

FACTS ABOUT KOREA

Korean Life

Clothing and Fashion, Food, Housing, Festivals,
Celebrations and Holidays, Religion



Korean Culture and Information Service
Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism



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Korean Life


생활

Since their settlement in prehistoric times on the land now known as the Korean Peninsula, the Korean people have developed a wealth of unique cultural traditions related to the way they dress, eat, and behave at home. These traditions reflect the natural environment of their homeland, a terrain predominately covered by hills and mountains, bound by the sea on three sides and marked by four distinct seasons.

Clothing and Fashion

The Korean people learned to use various fabrics, such as *sambe* (hemp), *mosi* (ramie), cotton and silk to make a range of clothing that was not only attractive but also provided them with effective protection even during the harshest winters and the hottest summers. They made warm winter clothes using the technique of filling soft cotton between two layers of material, silk or cotton fabric, and sewing them together with fine stitching, and produced cool summer clothes with hemp and ramie. These clothes typically feature graceful lines and forms that create the serene aura characteristic of the traditional Korean clothes we know as *hanbok*.

History reveals that Korean people in the past tended to prefer simple, white clothes to clothing decorated with different



A family wearing *hanbok*
(left)

colors and designs. That is why they were often referred to as “the white-clad people” among their neighbors who admired them for being a peaceful people. Nonetheless, Korea has also had a long tradition of enjoying colorful clothes with complex designs depending on the period and the wearer’s social status.

Today, Korea is home to many talented fashion designers who have earned an international reputation with their creative designs which combine traditional Korean designs and patterns with a modern artistic sensibility. The beauty of traditional Korean clothes has been introduced to, and praised in, many parts of the world thanks to the remarkable success in recent years of many Korean films and TV dramas including *Dae Jang Geum*.

Korean people today seem to prefer clothes inspired by modern Western styles to their traditional clothes, although some people still insist on wearing the latter on traditional holidays or for special family occasions such as weddings. Their love of tradition and yearning for the new sometimes led to the creation of attractive “modernized *hanbok*.”

Now a household name across the world thanks to “Gangnam Style,” a K-Pop song that shook the world in 2012, Gangnam-gu in Seoul is a large district where wealthy residential areas sit alongside high-end art facilities and Korea’s busiest fashion streets. The district now attracts numerous fashion-minded tourists from across East Asia and beyond with annual fashion festivals comprising international fashion shows and contests participated in by many rising designers.

Another fashion district in Seoul that enjoys an international reputation is Dongdaemun-gu, which has grown into a hub of the regional fashion industry, providing creative, affordable fashion

items for youth and the young at heart. With its fully developed distribution and sales network, highly efficient production facilities, and throng of talented, aspiring designers, the district is now one of Seoul's most popular attractions among foreign tourists.

Food

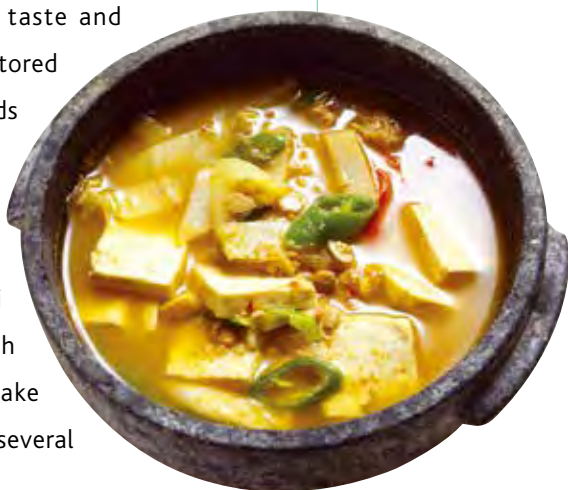
Since ancient times, the Korean people have maintained a belief that food and medicine have the same origin and hence perform the same function, following the adage that 'food is the best medicine'. They believe that health and illness alike come from the food they consume and how they eat it, and this idea has played a crucial role in the development of traditional Korean medicine whose basic principle is that we should use medicine only after food has failed.

