

Lecture VI
"What to Do with History?"

by

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

Wednesday, 8 May 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 Professor Kwok Kian Woon Professor of Sociology & Associate Provost (Student Life) Nanyang Technological University
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 VI: "What to Do with History?"

In his sixth and final lecture of the series, Professor Tan explains the importance of history in our lives. History is not merely a recollection of the past, but historical consciousness, gained through careful study and empathetic understanding, will give meaning and relevance to our past. As we mature as a country, histories will be written and re-written, and fresh historical narratives will co-exist alongside a national narrative. The discovery of Singapore's history will be an on-going process.

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

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