

## *Pemali* Tradition: An Expression of Local Wisdom at East Kalimantan

### *Tradisi Pemali: Sebuah Manifestasi Kearifan Lokal di Kalimantan Timur*

\*AWANG AZMAN AWANG PAWI & M. BAHRI ARIFIN

#### ABSTRACT

*The problem of communication among different cultures is an emerging thing nowadays. Pemali tradition as local wisdom is one of the communication ways to communicate culture in society. This article qualitatively describes local wisdom expressed in the pemali (taboo) tradition of Indonesian people by observing three qualitative variables of pemali namely objectives, function, and domain of use of pemali. The data of the research were the pemali texts containing a set of prohibition-and-consequence statement collected from the research informants representing twelve different ethnic groups living in East Kalimantan Province of Indonesia. The data were collected by using ethnographic interview and observation method and were further analyzed by applying hermeneutic method. Results of data analysis indicated that the local wisdom expressed in pemali, representing indigenous culture of the archipelago people, was identifiable within the objectives, function, and domain of use of pemali. With regard to objectives, the local wisdom was expressed in the four objectives of pemali i.e. safety, health, prosperity, and marriage mate. In terms of function, the local wisdom was expressed in two functions of pemali i.e. education including the teachings of values, character building, moral, and ethics on the one hand; and norm/conventions including social norms, and code of conduct on the other hand. With regard to domain of use of pemali, local wisdom was expressed in three domains of use each of which represented the three-dimensional-relation in human life that can guarantee the life balance and happiness i.e. relation between human and human, human and nature, and human and God, the creator of life and nature.*

*Keywords: Archipelago, ethnic group, indigenous culture, local wisdom, Malay world, pemali*

#### ABSTRAK

*Masalah komunikasi antara budaya yang berbeza adalah perkara yang timbul pada masa kini. Tradisi Pemali sebagai kearifan tempatan merupakan salah satu cara komunikasi untuk menyampaikan budaya dalam masyarakat. Artikel ini secara kualitatif menggambarkan kearifan lokal yang diungkapkan dalam tradisi pemali (tabu) masyarakat Indonesia dengan mengamati tiga pembolehubah kualitatif pemali iaitu objektif, fungsi, dan domain penggunaan pemali. Data kajian adalah teks pemali yang mengandungi satu set pernyataan larangan-dan-akibat yang dikumpul daripada informan kajian yang mewakili dua belas kumpulan etnik berbeza yang tinggal di Provinsi Kalimantan Timur Indonesia. Data dikumpul menggunakan kaedah temu bual dan pemerhatian etnografi dan seterusnya dianalisis dengan menggunakan kaedah hermeneutik. Hasil analisis data menunjukkan bahawa kearifan tempatan yang diungkapkan dalam pemali, mewakili budaya asli masyarakat Nusantara, dapat dikenal pasti dalam objektif, fungsi, dan domain penggunaan pemali. Berkaitan dengan objektif, kearifan tempatan diungkapkan dalam empat objektif pemali iaitu keselamatan, kesihatan, kesejahteraan dan jodoh. Dari segi fungsi, kearifan tempatan diungkapkan dalam dua fungsi pemali iaitu pendidikan termasuk ajaran nilai, pembinaan sahsiah, akhlak, dan etika di satu pihak; dan norma/konvensyen termasuk norma sosial, dan kod tingkah laku sebaliknya. Berkenaan dengan domain penggunaan pemali, kearifan tempatan diungkapkan dalam tiga domain penggunaan yang masing-masing mewakili hubungan tiga dimensi dalam kehidupan manusia yang dapat menjamin keseimbangan dan kebahagiaan hidup iaitu hubungan antara manusia dengan manusia, manusia dan alam, dan manusia dan Tuhan, pencipta kehidupan dan alam.*

*Kata kunci: Nusantara, kumpulan etnik, budaya tempatan, kearifan tempatan, Dunia Melayu, pemali*

#### INTRODUCTION

This article is part of a research report on *pemali* tradition in the life of indigenous people of the Indonesian archipelago, investigating a number of and qualitative variable. The part reported in this article is the one concerning qualitative description

of *pemali* in its function as the communication medium of local wisdom among the archipelago people.

