Annex: Information on the 2018 and 2021 winning books of the NUS Singapore History Prize

2021 Winner: *Leluhur: Singapore’s Kampong Gelam*

In this elegantly crafted and well-researched book published by Helang Books in 2019, Hidayah Amin brings to light the history of one of the most fascinating districts of Singapore, Kampong Gelam. Named after the *gelam* tree, Kampong Gelam is one of the oldest and continuously inhabited settlements in Singapore. Hidayah paints a rich picture of the area, employing her study to challenge not only the traditional narrative that before Stamford Raffles arrived, this island was inhabited by a small number of sleepy Malay villages, but also the notion of what the word “kampong” connotes. Hidayah demonstrates that for much of the period from the fourteenth century to the nineteenth century, pre-Raffles Singapore was cosmopolitan and dynamic. Far from being an island of sleepy Malay villages, Singapore often served as an entrepot of the Malay world. The Kampong Gelam area, in particular, was for long periods of time the hub of economic activities in this part of the world, connecting Singapore to the Malay Archipelago and beyond.

Deftly weaving together academic, community, and personal history, Hidayah makes an important contribution to our understanding of the long history of Singapore. Her narrative renders Singaporean history more multidimensional and multifaceted. Her elegant prose, which is accessible and engaging to both the academically oriented scholar as well as, importantly, the lay reader, is beautifully complemented by illustrations, maps, and photographs.

2018 Winner: *Singapore and the Silk Road of the Sea, 1300–1800*

*Singapore and the Silk Road of the Sea, 1300–1800* was published by NUS Press with the National Museum of Singapore in 2013. Synthesising 25 years of archaeological research to reconstruct the 14th-century port of Singapore, Prof Miksic’s study tells of a port where people processed raw materials, used money, and had specialised occupations. It portrays a well-organised and prosperous city with a cosmopolitan population that included residents from China, other parts of Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean. It highlights three important sources on Singapore’s long-term history: the archaeology, the historical textual evidence, and new evidence emerging from other excavations in the region, particularly marine archaeology.

Illustrating with more than 300 maps and colour photos, Prof Miksic had presented the history of Singapore in the context of Asia’s long-distance maritime trade in the years between 1300 and 1800. Many readers and reviewers have agreed that the publication has given a new and important understanding of Singapore’s pre-colonial past. In 2015, the book was shortlisted for the International Convention of Asia Scholars Book Prize for the Best Study in the Humanities.