
*The Makers & Keepers of Singapore History* is an immensely interesting read on notions of history making, recording and keeping. The book is an exciting collection of essays which challenges the official Singapore story which, for a long time, had been entrenched in the hearts and minds of Singaporeans. *The Singapore Story*, the title of the second volume of Lee Kuan Yew’s memoir, has been a text set in stone, so to speak – an immutable narrative about Singapore’s past and its growth as a nation. The authors in this collection tell us that Singapore’s history is multilayered and cannot be told in a linear fashion. They explore the ways in which the history of the island nation should be researched and presented which, they assert, must highlight diversity, multiplicity and a vision of the past which is necessarily generous in its embrace. Indeed, *The Makers & Keepers of Singapore History* compels the reader to be aware of the various narratives and threads which shape the past of Singapore. Importantly too, the book underlines the fact that the past of any nation is a palimpsest, constituting different layers, and to close the door to this awareness would provide for a stunted understanding of self and society which could only be detrimental to the meaningful growth of any nation. The essays in the collection demonstrate that Singapore’s past is profoundly pluralistic.

The Foreword, written by Professor Garry Rodan, quite succinctly puts down the intention of the book: "*The Makers & Keepers of Singapore History* represents a major intervention in the study of how Singapore history is created and reproduced. It highlights systemic and deep-seated impediments to independent research" (iii). The book adopts a innovative approach, i.e. it assembles the views and ideas of a multidisciplinary group of researchers looking at Singapore’s pasts from varying angles and using different genres. Some of the essays explore what resides in archival resources and state-sanctioned discourse, while others move beyond the realm of the carefully documented to include oral history and personal memories. Underlying all the essays however is the sense that history-writing is highly problematic and that there are many obstacles "hindering academic research on the political and social history of post-war Singapore" (vii). Even when it comes to personal accounts and oral histories, there are many dimensions that the researcher must be alert to. For example, to what extent is individual memory shaped by public imagination and discourse? Despite best efforts, how authentic is personal recounting? What challenges face the historian using oral history as a research field? Indeed, *The Makers & Keepers of Singapore History* puts forward numerous