The phrase local wisdom is nowadays on the lips of almost everybody throughout the world, taking an exclusive place within the discourse of various aspects of human life both in theoretical

and practical perspectives in line with the spirit and the need of every nation state to identify and uphold their own national identities. The indigenous culture (*pemali* is one among others) as the element of national identity is considered important in upholding national unities and solidarity on the one hand, while at the same time can create chance to promote a nation to be a global village (Bhawuk 2008; Awang Pawi et al. 2022) on the other hand.

The local wisdom of the archipelago people realized in their tradition and cultural practices they underwent since very long time ago and were handed down over different generations until the present time. The ability of a tradition to survive (Rubin, 1999) depends both on the memory capacity of the people and the capability of every individual people in the community to pass on the tradition to the next generation through explicit teaching and implicit teaching. Every generation, in turn, maintains the local tradition of their community in their own way in accordance with the current situation of their era (Awang Azman dan Nasrullah, 2022).

*Pemali* tradition is one of the many manifestation forms of the high intelligence and wisdom of earlier people in understanding the nature of life. Amid the limited access toward information sources and advancement in science and technology as well as the lack of transportation and information facilities and infrastructures, people of earlier generation have proved themselves capable of understanding the nature of life and hence successful in anticipating and addressing every aspect of their life wisely and properly. Local wisdoms that were framed in the form of *pemali* have emerged to be guidance for members of a community in the practice of their daily life so that they may maintain peaceful life and may continuously keep harmonious three-dimensional relations i.e. human to human relation, human to nature, and human to God, the creator of life.

*Pemali* tradition which is implemented as a cultural product of the archipelago people is one of the cultural practices which is basically invented from a process of contemplation, appreciation, and implementation of the supreme values within the national culture. In other words, *pemali* tradition is in fact one of the sources as well as the compilation of local wisdom possessed by the archipelago people that are persistently exist.

The issue of local wisdom strengthening and restoration as described above embraces a number of research problems that need simultaneous

and continuous attention. This article focuses on describing the local wisdoms communicated via *pemali* tradition that are continuously maintained and practiced in the daily life of different ethnic groups of the archipelago people up to the present. More particularly, this article focuses on the analysis of three qualitative variables of *pemali* tradition in relation to the concepts of local wisdom i.e. objective, function, and domain of use of *pemali*. Description of the three variables would answer the research question: how *pemali* tradition serves the function as medium of communication and as the expression of local wisdom given the objective, function, and domain of use of *pemali*?

In line with the research question set above, this article aims at providing data and description about local wisdoms communicated in the *pemali* tradition of the archipelago people by considering the objective, function, and domain of use of *pemali*.

The result of this research is expected to serve as an alternative source of information to those who are willing to improve their understanding about local wisdom within the *pemali* tradition of the archipelago people. A better understanding about local wisdom within *pemali* tradition would become a triggering factor for the emergence of a better appreciation toward the intelligence and glorious wisdom of the nation ancestors who have handed down *pemali* tradition to the present generation. Such an appreciation would in its turn become a motivation source to implement the supreme values taught in *pemali* in the way how people behave and live together both as members of society and as citizens of a nation. It is the practice of living together on the basis of the supreme values of culture and philosophy of one's own nation that would become the very important factor of creating and establishing national identity. Theoretically, results of this research will portrait some residues relating to the issue of both local wisdom and *pemali* tradition. The residues would generate more detailed and comprehensive investigation in the upcoming researches.

