

A Malay Cinderella: *Chěnděra Lela* and Modernity in Colonial Malaya



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CENDRILLON.

OU LA PETITE

PENTOUFLE DE VERRE.

CONTÉ.

L estoit une fois un
Gentilhomme qui
épousa en secondes nop.

Cendrillon ou La Petite Pentoufle de Verre (1697)

- *Cendrillon, or the Little Glass Slipper*
- Adapted by Charles Perrault
- Another literary version in French published before Perrault, "Finette Cendron" by Marie-Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville, the Countess d'Aulnoy (Cullen 58-59)
- Image source: Wikimedia Commons

THE MALAY HOME LIBRARY SERIES
No. 10.

CHĒNDĚRA LELA

OLEH
MUHD. SA'ID BIN HAJI HUSAIN.



DI-KELUARKAN OLEH
PEJABAT KARANG-MENGARANG,
SULTAN IDRIS TRAINING COLLEGE, TANJONG MALIM.

Chĕndĕra Lela (1931)

- Adapted by Muhd Sa'id Bin Haji Husain
- Illustrator: unknown artist
- No. 10 in the Malay Home Library Series

A possible path of adaptation...

Perrault's *Cendrillon* (1698)

English adaptations (19th to early 20th centuries)

Muhd Sa'id's *Chendera Lela* (1931)

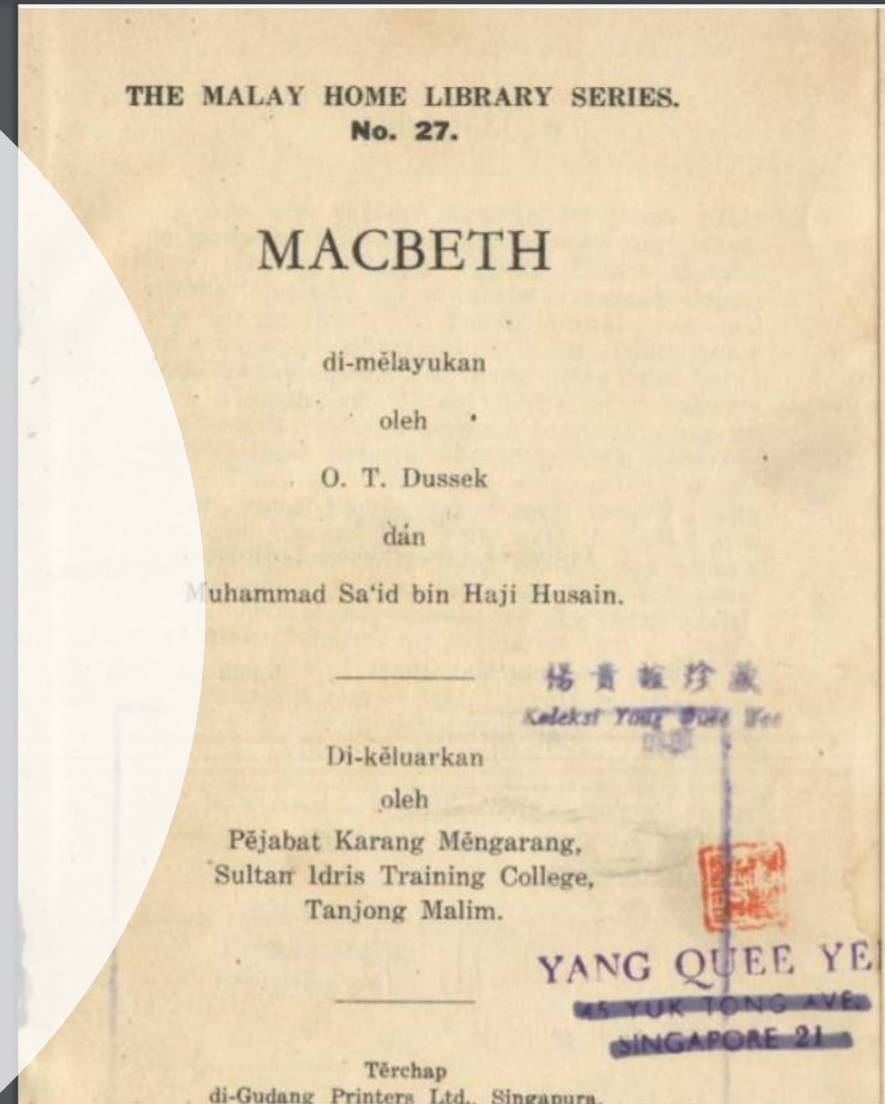
The Malay Translation Bureau

- Established in 1924
- Sultan Idris Training College (SITC), Tanjong Malim, Perak
- O.T. Dussek (headmaster of SITC)
- Zainal Abidin Ahmad @Za'ba (scholar & translator)
- R.O. Winstedt, Assistant Director of Education (Malay schools)
- Image: Sultan Idris Training College (courtesy of the National Archives, Malaysia)



