89).¹⁶ For example, in 1633 King Charles I ordered that Scottish clerics who were Doctors of Divinity were to wear tippetts.¹⁷ This came shortly after the King's visit to Scotland during which he was crowned at Holyrood and sought to impose the rites of the Church of England upon that of Scotland.¹⁸ In 1634 the King wrote a letter requiring that members of both universities in Aberdeen were to wear gowns both within the colleges and churches and on the streets; King's College replied that they would do so 'according to thair severall degrees and faculties',¹⁹ indicating that there was some differentiation in academical dress among ranks and subjects of study.

depicted in academical dress. For example, St Cosmas or St Damien as a Doctor of Physic of the University of Oxford. See: L. F. Hodges, *Chaucer and Clothing: Clerical and Academic Costume in the General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005), plate vi.

12 R. French, 'Medical Teaching in Aberdeen: From the Foundation of the University to the Middle of the Seventeenth Century', *History of Universities*, 3 (1983), pp. 127–57 (pp. 128, 131).

13 C. Innes, *Fasti Aberdonenses: Selections from the Records of the University and King's College of Aberdeen, 1494–1854* (Aberdeen: The Spalding Club, 1854), p. 58. Doctors of Civil Law were to follow the style of the University of Orléans. These orders were repeated in a charter of 1529 (*ibid.*, p. 87). See also: J. C. Cooper, 'Academical Dress in Late Medieval and Renaissance Scotland', *Medieval Clothing and Textiles*, 12 (2016), pp. 109–30 (pp. 121–22).

14 French, p. 149.

15 J. D. Comrie, *History of Scottish Medicine*, 2nd edn (London: The Wellcome Historical Medical Museum, 1932), Vol. 1, pp. 369–70. The first MDs granted by the universities of St Andrews, Glasgow and Edinburgh were in 1696, 1703 and 1705, respectively. The doctoral birretum acquired by the University of St Andrews for its first MD graduate is still preserved there (R. G. Cant, 'The St Andrews Graduation Cap', *Alumnus Chronicle*, 81 (1990), p. 8).

16 R. G. Cant, *The University of St Andrews: A Short History* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1946), p. 20.

17 Records of the Parliaments of Scotland, *Act III Regarding His Majesty's Royal Prerogative and Apparel of Kirkmen*, King Charles I (Edinburgh: 28 June 1633). This Act acknowledges an Act of 1609 which gives Royal Prerogative for the prescription of clerical dress. A warrant from the King dated 15 Oct. 1633 is appended in the Parliamentary Register. 'Tippet' is likely to refer to the scarf or stole rather than the hood; see: G. J. French, *The Tippetts of the Canons Ecclesiastical* (London: George Bell, 1850), pp. 24–28; 'The Minister's Scarf, or the "Sacrificer's" Stole—which?', *Church Association Tracts*, 6, No. 267; G. Deans, "'Hooded Crows"? A Reflection on Scottish Ecclesiastical Dress and Ministerial Practice from the Reformation to the Present Day', *TBS*, 13 (2013), pp. 45–73 (p. 59).

18 D. M. Bergeron, 'Charles I's Edinburgh Pageant (1633)', *Renaissance Studies*, 6 (1992), pp. 173–84 (p. 180).

19 Innes, pp. 393–94.

Conclusions

It is possible that this representation of Saint Luke is meant to show him in the dress of a Doctor of Medicine of King's College, Aberdeen—especially as the statutes of that institution required that the dress for the medical degree should be the same as that of the University of Paris.²⁰ After all, it was the only institution in Scotland which granted the degree during the early seventeenth century and its members were required to wear academical dress according to their degrees and faculties only two years before the image was painted. It is an interpretation not without its difficulties: the sleeves are not shown consistently between the sources, the headwear is completely different and the later figure is wearing a light belt.²¹ An alternative interpretation would be that the Grandtully representation of Saint Luke is not meant to show him as a physician and that the similarities between his dress and that of a Doctor of Medicine are entirely coincidental. The representation of Christ among the doctors remains useful as an indication of academical dress and further examples of this scene could prove to be valuable sources for other universities.

²⁰ The colours are comparable but the patterns are different. Although Parisian MD dress had changed since the early sixteenth century, it seems that King's College may have reverted to the dress it sought to emulate when its regulations were first promulgated (1505).

²¹ King's College statutes of 1641 order that student bursars were to wear a white leather belt (*balteum coriaceum album*). See: J. C. Cooper, 'The Scarlet Gown: History and Development of Scottish Undergraduate Dress', *TBS*, 10 (2010), pp. 8–42 (p. 22).