

YUL-GOK HISTORY

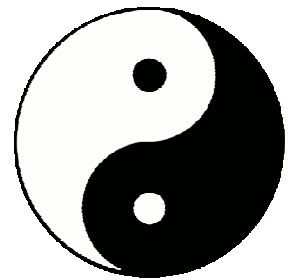


Yul Gok is the pseudonym of the great philosopher and scholar Yi I (1536-1584) nicknamed the "Confucius of Korea". The 38 movements of this pattern refer to his birthplace on the 38 degree latitude and the diagram represents a "scholar". The Yul Gok pen name translates as 'Chestnut valley'.

Yi I was born in Pukp'yong Village, Kangnung, Kangwon Province, on December 26, 1536. Yul-Gok became his pen name and he grew into a Confucian scholar, revered as the 'Greatest Teacher in the East.'

By the age of seven, Yul-Gok had already finished his lessons in the Confucian Classics. He became a Chinsa (a title conferred on scholars who passed the civil service examination in the literary department) at the age of 13.

In winter of that year he passed another civil service examination called Pyolsi with the highest marks. His excellent thesis on the subject of Ch'ondoch'aek (treatise on the Way of Heaven) struck all the examiners with great admiration. It basically looks at all things and how they interact and are affected by Um and Yang philosophy. The thesis was considered a literary masterpiece interwoven with extensive knowledge of history and Confucian philosophy of politics, also reflecting his profound knowledge of [Taoism](#), especially the philosophy of [Chuang-tzu](#).



His mother's death when he was 16 years old brought him deep sorrow. Many arguments arise on the question of Yul-Gok's temporary renunciation of the world by secluding himself on the Diamond Mountains. He may have thought after three years of lamentation and studying Buddhism that the Buddhist phrase, "life is transient," would ease his sorrow. Or he may have understood that the Confucian teaching, "Preserve your mind and nurture your nature," was synonymous with the Buddhist teaching, "Open your mind and see your nature." Finally, he may have regarded it as a pleasure simply to rest in the countryside enjoying the mountains and rivers. Leaving the mountains he focussed his attention on the study of Confucianism. It was when he turned 29 years of age that Yi I passed the higher civil service examination, and his government service started in that year.

Yul-Gok, at age 34, authored 'Tongho Mundap,' an eleven article treatise devoted to clarifying his conviction that righteous government could be realised even in his days, showing measures to achieve it and his aspirations for it. In September of the year he turned 40 years of age, he authored 'Sohak Chibyo' (The Essentials of Confucianism), which is considered a valuable book showing examples for a good Confucian life. The Yul-Gok Chonjip (The Complete Works of Yul-Gok) was compiled after his death on the basis of the writings he bequeathed.

Unlike [Yi Hwang](#), who suffered through tumultuous times and did not enjoy being in politics, Yi I was an active official who thought it important to implement Confucian values and principles to government administration. A trusted advisor of the King, Yul-Gok played a leading role in Korean politics for a little over 10 years but retired at the age of 40 when he became frustrated by the level of conflict that had developed within the Korean political environment. He returned to politics again 5 years later in 1581 holding various ministerial positions and striving to resolve some of the political turmoil of the times but by 1583 felt that King Seonjo's non-committal attitude made it difficult for him to remain in office and he finally retired in 1583 and died in the January of the following year.

For more info visit: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yi_I

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