It is the glorious wisdom and supreme intelligence of the earlier people expressed in *pemali* that were referred to in this research as the local wisdom possessed by the archipelago people. Further, the local wisdom is elaborated in its relation to the aspects of life within which people implement *pemali*, more particularly in its relation to the objective, function, and domain of use of *pemali* in the daily life of the archipelago people.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### LOCAL WISDOM

Definition of local wisdom varies in different publications depending on what point of view an author needs to emphasize. They, however, shared common agreement on the importance of indigenous knowledge a local community has as the basic element of the local wisdom. Nakornatap et.al. in Mungmachon (2012) defined local wisdom as in the following.

Local wisdom is basic knowledge gained from living in balance with nature. It is related to culture in the community which is accumulated and passed on. This wisdom can be both abstract and concrete, but the important characteristics are that it comes from experiences or truth gained from life. The wisdom from real experiences integrates the body, the spirit and the environment. It emphasizes respect for elders and their life experiences. Moreover, it values morals more than material things (Nakornatap et. al. in Mungmachon 2012:176).

The indigenous knowledge of a community may cover all aspect of human life of both ideas or conceptual and practical ones. Being as an indigenous knowledge, local wisdom is rooted down in the culture and tradition of a community that later evolve to be the characteristics of that community. The Thailand Research Fund (in Mungmachon 2012:176) categorizes community knowledge into three classes, consist: (1) Knowledge to maintain the community is its history, important stories, main values, culture, traditions, regulations, and the important teachings of the community. This knowledge is an indicator of the community's strength in the face of the flow of changing values. (2) Knowledge for a living is the knowledge of occupations, religion, and training for development of the potential quality and health of the members. (3) Knowledge of establishing harmony is the knowledge which comes from people's enjoyment of life or the general knowledge found in coffee shops, retail shops, or meeting places such as temple halls and school sport fields. This knowledge includes storytelling, lullabies, harvest songs, everyday stories and general news. It establishes harmony through close relationships, enjoyment and strength among the members. They value elders who have knowledge that comes from life experiences.

Another concept of local wisdom may be traced in the publication of Eillen, Parker & Bicker (2005) who named it local knowledge which is defined as below.

Local knowledge is: 1) a knowledge that is associated with a place, and a set of experience, and developed by the local people; 2) a knowledge acquired through mimicry, imitation and experimenting; 3) day-to-day practical knowledge gained from trial and error; 4) an empirical knowledge which is not theoretical; 5) a comprehensive and integrated knowledge in the realm of tradition and culture.

Based on the above and other definitions of local wisdom available in the literature, such as those in Sartini (2004), Rahmawati et al. (2012), Siswanto et al. (2013), Dahliani et al. (2015), local wisdom can be formulated as ideas, beliefs, and conducts/ behaviors that are emerging through a synthesis of intelligence and supreme values owned by a group of people at a particular territory serving the function as guidance in the way how to life together peacefully and the said ideas, beliefs, and conducts are summoned as the high valued wealth of the group and are continuously taught to the younger members of the group generation by generation by means of cultural properties owned by the group at a given time (Mohd Hamzah, Mohd Izham & Nurul Sahadila Abd Rani 2022). As a result of deep contemplation and intensive meaningful interaction with environment, the local wisdom gradually develops and later emerges to be the distinctive features of a group capable of distinguishing one community group from another.

With regard to the Indonesian context in particular and the Malay people in general, cultural properties commonly used as a medium of communicating the good teachings of local wisdom is the various genres of literary works of both classic and contemporary ones depending on the needs and situation of an era. Malay people are very familiar with such traditions as *berbalas pantun* (a contest in which a boy addresses a quatrain to a girl who must answer with a quatrain of her own, or it may also a group of boys or people to other groups), and *nina bobo* tradition (a ritual of telling particular stories to kids in bed prior to their nap, later known as lullaby), through which parents may teach their children since their earlier age about morality, character, good deeds etc. by choosing various themes ranging from the life of particular animals or plants, to any of the environmental phenomena such as rainbow, river flood, etc. Such traditions that are well practiced at the present time may best be explained as the traditions characteristics of Malay people that have been since very long time ago practiced by the Malay ancestors. These and other oral traditions of the like, including *pemali* tradition, have proved to be effective mediums of communication through

which ancestors of Malay people handed down their local wisdom and good teachings over generations up to the present time.