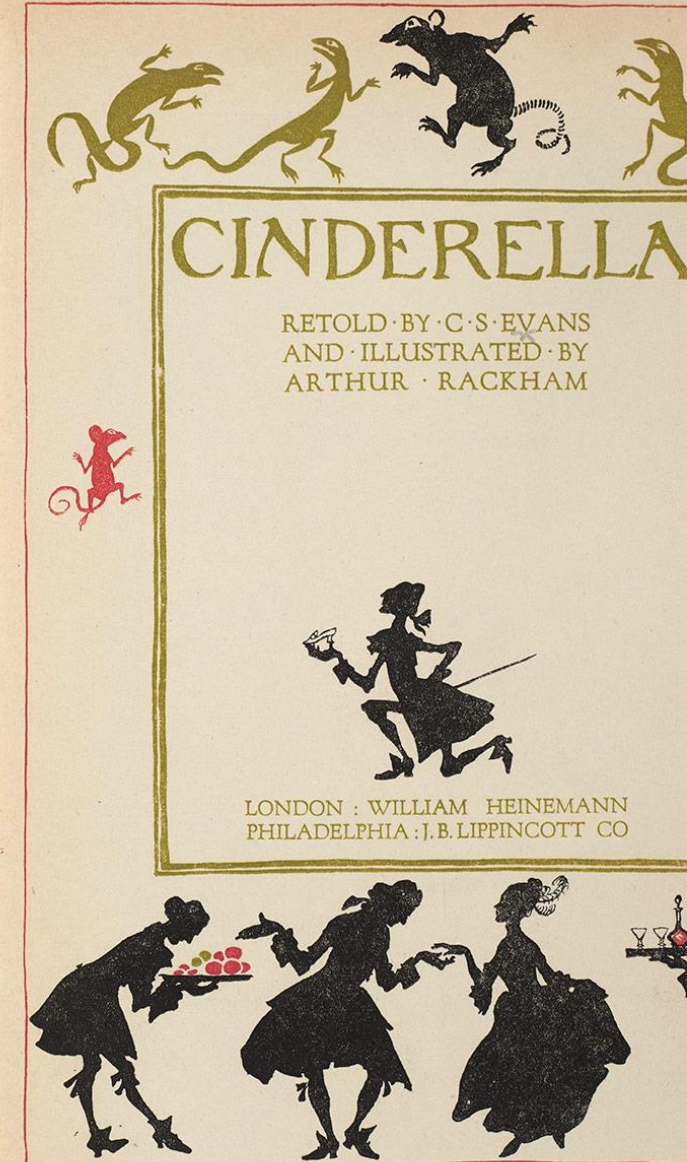
The Malay Home Library Series

- 64 titles published between 1924 – 1957 (Warnk 102)
- Translations of European works:
- Adaptations of Shakespeare's plays
- Sherlock Holmes stories (Arthur Conan Doyle)
- *Faust* (Goethe)
- Translations of stories from *The 1001 Nights* (*Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves*; *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp*)



From *Cendrillon* to *Chëndëra* *Lela*

- C.S. Evans' adaptation, *Cinderella* (1919), illustrated by Arthur Rackham
- Image source: The British Library



From *Cendrillon* to *Chëndëra Lela*

- First published in 1931; 5,000 copies
- 35 pages
- 6 short chapters
- Silhouette illustrations

PRINTERS LIMITED.

