Lim Lian Geok
(林连玉, Lin Lianyu, 1901–85)
*Writer, prominent educationist, fighter of Chinese education, Malaysia*

Lim Lian Geok, who was born in 1901 in China, was one of the founders of The United Chinese School Teachers' Association of Malaysia. He became president of the Association in 1950, and led the association for eight years. During his term as president, he spoke up for the promotion of Malaysian Chinese Education and the legal rights and interests of Malaysian Chinese citizens. He advocated that Malaya be independent, and that races in the country be treated impartially. He also urged the non-Malays to be patriotic to the country, and the Malays to think of all races coexisting and living together peacefully and harmoniously in order to develop the country.

Lim has his early education with his grandfather and was taught to read books such as *San Zi Jing* (三字经), *The Great Learning* (大学), *Golden Mean* (中庸), *The Analects* (论语), *Book of Master Meng* (孟子), *Book of Filial Piety* (孝经), and *Book of Poems* (诗经). When his grandfather died, he learned with his father and studied classical Chinese books such as *Zuo’s Commentary* (左传), and articles by the eight famous prose writers in the Tang and Song Dynasties. By studying these books, he acquired a good foundation in classical Chinese. He learned mathematics and geometry from his father, but due to the limited time he spent learning these, the new knowledge did not have much influence on him.

When he was sixteen years old, he was asked by his father to be an apprentice in a Chinese medicine shop in Xiamen. The family's hope was that he would learn to do business and rid them of the poverty endured by two generations. As an apprentice for three years, he seemed to be experienced enough to do business, but he did not venture into business and instead followed the path taken by his grandfather and father. He furthered his education at the Jimei Teacher Training College, studying there for five years and graduating as an excellent student with the reputation of “student of 90 marks”.

He was employed by his school as a teacher after finishing his training programme and was paid $50 a month, which was the highest among his former coursemates who were also employed in the same school but on salaries that were much lower. In the second year of his teaching career, there was a campus upheaval. This incident was planned by soldiers from the Kuomintang (国民党). The founder of the school, Tan Kah Kee (陈嘉庚), was very annoyed and announced the closure of Jimei School (集美学校). Because of this, Lim was forced to terminate his teaching career and emigrate to Nanyang (countries south of China, especially in Southeast Asia).

Lim based himself in Singapore and met up with Tan Kah Kee again. He persuaded Chen to reopen Jimei School. He then moved to Teluk Intan in Malaysia to visit his relative and was given a recommendation to teach in Air Tawar, a small town in Perak. However, after a month, he left Air Tawar and went to Indonesia. There he met a former classmate who was the principal of a secondary school at the time. Lim then taught in that school for three years. After the three-year contract, Lim returned home, but when his classmate resigned as the principal, he was urged to take over the post.

Although Lim worked in a foreign country, he was concerned about current