### PEMALI

In the tradition of the archipelago people, *pemali* is known as a type of oral utterance into which, in semantic perspective, particular magic-spiritual meanings are attached. The word *pemali* is an indigenous Indonesian lexicon existed in several vernaculars throughout the archipelago. *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*, The Standard Indonesian Dictionary (Badan 2016) defines *pemali* as *pantangan*, *larangan (berdasarkan adat dan kebiasaan)*. In *An Indonesian-English Dictionary* (Echols 2003), the words *pantangan* and *larangan* are both translated into prohibition. Thus, *pemali* is a prohibition emerges due to particular custom and tradition. Echols (2003) defined *pemali* as prohibition, something forbidden to do for it is believed to cause misfortunes, whereas *tabu* (taboo) is something strongly prohibited.

In the theoretical perspective, different publications on local wisdom (*pemali* is one kind

of manifestations of local wisdom) have been made by a number of experts all over the world and the term *taboo* is most commonly used by the experts-see for examples-Denis (1966), Freud (2002) to explain the phenomena referred to in Indonesia as the *pemali*-see also-Sedyawati (2006), Kamal (2009), Permana (2010), Hatmiati (2016). In different parts of the archipelago territory, it is a common phenomenon where local people talked about *pemali* and practiced the *pemali* in their daily life. Even the government institutions of both local and national levels talk about local wisdom (*pemali* is one of it) in their policy making sessions provided that the government are aware of the importance of upholding national identity through empowerment of local people and by encouraging them to implement their local wisdom in the spirit of creating better life and prosperity of all people throughout the country.

In this research, *pemali* is defined as a set of prohibitions originally formulated by people of much earlier generation with reference to cultural values communicated and taught orally from one generation to the other, violation of the prohibitions may bring along misfortunes or disaster either to individuals or to all members of the groups.



PICTURE 1. Illustration of *pemali* sit down on a pillow, you will get abscessed (Nurbawa 2016)

Based on the definition set above, *pemali* tradition of the archipelago people may be further described as having the following characteristics. (1) *Pemali* is a set of rules and conventions containing prohibition to perform certain behaviors on the basis of tradition and custom of a given community group; (2) the prohibition is a mandatory to every individual member of the group; (3) there exist particular misfortunes when violating the prohibitions; (4) the prohibition is implicitly containing good teachings about values and culture of the earlier people since it was formulated based on the result of deep contemplation on the nature of life; (5) the teachings

are generally communicated or taught orally to all members of the society so that they appeared to be a kind of between-generation sequence of cultural messages.

## METHOD

### RESEARCH DESIGN

A research on *pemali* tradition in Indonesia has been conducted in which a number of variables-both qualitative and quantitative-were investigated based on qualitative and quantitative design. This

article is reporting part of the research pertaining to qualitative variable investigated in the research. The investigation was designed qualitatively to see *pemali* as a cultural phenomenon that is used as an inter-generation medium of communication to promote the intelligence and nobility of the ancestors as the result of their deep contemplation and implementation of the supreme cultural values possessed by different ethnic groups of the indigenous people of the archipelago. In this article, concept of local wisdom is investigated in its relation to three qualitative variables of *pemali* i.e. the objective, function, and domain of use of *pemali*.

