

Example 5

Turtle: Longevity, Fortune-telling Ability

- While the dragon was considered the ruler of all animals, the turtle ruled over the insects.
- Because turtles live longer than other animals, they symbolize longevity.
- People also believed that turtles have the power to predict the future.
- Fortunetellers used the shape of a turtle's shell to forecast the future.
- Turtle images often form the base of steles or monuments to famous people, especially Buddhist monks.

- **Example 6**
- **Fish: Diligent Self-discipline**
- Since fish does not close its eyes when it sleeps or even when it dies, an ascetic devotee in Buddhism was expected to reach Nirvana with continuous effort like fish.

- **Example 7**
- **Tiger: Represents vigor, chivalry**
- Tigers in dreams represented a sign to take a public position.
- The embroidered breast patches on the court attire of military officials included tigers and leopards, both symbols of valor and courage.

- **Example 8**

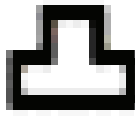
- **Lotus (Water Lily): Creation, Birth**

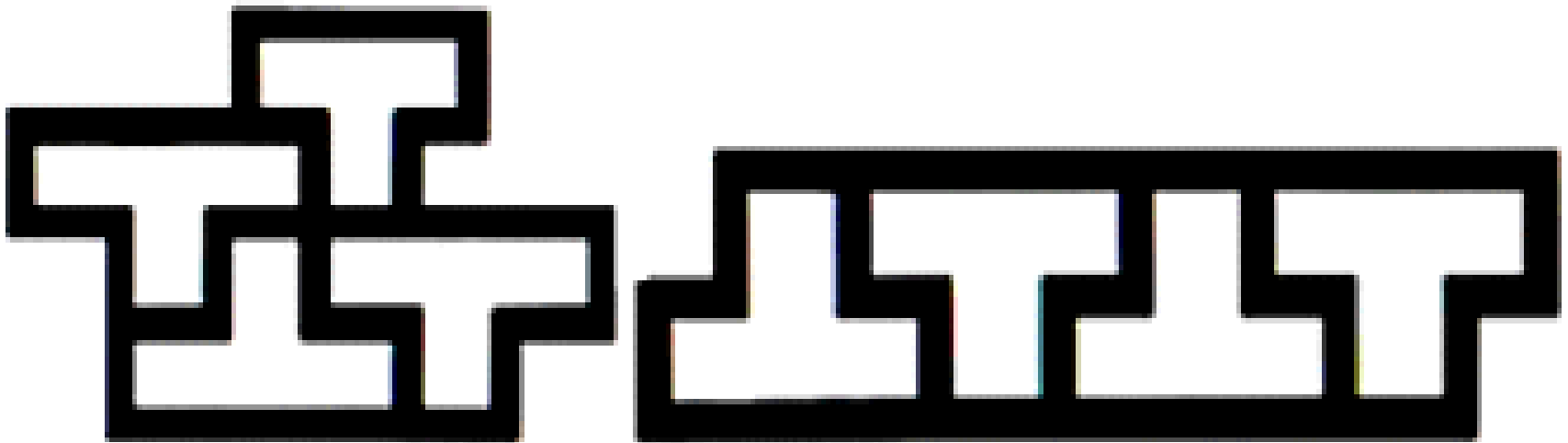
- A Buddhist story tells that the lotus came from the belly of a God who slept under water; for this reason it symbolizes birth and creation.
- Lotus plants produce flowers and fruits at the same time, unlike other plants that bear fruits only after their flowers bloom—this symbolizes having offspring consecutively.
- Other associated meanings include good omens, happiness, and a happy couple when presented with mandarin ducks.
- When shown with fish, it symbolizes material affluence and mental leisure.



- **Example 9**
- **Double Hee:** Happiness for Husband and Wife
- This symbol expresses wishes for a husband and wife to enjoy a happy marriage and many can be found at wedding ceremonies.
- In a broader sense, its meaning extends to a harmonious combination of Yin (female) and Yang (male).
- We can see this symbol engraved in many architectural structures in Korea.

- **Example 10**

-  **Symbol:** Prosperity of descendents
- This symbol means *Yang* and represents the male genitals.
- When the symbol is coupled, it means prosperity for descendents and children.



