

# Selected Manuscripts, Speeches and Letters by Lee Kong Chian

李光前文稿、讲辞与信函选编



Compiled and Translated by  
Jane Wee & Ina Zhang

黄美萍 章星虹  
编译



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National Library Board

100 Victoria Street

#14-01

Singapore 188064

Tel: 6332 3133

Fax: 6332 3233

Website: [www.nlb.gov.sg](http://www.nlb.gov.sg)

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## PREFACE

Lee Kong Chian (1893-1967) was a famous entrepreneur and philanthropist of Singapore and Malaya. Almost everyone in the region has heard about him, but not everyone is familiar with his life and outstanding achievements as he was a very unassuming man and kept a very low profile. He even refused to let a Chinese school he financed be named after him.

After his death, many people would like to know more about his life but there is neither an authoritative nor comprehensive book on him. When the Tan Kah Kee Foundation and the National Library Board (NLB) were planning to hold an exhibition on the legacy of both Tan Kah Kee and Lee Kong Chian, the preparatory committee found it particularly difficult to depict Lee Kong Chian's ideas and views, as not much research had been done on the man. During the first meeting of the committee, Prof. Wang Gungwu suggested that it would be useful to compile the speeches and letters of Lee Kong Chian as that had not yet been done.

This small book is the result of the joint effort of Ms Jane Wee of the NLB and Ms Ina Zhang, media analyst and editor. Produced under the constraints of time and budget, this booklet contains only 17 speeches and letters by Lee Kong Chian. Though incomplete, it contains interesting information on the character and views of this modest man and his dedication to a multiracial and multicultural Singapore.

The compilers of this booklet have managed to collect the speeches and letters scattered in newspapers and magazines within the short period of time given to them. It is a good beginning which I hope will be followed by future research on this important figure in Singapore and Malaysian history.

The booklet is bilingual as some documents are in English while others are in Chinese. The compilers have provided each document with either a Chinese or English translation, as the case may be, to enable the reader to have a better appreciation of the thoughts and ideas of Lee Kong Chian.

**Leo Suryadinata (Prof.)**  
Director, Chinese Heritage Centre  
October 2008

## 序

李光前（1893—1967）是新加坡与马来亚有名的企业家与慈善家。居住在这个区域的人都听过他的名字，但是，很少人了解他的生平与卓越的成就。这是因为他为人谦虚低调，他甚至反对将他资助的华校以他的名字命名。

李氏逝世后，有人想多了解他的生平事迹，然而，坊间却找不到一本具有权威或者比较完整的有关他的著作。当陈嘉庚基金会与新加坡国家图书馆董事会准备举办有关《承前启后 继往开来：陈嘉庚与李光前》的展览时，筹委会发现，要展现李光前的思想与观点最为困难，这是因为很少人研究这位名人。在筹委会的首次会议上，王康武教授就建议有必要收集有关李光前的演讲与书信，因为以前没人做过。

这本小册子是图书馆员黄美萍小姐与新闻工作者章星虹小姐合作的成果。由于时间及经费的限制，她们只能收集17篇李光前的演讲与书信。虽然不是很完整，但是，我们从中可看到这位谦虚先贤的性格与思想，以及他对多元种族与多元文化的新加坡所作的努力与贡献。

这本小册子的两位编者，在很短的时间内，从零散的报章杂志上成功地收集了这些演讲与书信。这是一个很好的开端。我希望，以后会有更多人继续研究这位在新加坡与马来西亚史上举足轻重的人物。

这本小册子以双语出版：有些原文是英文，有些是华文。两位编者特地将每一篇文稿翻译成华文或者英文。这么一来，不同语文的读者都能够更好地了解李光前的思想与作为。

廖建裕教授  
华裔馆馆长  
2008年10月





# INTRODUCTORY NOTES

The National Library Singapore is presenting the “Legacy of Tan Kah Kee and Lee Kong Chian” Exhibition on July 18-December 31, 2008. In the process of our research for the Exhibition, we came across some primary literature of historical value from various sources, mainly from *Nanyang Siang Pau*. This included a number of manuscripts, letters and speeches by Lee Kong Chian.

In consideration of the fact that only a handful of Chinese titles on the life and contributions of Lee Kong Chian have so far been published in China and none in English, we have compiled 17 of Lee Kong Chian’s manuscripts, letters, and speeches, originally written either in English or Chinese, into this collection.