Fermentation of Food

One of the key words to understanding traditional Korean food is fermentation, a metabolic process that helps food to 'mature' so that it has improved taste and nutritional properties and can be stored for a longer period. The Korean foods that best represent the tradition of fermentation developed in Korea include *doenjang* (soybean paste), *ganjang* (soy sauce), *gochujang* (chili paste) and *jeotgal* (fermented fish sauce), whose fermentation can take anywhere from several months to several

Doenjang Jjigae (Soybean Paste Stew)

This stew-like Korean dish is made by boiling an assortment of ingredients such as meat, clams, vegetables, mushrooms, chili, tofu, and soy paste.



years. The degree of fermentation is a key factor in the taste and flavor of food cooked at home and in restaurants

Doenjang (Soybean Paste) and Ganjang (Soy Sauce)

Two of the most important items of traditional fermented food in Korea are *doenjang* and *ganjang*. To make them, it is necessary to soak soybeans in water and boil them until fully cooked. Then, they must be pounded and formed into brick-shaped lumps, and left to dry and ferment. Then, they are placed in salted water in a large pot along with dried red chili and heated charcoal, which help remove impurities and odor during the fermentation process. The beans thus prepared are then left for about two to three months until they become fully fermented. This product should then be divided into two, solids and liquid, of which the former needs to be brewed for over five more months and the latter for over three months to develop a full flavor and taste. Just like wine,

Jangdokdae

(Soy Jar Terrace)

An area outside the kitchen used to store large brown-glazed pottery jars containing soy paste, soy sauce, and chili paste.



soy sauce tends to have a richer flavor and taste when brewed for a longer period.

Gochujang (Chili Paste)

Gochujang (chili paste) is a traditional Korean condiment made by fermenting a mixture of soybean malt, salt, and chili pepper powder with a blend of powdered rice, barley, flour, and malted barley. *Gochujang* has long been one of the most important traditional condiments among Korean people, whose palates have evolved towards a preference for hot and spicy foods since they were introduced to chili several hundred years ago. Chili and *gochujang* are now often regarded as a symbol of the vibrant, energetic disposition of Korean people.

Jeotgal (Salted Seafood)

An almost indispensable ingredient for kimchi and a very popular condiment used to enhance the taste of food, *jeotgal* (salted seafood) is made by mixing one of a variety of seafood (such as anchovy, shrimp, oyster, or clam) with salt, or with other condiments in addition to salt, and fermenting it in a cool place. They say that a longer period of fermentation makes it tastier. The tradition of making fermented fish sauce yielded several special delicacies including *sikhae*, which is made by fermenting fish mixed with rice and condiments.

Kimchi

Now beginning to gain a worldwide reputation as a representative food of Korea, kimchi has been praised for its anti-carcinogenic properties and nutritional value, as well as numerous variations



Saeujeot (Salted Shrimp)

One of the two most popular fish sauces in Korea, the other being anchovy sauce, this shrimp sauce made by fermenting salted shrimps is used to improve the taste of dishes, including kimchi.

Making *Baechu* (Cabbage) Kimchi



- 1 Ingredients for kimchi
- 2 Slice and wash kimchi cabbages and soak in salt water.
- 3 Clean the bottoms of the cabbages.
- 4 Mix seasonings with salted and fermented fish.
- 5 Spread seasonings evenly between the cabbage leaves.
- 6 Wrap the whole cabbage and store in a cool place.

that create excitingly diverse flavors and tastes. The most common type of kimchi is made by mixing salted white cabbage with kimchi paste made of chili powder, garlic, spring onion, Korean radish ginger, fish sauce and other ingredients like fresh seafood. Kimchi is normally eaten after fermenting it for several days although some prefer *mugeunji* (ripe kimchi) which is fully fermented for over one year.

The ingredients of kimchi vary according to each region and its special local produce and traditions. Seoul, for instance, is famous for *gungjung kimchi* (royal kimchi), *bossam kimchi* (wrapped kimchi), *chonggak kimchi* (whole radish kimchi), and *kkakdugi* (cubed radish kimchi), while Jeolla-do is well known for its *godeulppaegi kimchi* (Korean lettuce kimchi) and *gat kimchi* (leaf mustard kimchi).

In 2001, the Codex Alimentarius Commission listed Korean kimchi in the internationally recognized standards, and in 2012 officially recognized the term "kimchi cabbage," which had previously been referred to as "Chinese cabbage" until then. In 2006, a US health magazine, Health Magazine, selected *kimchi* as one of the five healthiest foods on earth.

