

Lecture V  
“Before Nation and Beyond: Places, Histories and Identities”

Tuesday, 9 April 2019  
Auditorium, Shaw Foundation Alumni House  
National University of Singapore  
11 Kent Ridge Drive  
Singapore 119244

**PROGRAMME**

5.45 pm – 6.25 pm	<b>Registration</b> <i>(Light refreshments served)</i>
6.25 pm – 6.30 pm	<b>Guests to be seated</b>
6.30 pm – 6.45 pm	<b>Remarks</b>  Professor Tan Tai Yong 6 <sup>th</sup> S R Nathan Fellow
6.45 pm	<b>Dialogue</b>  Professor Tan Tai Yong  Professor Wang Gungwu Chairman Board of Trustees ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute
	<b>Chaired by</b>  Mr Janadas Devan Director Institute of Policy Studies
	<b>Question-and-Answer Session</b>
8.00 pm	<b>End</b>

## 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 V: "Before Nation and Beyond: Places, Histories and Identities"

How do nations relate to their history and histories?

The idea of the nation state itself is a relatively new concept in human history, at least as an organisational unit for the world. Yet, today, nation states have emerged as the key players in our world order, shaping the identities of individuals, families, and societies.

Professor Tan Tai Yong and Professor Wang Gungwu will discuss the idea of the nation state, and the role of history in the development of national and individual identities, looking at examples from China, India and Southeast Asia. They will also consider themes in Singapore's history, such as the bicentennial, globalisation, separation from Malaysia, and its evolving identity over the years.

## SPEAKERS' 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 at NUS from 2004 to 2015. He was awarded the Public Administration Medal (Silver) at the 2009 National Day Awards.

**WANG Gungwu** is Chairman of the ISEAS Board of Trustees.

Professor Wang is University Professor at the National University of Singapore and Emeritus Professor of Australia National University, a historian of China and Southeast Asia, and an authority on the Chinese diaspora. He has held several key leadership positions including Chairman of East Asian Institute (2007-18), Chairman of Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (2005-17), Director of East Asian Institute (1997-2007), Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hong Kong (1986-95), and President of the Australian Academy of the Humanities (1980-1988). He was Professor of Far Eastern History at the Australian National University from 1968 to 1986.

## THE S R NATHAN FELLOWSHIP FOR THE STUDY OF SINGAPORE

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