



STANDING ON THE CLIFF

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*Political writings
by Tay Tian Yan*


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TAY TIAN YAN was born in Malacca, Malaysia. He received his B.A. degree (Journalism) from Taiwan and his Master degree from United Kingdom.

He began his career with Sin Chew Daily in 1985. He started as a reporter and then became an editorial columnist, leader writer, executive editor and now as deputy editor-in-chief.

He won several awards for his commentaries and had published four books.



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Preface



It has been more than a decade since I started writing my political columns. The writing began, and, now, cannot be stopped. It feels as though I have been battling with time and wrestling with the issues. It was a long-standing challenge I imposed upon myself.

These articles might have affected my readers. Some have also said, "You are helping us to say what we've wanted to say." Perhaps, a few sufficiently inspiring articles, coupled with the appropriate suggestions and criticisms, have caused some changes. Even minuscule changes may very well be a formidable motivating force.

The hope for change and a fervent belief in the future are the reason for continuing in my writings.

Otherwise, as Plato forewarns, "Those who are too smart to engage in politics are punished by being governed by those who are dumber."

This does not imply that all intelligent individuals have the obligation to participate in politics. However, their continual presence is required in order to remind those who are not as clever but who wield great power that, "You are being watched." Entrusting politics to politicians alone might be very risky.



The title, "Standing On A Cliff", is taken from one of the articles in this book. It also describes how I imagine my outlook of the world to be-- at the edge of a cliff, peering down into a steep



fall, looking ahead into a boundless horizon. Hopefully, this is also a place with a peculiar viewpoint, where everything can be seen in a different light.

This compilation consists of articles from the period just after the “308” political tsunami, when Pak Lah handed over the reins to Najib. It was a time of shock and change in Malaysia . A time when the old was gone but the new had not come.

People were suspicious of all that happened, and were hesitant of the future. At such critical moments in history, political observations, commentaries and discussions should be equipped with a keen sense of social responsibility, justice and, most importantly, moral courage.

Standing on the edge of the cliff is a precarious matter. One slip, and you never know if it’s just a bruise, or if it’s time to say Sayonara.

Events, topics, even individuals will gradually fade with the past. But, most of the time, writing remains. As a spark of insight, or as a moral guide for the distant future.

I want to offer my sincerest gratitude to my colleagues in Sin Chew Daily whose understanding and heartfelt concern for me were a warming source of comfort during the writing process.

I also want to thank Karim Raslan for sharing his ideas and encouragements, and for writing the preface. Differences in language should not be the cause of estrangement within a society. Instead, we need many more individuals who are able to bridge the gaps between the languages which will increase the exchange and divergence of ideas.

I believe that after crossing these language barriers, we will find that we are not very different from each other after all. Conversely, we will discover many similarities, including our values and the dreams we pursue.

This is the reason for publishing an English edition. I want to thank all those who contributed to the translations: Dominic Loh, Soong Phui Jee, Chong Ciew Ju, Tan Char Di and my niece, Chang Yee Chien.

Lastly, I wish to thank my dear friends Kevin Tan and Bob Teoh whose meticulousness in the editing and proofreading of the English edition was a great help to me. I would also like to point out that any fault found in the book belongs entirely to me.

Foreword

by Karim Raslan

Just over three years ago, one of Sin Chew Daily's most prolific and hard-hitting columnists started translating his work into the English language on regular basis and posting it onto the internet.

Almost immediately, writers such as myself sat up and took note. Here was a fresh—at least to those of us who didn't read Chinese—and vivacious voice coming from the nation's most avowedly intellectual newspaper.

However, as I followed his postings I quickly realised that Mr Tay brought a lot more to his work than was immediately apparent. He was by no means a mere polemicist. His interests were broad and wide-ranging—international geo-politics and economics featuring alongside the requisite diet of local political intrigue.

Educated both in Taiwan—where he studied journalism and in the UK—where he completed a Masters in Economics, Mr Tay possessed a diverse and unusual range of experiences. Indeed, his cosmopolitan, world view, coupled with his birth and initial primary and secondary education in Malacca gave him a uniquely Malaysian perspective.

Whilst his work is generally loaded with social criticism and lashings of sarcasm, he's not without his hopefulness. Moreover, he's courageous and bold when it comes to issues that he knows mean a great deal to his readers.