Bibimbap

Bibimbap (literally "mixed rice") is essentially a dish of cooked rice served after mixing it with an assortment of fresh and seasoned vegetables, fried egg, minced raw beef and other ingredients before cooking. The dish is closely related with Jeonju, a UNESCO-designated "City of Gastronomy", where food-related festivals, including the Bibimbap Festival, are held every autumn, attracting gastronomes from across Korea and beyond. *Bibimbap* has

recently begun to attract worldwide attention for its nutritional balance, which is said to help keep those who eat it free from geriatric diseases, and is now generally cited as one of the three most representative dishes of Korean cuisine along with kimchi and *bulgogi*.

Bulgogi

Bulgogi, which literally means “fire meat”, refers to a traditional Korean dish made by grilling beef or (rarely) pork after shredding or slicing it and marinating it in sweet soy sauce mixed with a great variety of condiments. It is one of the rare meat dishes to have developed in Korea, where people were generally more accustomed to eating vegetable dishes, and has won many enthusiasts outside the country. *Bulgogi* has recently been adopted by fast-food restaurants in Korea, resulting in the emergence of *bulgogi* hamburgers and pizzas.

Tteok (Rice Cake)

Tteok, or Korean rice cake, refers to a range of sticky cakes made by steaming powdered rice with other grains, usually beans, or by pounding boiled rice into different shapes and textures. While *tteok* was sometimes eaten as part of a meal, it was more often one of a variety of special foods served at special family or communal occasions such as birthday parties, wedding receptions, memorial services and traditional holidays. Rice is the main ingredient of *tteok*, but it is often mixed with other grains, fruits, nuts and herbs such as mugwort, red bean, jujube, soybean and chestnut.

Korean people in the past assigned various symbolic meanings



Bibimbap: Cooked rice served with fresh and seasoned vegetables, minced raw beef and chili paste (above).
Bulgogi: Stripped or shredded beef marinated with soy sauce-based condiments and grilled (below)

to *tteok* and made and ate it according to those meanings. They made (and still make) *baekseolgi* (white steamed rice cakes), for instance, on the first birthday of a baby as it symbolizes a long life, and they made *patsirutteok* (steamed red bean and rice cake) whenever they started a business as its red color was believed to help repel evil forces. They celebrate New Year's Day with *tteokguk*, consisting of a broth with rice flakes, and Chuseok (the 15th Day of the Eighth Lunar Month) with *songpyeon*, bite-sized half-moon shaped rice cakes stuffed with a honey, chestnut, soybean, or sesame mixture. There are many famous *tteok* houses in Nagwon-dong in downtown Seoul.

Juk (Porridge)

Juk is a Korean-style porridge made of various grains that is usually served to children, the elderly, or people suffering from



Injeolmi Rice Cake

These Korean rice cakes are made by coating cubes of pounded glutinous rice with bean powder. They are marked by their soft and chewy texture and are easily digested.



Janggukjuk (Soy Sauce Porridge)

This traditional Korean porridge (*juk*) is made by boiling minced beef and Pyogo mushrooms with pounded rice and seasoned with soy sauce. It is rich in proteins and particularly good for people suffering from digestive problems.



Kongguksu (Noodles in Cold Soybean Soup)

This Korean noodle dish is made by mixing boiled noodles with chilled bean soup. For Koreans, it is a fine source of protein.

digestive problems. In recent years *juk* houses have begun to appear in many parts of Korea. They usually prepare the dish with a wide range of ingredients, mostly grains and vegetables, and it has also been developed into numerous varieties, some of which are now served at small specialty diners.

Noodles

Korean people have developed a wide range of noodle dishes that are full of symbolic meanings. One such dish is *janchi guksu* (literally "banquet noodles"), which is served in a hot anchovy broth to the guests at a wedding reception, (hence the name). This dish is so closely related with the idea of a happy marriage in Korea that a question such as "When can we eat noodles?" would readily be understood to mean "When do you plan to get married?" It is also eaten to celebrate birthdays because it symbolizes a long, healthy life. Korean people also have a long established tradition of eating *naengmyeon* (cold buckwheat noodles), served in either cold beef broth (*Pyeongyang naengmyeon*) or with a spicy chili sauce (*Hamheung naengmyeon*).

