



TOI-GYE HISTORY

Toi Gye is the pen name of the noted scholar Yi Hwang (1501-1570 A.D.), an authority on Neo-Confucianism. Yi Hwang was one of the two most prominent Korean Confucian scholars of the Joseon Dynasty, the other being the younger Yi I (Yulgok). Toi-Gye is translated as 'Retreating Creek'. Yi Hwang, or Toi Gye as he is often called, lived at a time of great social upheaval and ethical conflict between the public good and private self-interest.



Born in 1501 Yi was the youngest son of eight children. A child prodigy, he had learnt the Analects of Confucius by the age of nine and went on to develop a passion for poetry. His poem Yadang (Pond in the Wild) written when he was 18 is considered one of his most important works. Around the age of 20 he committed himself to the study of the Ancient Chinese Classical Text 'I Ching' and also to the study of Neo-Confucianism.

Passing his preliminary exams to become a government official at the age of 26 he went on to complete the civil service exams at age 33 with top honours. He chose to continue his education re-entering the national academy [Seonggyunwan](#) in 1534 whilst still working for the government.

He was relentless in his integrity when dealing with corrupt government officials to the point where he was exiled from the capital on numerous occasions. He frequently became disillusioned with the power struggles and political discord associated with government and resigned on several occasions only to be brought back out of retirement to hold positions away from the royal court in rural areas.

Yi was the ideal gentleman-scholar for he pursued self-cultivation and service to his country throughout his life. Greatly respected by Korean Kings Chungjong, Myongjong and Sonjo, his thought even influenced the development of Neo-Confucianism in Japan.

The author of many books on Confucianism, Yi also published a "shijo" collection, a short poetic form popular with the literati of the Choson period.

It was in his later years that he began to build Dosan Seowon, a private Confucian academy offering instruction in the classics and honouring the sages with regular memorial rites. The academy remains a centre for the study of Toi Gye thought, and twice yearly services are held in honour of its founder.

Yi died in 1570 having completed 40 years of public life during which he had served 4 kings. Following his death he was posthumously promoted to the highest ministerial rank. His mortuary tablet is enshrined in a Confucian shrine as well as in the shrine of King Sonjo.

For more information visit; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yi_Hwang