

# NATIONAL SYMBOLS OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Uniting People and Elevating National Pride

National Symbols of the Republic of Korea







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Uniting People and Elevating National Pride

A national symbol is an official representation of a nation, uniting people and helping to establish national identity. The symbols of the Republic of Korea are the Taegeukgi, Aegukga, Mugunghwa, Naramunjang and Guksae.

## Origin of the nation’s title, Daehanminguk

### Daehanjeguk (Great Korean Empire: 1897- 1910)

In a royal edict issued on October 13, 1887, King Gojong proclaimed the country as Daehan and the king as emperor.  
“I, Emperor Bongcheonseungun, set down the following ordinance. Since the times of Dangun (legendary founder of Korea) and Gija (legendary ruler of ancient Korea), the territory was split, with different clans fighting with each other for supremacy. It was later, during the Goryeo (Kingdom in place from A.D. 918 to 1392) era that the ancient Three Han Confederacies of Mahan, Jinhan, and Byeonhan were integrated.  
<Omitted>  
On September 17 this year, I performed a ritual for heaven at the south of Mount Baegaksan and ascended to the throne of emperor. The country shall be named Daehan (Korean Empire) and this shall be the first year of the Gwangmu era. . .”<Omitted>  
(Gojongsillok (Annals of Emperor Gojong), Volume 36)

### Provisional Government

The title Daehan became ineffective after the fall of the empire in August 1910. On April 11, 1919, the Provisional Government stipulated in Article 1 of the Provisional Charter that the nation would be a democratic republic. Daehanminguk (The Republic of Korea) became the official name based on Article 1 of the Provisional Constitution (promulgated on September 11, 1919), which provided that Daehanminguk shall consist of the Daehan people.

### Daehanminguk (The Republic of Korea)

Following the nation’s liberation on August 15, 1945, the Constitution of the First Republic (Jeheon Constitution), which was proclaimed on July 17, 1948, stipulated in its Preamble and Article 1 that the country be named Daehanminguk

|  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  |  |
| 02   | 06   | 08   | 10   | 12   |
| National Flag<br>Taegeukgi   | National Anthem<br>Aegukga   | National Flower<br>Mugunghwa   | National Emblem<br>Naramunjang   | National Seal<br>Guksae  |



# Taegeukgi

The National Flag

## Origin

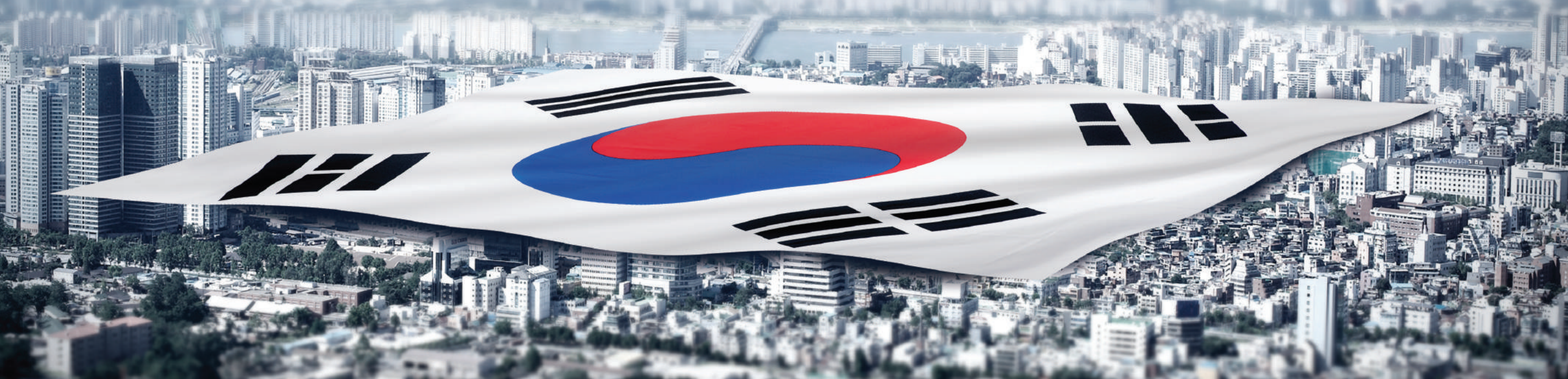
Following the trend for modern states to adopt national flags, the decision to create a national flag for Korea emerged with the ratification of the Korea and United States Treaty of 1882. No accurate records remain of the Korean flag chosen for use at the signing ceremony; however, some argue that the flag was similar to the ensign flag featured in the Flags of Maritime Nations issued by the U.S. Navy Department's Bureau of Navigation and found in 2004.

