

Dr. Frank Dhont & Dr. Hannah Ho Ming Yit

“Representations of Painful Memories: World War Two in
Bruneian and Malaysian Literature”

Wednesday, 22nd February 2017 at 2:30 p.m.

IAS Meeting Room 2.27, Level 2, FASS Building

Abstract

The deployment of history in fiction is, and continues to be, a hotly contentious issue. Yet, history largely remains as an enduring source of inspiration for literary writings. World War II under the Japanese occupation arguably features as a powerful episode of history within Southeast Asia, not least in Negara Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia. Two great literary talents, namely the acclaimed Muslim Burmat and award-winning Tan Twan Eng, have used that history as a fundamental basis for their fictional works. With the historical past of a Japanese military presence serving as the novels' shared background, both *Permainan Laut* (2008) and *The Garden of Evening Mists* (2012) carefully weave the painful experiences of individuals and the collective memory of society into their intricate literary fabric. This presentation, thus, examines the ways that these dual authors approach these salient issues—by extricating similarities and differences to contribute to an extrapolation into the richly layered textures of historical narratives. In so doing, it demonstrates the significance of these integral complexities to reiterate, ultimately, the profound and lasting impact of war on society.

Speaker's Profile



Dr. Frank Dhont serves as a historian at the Institute of Asian Studies (Universiti Brunei Darussalam) since 2014, with a research interest in the growth and development of modern nationhood in the 20th Century in Indonesia and in the larger Malay World. His work specifically focuses on the Japanese era in Southeast Asia during World War II as catalyst of major change and socio-political development both for intellectual elites as well as ordinary people in the modern nations of Southeast Asia. He has also developed a research focus on 20th Century Borneo.



Dr. Hannah Ho Ming Yit is a Lecturer in English Literature at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Universiti Brunei Darussalam. She completed her PhD at the University of York (UK). Her fellowships include King's College London (UK) and University of California, Berkeley (USA). Current research interests fall in the areas of memory and trauma studies, the intersections of gender, race and class identities, as well as the diasporic experiences of East Asians as narrated within literary representations produced in the contemporary period.