


History of Nation-Building Series

# Nation-Building

## Five Southeast Asian Histories



edited by  
WANG GUNGU

# Contents

<i>Preface by Wang Gungwu</i>		vii
<i>The Contributors</i>		ix
Chapter One	Contemporary and National History: A Double Challenge <i>Wang Gungwu</i>	1
Chapter Two	Nation and State in Histories of Nation-Building, with Special Reference to Thailand <i>Craig J. Reynolds</i>	21
Chapter Three	Rethinking History and "Nation-Building" in the Philippines <i>Caroline S. Hau</i>	39
Chapter Four	Writing the History of Independent Indonesia <i>Anthony Reid</i>	69
Chapter Five	Ethnicity in the Making of Malaysia <i>Cheah Boon Kheng</i>	91
Chapter Six	Historians Writing Nations: Malaysian Contests <i>Anthony Milner</i>	117
Chapter Seven	Writing Malaysia's Contemporary History <i>Lee Kam Hing</i>	163
Chapter Eight	Forging Malaysia and Singapore: Colonialism, Decolonization and Nation-Building <i>Tony Stockwell</i>	191

Chapter Nine	Nation-Building and the Singapore Story: Some Issues in the Study of Contemporary Singapore History <i>Albert Lau</i>	221
Chapter Ten	Nation and Heritage <i>Wang Gungwu</i>	251
<i>Index</i>		279

## Contemporary and National History: A Double Challenge

*Wang Gungwu*

AT THE International Conference of Historians of Asia (IAHA) in Bangkok (1996), there was a panel on nation-building at which it was debated whether it was time for historians to write nation-building histories for Southeast Asia. This appeared rather unadventurous because in 1996 there was much more debate about globalization and transnational developments, even speculation about the end of nation-states. It was pointed out that the break-up of colonial empires in Asia had happened a long while back. Unlike the new nations after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires, those that were established after World War II faced a world that was changing much faster than it has ever done. Since the 1950s, new global markets have flourished, new technologies have reached out in all directions and new social forces have been released. It was surely more important to examine the new emerging factors in society that were transforming human lives beyond recognition. In many countries, these had begun to render the idea of nation-states increasingly irrelevant.

On the other hand, only a few years earlier, German reunification and the dissolution of the Soviet Empire had led to a new wave of nation-building in Central and Eastern Europe as well as Central Asia. And what a dramatic challenge that has been to the Western European experiment in crossing national borders to build new kinds of communities. Since then, the tension between a European Union seeking to double its size and the