In his capacity as Envoy Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary under King Gojong, Park Yeong-hyo kept a record of his diplomatic mission to Japan in 1882. According to his journal, known as *Sahwagiryak*, in September of that year while aboard the ship to Japan, Park created a four-trigram flag with a taegeuk circle (instead of the flag with eight black bars that had been used prior to 1800). The flag was used from September 25, 1882, according to Park's report to the government on October 3 of that year.

By royal order on March 6, 1883, King Gojong promulgated that Park's flag with a taegeuk circle in the center and four trigrams around it (the flag named Taegeukgi) be the national flag. However, due to a lack of specific guidelines, the flag design took different forms. On June 29, 1942, the Provisional Government issued a national flag style guide to ensure that subsequent flags would be created in a consistent manner. Despite these efforts, however, ordinary people were unaware of these guidelines.

After the establishment of the Republic of Korea on August 15, 1948, the government felt an increasing need to standardize flag construction. Thus in January 1949, it formed the National Flag Correction Committee, which announced the National Flag Construction Guidelines on October 15 of that year.

A number of regulations were later implemented, providing for the systematic management of the flag: the Act on the Flag of the Republic of Korea, enacted in January 2007; the Enforcement Decree of the Act on the Flag of the Republic of Korea, in July 2007; and the Regulations on the Hoisting, Management, and Promotion of the National Flag in September 2009 (by instructions from the Prime Minister).







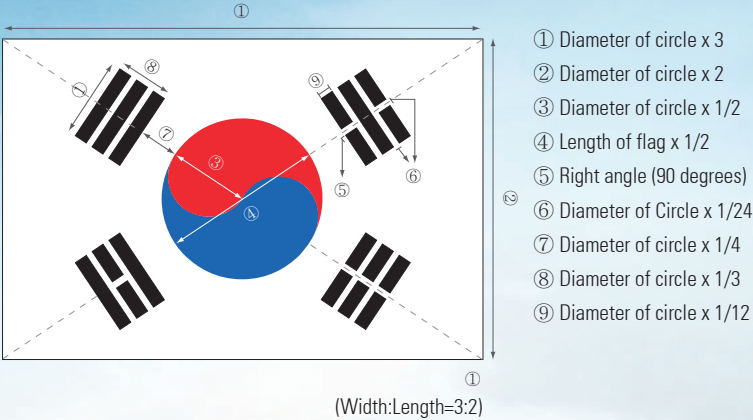
Symbolism  
of the flag

The Taegeukgi consists of a white background, a red and blue taegeuk circle in the center, and four black trigrams (collectively called *geongongamri*), one in each corner of the flag.

The white background represents brightness, purity, and peace, qualities that are highly valued by the people. The taegeuk, which has long been a commonly used motif, denotes the harmony between the negative cosmic forces (yin : blue portion) and the positive cosmic forces (yang : red portion), depicting the truth of nature that all things are created and evolve through the interaction of yin and yang. The four black trigrams are specific representations of the movement and harmony of these forces. In detail, *the geon* symbolizes the sky, *the gon* the earth, *the gam* water, and *the ri* fire. Together, they create harmony around the taegeuk mark.

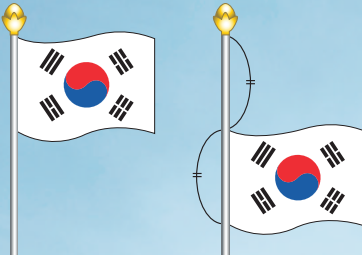


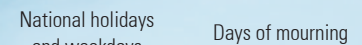





In short, the Taegeukgi flag embodies the vision of the Korean people who, like the universe, seek continuous creation and enrichment. By upholding the spirit and significance of the Taegeukgi, the people seek to realize unity and unification and contribute to the happiness and peace of humanity.