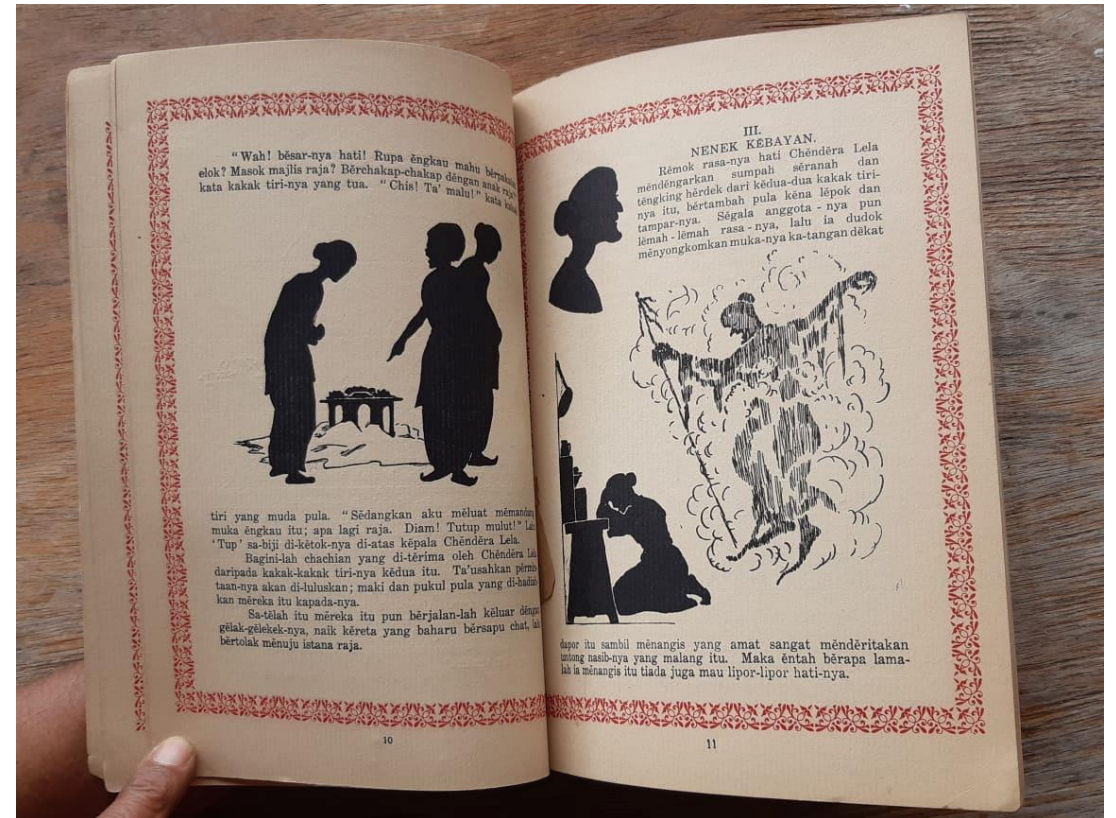
First Edition, 1931 ... 5000 Copies.

- Local adaptations of Western texts in colonial Indonesia as “a kind of canonical counter-discourse of their own” (Jedamski 20)
- “In fact, the emergence of the colonial government’s printing house, Balai Poestaka, in the last decades of colonial rule, can be seen as an attempt to control the process of ‘imitation’ that was gaining ground in indigenous society of the time. In this case, it was the colonial power itself that was forced to ‘write back’ – in the language of the colonized.” (Jedamski 20)

- **Indigenization:** “...the advantage of the more general anthropological usage in thinking about adaptation is that it implies agency: people pick and choose what they want to transplant to their own soil. Adapters of traveling stories exert power over what they adapt” (Hutcheon 150).

The indigenization of Cendrillon/Cinderella

- Cinderella → Chendera Lela
- The fairy godmother → *nenek kebyan* (a female helper figure in Malay folktales)
- The language, style and world of *hikayat* (classical Malay prose texts)



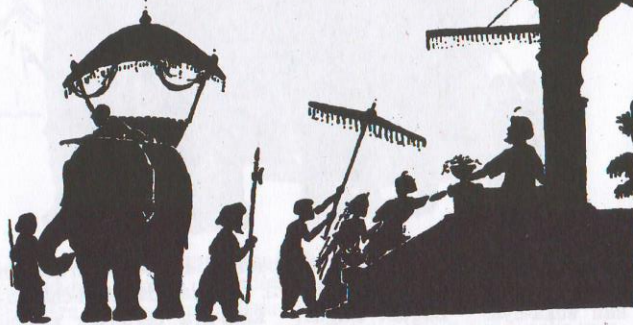
The indigenization of Cendrillon/Cinderella

- Cultural and customary practices e.g. the ball → “tamasha besar kerana sa-orang puteranya laki-laki telah ‘akil baligh” (CL 7).
- Chendera Lela’s dress for the *tamasha*: a “green silk *baju*, a pink shawl made of *kain telepok* (gilded cloth), bracelets and diamond *kerabu* (earrings) in the *ikat bunga tanjong* cut...and a pair of jewelled shoes inlaid with *intan* (diamond chips), shining brilliantly” (CL 17).

aku balek mēngadap mēmpērsēmbahkan hal ini kapada Yang Tēramat. Mulia Baginda Putēra Mahkota."

