

Biographical Notes

Toshio Egawa (4 November 1935 –) – Businessman/philanthropist

Toshio Egawa is a Japanese businessman, author, journalist, art collector and karate martial artist who has made significant donations to museums and libraries in Japan and Singapore.

Egawa was born into a Samurai family and was exposed at an early age to the classical Japanese arts, including martial arts (karate and judo), Japanese flower arrangement and music.¹ He grew up in Tokyo and the Tohoju North region,² and was a high school student during the American Occupation of post-war Japan (1945-1952).³ He read economics at the Meiji Gakuin University, and worked part time at a foreign news agency while studying there.⁴ He graduated in 1959.⁵

After he completed his studies, Egawa spent the bulk of his career at two major Japanese corporations – Minebea and Konica. He began his career as an executive at Minebea in the 1960s,⁶ and rose the ranks to become a member of the Board of Directors (1972-1986) and eventually, Managing Director (1979-1986). In 1986, Egawa left Minebea for the Konica Corporation. He held various executive positions before becoming Managing Director (1992-1996) and later Executive Advisor (1996-1998). He has been the President of Egawa Strategics Laboratory since 1998.⁷

Egawa was one of the pioneer group of Japanese industrialists that helped build the Jurong Industrial Estate in Singapore. He was involved in the estate's development when he was an executive at the Minebea Corporation in the 1960s.⁸ He was also a frequent visitor to Singapore when he was Managing Director of Konica in the 1990s.⁹

Apart from his corporate career, Egawa is a major collector of art, antiques and artefacts. He and his wife started collecting when they were in their 30s.¹⁰ Since the 1990s, the Egawas have donated some of their collections to various museums and libraries.

The Egawas made their first donation to the Kuboso Memorial Museum of Arts in Osaka to commemorate their fortieth wedding anniversary.¹¹ This was a donation of taiko agraffes – bronze belt ornamental fittings used by ancient Chinese. This was followed by a donation of rare art books on stained glass to Egawa's alma mater, Meijin Gakuin University.¹²

¹ Egawa, Toshio, *The criteria for those who reach the top to lead with mind and heart*, Singapore: ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute (2018), p. ix.

² Egawa, *The criteria for those who reach the top to lead with mind and heart*, p. 140.

³ Egawa, *The criteria for those who reach the top to lead with mind and heart*, p. 140.

⁴ Egawa, *The criteria for those who reach the top to lead with mind and heart*, p. 140.

⁵ Egawa, *The criteria for those who reach the top to lead with mind and heart*, p. xxxi.

⁶ *Singapore Embassy in Tokyo FB page* (9 November 2017), retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/SingaporeEmbassyTokyo/posts/iseas-yusof-ishak-institute-held-a-workshop-and-book-launch-for-two-toshio-egawa/1592122100809443/>

⁷ *Toshio Egawa Private Archive Collection in the ISEAS Library Singapore*, Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, (2017), p. xxxi.

⁸ *Singapore Embassy in Tokyo FB page* (9 November 2017).

⁹ "Gift of antique ceramics", *Straits Times*, 8 January 2010.

¹⁰ "Gift of antique ceramics", *Straits Times*, 8 January 2010.

¹¹ Egawa, *The criteria for those who reach the top to lead with mind and heart*, p. 140.

¹² "Gift of antique ceramics", *Straits Times*, 8 January 2010.



Between 2010 and 2018, Egawa made several major donations to Singapore institutions, including the Asian Civilisations Museum (2010),¹³ National Library Board (2011)¹⁴ and the ISEAS Library (2010, 2016-2018).¹⁵ Donated items included ceramics, books, calligraphic works, historical letters and manuscripts, philatelic collections, photographs and paintings.¹⁶ The main themes of his donations to the ISEAS Library relate to imperial circles in Japan during the Meiji and Taisho eras, and to the subsequent Japanese imperialism in Asia from 1894 to 1945.

¹³ "Gift of antique ceramics", *Straits Times*, 8 January 2010.

¹⁴ *Singapore Embassy in Tokyo FB page* (9 November 2017), retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/SingaporeEmbassyTokyo/posts/iseas-yusof-ishak-institute-held-a-workshop-and-book-launch-for-two-toshio-egawa/1592122100809443/>

¹⁵ *Toshio Egawa Private Archive Collection in the ISEAS Library Singapore: An Enlarged Catalogue* (Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2019), p. xxviii, blurb on back cover.