A long-gone Kelantan custom

Those who go to Kelantan will hear the story of Pantai Cinta Berahi, or Beach of Passionate Love.

At that time, Kelantan celebrated a ritual called Puja Pantai, held on this beach every four years.

The last time it was held was in 1958.

Everyone, including the sultan and his consort, would camp on the beach.

There was no electricity then. However, the then Electricity Board (known today as Tenaga Nasional Bhd) provided a turbine that generated electricity. The crowd used kerosene lamps.

This was during the time when Kelantan people displayed considerable hospitality.

Strangers would be invited to partake in the food of another family’s, and men and women would salam (shake hands) freely.

Someone who was not from the state would be invited to stay the night with a local family at the camp. When dusk set in, there was village entertainment, such as manora, Mak Yong and wayang kulit.

These festivities continued for about a week.

Puja Pantai started on the third day. Drummers of rebana, gong and kertok would warm their instruments while waiting for the elders, men and women to begin the rituals.

The women would march at the forefront, carrying on their heads pulut kunyi, beras kunyi, tepong tawar, eggs and mango leaves.

The men followed, a buffalo in their midst, while the elders at the rear were armed with keris, lembing and gedombak.

The troop marched to a spot at the beach, where a pawang (shaman) and his members were waiting.

The pawang would intone a mantra calling for the guides of the seas, wind, earth and fire to guard the beach, and allow fishermen favourable wind and passage when in rough seas.

They slaughtered the white buffalo and floated the carcass along the shore.

All this while, the rebana, kertok and gong were beaten with intensity, and mysteriously, the carcass would disappear into the sea.

This was the culture and custom of Malays of Kelantan almost 60 years ago.

Such great events have no place today, and so, the vocabularies and languages spoken in each of the rituals are gone.

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