Maka ia pun bērmohon lalu balek ka-istana mēngadap baginda. Sa-tēlah sampai lalu di-pērsēmbahkan-nya kapada anak raja itu mēngatakan pērēmpuan muda yang di-chari itu sudah-lah di-dapati-nya. Maka baginda pun amat sukachita-nya, lalu bērtitah mēnyuroh mēnyiapkan angkatan sa-ekor gajah dēngan sēgala kēlengkapan-nya akan pērgi mēnjēmput anak pērawan yang di-chintai-nya itu. Sa-tēlah musta'ed, angkatan itu pun bērjalan-lah mēnuju rumah Chēndēra Lela: anak raja itu mēnanti di-istana.

Shahadan sa-tēlah sampai ka-rumah Chēndēra Lela, maka Bēntara Tua itu pun tiada-lah lengah lagi mēnyampaikan titah baginda Putēra Mahkota kapada Chēndēra Lela, ia-itu mēmpērsilakan Chēndēra Lela ka-istana-nya. Pada kētika itu mēnangis-nangis-lah kēdua kakak tiri-nya itu



mēnyēmbah kaki Chēndēra Lela minta ma'af. Sudah Chēndēra Lela pun bērangkat-lah ka-istana raja di-arak dēngan pēlbagai bunyi-bunyian yang mērdū-mērdū. Anak raja sēndiri mēnyambut Chēndēra Lela naik ka-istana.

Hatta pada sa'at yang baik dan hari yang cerah Chēndēra Lela dēngan anak raja itu pun di-kahwink-an-lah. Anak raja baginda dēngan pēralatan yang hebat (hailat) dan ramai adat raja-raja.

Maka dudok-lah kēdua laki istana dēngan sēntosa sa-lama-lama-nya. Tētapi Chēndēra Lela sēndiri bērhenti bērhenti mēnyakiti kakak tiri-nya. Kakak tiri-nya bērdua itu di-bawa-nya juga diam di-istana sama-sama dalam istana itu, sunggoh pun mēreka kēdua sēndiri mēnyakiti kakak tiri-nya. Dēmikian-lah di-chēritakan orasi Chēndēra Lela.

TAMMAT.

The indigenization of Cendrillon/Cinderella

- Chendera Lela as tragic, suffering heroine
- Cries and laments when abused by her stepsisters
- A lack of comic or witty scenes or dialogue from Chendera Lela
- Elephants and other details from a Malay royal court

Illustrations in *Chendera Lela*

“Fixed in print, a folktale becomes a different creation, losing the nuances of performance and gaining the literary conventions of its day. When illustration is added, another level of interpretation is formed and perpetuated.”
(Cullen 57)

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Illustrations in *Chendera Lela*