English-Chinese translation is provided for each of the selected manuscripts, letters, and speech so as to meet the needs of readers with different language preferences.

This collection is nevertheless a humble attempt to add to the existing literature about Lee Kong Chian. It is our belief that the primary literature would provide our readers with some insight to his personality and demeanour, and would be of some use to researchers and writers interested in writing about Lee Kong Chian. It is also our sincere hope that this collection would spur others to come forward with more literature in relation to Lee Kong Chian, especially his original manuscripts, speeches and/or letters, to help fill the gaps in this collection.

**Jane Wee & Ina Zhang**

October 2008

## 出版说明

新加坡国家图书馆于2008年7月18日—12月31日举办《承前启后 继往开来：陈嘉庚与李光前》展览。在为该大型展览搜集和整理资料的过程中，我们接触了许多原始历史文献资料，其中包括李光前的文稿、讲辞和信函，主要来源于当时的《南洋商报》，颇具历史研究价值。

就目前已出版的有关李光前生平事迹与贡献的书籍而言，华文传记仅有数部在中国出版发行，而同类英文书籍则未见面世。有鉴于此，我们将上述李光前的文稿、讲辞和信函原件共17篇汇编成册，为读者呈现《李光前文稿、讲辞与信函选编》。

书中收录之文稿、讲辞与信函，当年分别以英文或华文书写。在将之汇编成册的过程中，我们采用了中英对照翻译的方式，以满足不同语言背景的读者的不同阅读需求。

这部《李光前文稿、讲辞与信函选编》的出版可谓一次粗浅的尝试，旨在李光前研究领域起到抛砖引玉的作用。我们希望这部原始文献选编，能助读者加深对李光前的了解，同时也为专事研究李光前生平的学者、文学创作者提供所需的第一手历史资料。我们也期冀看到更多有关李光前的研究专著和文献，尤为希望读者能找到更多李光前的文稿、讲辞或信函原件，以弥补这部选编未及收录之缺憾。

黄美萍 章星虹

2008年10月

# POLITICAL IDENTITY

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## 政治认同

#### BACKGROUND

Lee Kong Chian went to the United States for an international rubber conference shortly before the outbreak of the Pacific War, and was stranded in the US during the war period. He returned to Singapore in late November 1945 when the World War II ended. The following letter was carried by *The Times* on July 12, 1945 when Lee Kong Chian was in Britain, and in the letter he expressed concern for the future of the Chinese in Malaya in view of an uncertain political prospect.



Lee Kong Chian (1965). Source: Nanyang Siang Pau © Singapore Press Holdings Ltd. Permission required for reproduction.

李光前（1965年）。

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## To the Press: Future of Malaya -- A Chinese View

"Dear Editor,

Sir - In view of the interest displayed in your article on 'Malay Union' and owing to the importance of the subject itself, I ask your indulgence to state my views.

I lived and grew up in Malaya from 1901\*. As a boy I played with Malay children and later worked with Malays and others in Malaya. I like and admire the Malays and hope that their interests and welfare, together with that of the Malayan peoples as a whole, will be the objects of British long-term policy.

I welcome the acceptance of the principle of 'Malay Union' by H.H. the Raja of Sarawak. I would go a step farther. There is ethnological, geographical, and economic justification for such a union to embrace the whole of Borneo, the Netherlands East Indies, Malaya, and possibly Siam or at least Southern Siam. The present political division of Borneo between the Dutch, the Crown Colony, Sarawak, and British North Borneo is not ideal for the welfare and natural development of the country as a whole. The recent statesmanlike utterances of Field-Marshal Smuts on the desirability of union between the British, Dutch, and other Western nations, lend powerful support to this idea. A somewhat similar artificial division existed in Malaya -- the Colony, the Federated and Unfederated States -- and such division was not and is not best suited to the fullest development of the country's potentialities or the happiness and welfare of the inhabitants.

In 1939 the population of Malaya included 39 percent Chinese and 37 percent Malays. The balance consisted of Indians, Eurasians and British in that numerical order, together with a sprinkling of other nationalities. The Chinese include local born and immigrants. The Malays also include local born and immigrants from the neighbouring islands. Research conducted by the late Dr. Van Cuylenburg under the auspices of the Rockefeller Foundation and Raffles Museum has proved the existence of Chinese in Kelantan for over 700 years. Tombstones in Malacca prove the continuous presence of Chinese in Malacca since the 15th century. It is acknowledged that Chinese immigrants are law-abiding, industrious, and peaceful and without political ties or obligations to their homeland. Never can it be suggested that Chinese immigrants have shown any concern for political or territorial acquisitions.

