

Report from Recipient of the 2010 Anglo-Korean Society Postgraduate Bursary Jung-Taek Lee

My research aims to explore cultural implications and social narratives embedded in dress and fashion during the time of modernisation and colonisation between 1876 and 1945. This research period is significant as it constitutes a transitional phase during which Korea began interacting with Western and Japanese powers, and during which Western dress and fashion began to replace those of traditional Korea. In this scope, the thesis critically questions Western-oriented fashion discourse, and endeavours to re-contextualise the emergence of modern fashion in Korea along with the dual dress practices of Korean dress (*hanbok*) and Western dress (*yangbok*).

The Anglo-Korean Society Post-Graduate Bursary has enabled me to conduct a crucial part of my research. Some research material is available at SOAS and in museums in London, but due to the small size of this material it was highly limited, and did not provide sufficient empirical research data. The bursary therefore provided me with an opportunity to collect and engage with the essential sources only available in Korea. In particular, the grant, all used for expenses, greatly facilitated me to undertake three-month fieldwork study in Seoul. During the visit, I was based at Sungkyunkwan University where I examined an early twentieth century *hanbok* collection. The collection consisted of almost three hundred men's and women's *hanbok* garments that had been collected in Seoul and Daejeon areas until the 1990s, whereafter they were donated to Daejeon Saint Mary's Girls' High School, and later loaned to the department of Fashion Design at the University. Through an object-based investigation of the collection, I gained invaluable details of the modernised *hanbok* from the colonial period, which have enriched my thesis and surmounted the confines of the image and text sources on *hanbok* hitherto examined.

With dress as an aesthetic medium for the expression of ideas, desires and social strata, the *hanbok* objects reflected a sense of hybrid modernity and fashion in the 1930s and 40s. For instance, a black *durumagi* (overcoat of *hanbok*) was made for a gentleman at 'Sinhan Tailor Shop [신한 라사]' as the label stitched next to the inner pocket shows (Figure 1). A male traditional *durumagi* was made with black cotton which resembled the colour of men's Western suit at the time, and finished with bias bindings at the edges of clothes by a tailor's hands. A brighter colour combination - blue and red - was used for a female *durumagi* inscribed with the name of the owner in Korean 'Lee Haeng-ja [이 행자]' stitched by sewing machine next to a different design of the inner pocket (Figure 2). Judging from the quality of the fabric and the dyeing of the lining, the owner would have been a fashion conscious figure from an affluent class, and both of these traditional *durumagi* were made using modern techniques of sewing and featured a modernised version of *hanbok* aesthetics. The research of these objects offered a unique means of linking a specific dress and style to its owner, thereby enabling me to gain a greater understanding of how different classes and gender dressed during this period, and serving as a means to reconstruct a colourful and multidimensional picture of the emergence of modern fashion during this time.

While in Seoul, I also participated in seminars and conferences related to my material and period of study. These scholarly meetings allowed me to meet with other academics in the field and helped me to promote networks in Korea. They were also invaluable in terms of helping me place my research and methodologies in the context of current Korean scholarship on dress and fashion.

In sum, the grant greatly furthered my research and I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Anglo-Korean Society and the Bursary Committee of the British Association for Korean Studies, wishing the research results will foster friendship and cultural understanding between the two countries.

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(Figure 1. Man's black *durumagi* lining in greyish brown, labelled with the maker “신한 라사”, Daejeon Saint Mary's Girls' High School collection)



(Figure 2. Woman's blue *durumagi* lining in red dyeing, inscribed with the owner “이행자”, Daejeon Saint Mary's Girls' High School collection)