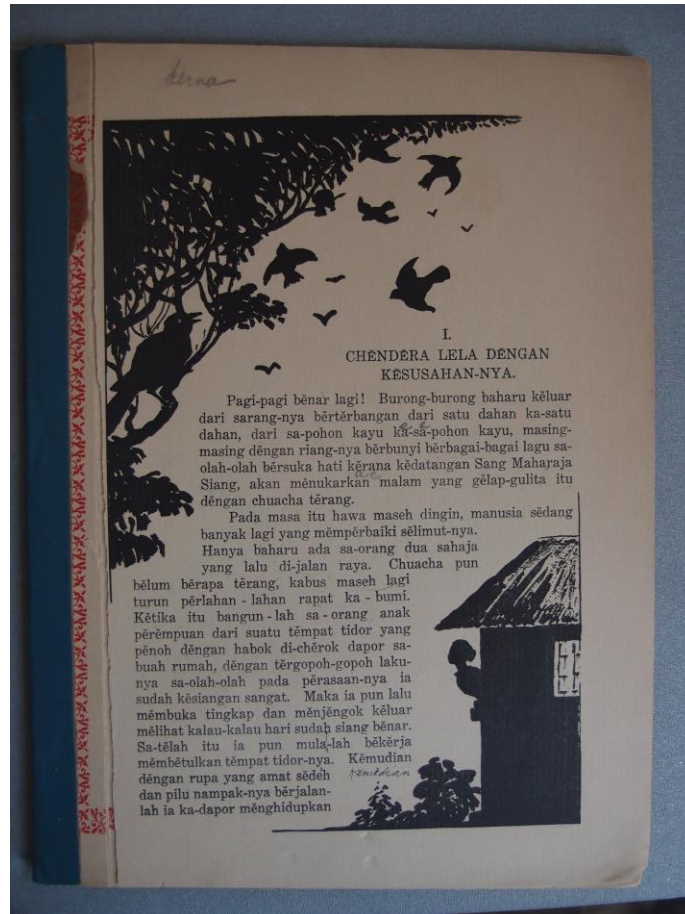


Image: Chapter 1 from *Chendera Lela*

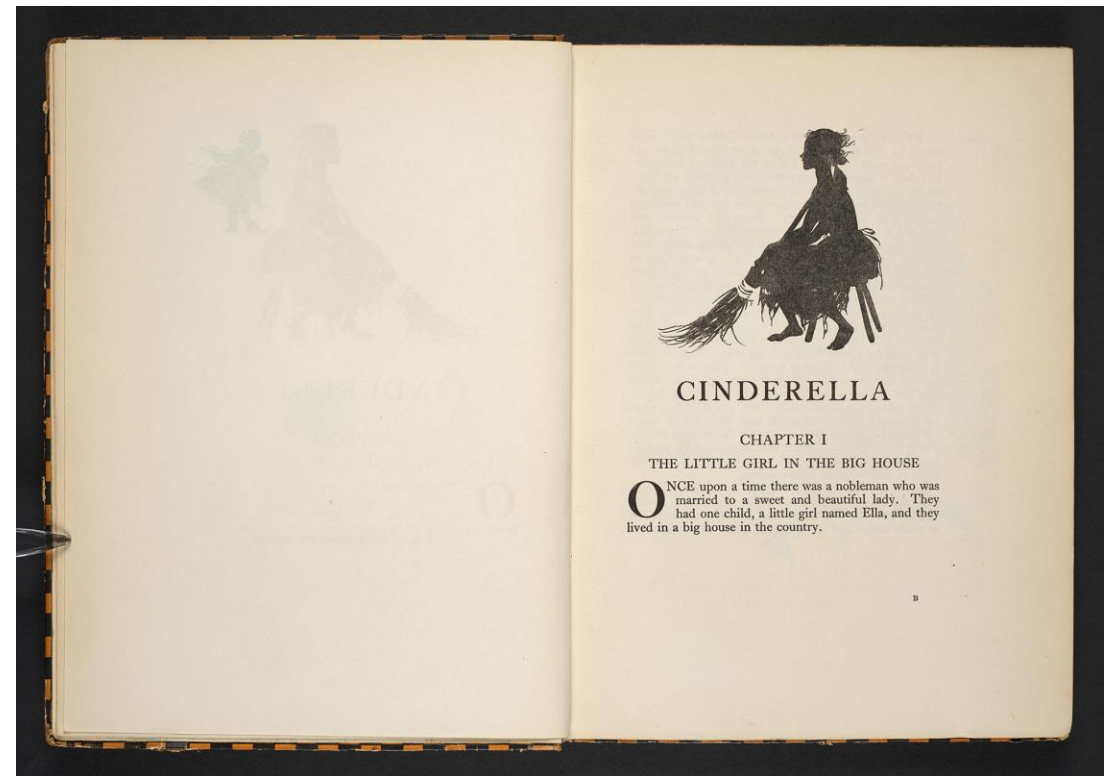


Image: Chapter 1 from *Cinderella* (retold by C.S. Evans)



Image: Chendera Lela's dead mother watching over her.

