

Lecture IV
"The Idea of Singapore – City, Country and Nation"

by

Professor Tan Tai Yong
6th S R Nathan Fellow for the Study of Singapore

Wednesday, 6 March 2019

PROGRAMME

5.45 pm – 6.25 pm	Registration <i>(Light refreshments served)</i>
6.25 pm – 6.30 pm	Guests to be seated
6.30 pm – 7.30 pm	Lecture by Professor Tan Tai Yong
7.30 pm – 8.00 pm	Question-and-Answer Session Moderated by Ms Lydia Lim Head, Training and Talent Development The Straits Times Singapore Press Holdings Ltd
8.00 pm	End

SYNOPSIS

The Theme

In 2019, Singapore marks the bicentennial of a significant turning point in its history – the arrival of the East India Company and the establishment of a British trading settlement on the island in 1819. Marking a bicentennial might suggest that 1819 was a point of origin, where it all began. But, did our history begin in 1819? What was Singapore before the *Indiana* landed on its shores, and how far back does our history go? The Bicentennial is perhaps an opportune occasion to think more deeply about our history and to reflect on whether that history has meaning for our present and future.

In this lecture series, Professor Tan seeks to explain how Singapore has evolved over a period of 700 years. Throughout its long history, Singapore has taken many forms – trading port, colony, port city and city state – and its evolution was often influenced by external forces and factors. He will identify some of the underlying continuities to show that history is not merely a thing of the past; but by understanding how our island has been shaped by its history, we will have a better appreciation of our current and continued challenges as a city-state.

Lecture IV: "The Idea of Singapore – City, Country and Nation"

Singapore is both a city and a country, and arguably one of a kind. It was a classical cosmopolis, colonial port city, and was designated as a city under British rule in 1951. It then, unexpectedly, attained nationhood in 1965, and has since engineered a distinct national identity, built on strong institutions of governance. But being a city and a country at times involves conflicting needs and orientations. Looking inwards within the boundaries of Singapore's shores for rootedness and common identity did not always coincide with the openness, mobility and external orientation of a globalised city-state. This lecture will examine the processes and paradoxes that went into the making of contemporary Singapore, asking how a stable national identity could be built around the constant tensions of being simultaneously global and local.

SPEAKER'S PROFILE

TAN Tai Yong is the Institute of Policy Studies' 6th S R Nathan Fellow for the Study of Singapore.

Professor Tan is President and Professor of Humanities (History) at Yale-NUS College. Prior to becoming president in July 2017, he served as the College's Executive Vice President (Academic Affairs) from 2014 to 2017.

A graduate of NUS, Professor Tan completed his doctorate at Cambridge University. He has been a faculty member of the NUS Department of History since 1992 and served the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences as Sub-Dean (1994–1999), Head of the History Department (2000–2003), Vice-Dean (2001–2003), and Dean (2004–2009). Professor Tan was previously the Vice Provost (Student Life) (2010–2014) at NUS. He was the Founding Director of the Institute of South Asian Studies, an autonomous university-level research institute in NUS, serving from 2004 to 2015. He received Teaching Excellence Awards in 1992 and 2000.

Professor Tan served as a Nominated Member of Parliament from 2014 to 2015. He was awarded the Public Administration Medal (Silver) at the 2009 National Day Awards.

THE S R NATHAN FELLOWSHIP FOR THE STUDY OF SINGAPORE

For information on the S R Nathan Fellowship for the Study of Singapore and the Institute of Policy Studies, please visit <http://www.lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/ips>.