Hanjeongsik (Korean Set Menu)

Hanjeongsik, otherwise known as the Korean set meal, originally consisted of cooked rice, soup, and anywhere from three to five, (largely vegetable,) side dishes. As people are gradually becoming better off due to the thriving national economy, today's set meal tends to be much more luxurious with tens of new dishes, meat and fish included, although the three basic dishes, i.e. rice, soup, and kimchi, still remain. Two cities in the southwestern part



Hanjeongsik (Korean Set Menu)

This traditional Korean set meal typically consisted of rice and soup and an assortment of side dishes. The meal is often divided into subgroups according to the number of side dishes, i.e. 3, 5, 7, 9 and 12.

of Korea, Jeonju and Gwangju, are particularly famous for this traditional Korean meal.

Korean Temple Cuisine

Korean Buddhist temples have maintained their own culinary traditions, creating a wonderful range of vegetable dishes and ingredients and developing recipes to provide the proteins and other substances required for the monks and nuns to remain healthy. Temple foods are now enthusiastically received by vegans and other people who follow special diets for health-related reasons.

Alcoholic Beverages

A wide variety of alcoholic beverages have been developed across different parts of Korea to meet the needs of local communities during holidays, festivals, memorial rites and other

commemorative occasions. Currently some 300 traditional beverages have survived, including *Munbaeju* (wild pear liquor) and *Songjeolju* (pine knot liquor) in Seoul; *Sanseong Soju* (distilled liquor) in Gwangju of Gyeonggi-do; *Hongju* (red liquor) and *Leegangju* (distilled liquor) in Jeolla-do; *Sogokju* (rice wine) in Hansan of Chungcheong-do; *Insamju* (ginseng liquor) in Geumsan; *Gyodong Beopju* (rice liquor) and *Andong Soju* (distilled liquor) in Gyeongju of Gyeongsangbuk-do; and *Okseonju* (distilled liquor) in Hongcheon of Gangwon-do.

One of the most popular traditional alcoholic beverages across Korea today is *makgeolli* (rice wine), which is also known by other names such as *nongju* (farmer's wine), *takju* (cloudy wine) and *dongdongju* (rice wine). It is made by a process in which steamed rice, barley or wheat is mixed with malt and left

Makgeolli

This rustic alcoholic beverage, which is widely popular in Korea, is made by fermenting steamed rice, barley, or wheat mixed with malt.



to ferment, and has an alcohol content of 6-7%, making it a fairly mild drink. It has recently begun to fascinate connoisseurs and health-conscious young consumers across many parts of the world, resulting in the opening of makgeolli brewery schools and the appearance of well-trained sommeliers.

Another hugely popular alcoholic beverage of Korea is *soju* which is made by adding water and flavoring to alcohol extracted from sweet potatoes and grains. With an alcohol content that varies but is significantly higher than makgeolli, it is much appreciated by ordinary citizens across Korea and is rapidly gaining enthusiasts outside Korea.

Hanok, traditional Korean houses

Seobaekdang, the head residence of the Gyeongju Sohn clan, in Yangdong Village located in Gyeongju, North Gyeongsang Province

Housing

Korean people have developed unique architectural techniques to build housing that is properly adapted to the surrounding natural environment, providing dwellers with better protection. A



distinctive feature of the *hanok* (traditional Korean house) is an underfloor heating system called *ondol*. Literally meaning “warm stones” and developed during the prehistoric period, *ondol* refers to the system of channels running beneath the stone floor of a room through which heat is delivered from the fireplace in the kitchen. It is also designed to effectively draw out the smoke through the under-the-floor passages connected to the chimney.

Another important element of the traditional Korean house is the board-floored room (*maru*) located at the center and used for multiple purposes. The room is usually larger than other rooms and is raised from the ground to allow air to freely circulate under it, creating a cool living environment during the warm summer season. The smart system combining *ondol* and *maru* makes the traditional Korean house a comfortable living space for its residents not only in the harsh winter but also in the scorching summer. The roof is typically covered with either ceramic tiles or thatching. While most of the roof tiles are dark gray, some exhibit more vibrant colors as demonstrated, for example, by the Official Residence of the Korean President Cheongwadae, which literally means “Blue House” because, as the name shows, it is covered by blue roof tiles.