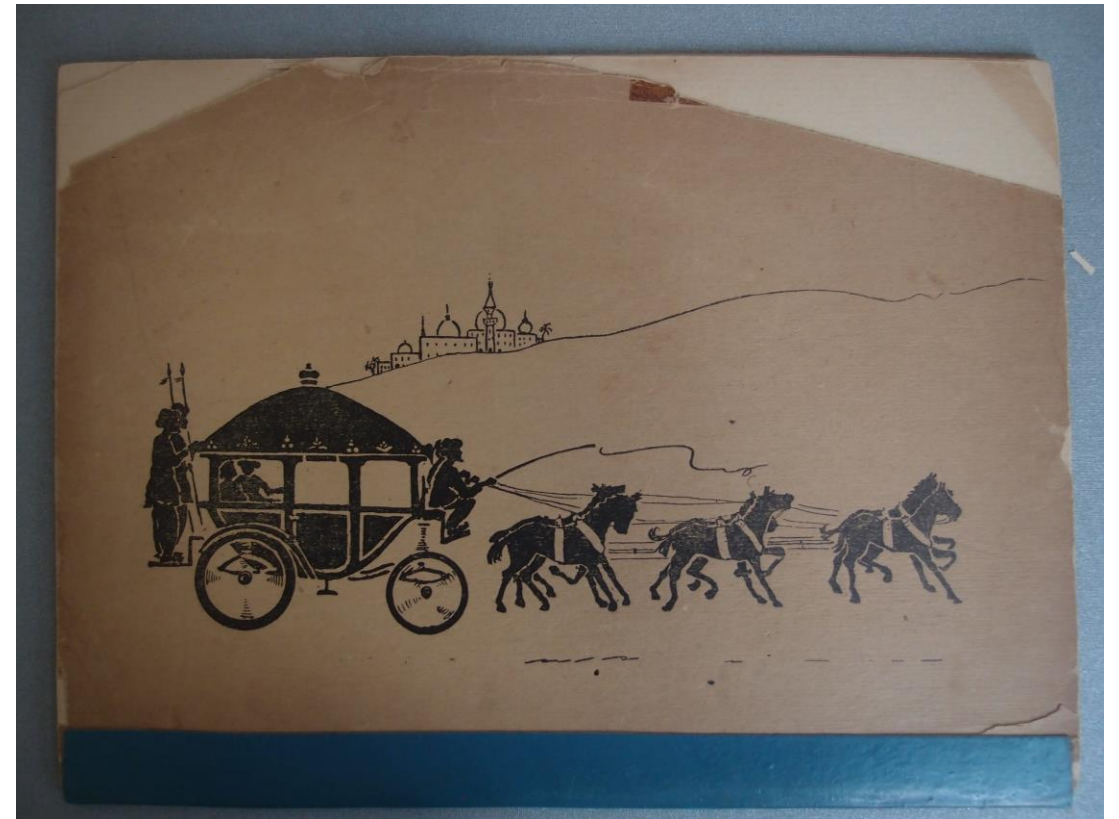
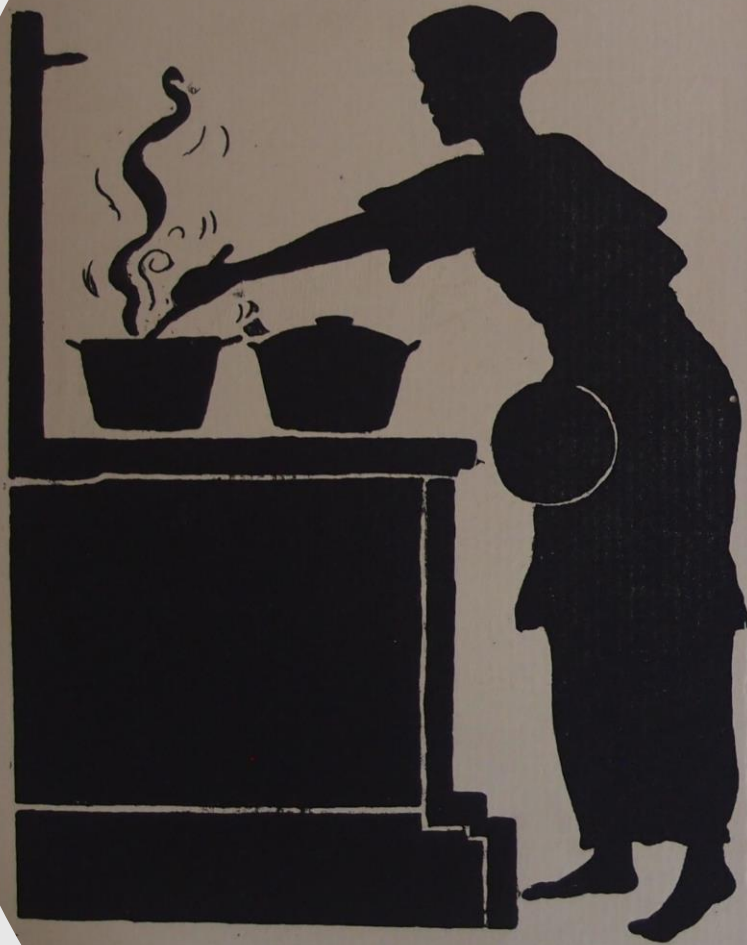


Image: Back cover of *Chendera Lela* showing the pumpkin carriage



II.

