

IN CHERISHED MEMORY OF PROFESSOR DR. K.S. NATHAN, 1946 -2025

Danny Wong Tze Ken*



Professor Dr. K. S. Nathan, former Professor of History at the Department of History, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Universiti Malaya, passed away on 28 May 2025. Professor Nathan was born and educated in Kuala Lumpur. Upon completing his secondary education, he underwent professional training at the Malaysian Teachers' College–Regional Training College and qualified as a college-trained teacher in 1966. After several years of teaching, he gained admission to the University of Malaya, where he read History in the Department of History, Faculty of Arts. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours), Second Class Upper, in 1971.

Professor Nathan subsequently pursued postgraduate studies at Claremont Graduate University in California, where he obtained his PhD in International Relations. He later earned a Bachelor of Laws (LL.B) (Honours) from the University of London, followed by the Certificate of Legal Practice in 1996, and a Master of Laws (LL.M), also from the University of London, in the same year.

Upon returning to Malaysia, Professor Nathan rejoined the Department of History as a lecturer. He went on to have a highly distinguished academic career at Universiti Malaya, being promoted to Associate Professor in 1984 and to full Professor in 1994. He was part of a pioneering group of scholars in the Department who strongly advocated the teaching of diplomatic history and international relations. Their efforts culminated in the establishment of the Department of International and Strategic Studies, in which Professor Nathan played a crucial role. He continued to teach in both the History Department and the newly established department.

Within the Department of History, Professor Nathan taught International Relations and Diplomatic History. He also maintained close professional ties with the United States Embassy and was a Fulbright Fellow. Throughout his career, he was a driving force behind the Malaysian Association for American Studies, serving as its President until his passing. Professor Nathan retired from Universiti Malaya in 2001.

Following his retirement, Professor Nathan remained actively engaged in academic and policy-related work. He served as a Senior Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), Singapore (2001–2007); Head of the Centre for American Studies (KAMERA) at the Institute of Occidental Studies (IKON), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) from 2007 to 2012; and Deputy Director of IKON from 2008 to 2012. He subsequently held the position of Director of the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies (IKMAS), UKM, from 2011 to 2013, before joining the Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA), UKM, as a Principal Fellow. Until his passing, he also served as Senior Research Fellow at the Asia–Europe Institute (AEI), Universiti Malaya.

Throughout his illustrious career, Professor Nathan published extensively. His notable works include *Détente and Soviet Policy in Southeast Asia* (1984); *Trilateralism in Asia: US–Japan–ASEAN Relations* (1986); *American Studies in Malaysia: Current State and Future Direction* (1986); *North America and the Asia-Pacific in the 21st Century: Challenges and Prospects for Cooperative Security and Prosperity* (1999); *India and ASEAN: The Growing Partnership for the 21st Century* (2000); *The European Union, United States and ASEAN: Challenges and Prospects for Cooperative Engagement in the 21st Century* (London: ASEAN Academic Press, 2002); *Islam in Southeast Asia: Political, Social and Strategic Challenges for the 21st Century* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005; first reprint 2006); and *Religious Pluralism in Democratic Societies: Challenges and Prospects for Southeast Asia, Europe, and the United States in the New Millennium* (first published 2007; second printing July 2010), in addition to numerous articles in local, regional, and international journals.

Professor Nathan belonged to a generation of Malaysians who bore witness to many of the nation’s defining historical moments. Emerging from the aftermath of war, he lived through the challenging years of the Emergency and witnessed the birth of an independent nation. He was deeply involved in the process of nation-building and consistently championed the ideals of a progressive, fair, and just Malaysia.

I had the privilege and honour of being supervised by Professor Nathan for my BA (Honours) graduation exercise as well as my Master’s thesis. He instilled in me the importance of scholarly meticulousness combined with a broad, critical understanding of historical events. It was also he who impressed upon me the enduring academic principle of “publish or perish.” For his mentorship and guidance, I remain profoundly indebted.

Thank you, Professor Nathan. You will be deeply missed.

***Professor Datuk Dr. Danny Wong Tze Ken** is a Professor in the Department of History and Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Universiti Malaya. He is currently a member of the National Historians Council (2025–2027).