



Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS), Kyoto University
SPECIAL SEMINAR

Romanschrijvers and Wartawan Ksatria: Politically oriented Sumatran novelists during the long 1940s

Date/ time: April 16, 2015 (Thursday), from 13.30 p.m.

Venue: Tonan-Tei, Inamori Foundation Building 201 (2nd floor),
Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University

Speaker: William Bradley Horton

Abstract:

Between 1938-1942, Sumatra was the center of an Indonesian language publication boom, including newspapers, fiction, and even non-fiction works. Particularly spectacular was the sudden appearance of literary periodicals like *Alhambra*, *Roman Pergaoelan*, *Doenia Pengalaman*, and *Loekisan Poedjanga*, modeled after the tremendously successful Sino-Malay *Tjerita Romans* and *Pengidoepan* which had been published on Java since the mid-1920s.

Central to the publishing boom was a complex of Islamic, national, and ethnic identities and a growing capitalist drive. Criticism of the literature for violating Islamic mores and for being frivolous thus struck a sensitive vein. From the beginning, however, there were a small number of politically oriented writers like Abdoe'lxarim, Mohammad Saleh Oemar, Matu Mona, Mahals, and Tamar Djaja who not only helped to provide stories for the presses, but justification for the existence of popular fiction going into the Japanese Occupation.

Dramatic changes with the defeat of the Dutch and the 25th Army occupation of Sumatra from 1942, and again with Japan's surrender and the ensuing revolutionary war between the Dutch and the nascent Republic of Indonesia changed the fields of activity of these writers. As part of an effort to understand the changes during this period, this presentation will follow the activities and experiences of several of these writers during this critical decade of Indonesian history.

Moderator: Jafar Suryomenggolo (CSEAS)

About the speaker:

William Bradley Horton is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Southeast Asian Studies Program and the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor Department of History. He has engaged in research on a number of subjects related to 20th Century Indonesian and East Timorese history, particularly focusing on the 1940s, and Japanese involvement in Indonesia. His publications include articles on the comfort women of Indonesia, Japanese women in Indonesia during the occupation (1942-45), and related to the politics of literature in the 1940s, including a study of a novel by the ex-Digulist Abdoe'lxarim M.s. published in 1941. He is currently a researcher at the Waseda Organization for Japan-U.S. Studies.