TAMASHA DI-ISTANA RAJA.



Hatta pada suatu masa, raja dalam nĕgĕri itu hĕndak mĕngadakan suatu tamasha bĕsar kĕrana sa - orang putĕra-nya laki-laki tĕlah 'akil baligh. Dalam tamasha itu tĕlah di - tĕtapkan dua malam hĕndak di - pĕrbuat majlis tari-mĕnari. Maka ramai - lah sĕgala hamba ra'ayat baginda sibok bĕkĕrja mĕnyiapkan kĕlĕngkapan jamuan sĕrta mĕnghiasi sĕgala istana dan balairong - sĕri. Ēntah bĕbĕrapa banyak kĕrbau lĕmbu yang di - sĕmbĕleh dan

bĕbĕrapa gĕdong makanan-makanan yang di-masak akan jamuan dalam tamasha itu. Istana dan balairong jangan di-kata lagi molek-nya, tĕrhias dĕngan bĕrbagai-bagai panji-panji, teng dan tanglong yang bĕrmacham-macham warna. Maka ramai-lah sĕgala anak muda-muda laki-laki pĕrĕmpuan di-jĕmput oleh baginda ka-majlis tari-mĕnari itu.



Akan kedua kakak tiri Chëndëra Lela ini pun di-jemput-lah juga oleh baginda. Maka tiada-lah terkira-kirakan betapa suka-nya hati kedua kakak tiri Chëndëra Lela ini sa-tëlah mënërima jëmputan baginda itu, hingga hal itu-lah sahaja yang di-përcha-kapkan-nya anak-bëranak hingga jauh malam.

Ada pun Chëndëra Lela ta'usah-lah di-sëbut lagi: jangan-kan di-jëmput, di-pandang sahaja roman pakaian-nya sudah di-tëntukan orang dia hamba orang; istimewa pula mëlihatan pëkërjaan-nya sa-hari-hari. Jadi di-manakan layak ia masuk majlis raja.

