

Colourful history of the Negara Ku

By FIFI LIM

THERE is a longer history to the origin of the *Negara Ku* than that it was derived from the song *Terang Bulan*. In fact, the tune comes from Mahe, Seychelles.

According to Raja Aminah binti Al-Marhum Sultan Abdullah (probably the only person besides her sister, Raja Halijah, who can trace the origin), she first heard the tune of the *Negara Ku* in Mahe, Seychelles, where her father, Sultan Abdullah of Perak was living in exile.

That was in 1892 when she was about eight years old.

The tune was often played by a French Band which gave public performances near her home. As Raja Aminah remembered it, the tune was very popular and was usually hummed or whistled by sailors and others on the island.

In 1885, her brother, Raja Chulan of Perak, visited the Seychelles and heard the tune. He took a fancy to it, taught himself to play it on the violin and brought it back to Perak.

Several years later,

the tune was adopted as the anthem of the Sultan of Perak. How this came to pass is best related by Raja Aminah's nephew, Raja Kamaralzaman Ibni Al-Marhum Raja Mansur.

In 1888, Sultan Idris of Perak was invited to London by Queen Victoria. Raja Mansur was his ADC who, together with Sir Hugh Low, then British Resident of Perak, accompanied the Sultan on his trip.

When their ship docked at Southampton, an officer of the British Government came on board and asked Raja Mansur to

give him the music of the Perak anthem so that it could be played when His Highness was given a ceremonial welcome.

Bangsawan

Raja Mansur thought it would be undignified to reply that Perak had no State anthem, so he decided to create one.

He explained that he had not brought the music with him but he could hum or play the tune if someone could take down the notes. When the bandmaster arrived, he hummed the music of his favourite tune from the Seychelles.

When the bandmaster had gone ashore, Raja Mansur told the Sultan

what he had done. On the way to Buckingham Palace, he reminded the Sultan that when he heard the tune he must also stand to attention as it was now his own State anthem.

From that day onwards, that tune became Perak's official anthem.

Around this time, this Seychelles tune was introduced into an Indonesian *Bangsawan* play which was being performed in Singapore.

There are two possible ways how this introduction came about:

● Through people regularly travelling by steamer between Singa-

pore and the Seychelles at that time; or,

● It was passed on to the *Bangsawan* troupe by someone in contact with Raja Chulan or Raja Mansur.

The troupe was known as *Indra Zanzibar* or *Wayang Kassim* and the music was called *Stambul Satu*. It was extremely popular and was soon picked up by other *Bangsawan* companies.

Years later, it was called *Terang Bulan*.

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N.SUNTA

STATE ANTHEM.