#### TECHNIQUE OF DATA COLLECTION

The data of this research were a number of utterances known as *pemali*, consisting of prohibition-and-consequence statement, believed and practiced by the archipelago people of Indonesia in their daily life. There was a total of 372 text of *pemali* collected from the informants representing twelve different ethnic groups of the archipelago people residing in East Kalimantan Province. The twelve ethnic groups are (in alphabetical order): Bali, Banjar, Batak, Bugis, Dayak, Jawa, Kutai, Mandar, Manggarai, Paser, Sunda, and Toraja. While a number of *pemali* are well recognized by more than one ethnic groups, the rest are owned by a single particular ethnic group. In other words, some ethnic groups share the same particular *pemali*, and a particular ethnic group has its own *pemali* distinct from those the other groups have. Data were collected by means of observation, ethnographic interview, field notes, and audio recording. The informants representing each ethnic group were purposively determined and randomly chosen 2 (two) informants each.

#### TECHNIQUE OF DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data were then analyzed following procedure advocated by Miles & Huberman (1994) consisting of four steps i.e. collection, reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. By reduction step, the collected 372 *pemali* texts were classified on the basis of the three variables: objective, function and domain of use, resulting in a long list of *pemali* texts that have been sorted out and grouped in accordance with their objective, function, and domain of use. Each data group was then analyzed by applying hermeneutic method (Grondin, 1994) to find out

local wisdom content of the *pemali* texts. The results of the analysis were then displayed and concluded by reference to the previously set research questions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this part, the results of the analysis are displayed to show the local wisdom contents that are communicated by the ancestors to the generations next to them via *pemali* tradition. The local wisdom contents of *pemali* were identifiable within the objectives, functions, and domains of usage of the *pemali*.

#### LOCAL WISDOM IN THE OBJECTIVES OF PEMALI

The results of analysis on the *pemali* texts gave a general description of the objectives the ancestors of different ethnic groups creating *pemali*. After a careful hermeneutic analysis on the available *pemali* texts, there were identified four different objectives of *pemali*, they are successively: safety, health, welfare, and marriage mate. The four objectives represent four aspects of the highest priority in the fulfillment of the people life needs in accordance with the situation of the surrounding natural environment of a given time. The priority aspects were taught to the entire member of the community group via *pemali* which is used as the communication medium considered effective in the effort to create a better prosperous life. The local wisdom content in the objectives of *pemali* lies in the fact that the ancestor of the archipelago people was capable and smart in identifying and specifying the priority aspects of their life to be fulfilled, as well as their high intelligence in choosing accurate symbols to construct the prohibition-and-consequence statement as in *pemali*.

In terms of number of *pemali* for each kind of objective, *pemali* bearing the objective for safety in day-to-day life is the most in number (53.38%), followed successively by *pemali* for health (18.65%), for prosperity (17.36%), and for marriage mate (10.61). The rank order in the number of *pemali* by objective clearly declares the ancestors' perspective and belief about the rank order of basic needs they ought to strive for to create happy and prosperous life as well as to ensure life sustainability of their community and of their coming generations.

### 1. Safety

*Pemali* for life safety purposes is reaching out a number of daily-life aspects such as safety pertaining to one's job (farming, fishing, hunting, etc.), safety in social life and public association, safety in traveling, safety in house hold affairs, in educating and caring children, and so on. The fact that the regulatory scope of the *pemali* that encompassing multi-dimension of life aspects indicated that the people of older generations possessed good deposit of knowledge, sensitivity, and concern (based on which local wisdom embodied) on the importance of ensuring the safety of their community members in the various activities of their day-to-day life. *Pemali* of this kind was identified in the following data.

#### (BG06Sm)

[1] *Pemali memakai payung dalam rumah, nanti akan mendapat musibah.* (It is forbidden to wear an umbrella within a house; it may lead you to a misfortune).

#### (BJ12Sm)

[2] *Pemali bagi calon pengantin bepergian sebelum hari akad nikah, nanti bisa menimbulkan hal-hal yang tidak diinginkan.* (It is forbidden for a future bride or groom to go traveling prior to his/her wedding day, any kind of accident may happen).

