

**IN FOND MEMORY OF PROFESSOR DR. SHAKILA YACOB, SCHOLAR,
MENTOR, AND BUILDER OF MINDS, 1962-2025**

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It is with deep respect and heartfelt remembrance that we honour the life and legacy of Professor Shakila Yacob, an extraordinary scholar whose contributions to Malaysian academia particularly in American History, U.S.- Malaysia History, Business History and Public Policy to continue shaping generations of students and researchers.

I came to know Prof Shakila in 2009, while studying American History at Universiti Malaysia Sabah. Her influential book *Amerika Syarikat: Pembentukan Negara Bangsa* served as one of the foundational texts in my coursework. Even then, as a young student, I felt a profound admiration for her scholarship. I held an early aspiration that perhaps one day I might follow in her footsteps to become an American History scholar in Malaysia, inspired by the intellectual path she had opened.

In 2014, she served as the external examiner for my Master's thesis at Universiti Malaysia Sabah. I vividly recall feeling both intimidated and amazed. Her comments meticulously argued and her knowledge encyclopaedic. Yet beneath the intensity, there was encouragement, an invitation to think more critically, to write more responsibly and to embrace the discipline of historical inquiry.

In 2015, I began my Ph.D at the Department of History, Universiti Malaya, and without hesitation, I chose Prof Shakila as my supervisor. It was the most defining academic decision I ever made. Under her guidance, my intellectual world expanded. She challenged every idea, questioned every assumption and inspected every single word I wrote. She demanded precision, clarity, and honesty in scholarship. To her, historical writing was not merely an academic exercise but also a responsibility.

Her expertise extended far beyond American History. As a renowned Business Historian, she produced influential research on multinational enterprises, colonial economic transitions and the dynamics of foreign investment in Malaya. Internationally recognised, her work appeared in leading journals such as *Business History Review*, *Enterprise & Society*, *International History Review* and a book published by Routledge, *The United States and the*

Malaysian Economy. Her scholarly reach also shaped the field of Public Policy research and consultations, particularly through her long association with the International Institute of Public Policy and Management (INPUMA), where she served as Deputy Director and later Executive Director (2018–2021).

Despite her seniority and impressive global profile, Prof Shakila lived a life of deliberate humility. She guarded her privacy, prioritised her faith and placed her family above all else. She gave quietly and generously, never publicising her acts of charity. She often reminded us that giving was part of one’s preparation for the hereafter. Many of her personal advices were grounded in Islamic teachings, remembering Allah, guard your prayers, stay mindful of one’s intentions and remain grounded no matter how far one’s academic journey goes.

Her commitment to her students was unwavering. Even during her Fulbright sabbatical at the University of Maryland, Washington D.C. (2015–2016), she continued to supervise us closely. Distance never diluted her involvement. Emails arrived with the same intensity as reminders to stay on track, to refine arguments and to read more deeply. Her expectation of excellence transcended geography.

After I completed my PhD in 2019, she did not simply step away as a supervisor. Instead, she placed me “under her wings” once more. This time at INPUMA, where she served as Executive Director. She provided opportunities, mentorship and support, ensuring that my transition into academia was grounded, guided, and meaningful.

The last time I saw her was over lunch at Sunway Pyramid. It was one of the rare occasions when we spoke at length outside academic matters. We talked about life, work and the future. I didn’t know then that it would be our final meeting, but I remember leaving with the same feeling I had always carried after speaking with her, grateful, encouraged and inspired.

Prof Shakila’s legacy is far greater than her publications, positions, or accolades, though these were many. She was a scholar of depth and integrity, a mentor of rare dedication and a woman of quiet strength and unwavering faith. Her influence endures in her students; in the institutions she helped shape and in the many fields of study she advanced.

May Allah grant Professor Shakila Yacob mercy, peace and the highest place in Jannah. Her contributions to academia and to the lives she touched will continue to illuminate our paths for years to come.

Al-Fatihah.

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