

Speech by Ng Yew Kang, President, Genealogy Society Singapore at the launch of the book '12 Family Histories- A Tapestry of Singapore's Multicultural Legacy' on Saturday 23 September 2023 at 2.00 pm at the POD, Level 16, National Library, 100 Victoria Street, Singapore 188064

Ms Low Yen Ling, Minister of State, Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, and Ministry of Trade and Industry, Professor Wang Gungwu, Advisor, Genealogy Society Singapore, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

A very good afternoon to you. Thank you for being here to witness the launch of a unique book on the family histories of 12 multiethnic Singaporeans. This book is the result of cooperation between the Genealogy Society Singapore and the historic Goh Loo Club. The Genealogy Society is a young society with the objective of encouraging and assisting Singaporeans to research and write their family history. The 114-year Goh Loo Club was founded by prominent persons such as Tan Kah Kee, Tan Lark Sye, Tan Ean Kiam, and Lee Kong Chian. It was involved in supporting the revolution in China led by Dr Sun Yat Sen. It now organises art and cultural activities for its members and the public.

This book delves into the life of twelve families who have called Singapore home for generations. It is an enlightening and timely exploration of immigration roots in Singapore. The book brings to life the stories and experiences of migrant Arab, Bugis, Chinese, Eurasian, Indian, and Peranakan families. Unfortunately, Mr. Subbiah Lakshmanan who wrote an insightful story of the chettiers in India, Singapore, and South East Asia, had abruptly left us due to a sudden fatal heart attack a few months ago. We at Genealogy Society Singapore deeply mourn the loss of a talented young life member. Our condolence goes to the family for the loss of a highly educated and resourceful son, husband, and father.

Unlike 2 previous books on family history published by Genealogy Society Singapore which featured one Chinese family each, this is the first time we are presenting the family histories of 12 multi-ethnic Singaporeans. This is a bold new approach adopted by the Society. We do this for several reasons: first, it signifies that all Singaporeans irrespective of race have their colourful family stories to tell their descendants. Second, it demonstrates that the Genealogy Society is a multiracial society with life members who are Chinese, Malay, Indian, Eurasian, and Arab. We also have associate life members who are Australian, British, American, and even Russian. Third, this approach allows more families to publish their family histories even if they do not have sufficient information to fill a monograph of significant size.

We are exploring with our partner 'My China Roots' to publish family history in web format. The advantage is that it is editable, and can carry videos, more personal portraits at different stages of life, and memorable family gatherings. It can also easily be circulated among family members and friends.

We are grateful to Goh Loo Club for agreeing to co-publish this book with us. The historic club, with a luminous membership, is active in promoting artistic and cultural activities. This is the first time it is promoting family history among its members and friends.

We will continue to encourage and assist Singaporeans to research and record their family histories. We should recover and preserve the story of our forefathers and our extended family members before the information is lost for good.

Finally, on behalf of Genealogy Society Singapore, I wish to thank Ms Low Yen Ling, Minister of State, Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, and Ministry of Trade and Industry, for taking time off her busy schedule to be our Guest of Honour, the National Heritage Board for giving us a minor project grant, the Goh Loo Club for agreeing to be our co-publisher, and the 12 authors for enthusiastically participating in this unique project. My gratitude also goes to the Organising Team who has spent valuable time and effort to ensure the smooth proceeding of this Ceremony, and all of you for gracing this occasion.

Thank you.