Malaya under British rule, direction, and guidance and with the assistance of British finance was mainly developed with Chinese sweat, blood, toil and lives. If there are more wealthy Chinese than British it should be remembered that the Chinese outnumbered the British by about 100 to 1 and that for every single wealthy Chinese, hundreds and thousands have died in the jungle and outlying districts struggling against a hostile climate and environment in the development of the country. Conditions following upon the first World War gave an unhealthy impetus to narrow nationalism in most countries -- an impetus accentuated by the economic slump of the early thirties -- and it would have been surprising indeed if Chinese wherever domiciled has escaped the influences of such worldwide trends.



There are over 70,000,000 Malays inhabiting the Asiatic Archipelago from Malaya to the Philippines; they claim to have originated in the Highlands of Sumatra. There are about 2,500,000 only in Malaya. Japanese propaganda, incensed by the Chinese boycott of Japanese goods, and other outside influences, might endeavour to provoke disharmony between Malays and Chinese. There is no reason why such influences should succeed. There is every reason for a continuance of the absolute friendly relations which have always existed in Malaya between British, Chinese, Malays, and other nationalities. The Chinese have the highest regards for the British sense of justice and fair play and the law and order which is a concomitant of British rule and an essential prerequisite to social and economic stability and development. The Chinese have shown this regard by their ready, loyal, and willing cooperation both before and during the recent emergency. The Chinese recognize that their paramount duty everywhere is to live, practice, and enlarge the conception of the old teaching of 'brotherhood within the four seas'.

It is agreed there is room for improvement in the economic conditions of the Malays. This can surely be accomplished without detriment to the other races and without reserving senior Government posts exclusively to the British and Malays in the Malay States. Especially is it desirable that the Malays continue to receive their free elementary education and assisted higher education. (The Chinese supported their own schools from their own resources coupled with Government grants in aids). Further, the Malays should be encouraged and trained, together with other local born citizens, for agricultural and commercial pursuits and in the management of the large industrial undertakings, such as railways, docks, public utilities, hydraulic projects etc. To confine them to the Civil Service exclusively will not serve their best interests.

In conclusion and having regard to what may have happened during the past three years. I venture to suggest that during the interim period following upon the liberation of Malaya, a commission should be set up consisting of individuals free from preconceived ideas and prejudices, capable of an objective investigation and study of the facts and which will be charged with the duty of making recommendations for the future government and development of the area so as to give the widest effect to the four freedoms envisaged for all peoples in the *Atlantic Charter*.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,  
LEE KONG CHIAN.

Regis House, King William Street, E.C.4."

\* Note: Lee Kong Chian actually followed his father Lee Kuo Chuan to Singapore in 1903.

Source:

*The Future of Malaya: a Chinese View. The Times. July 12, 1945.*

背景资料：

1942年，李光前赴美出席国际橡胶会议，后因太平洋战事而滞留美国。第二次世界大战结束后，李光前于1945年11月底返回新加坡。此函发表于1945年7月12日的《泰晤士报》，当时人在英国的李光前，在函件中表达了对马来亚华人政治前景的关切之情。



Lee Kong Chian (1965). Source: Nanyang Siang Pau © Singapore Press Holdings Ltd. Permission required for reproduction.

李光前（1965年）。

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## 致编者：马来亚之未来——华人社群的见解（译文 / Translated Text）

“编者先生台鉴：

鉴于贵报刊载之文章中对‘马来联盟’之关切以及议题本身之重要，鄙人冒昧投书，万望海涵。

吾自1901年始\*居于马来亚，并成长于斯。孩提时与马来儿童同嬉戏，成年后与马来人及他族同胞在马来亚同工共事。吾对马来人喜爱及钦佩有加，故期许马来人之福祉及马来亚其他民族之福祉，能同为大不列颠长远政策所涵及。