Construction  
of the Flag  
of Korea



Pledge of  
allegiance to  
the flag  
(revised on  
July 27, 2007)

I, standing before the noble Taegeukgi, solemnly pledge allegiance to the Republic of Korea, to its glory, liberty and justice.

| Designated days for national flag flying   | Rule for flag hoisting  |
|--|---|
| National holidays and celebration days   |  |
|  March 1 (Independence Movement Day)            |   |
|  June 6 (Memorial Day, flag flown at half-mast) |  |
|  July 17 (Constitution Day)                     |   |
|  August 15 (Liberation Day)                     | National holidays and weekdays  |
|  October 1 (Armed Forces Day)                   |   |
|  October 3 (National Foundation Day)            | Days of mourning  |
|  October 9 (Hangeul Day)                        |   |
| ※ The flag can be displayed 24 hours a day.  |   |



# Aegukga

The National Anthem

## Origin

Generically, Aegukga refers to any song that expresses love for one’s country. However, the term has become synonymous with Korea’s national anthem.

During the period of enlightenment in the late Joseon Dynasty, several patriotic songs were used. In 1896, the first editions of the Dongnipsinmun (The Independent) featured a number of lyrics for such songs but it is unclear as to what melodies were sung with those lyrics. According to records, a song entitled “Daehanjeguk (Korean Empire) Aegukga” was composed in 1902, and the government organized a western-style military band to play it during major state functions.

The lyrics of Korea’s national anthem were first written sometime around 1907 with the intention of inspiring love and allegiance to the country, as well as a sense of independence at a time when the country was under foreign aggression. Following adaptation by several composers, the lyrics gradually took the form we know today.

- 1. Until that day when the waters of the East Sea run dry and Mount Baekdusan is worn away, God protect and preserve our nation; Hurray to Korea.
- 2. As the pine atop Namsan Peak stands firm, unchanged through wind and frost, as if wrapped in armor, so shall our resilient spirit.
- 3. The autumn sky is void and vast, high and cloudless; the bright moon is our heart, undivided and true.
- 4. With this spirit and this mind, give all loyalty, in suffering or in joy, to the love of country.

**Refrain:**  
Three thousand ri of splendid rivers and mountains covered with Mugunghwa blossoms. Great Korean people, stay true to the Great Korean way!

## 애국가

보통빠르게

안익태 작곡



1. 동해물과백두산이마르고닳도록,  
2. 남산위에 저소나무 철갑을 두른 듯,  
3. 가을하늘 광활한데 높고 구름 없이,  
4. 이기상과이맘으로충성을다하여.



하느님이보우-하사우리나라만세.  
바람서리불변-함은우리기상일세.  
밝은달은우리-가슴일편단심일세.  
괴로우나즐거우나나라사랑하세.



(후렴)무-궁화삼천리화려강산



대한사람대한-으로길이보전하세.

Initially, the Aegukga was sung to the tune of the Scottish folk song, “Auld Lang Syne.” While studying abroad, Korean composer Ahn Eak-tai felt that this foreign melody was unfit for Korea’s national anthem. In 1935, he composed the Symphonic Fantasy Korea, the finale of which became the current melody for the national anthem. Even though the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea adopted this tune as their national anthem, it was only known abroad.

In Korea, the lyrics continued to be sung to the Scottish folk song until the Korean government was established in 1948 following the nation’s independence from Japan. At that time, the current version of Aegukga was sung during official government functions, and gradually, with its inclusion in all student textbooks, it gained popular acceptance. Afterwards, the song was widely disseminated abroad and finally became established as the national anthem of Korea.

Whenever people sing Aegugka, which, for almost a century, has been part of the people’s destiny both in good times and bad, they are reminded of the love that their forefathers held for the nation.



# Mugunghwa

The National Flower






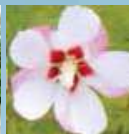
## Origin

The Mugunghwa, or the rose of Sharon, is an object of deep affection. Meaning “eternal blossom that never fades,” it has been an important symbol of Korean culture for centuries. Ancient records show that even before the Gojoseon era (ancient Korean kingdom), the mugunghwa was treasured as a “blossom from heaven”. As further testimony of its cultural value, the Silla Kingdom (57 BC~AD 935) called itself Geunhwahyang, meaning Country of the Mugunghwa. The ancient Chinese, too, referred to Korea as the “land of wise men where the Mugunghwa blooms.” Over time, the public affection grew stronger when a phrase extolling the flower’s beauty was included in the national anthem in the late 19th century. Those words are “Mugunghwa samcheonli hwaryeogangsan (Three thousand ri\* (equivalent to 1,200 kilometers, the length of the Korean Peninsula) of splendid rivers and mountains covered with Mugunghwa blossoms)”. Even during the dark days of Japanese colonial rule, the people’s devotion to the flower never faded. Hence, it was only natural for the government to adopt it as the national flower after Korea regained its independence from Japan.

