

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Due to changes in employment and in country of residence while I was working on this book, the final product took much longer than had been planned. For this I am truly sorry to all those who had waited eagerly for it to see the light of day. In truth, this was a project that was in some ways bounced my way while I was Deputy Director at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS, now ISEAS—Yusof Ishak Institute). I thought it too important a subject to be ignored any further, but other book projects came in the way which for various reasons I had to prioritize. But be that as it may, the book being completed after 9 May 2018, when a new government took power in Malaysia, has meant that a new significance is now given to the life and times of Lee Hau-Shik. Lessons that can be learned from reading about him are definitely relevant to the search for new and less divisive narratives being embarked upon by Malaysianists and Malaysians. The H.S. Lee Papers now kept so competently at ISEAS Library are a rich source of information about the man, and equally importantly, also about the chaotic times in which he lived. Nothing beats browsing through original texts for providing an author with inspiration and insight about a time that is not his own. And so, working on this project has been a humbling experience.

Most importantly, the book is full of reminders about how difficult a peaceful and progressive governance of a multicultural democracy can be, and how easily things can go off the rails in terms of economic progress, fair distribution of wealth and opportunities, and harmony between disparate communities. The historical context is always decisive in a scholar's search for deeper relevance and broader meanings, be it in the study of a man or of his times.

I must first of all thank the family of Lee Hau-Shik, especially Thomas Lee, whose patience I tested to the limit through my delays, and ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, especially the directors under whom I served, Mr K. Kesavapany and Mr Tan Chin Tiong, and the librarians whose help was easily available and warmly given, especially Mr Pitt Kuan Wah and Ms Liang Shuang.

Many others were helpful along the way, and I remember warmly their assistance in the completion of this book, even if I have to leave their names unmentioned here because they are so many, and I do not wish to leave any one person out.

Needless to say, all mistakes and factual errors found herein—and they are bound to be numerous given the volume of material I had to plough through—are my responsibility, and mine alone.