While traditional Korean houses are generally wooden structures, they can survive as long as other buildings made with other materials if properly taken care of. Built before 1363, Geungnakjeon Hall of Bongjeongsa Temple in Andong, Gyeongsangbuk-do, for instance, is Korea’s oldest remaining building, still maintaining its original structure intact after 650 years. As an ideal location for their house, Korean people preferred a site protected by hills or mountains on three

Hanok, traditional Korean houses

The ancient house of Yun Jeung, a Confucian scholar of the late Joseon (1392-1910) period, situated in Nonsan, South Chungcheong Province, also called *Myeongjae Gotaek* after his pen name

of its sides, with a stream or river passing in front, thus providing easy access to water. Houses built in such a place create a great harmony with the surrounding environment, attracting more and more admirers not just in Korea but outside it as well.

These days, over 60% of Seoul's population live in modern apartments but, interestingly, these tall, multistoried buildings are almost without exception furnished with a heating system inspired by the age-old *ondol* system. Similarly, newly built detached houses are also reliant on the legacy of the *ondol* system of heating the floor, although the traditional heat passages are now replaced by under-floor metal pipes with running water heated either by gas or electricity. This heating system has now begun to be exported to other countries with wide variations in daily temperature.



Professor Robert Fouser and Hanok

Professor Robert Fouser, the first foreign national employed by Seoul National University to teach students at the Department of Korean Language Education, is a great enthusiast of the traditional Korean houses known as *hanok*. His love of Korean language and culture has a long history as his career, which includes opening, and teaching, a Korean language course at Kagoshima University in Japan, attests. His home in Korea was for a number of years an exquisite *Hanok* located in Bukchon, downtown Seoul, until he moved to Seochon, another historic district of the Korean capital, where he found a new *hanok* which is still his home today. He loves not only the house he lives in but also the surroundings, a complex network of narrow alleys winding between other *hanok* buildings and the natural environment around it. Recently, he launched a campaign to increase public awareness of the value of the *hanok* as a living space and the importance of preserving and reviving it for the present and future generations.



Festivals, Celebrations and Holidays

Festivals

Until the mid-20th century, Korea was primarily an agricultural society, and the seasonal rhythms of daily life were organized by the lunar calendar. As a society where farming was hugely important for the subsistence of its members, it developed a great variety of semi-religious events where prayers were offered for a good harvest and abundant food, and which gradually developed into communal celebrations and festivals.

The Lunar New Year's Day (*Seol* or *Seollal*), which is generally regarded as the most important of all the traditional seasonal festivals, is celebrated with a special festival food called *tteokguk*, or "rice flake soup". Eating it signified becoming one year older (this means that a child born on the 29th of the twelfth lunar month becomes two years old only two days later). The festival is also related with the ceremony of performing the *Sebae* (New Year's Bow) before the elders of one's family and neighborhood. After *Sebae*, the elders present New Year's gift money to their juniors.

Another important seasonal festival called *Daeboreum* (Greater Full Moon) celebrates the fifteenth day of the first month of the year by the lunar calendar. On that day, people eat special festival food called *ogokbap*, a dish made with five grains and served with an assortment of cooked vegetables, play games aimed for the unity of the local community and perform rituals for good harvest. Chuseok, which is held on the fifteenth day of the eighth lunar month, consists of thanksgiving services in which newly harvested crops and fruits are offered to the ancestral spirits. Generally held to be as important as the Lunar New Year's Day,

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1. Sebae

(New Year Bow)

Korea has a long tradition of starting the New Year (by the lunar calendar) with the ceremonious bows made by children to their parents

2. Chuseok and Songpyeon

During the mid-autumn holiday of Chuseok (15th day of the 8th lunar month), families gather together and make *songpyeon* (half-moon shape rice cake).



Traditional Wedding

The traditional Korean wedding ceremony largely consists of three stages: Jeonallye, in which the groom visits the bride's family with a wooden goose; Gyobaerye, in which bride and groom exchange ceremonious bows; and Hapgeullye, where the marrying couple share a cup of wine.

The photo shows a bride and groom exchanging ceremonious bows during the Gyobaerye stage of their wedding ceremony.