**Botanical name** Hibiscus syriacus L.  
**Common name** Rose of Sharon  
**Distribution** Korea, China, India, Japan  
**Flowering season** From early July to mid-October

## Varieties

Koreans cherish the national flower because it honors the country’s noble spirit and symbolizes the many successes as well as tribulations that the nation has experienced. Mugunghwa varieties are grouped based on the colors of their blossoms. The groups are Baedal, Dansim, and Asadal

|   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <b>Baedal</b>   | Pure white flower   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Dansim</b>   | White, red, purple, or blue flower with intense red or purple center                |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Asadal</b>   | White flower with intense red center that fades to pale pink at the petal edges     |   |   |   |   |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Baedal  | Red Dansim  | Purple Dansim   | Blue Dansim   | White Dansim  | Asadal  |

## Usage

The flower is a symbol in the flags of government and national organizations, decorations, and badges.

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Emblem of the President</b>  | <b>Lawmaker's badge</b>   | <b>Supreme Court logo</b>   |
|  |  |  |



# Naramunjang

The National Emblem



## Significance

In general, emblems were adopted in western countries to symbolize the genealogical records and authority of a clan, organization, or the state. The national emblem of Korea is called Naramunjang or Gukjang. The design is based on the motifs of the Taegeukgi flag and the Mugunghwa flower, which are national symbols. The taegeuk motif is surrounded by five Mugunghwa petals, and the entire design is encircled by a ribbon with the letters ‘대한민국 (The Republic of Korea).’

## Usage

Based on the Regulations on the National Emblem formulated on December 10, 1963, the national emblem is used as a state symbol on major documents sent to foreign institutions, on medals and other decorations, Presidential commendations, and signage on diplomatic missions abroad.

The emblem is designed in the form of a badge or a brass die. If necessary, the size can be scaled up or down depending on the usage.



### Usage (Article 3, Regulations on the National Emblem)

1. Official documents sent abroad, international organizations or foreign institutions stationed in Korea
2. Certificates of appointment for 1st-grade or higher grade government officials
3. Medals, certificates of decoration, and Presidential commendations
4. Public official ID cards
5. Graduation certificates or diplomas issued by national or public universities
6. Vessels or aircrafts owned by the government
7. Diplomatic missions overseas
8. Currency
9. Documents, facilities, or goods on which the use of the national emblem is deemed necessary by the head of a ministry or agency



# Guksae

The National Seal

**Fifth Guksae characteristics**

|                            |                              |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Impression</b>          | in Hunminjeongeum style font |
| <b>Handle Featuring</b>    | a pair of phoenix            |
| <b>Material and weight</b> | Gold alloy, 3.38kg           |
| <b>Size</b>                | 10.4cmx10.4cm                |

**Significance**

The national seal has been called by various names-sae, bo, eobo, eosae, oksae, and guksae. Sae and bo are generic terms for national seals; eobo and eosae refer to the seal of the king engraved with his/her pen name and eulogistic title; oksae refer to a seal made of jade. The modern term for the national seal is Guksae.

As an official seal for state affairs and an important national symbol, the Guksae is stamped on important state documents. It represents national authority, and reflects the nation’s power and culture, and the characteristics of the era in which it is used. Unlike the West, where such seals are usually embossed, in Eastern countries, a national seal is an imprint.

**The Fifth Guksae**

The creation of the Fifth Guksae currently in use was preceded by an extensive opinion-gathering process, which involved expert discussions, opinion surveys, and public hearings beginning in September 2010. Based on the views gathered, a Guksae Creation Committee comprising experts from various fields was set up in November 2010 and the production of a new national seal was completed in September 2011. The seal has been in use since October 25, 2011.