### 2. Health

*Pemali* for health purposes that are recognized and practiced by the Indonesian archipelago people including prohibition to do particular deeds to avoid particular diseases or pain at particular part of human body. Such *pemali* deals with various types of diseases and pains potentially suffered when violating *pemali* containing the specified diseases or pains. The inclusion of people health and pain in the *pemali* regulatory scope adequately indicated that people of the older generations considered health as an important aspect to give priority along with safety aspect in the management of their life. People knowledge, sensitivity, and concern about types of diseases and pains as well as ways to avoid them evolved to be the local wisdoms they maintained and practiced up to the present time. *Pemali* of this kind is represented by the following data.

#### (BJ32Sh)

[3] *Pemali makan sambil berbaring, nanti punggung akan lengket di kasur atau bantal.* (It is forbidden to eat something while lying down on bed; your back will be sticky on the matras).

#### (DY17Sh)

[4] *Pemali duduk di atas bantal, nanti bisulan.* (It is forbidden to sit down on a pillow, you will get abscessed).

### 3. Prosperity

The next important aspect of life the older generations gave high priority and thus included within the regulatory scope of *pemali* is prosperity. Based on the number of *pemali* taking account of prosperity, it is known that this kind of *pemali* takes the third place in number which is also indicating that prosperity is in third priority to fulfill in the life after safety and health. This fact explains that the knowledge, sensitivity, and concern (thus, the local wisdom) of the older generation people considers searching for prosperity may only be well executed when the other two priorities, self and family safety and health, have been well fulfilled. In other words, under a situation in which safety and health of oneself or family is not well established, life prosperity is hardly achieved. Within this particular context, *pemali* evolves to be an effective inter-generation medium of communication through which the local wisdom of a community group could be preserved. *Pemali* of this kind is represented by the following data.

#### (TM09Rz)

[5] *Pemali menikah mendahului kakak, nanti susah dapat rezeki.* (It is forbidden to get married overtaking the chance of one's elder brother/sister, your life will suffer from misery).

#### (TR37Rz)

[6] *Pemali memakai baju pada saat mengambil padi dari lumbung.* (It is forbidden wearing clothes when taking rice from the barn).

### 4. Marriage mate

In the tradition of Indonesian archipelago people, there exists a number of *pemali* created for the purpose of getting appropriate marriage mate and

avoiding ones considered not suitable. The inclusion of marriage mate within the scope of *pemali* by the ancestors indicated that marriage mate is one among other phenomena considered important since very earlier period of human life history.

However, *pemali* of this kind is less in number comparing to those pertaining to safety, health, and prosperity. This is to say that part of the local wisdom taught by the ancestors to their younger generation is the one pertaining to the their believes that ideal marriage mate could only be found after the other three priority set in *pemali*, safety, health, and prosperity, have been adequately fulfilled. It is also noted that the use particular symbols in the *pemali* pertaining to marriage mate may indicate level of intelligence and good understanding of the ancestors in selecting communication symbols appropriate to the situation and the need of its era. *Pemali* of this kind is represented by the following data.

**(JW34Jd)**

[7] *Pemali menyanyi pada saat makan, nanti sulit dapat jodoh.* (It is forbidden to sing while one is eating—breakfast, lunch, dinner—, it will make it hard for you to get spouse).

**(BG20Jd)**

[8] *Pemali bernyanyi di dapur saat memasak, nanti dapat jodoh laki-laki tua.* (It is forbidden, for young girls, to sing while cooking at kitchen, you will get an old-aged husband).

LOCAL WISDOM IN THE FUNCTION OF PEMALI

The wisdom and nobleness of the older generation people were reflected in the *pemali* they created especially when viewed in respect of the function of *pemali* known and practiced by different ethnic groups of the archipelago people. In the practice of their daily life, the archipelago people positioned *pemali* as a cultural institution serving two main functions. The first is education function by which they educate themselves about moral, ethic, character building, good conduct, cultural values, religion teachings, etc. The second is regulatory function through which they formulated cultural-based regulation and conventions including social norms, morality norms, and decency manners.

