



Offerings to the Sea: The Mah Meri People of Pulau Carey

窥探玛美里海祭

It is not commonly known that 60 kilometres from the city of Kuala Lumpur lies Pulau Carey, an island home to the Mah Meri. These indigenous people practise ancestor worship, and are well known for their wood carving and weaving skills. Their costumes feature skirts made with bark leather and screw pine leaves, shawls and ornaments. The men also don wood-carved masks.

Among them, the villagers from Kampung Sungai Judah would make their annual offerings to the sea on the fifth day of the lunar new year. With the accompaniment of music, they march down in great numbers for several kilometres to the seaside altar.

As the shaman conducts the ritual in front of the altar, the people sing along with the music, giving thanks to the sea and their ancestors for the blessings received over the past year, and also praying for peace and bountiful harvest in the coming year. The shaman dabs paint on the foreheads, palms, and the backs of the hands of every person, symbolising blessings. Then, Mah Meri people dressed in traditional

costumes and one of the masked men go around the *busut*, an earthen mound representing mysterious power, performing the “Mayin Jo-Oh”, a traditional dance that has been listed as a Malaysia’s intangible cultural heritage, to drive away ghosts and monsters.

While in admiration as I stand in this time and place, I cannot help but wonder if this rich culture will disappear in the torrents of development.

(Translated by Daryl Li)

或许很多人不晓得，在距离吉隆坡市区约60公里处有一座凯莉岛，住着笃信先灵力量的玛美里族。这些散居于五个村落的原住民擅长木雕及编织，其服饰即结合这两项：树皮衣、用亚答叶编织而成的裙子、披肩及首饰，男子还佩戴木刻面具。

当中，来自甘榜双溪祖达的村民会在每年正月初五祭海。在音乐声的伴随中，他们浩浩荡荡地游行数公里至海边的祭台，献上供品。



巫师在祭台前作法，众人随着音乐唱歌，感谢大海及祖灵过去一年的庇佑，也祈祷来年继续获得平安及丰收。巫师为每个人在额头、手掌及手背点上水粉，象征祝福。尔后，身着传统服装的族人与一面具人绕着象征神秘力量、编织而成的“武述”（意为蚁丘）跳起被列入马来西亚非物质文化遗产的民族舞蹈“Mayin Jo-Oh”，驱赶鬼魅魍魉。

此刻此景，让我赞叹之余，不禁感慨这丰富的文化会消失在发展洪流中吗？**PN**