The Fifth Guksae is square, measuring 10.4 centimeters on all sides, and weighs 3.38 kilograms. Compared to previous national seals, the new one was enlarged for greater dignity and authority. The seal, which is hollow inside, was produced in such a way that the seal’s face and grip are constructed as one piece, rather than separately executed.



It is made of gold, silver, copper, zinc, and iridium. The use of iridium, which is a rare metal, makes the alloy more tightly integrated, thus preventing fissures.










The seal is engraved in the hunminjeongeum style font with the letters ‘대한민국(Daehanminguk: The Republic of Korea)’. The handle of the seal features a pair of seated phoenix with dynamically sculpted wings and tail feathers. A fully open rose of Sharon rests on their backs.

**Usage (Article 6, Regulations on the National Seal)**

1. Preamble to a promulgation announcing a revision to the Constitution
2. Certificates of appointment for government officials bestowed directly by the President, appointment certificates for government officials, the presentation of which the President has delegated to the relevant Minister on his/her behalf, in accordance with Article 5-1 of the Official Appointment Regulations
3. Certificates of national decoration in accordance with Article 9 and Article 19 of the Awards and Decorations Act and Article 17 of the Enforcement Decree of said act
4. Ratification instruments in the name of the President or other diplomatic documents that require the affixed seal, by order of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
5. Other documents on which the affixing of the national seal is deemed necessary by the Minister of Security and Public Administration



Development of Korea’s National Seal

| Classification      | First Guksae  | Second Guksae   | Third Guksae  | Fourth Guksae  | Fifth Guksae  |
|---------------------|---|---|---|--|---|
| Period used         | May 5, 1949<br>— Dec. 31, 1962  | Jan. 1, 1963<br>— Jan. 31, 1999   | Feb. 1, 1999<br>— Feb. 21, 2008,<br>Nov. 30, 2010<br>— Oct. 24, 2011                | Feb. 22, 2008<br>— Nov. 29, 2010   | Oct. 25, 2011 —   |
| Impression          |  |    |    |    |    |
| Size                | Square<br>(6.06×6.06cm)   | Square<br>(7×7cm)   | Square<br>(10.1×10.1cm)   | Square<br>(9.9×9.9cm)  | Square<br>(10.4×10.4cm)   |
| Material and weight | Silver  | Silver, 2.0kg   | Gold alloy, 2.15kg  | Gold alloy, 2.9kg  | Gold alloy, 3.38kg  |
| Regulations         | Regulations on the National Seal (Presidential Decree No. 83)                     | Regulations on the National Seal (Cabinet Order No. 643)                            | Regulations on the National Seal (Presidential Decree No. 16096)                    | Regulations on the National Seal (Presidential Decree No. 20641)                     | Regulations on the National Seal (Presidential Decree No. 23236)                      |
| Handle design       | Unknown   |  |  |  |  |

National Symbols of the Republic of Korea



National flag: Taegukgi

**Constituent parts:** White background, taegeuk circle, and four trigrams  
**Basis:** Act on the Flag of the Republic of Korea (Act No. 10741, May 30, 2011), Enforcement Decree of the Act on the Flag of the Republic of Korea (Presidential Decree No. 24425, March 23, 2013), etc.



National anthem: Aegukga

**Composer:** Ahn Eak-tai (November 1935)  
**Lyrics:** Four parts and refrain \* Writer unknown  
**Background:** Conventionally recognized as the national anthem



National flower: Mugunghwa

**Meaning:** Eternal blossom that never fades  
**Background:** Conventionally recognized as the national flower



National emblem: Naramunjang

**Constituent parts:** Mugunghwa, taegeuk mark, star, ribbon, and the letters ‘대한민국’  
**Basis:** Regulations on the National Emblem (Presidential Decree No. 23399, November 28, 2011)



National seal: Guksae

**Dimensions:** 10.4 centimeters on all sides, 3.38 kilograms  
**Form:** (Grip) Phoenix, (Font) Hunminjeongeum style font  
**Basis:** Regulations on the National Seal (Presidential Decree No. 24425, March 23, 2013)





Taegeukgi  
is a national symbol of the  
Republic of Korea  
representing Korean traditions  
and ideals.

To honor and cherish the Taegeukgi  
is to uphold our national pride.  
Showing respect for the flag and preserving  
the dignity of the nation  
are ways to strengthen the foundation of our country.

## National Symbols of the Republic of Korea

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
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