In carrying out its education functions, *pemali* had evolved to be a means of transfer of knowledge as well as a means of forming values, character,

moral and ethics; therefore, it at the same time served as means of preservation and inheritance of those knowledge, values, character, moral, and ethics. Through the prohibition-and-consequence statement in *pemali*, the ancestors transferred their wisdom and nobleness as well as guided in habituating good behaviors among members of their community. *Pemali* serving education function is exemplified by the following data.

**(JW06Sm)**

[9] *Pemali bagi anak-anak kelua dan bermain saat senja, nanti diculik wewe gombel.* (It is forbidden (for children) to go playing out of houses during sun set time, it may cause one is kidnapped by ghosts).

**(BG21Jd)**

[10] *Pemali bangun kesiangan bagi perempuan, nanti jodohnya menjauh.* (It is forbidden (for girls) to wake up late at noon, she will be hard to get a husband).

Provided with knowledge stated in the above *pemali* as well as the habit of practicing the *pemali* in their daily life, the archipelago people had in fact at the same time preserved and bequeathed the knowledge and commendable behavior to their descendants continuously from one generation to the others.

The high level of people obedience toward *pemali* (Arifin & Pawi, 2019) indicated that *pemali* had proved as an effective means in fostering a law-abiding society, a society in which people comply with regulations and conventions they made themselves. The following data are examples of *pemali* serving the regulatory function.

**(TR20Sm)**

[11] *Pemali memanggang daging di atas rumah, nanti mendapat musibah.* (It is forbidden to roast meat within house; it can later be a disastrous).

**(BG21Jd)**

[12] *Pemali meninggalkan makanan yang telah terhidang, nanti dapat bencana.* (It is forbidden to leave food that has been served; it may lead you to a misfortune).

The regulation and convention as stated in the above two examples, although at first it was just an initiative of individual member of the society, but soon after being formulated in the form of *pemali*,

it eventually evolved to be a cultural regulation and convention to whom all members of the society are abided. In the perspective, *pemali* had proved effective in serving the function of preventing people from such deviant behavior as violating the cultural convention and regulation of their own society.

LOCAL WISDOM IN THE DOMAIN OF USE OF PEMALI

The result of analysis on the data of *pemali* texts indicated that the use of *pemali* by different ethnic groups of the indigenous people of Indonesian archipelago was identified to fall into three domains of usage, each of which representing the three components of a three-dimensional relation in human life, they are human-to-human relation, human-and-nature, and human-and-God (the creator of life). The ancestors considered the three-dimensional relation as the basic guidance to strictly uphold in their efforts to maintain life balance and survival of their community. Therefore, public figures and informal leaders in the community constantly make sure that every individual member of their community are being in mode of harmonious relation with each other, with the surrounding natural environment, and with the God, the creator of life. Examples of *pemali* texts representing the three kinds of relation are in the following data.

**(PS07Sm)**

[13] *Pemali jalan/pergi saat orang masih makan, nanti bisa kepuhunan.* (It is forbidden to leave for a travel while the others are still having breakfast/lunch/dinner, it may cause you a disastrous).

**(TM18Sh)**

[14] *Pemali bagi suami membunuh binatang saat istrinya sedang hamil, nanti anaknya cacat.* (It is forbidden for a husband to kill animal during his wife’s pregnancy, his child will be born disabled).

**(BL15Sh)**

[15] *Pemali memasuki area pure saat sedang haid, nanti sakit.* (It is forbidden (for a woman) to enter temple area while menstruating, it can make her sick).