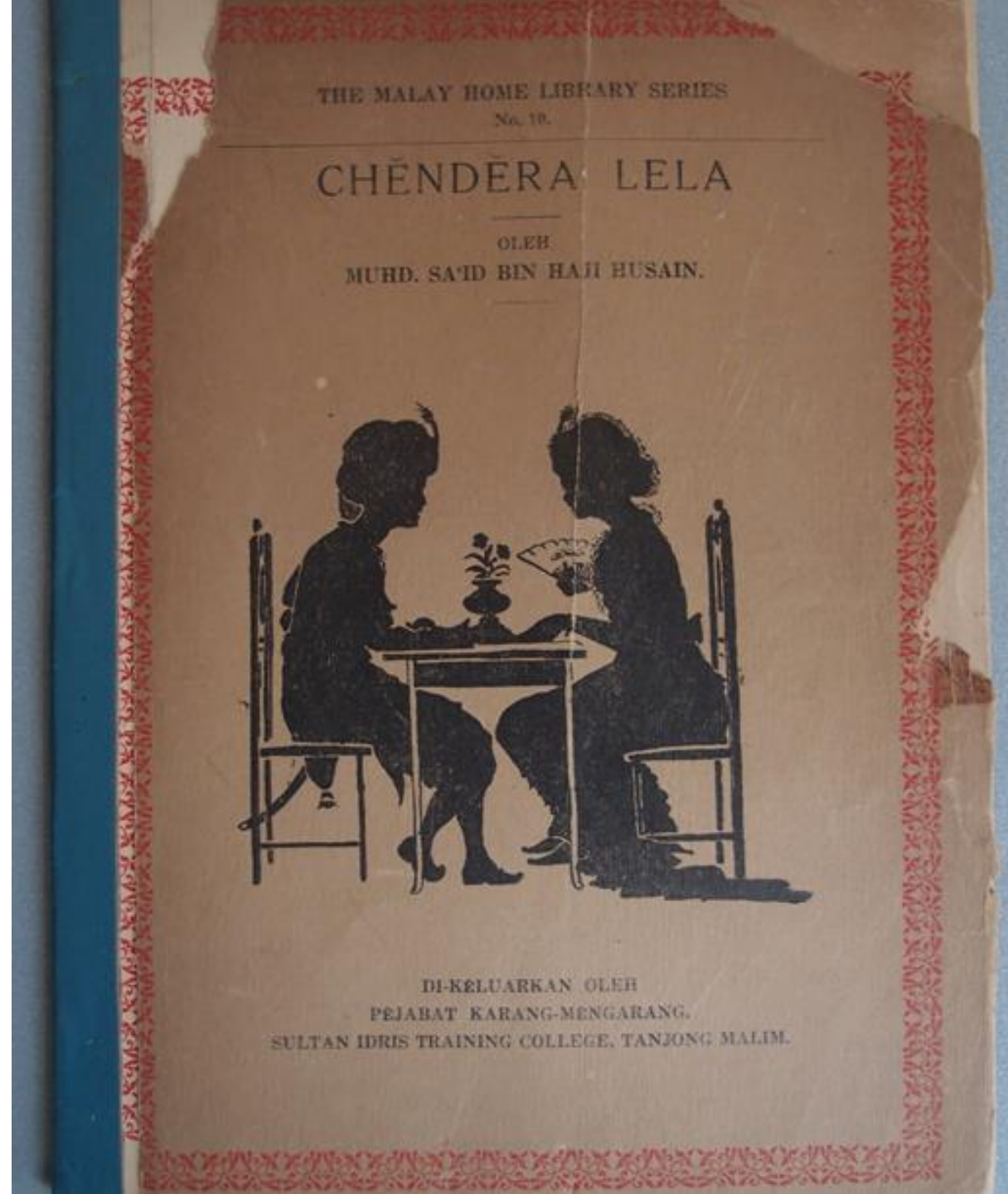
Sa-tëlah datang pada malam yang përtama majlis tari-mënari baginda itu hëndak di-jalankan, Chëndëra Lela pun kënalah mëlayan kedua-dua kakak tiri-nya itu bërhias, hingga ta'



putus-putus-nya mëreka itu mënëriak dan mënuyuroh Chëndëra Lela, kërana masing-masing hëndak bërdahulu-dahuluan siap. Yang ini bëlum lagi sëlësai, sudah yang itu pula hëndak di-ambil. Ini hëndak di-kënanak, itu hëndak di-pasangkan,.....

Apakala sëlësai-lah kedua kakak tiri-nya itu bërhias, Chëndëra Lela pun tiada-lah tërtahan lagi hati-nya, bërchuchoran ayer mata-nya mënangis tërsëdan-sëdan. Maka kedua kakak tiri-nya itu pun bër tanya akan Chëndëra Lela apa-kah yang di-tangiskan-nya itu. Maka jawab Chëndëra Lela dëngan tangis-nya, "Kalau kakak suka mëmbara, sahaya ingin bënar hëndak përgi bër sama-sama. Alang-kah suka-nya hati sahaya kalau dapat bër pakaian chantek-chantek sapërti kakak kedua ini sërta përgi pula ka-istana raja! Dapat-lah sahaya mëliah bagaimana elok-nya. Untong-untong sahaya dapat bër chakap-chakap dëngan anak raja itu sëndiri."

- To what extent does *Chëndëra Lela* fulfil the needs of a modern Malay readership?
- Or, does it merely represent colonial ideas of what Malays should read/how they should see themselves (Soda; Warnk)?



Modernity in Colonial Malaya: Malay Publications

Modern Malay novels:

- *Ceritera Kecurian Lima Million Ringgit* (The Tale of the Theft of Five Million Ringgit) (1922)
- *Hikayat Faridah Hanom* (The Romance of Faridah Hanom) (1925-26)
- *Hikayat Taman Cinta Berahi* (The Romance of the Garden of Erotic Love) (1928)

1930s: A burgeoning Malay-language press (*Saudara*, *Warta Malaya* & many others)

Image: front pages of the first and final editions of *Saudara*



Modernity in Colonial Malaya: *Bangsawan*

- *Bangsawan*: a hybrid 'opera' popular among urban Malaysians – Indian influence – adopted by locals – multiethnic audience
- Image: A *bangsawan* performance in Penang, c. 1895 (courtesy of KITLV, Leiden University Collection)



Conclusion and End

Terima kasih/Merci/Thank you

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