Chuseok is also one of the two annual occasions when all the family members gather together.

Celebrations

Korean parents mark the one-hundredth day anniversary (*baegil*) and the first birthday (*dol*) of their baby with special big celebrations in which their families, relatives and friends participate. They generally hold a large celebratory banquet for their baby with a ritual prayer for the baby's health, success in life, and longevity, and the participants give the baby gold rings as a special gift.

Weddings have also been a very important family celebration in Korea. Most Korean people today choose their own spouse according to their heart's desire. In pre-modern times, however,



husbands and wives were given by their parents or matchmakers after an examination of their horoscopic data, called *Saju* (Four Pillars of Destiny), which are determined by the hour and date of their birth. The tradition of consulting a diviner on their luck in the New Year and exchanging horoscopic data as part of the matchmaking process is still maintained by some families.

In the past, a wedding ceremony was an important village festival where the entire community would gather together to celebrate the young couple dressed in luxurious wedding robes and bejeweled headdresses. Today, the Western style of wedding ceremony is widely regarded as the norm, but some traditional rituals such as *Pyebaek* (traditional ceremony to pay respect to the groom's family by the newly-wedded couple right after their wedding) and *lbaji* (wedding food that the bride presents to the groom's family) are still maintained.

In Korea, a baby becomes one year old as soon as she is born, and 60 years old on her 59th birthday. The age 60 has a profound meaning for Korean people as it signifies the completion of a sexagenary cycle. Someone who had reached the age of 60 was admired greatly as he or she was regarded as old enough to have experienced all the principles of heaven and earth. Today Korean men and women live much longer—about 80 years on average—than they did before and the 60th birthday is no longer celebrated in such a grand manner as it was previously.

National Holidays

In Korea there are five national holidays designated by the government: Independence Declaration Day (*Samiljeol*, March 1), which commemorates the March First Movement, one of

Public Holidays in Korea

Jan 1	New Year's Day Seollal	The first day of the year. The first day of the year by the lunar calendar. Three Day Celebration.
Mar 1	Independence Day	Commemorates the March First Movement, non-violent public resistance against the Japanese colonial rule, and the declaration of Korean Independence in 1919
Apr 8	Buddha's Birthday	Celebrates the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha. A variety of celebratory events are held in Buddhist temples across Korea,
May 5	Children's Day	A great variety of celebratory and fun events for children are held across the country.
Jun 6	Memorial Day	A national memorial service is held at the National Cemetery to honor and commemorate the achievements of war heroes and veterans
Aug 15	Liberation Day	Celebrates the 1945 liberation of Korea from Japanese colonial rule.
Aug 15	Chuseok	Known by different names such as Chuseok and Hangawi, this seasonal festival on the 15th day of the 8th lunar month brings families together for memorial services for their ancestors and celebratory events.
Oct 3	National Foundation Day	Commemorates the foundation of Gojoseon, the first Korean state, by Dangun in 2333 BCE.
Oct 9	Hangeul Day	Marks the invention and promulgation of Hunminjeongeum (Hangeul), the Korean writing system.
Dec 25	Christmas	Celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ with a great variety of religious and secular events.

the earliest public displays of Korean resistance against the Japanese occupation of Korea, and the promulgation of the Constitution of the Republic of Korea in 1948; Liberation Day

(*Gwangbokjeol*, August 15), celebrating national liberation from Imperial Japan in 1945; National Foundation Day, which marks the foundation of Gojoseon, the first state of the Korean nation, on the 3rd day of 10th lunar month, 2333 BCE; and Hangeul Day (*Hangeullal*, October 9), which commemorates the invention and proclamation of the Korean writing system.

Public Holidays

The public holidays during which work is suspended by law in Korea include New Year's Day, Seollal (or Lunar New Year's Day, celebrated for 3 days), *Chuseok* (Mid-autumn Festival on the 15th day of the 8th lunar month, celebrated for 3 days), Buddha's Birthday (on the 8th day of the 4th lunar month), Children's Day (May 5), Memorial Day (June 6) and Christmas Day. There are fifteen public holidays in total on which businesses are closed by law and employees have a day off, from which Constitution Day is excluded.