A number of *pemali* explicitly stated norms and regulation pertaining to morals and good manners that must be practiced in social interaction among members of intra and interethnic society. This clearly explained how people of older generations gave serious attention toward the importance of good acculturation (Berry 2008) i.e. creating comfortable social atmosphere in order to avoid conflict between people. In their point of view, any kind of social conflict between people must be eradicated to a minimum point of both in terms of coverage and quantity as the prior conditions in establishing people peace and happiness.

TABLE 1. Three-dimensional relation in human life of pemali tradition

Pemali	Meaning	Objective
<i>Pemali jalan/pergi saat orang masih makan,</i> (It is forbidden to leave for a travel while the others are still having breakfast/lunch/dinner)	<i>Nanti bisa kepuhunan.</i> (it may cause you a disastrous).	mode of harmonious relation with each other
<i>Pemali bagi suami membunuh binatang saat istrinya sedang hamil</i> (It is forbidden for a husband to kill animal during his wife’s pregnancy)	<i>nanti anaknya cacat.</i> (his child will be born disabled).	mode of harmonious relation with the surrounding natural environment
<i>Pemali memasuki area pure saat sedang haid</i> (It is forbidden (for a woman) to enter temple area while menstruating)	<i>nanti sakit.</i> (it can make her sick).	mode of harmonious relation with the God, the creator of life

People knowledge and awareness of the importance of protecting surrounding natural environment as the provider of human life resources had for a long time been established. The ancestors really understood that maintaining a good balance of natural ecosystems as the provider of human life resources be a determinant of ensuring the continuity of human life. On the contrary, the disruption of nature’s preservation as a source of life by human behavior causes the loss of carrying

capacity of nature to human survival. The way how to maintain good relation with nature was taught and perpetuated in the *pemali*

Since *pemali* tradition is not affiliated with the teachings and dogmas of certain religions (Christian Clerk, 1983:5), human relation with God, the creature of life, in *pemali* is expressing the wisdom of older generation people who knew and were aware of the existence of other (supernatural) forces that controlled human life and nature, namely the



power of the Creator of life and nature. A number of *pemali*, as in the above examples, that are currently known and carried out by the people of the archipelago contain prohibitions to do certain actions which basically represent the desire not to interfere with human relations with the Creator.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the results and research findings as previously described, this study concludes that the *pemali*, known and carried out by different ethnic groups of the Indonesian archipelago who live in East Kalimantan, is a medium of communication between generations in expressing the intelligence and wisdom of the archipelagic ancestors as a result of their contemplation and interpretation of the nature and purpose of human life. Their intelligence and wisdom are encapsulated in the formulation of their prohibition-and-consequence statements in such a way that they are present as a string of wise sentences that are believed and obeyed by members of the community concerned.

The intelligence and wisdom become even more impressive considering that it was born from the contemplation of older generation people in a time characterized by a lack of and underdeveloped in all fields of cultural institutions.

Local wisdom in *pemali* lies in the fact that in the midst of the shortcomings and limitations of access to sources of information and the development of science and technology as well as the lack of means and facilities of transportation and communication technology, the ancestors of the archipelago community were able to formulate smart and wise ideas about the nature of life and how to live that life properly.

As the climax, local wisdom in *pemali* is reflected in three aspects observed in creation of *pemali* i.e. objectives, function, and domain of use. With regard to each of those three aspects, local wisdom in *pemali* lies successively in (1) accuracy in determining the four priority aspects of life that became the goal of *pemali*, namely safety, health, prosperity, and marriage mate; (2) effectiveness of the *Pemali* function as an educational and regulatory/regulatory institution; and (3) carefulness in determining the three domains of use of *pemali*, namely the relationship between humans and humans, humans and nature, and humans and the God, the creator of life and God .

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Awang Azman Awang Pawi  
Academy of Malay Studies  
University of Malaya  
50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
awangazman@um.edu.my  
\*Corresponding Author

M. Bahri Arifin  
Faculty of Cultural Sciences  
Mulawarman University  
Samarinda, Indonesia  
bahri.arifin@fib.unmul.ac.id