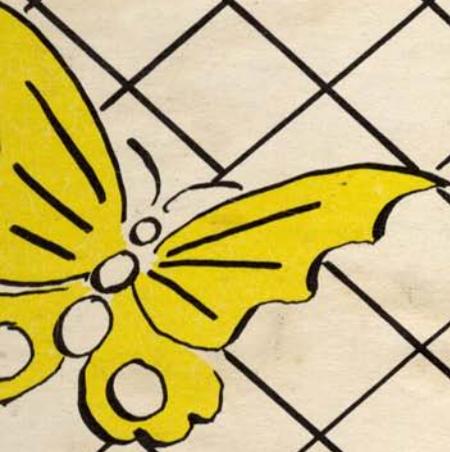


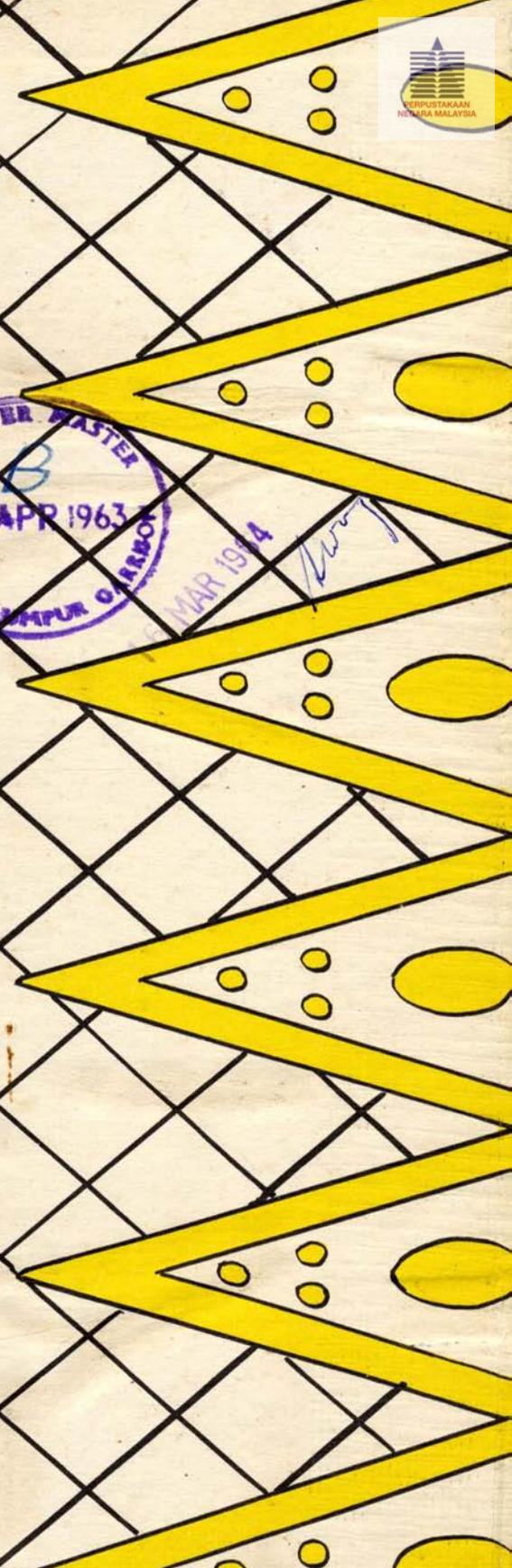


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PADDYLANDS

A STORY OF MALAYA

Illustrated by
NORA HAMERTON



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*The endpapers are reproduced from a
drawing based on a native design for
a sarong.*

CHAPTER I

AT HOME

HUSSAIN and his father, whose name was Mat, and his mother, Habiba, with Sap, his baby brother, lived in Malaya, which, as you know, is in Asia. It is just north of the equator, south of China, and between India and Australia. They lived on the edge of the paddy—that is, 'rice'—fields of Kedah in a little Malay hut like the one you can see at page 11, with its walls and thatch made of nipah palm, raised off the ground on poles, like a boy mounted on stilts. A very pleasant home it was, too, with the canal—or *parit*, as it is called in Malay—running right past its doors. Every one bathed and fished in the canal, and every family had its own boat—or *perahu*—on it. When they went to shop in the little town of Alor Star, or when Mat and the other men went to the mosque, as they did on Fridays, they all took their boats and went by the canal.

Several families lived near Hussain, and he and the other children played together in the shade of the coconut-trees. Sometimes they played blind-man's-buff, though they called it Blind Chinaman, and sometimes they kicked balls of plaited grass about. Again, sometimes it was the wild-bull game, which was splendid for children with bare feet. One boy would be the bull and had to run about on all fours while the rest scampered round him, teasing, but always keeping clear of his heels, for if he managed to kick anyone below the knee that boy had to be the bull.

Then there was a cockleshell game (rather like the knucklestones still played by English country children), which was a favourite with the little girls. It needed a quick eye and nimble fingers, and much