Religion

Korea is a country where all the world's major religions, Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism and Islam, peacefully coexist with shamanism. Given the great diversity of religious expression, the role of religion in South Korea's social development has been complex; and some traditions are best understood as important cultural properties rather than as rites of worship. According to the 2005 statistics, 53% of the Korean population has a religion, while the 2008 statistics show that there were over 510 religious organizations in Korea. Among them Buddhism and Confucianism have been more influential than any others upon the life of

Diversity in Religious Life

Now rapidly on its way to becoming a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious society, Korea protects religious diversity by law. People in Korea are free to lead a religious life according to their own choice and convictions, whether as followers of one of the major religions, namely, Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Islam, or as adherents of Korean native religions such Won Buddhism and Cheondogyo.

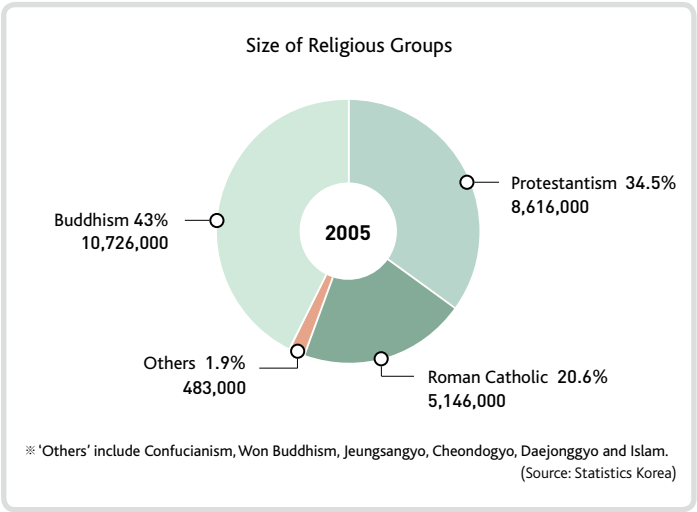
the Korean people and over half of the country’s listed cultural heritage are related with the two religions. Since its arrival in Korea in 372, Buddhism has produced several tens of thousands temples across the country and currently has more adherents than any other religion.

Adopted as the state ideology of the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910), Confucianism was more a system of ethics than religion and stressed the importance of loyalty, filial piety and other virtues. Confucian followers also valued ancestral worship in the belief that the ancestral spirits can affect the life of their descendants, and tried to find auspicious sites for the graves of their ancestors. Today, however, more and more people are turning from the practice of burial to cremation.

Catholicism was introduced to Korea from China through the envoys of late Joseon who visited Beijing and the Western priests who followed them. The early Roman Catholics in Korea

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- 1. Chungdong First Methodist Church in Seoul
Korea's first Protestant church founded in 1897.
- 2. Lotus Lantern Festival
The festival celebrates the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha on the 8th day of the 4th lunar month.







The interior of Myeongdong Cathedral in Seoul

were subjected to severe persecution, but the religion continued to spread among the common people across the country. The persecution of Christian believers by Joseon's rulers led Korea to yield the world's fourth largest number of Christian saints.

Protestantism was brought to Korea during the late 19th century by North American missionaries, and quickly won people's hearts through school education and medical services. Even today, Protestants in Korea operate a great number of educational institutions, middle and high schools, colleges and universities, and medical centers.

In Korea there is a rich array of native religions such as Cheondogyo, Won Buddhism and Daejonggyo which, although suffered various vicissitudes of modern Korean history, are still active in increasing the number of their adherents. Cheondogyo,



The Seoul Central Mosque
in Itaewon, Seoul

formed on the basis of the Eastern Learning (Donghak) of the 19th century, maintains the doctrine that "Man is Heaven," which exerted a strong influence upon the process of modernization in Korea. Daejonggyo, established in the early 20th century to worship Dangun, the founder of the first Korean state, also affected the life of ordinary Korean people, boosting Korean nationalism. In 1955, there appeared the Islamic Society of Korea and the first Korean Imam, followed by the foundation of the Korean Muslim Federation in 1967. Islam currently has about 60 places of worship across Korea and there are about 100,000 Korean Muslims. In addition to the major religions, shamanism has also played an important part in the daily life of the Korean people, trying to help them connect with the spiritual world and making predictions about their future.