

The story behind Negara-ku

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Today choirs in every State sing the anthem at national events.
Here one such choir in Perak sings the anthem.



THE tune which we all know as Negara Ku has an interesting history and probably only two known individuals alive can trace its origin from their personal knowledge.

They are Raja Aminah binti Sultan Abdullah and Raja Halijah binti Sultan Abdullah whose father, the Sultan Abdullah of Perak lived in exile in the Seychelles.

Both sisters who were born in the Seychelles remember hearing the tune in the 1880s, played by a French band which gave public performances every Tuesday near their house which was close to the seafront.

The song was so popular that it was hummed and whistled by sailors and others on the island.

Raja Aminah and Raja Halijah remember the tune very clearly and have no doubt that it is the same one which is now the national anthem.

Their elder brother, Raja Chulan visited the Seychelles several times during his father's exile and heard the tune then. He took a fancy to the tune and taught himself to play it on the violin.

Raja Chulan played the tune to his brother Raja Mansur who was a junior officer in the Perak secre-

tariat in 1883.

Sultan Abdullah was allowed to leave the Seychelles and went to live in Singapore in 1895.

Raja Kamaralzaman, son of the late Raja Mansur gave this account of how the tune was adopted the State anthem by the Sultan of Perak. His story is corroborated by reliable witnesses.

Sultan Idris of Perak was invited to London by Queen Victoria in 1888, the year after he was proclaimed Sultan. He was accompanied by Sir Hugh Low, the British resident of Perak who took Raja Mansur along with him as his ADC.

When their ship reached Southampton, a representative of the British Government came on board and asked Raja Mansur to give him the music of the Perak State anthem so that it could be played when the Sultan was given a ceremonial welcome.

Raja Mansur thought it would be undignified to reply that Perak had as yet no State anthem so he decid-

ed 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, and when the bandmaster arrived he hummed the music of his favourite tune from the Seychelles.

When the bandmaster went ashore Raja Mansur went to the Sultan and told him what he had done and when they drove in State to Buckingham Palace, he reminded the Sultan that when he heard the tune he must stand to attention himself as it was now his own State anthem. From that day onwards Perak adopted this as its official anthem and was probably the first Malay State to have one.

The music was extremely popular and was later sung by various bangsawan companies as *Terang Bulan*.

The tune was believed to have been composed by the famous French composer and poet Beranger (1780-1887).

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