

# The Chinese Dilemma

YE LIN-SHENG

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YE LIN-SHENG

华人的困境

PUSTAKA PERDANA



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## PREFACE

I HAVE DWELT on "the Chinese dilemma" in Malaysia ever since I read Mahathir Mohamad's *The Malay Dilemma* (1970) more than a quarter of a century ago. In 1990 I began to put my thoughts down on paper. My progress was tortuous as I lacked the necessary erudition and found it difficult to gather material.

In 1992, I came across Lynn Pan's *Sons of the Yellow Emperor: The Story of the Overseas Chinese* (1990). Two thoughts struck me as I read this saga about the millions of Chinese who left the shores of China to seek their fortunes overseas. The first was that the persecution, cruelty and humiliation these Chinese suffered were perpetrated not by the indigenous peoples of the lands to which they had journeyed, but by the white colonisers—the Spaniards in Manila, the Dutch in Batavia, the British in Australia and Canada, and the white Americans in California.

My second thought was that if I could enlist Lynn Pan's assistance I might be able to tell my story and tell it better. I thought that if I could tap into her command of the English language and her familiarity with the history of the Chinese diaspora, my attempts to spell out the Chinese dilemma might get somewhere.

I got in touch with her through her publisher and we met half a dozen times to talk at length about the issues set out in this book. Among other things, she introduced me to Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (1940) and Thomas Sowell's *Preferential Policies: An International Perspective* (1990). Reading these books, I became more convinced than ever that the Chinese dilemma in Malaysia called for someone to articulate it.

I am most grateful to her for agreeing to act as scribe. I now know that without her I would have continued to flounder for many more years without result! I must also record my thanks to my Girl Friday Xu Bingyuan, who for so long has typed and retyped many a simple sentence, and to my classmate Chen Hanqiang, whose thoughtful insights and knowledge of the Malaysian Chinese community have informed my understanding of many issues.

I am responsible for the general thrust of the book, the views expressed in it and for any awkwardness in the way I argue my case. Discussing these views with friends and showing them an earlier draft of the manuscript in the closing stages of the book was a salutary exercise. While conscious of the emotions evoked by the subject matter, I must confess to my surprise at finding how sensitive it has remained. I can only ask my many friends across the racial spectrum to believe me, or at any rate to give me the benefit of the doubt, when I say that the arguments I put forward are not intended to score points for any side, but rather to foster understanding between the peoples of our country.

YE LIN-SHENG  
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