- **Example 11**
- **Wild Goose:** Loyalty, Best Luck
- Wild geese are seasonal birds and they are believed to deliver good news.
- Wild geese are sometimes painted with reeds, symbolizing peace; flying wild geese meant the best luck.
- Traditionally Korean groom travels to the home of his bride on the back of a pony, bearing a live goose, a symbol of fidelity because it takes only partner in its life, and gives it to his new mother-in-law as a sign of his faithfulness to her daughter.
- Nowadays, Koreans substitute the live goose with a wooden one. wo wooden hand-carved wild geese symbolize a happily married couple who remain faithful to their partner their entire lives (similar to the mandarin duck).

- **Example 12**

- **Buddhist Swastika: Auspiciousness**

- The symbol (卐) represents an auspicious sign in Buddhism.
- It is considered to have omnipotent godly power, as well as the meaning of the whole universe.

- **Example 13**

- The Cross

- ◆ Out of these symbols, the most important cultural symbols are those of Buddhism and Christianity, which are two largest religions in Korea.
- ◆ According to 2005 census, **Buddhism** is the largest religion with nearly 11 million adherents.
- ◆ There are 39 Buddhist orders, more than 11,000 temples, over 26,000 monks, and a large number of Buddhist-run media outlets, including a cable television, a radio network, and newspapers.

◆ **Table 1. Religious Population in South Korea (in thousands; percentage of total population)**

	1995	2005
◆ Buddhist	10,321 (23.2)	10,726 (22.8)
◆ Protestant	8,760 (19.7)	8,616 (18.3)
◆ Catholic	2,951 (6.6)	5,146 (10.9)
◆ Confucian	211 (0.5)	105 (0.2)
◆ Won Buddhist	87 (0.2)	130 (0.3)
◆ Other Religions	268 (0.6)	247 (0.5)
◆ No Rel. Affiliation	21,953 (49.3)	21,865 (46.9)

◆ Source: National Statistical Office (1997, 2006).

◆ Protestantism

- ◆ Since its introduction in 1884, **Protestantism** has proceeded to become the second largest religion in Korea.
- ◆ Nearly nine million Koreans or about 20 percent of the country's 49 million people are Protestant.
- ◆ The growth of Korean Protestantism had been particularly pronounced from the early 1960s to the end of the 1980s, the period of the country's remarkable modernization.

- Since the early 1960s, when South Korea's Protestants scarcely topped the one million mark, the number of Protestant Christians increased faster than in any other country, nearly doubling every decade (see Table 2).

◆ Table 2. The Number of Protestant Christians, 1950-2005

◆ Year	# of Members	Growth Rate (%)
◆ 1950	500,198	-
◆ 1960	623,072	24.6
◆ 1970	3,192,621	512.4
◆ 1980	5,001,491	56.7
◆ 1985	6,489,282	29.8
◆ 1991	8,037,464	23.9
◆ 1995	8,760,336	9.0
◆ 2005	8,616,438	-1.6

◆ Sources: National Statistical Office (1997, 2006).

- Greater Seoul is home to 23 of the 50 largest churches in the world.
- In fact, five of the ten largest churches in the world are found in Seoul, a "city of churches."
- Korea is home to the world's largest congregation, the Yeoido Full Gospel Church (+half million), and the world's largest Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist congregations:
 - Yeongnak Presbyterian Church (60,000 members in 2006)
 - Gwangnim Methodist Church (70,000 members in 2009)
 - Seongnak Baptist Church (130,000 members in 2009)

- The largest denominations in terms of membership are Presbyterian (33%), Methodist (22%), Holiness (16%), Baptist (11%), and Full Gospel (8%).
- Korea became the world's second largest source of Christian missionaries. The number of Korean overseas missionaries at the end of 2008 was 19,413 in 168 countries, which was second only to the U.S., which had 46,000 missionaries worldwide. Britain was third with 6,000 missionaries.

◆ Catholicism

- ◆ Although Catholicism was severely persecuted in the 18th and 19th centuries, during which nearly 10,000 Catholics were martyred, there are now 5.1 million Catholics in Korea, which amounts to about 11 percent of the population.
- ◆ In fact, Catholicism has enjoyed the largest increase in membership of all the religions in the last decade, soaring from 2.9 million in 1995 to over 5 million in 2005.

- In May of 1984 during the bicentennial commemoration of Korean Catholicism, Pope John Paul II canonized 103 of the martyrs, making Korea fourth in the world in the total number of saints.
- Together, Protestant and Catholic Christians comprise roughly 30% of the population, and Christianity as a whole is the largest religion in Korea.
- Comparisons with China and Japan.