吾欢迎沙撈越首长H. H. 接受‘马来联盟’之原则，亦望就此议题进言。吾认为，鉴于族群、地域、经济因素之考量，此联盟足应涵盖整个婆罗洲、荷属东印度和马来亚，甚至暹罗或至少暹罗南部。然而，就目前婆罗洲之政治分域，这块土地分为荷属殖民地、英直辖殖民地、沙撈越以及英属北婆罗洲，这对整体国家之利益和自然发展均不甚理想。最近，国际政治家如斯穆茨将军（Field-Marshal Smuts），阐述了英、荷及其他西方国家之间的理想联盟方式，客观上亦为上述观点提供了强有力支持。今日之马来亚，分为直属殖民地、马来联邦和马来属邦，这种分域存有类似的人为划分因素，论在过往抑或今日，均无助于充分发展国家之潜能，亦不利于促进居民之福祉。

1939年马来亚总人口中，39%是华人，37%是马来人，其余依次是印度人、欧亚人和英国人，以及为数不多之其他国籍居民。华人中既有在本地出生的，也有外来的移民；马来人也同样包括本地出生人口和来自邻近岛屿之移民。根据由洛克菲勒基金会和莱佛士博物馆联合主办、已故范·盖伦巴格博士（Dr. Van Cuylenburg）主持进行的一项研究结果，华人在吉兰丹州已居住了700余年。位于马六甲之墓碑亦提供了实证，证明自15世纪起就已有华人在马六甲居住。移居本地区之华人，一向被公认为一群奉公守法、勤劳苦干、爱好和平之人，并未与其原居地维持任何政治联系或承担任何义务。指责华人移民有夺取政权或侵占领土野心的说法，实属无稽之谈。

处于英国主政下的马来亚，在财政上获英资助，然其发展主要有赖于华人之汗水、鲜血、辛劳乃至生命之付出。若说富有华人在数目上多于富有英人，其原因是华人与英人的人口比例是100:1；而且，每一名发财致富华人的背后，实际上都有上百甚至上千人曾为了国家之发展而在恶劣气候环境下拼命劳作，最后亡命于丛林或偏僻地区之中。第一次世界大战结束后，一些不良因素导致了大多数国家走向狭隘民族主义——30年代初的经济不景气，又强化了此趋势——事实上，若说定居各地的华人能够独善其身、不受此负面影响，那才是令人讶异的。

从马来亚到菲律宾，亚太群岛上的马来人口总数达7千万，他们自称起源于苏门答腊之高原地带。在这些马来人中，其中大约只有250万居于马来亚。由于日本人对华人抵制日货以及其他外在因素怀恨于心，他们的政治宣传可能会刻意挑起马来人与华人之间之不和。此一企图不应得逞。马来亚的英人、华人、马来人以及其他民族的人民，实应永远维系一向以来根深蒂固之友好关系。华人对于英人之正义感、公平竞争、法律和秩序，颇怀敬意，因为这些良好制度与英人统治相伴相随，也是社会经济稳定及国家发展的一个重要先决条件。正是出于此种敬意，面对近日之紧急状态，华人均表现出乐





于从命、忠心不贰以及愿意合作的特性。华人意识到自己的首要义务是履行和传播‘四海之内皆兄弟’的古训，并将其发扬光大。

众所周知，马来人的经济状况仍有待改善。然而，在不损害其他族群的利益、在不为英人或马来州府之马来人保留政府高级职位的前提下，这个目标依然可以达成。一个尤为理想的做法，是让马来人继续接受免费初级教育，并在高等教育方面得到援助（在这方面，华人是自办教育，依靠自身资源，外加政府的拨款资助）。此外，政府亦应鼓励和训练马来人，使之能够与其他在本地出生之公民一道，投身农业生产和商业运作，参与管理大型工业企业，如铁路、码头、公共服务、水利工程等等。若将马来人局限于处理民事公务，其实并非真正为他们的利益着想。

简而言之，考虑到过去三年所发生的事情，吾冒昧地建议，随着马来亚之光复，在过渡期间应设立一个由无成见或偏见的人组成的、具备客观调查及研究事实能力的委员会，委以向政府就本地区之未来发展献计献策之重任，以求最大限度地实现《大西洋宪章》所推崇的四大自由。

李光前  
诚挚拜上  
瑞吉别墅，威廉国王大街  
E. C. 4.”

\*注：李光前实于1903年随父亲李国专移居新加坡。

资料来源：

致编者函：马来亚之未来——华人社群的见解。英国泰晤士报，1945年7月12日。