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## Local Wisdom in Malam Berinai Tradition in Malay Society, Tanjungbalai, North Sumatera, Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

Malam Berinai tradition is part of a traditional wedding ceremony in Malay society. The tradition of malam berinai which is a series of ceremonies is held on the evenings before the wedding ceremony. Malam berinai becomes a very important part in the ceremony to give a signal to the bride. Giving henna to the bride is an attempt to give a sign to the bride as well as the blessing of the family to allow the bride and groom set up a new life. In addition, malam berinai is thanking and praying to God asking for the successful of the marriage ceremony the next day, away from all obstacles and barriers. The purpose of this study is to analyze the form of local wisdom contained in traditional Malay society malam berinai in Tanjungbalai. This study used a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach. Ethnographic approach is the work of describing a culture. The main objective of this activity is to understand a way of life from the perspective of indigenous people. The results show there are four forms of local wisdom in this malam berinai tradition, they are manners, gratitude, mutual help, and care for the environment. The fourth local wisdom is to serve the Malay Tanjungbalai to guide their lives in society and country.

**Keywords:** Local wisdom, malay society, henna, Malam Berinai tradition.

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### 1.0 Introduction

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Henna is a widely known decorative material used to beautify hands and feet. It is also known by the names of Mehndi and Mylanchi. Fetched from a bush known as *Lawsonia Inermis*, Henna leaves are dehydrated and crushed to form henna powder. Then water is added to form a thick Henna paste. In ancient era the Henna paste was used to provide comfort in the diseases related to the blood circulation and various other pains. Today, Henna has got an entirely different usage and significance. Nowadays, Henna is used for beautifying hands, legs and dyeing of hairs all across the world and especially in Indian Subcontinent. Plastic or paper cones are used for beautifying hands and feet, and small brushes are put to use when it comes to dyeing hairs.

Application of henna on the hands and feet of bride, one night before the wedding ceremony is the most common usage but traditions vary country to country; a brief of which is given below: -

- In some Asian countries like India and Pakistan the bridegrooms are also beautified by Mehendi.
- In Morocco the Henna ritual is performed during the 7th month of pregnancy.
- In Kuwait, UAE and some other countries the Mehendi rasm (Henna ritual) is celebrated few days before the wedding ceremony.
- Other than marriages, Henna is used widely by the Muslim community in Kerala (India) on various occasions of religious significance (<http://www.matrimonialsindia.com/blog/significance-of-henna-or-mehendi.htm>).

Despite of the beauty of henna, henna also has medicinal properties. It is recommended widely to dye hair and as the conditioner for both men and women. Henna is also popular for its cooling effect to head. In the hot weather in India, henna is very useful to cool the hair. It can also help lowering body temperature and soothe headaches, fevers, burning feet, and even hysteria or a violent temper. It can increase the luster of nails, is effective in muscular rigidity and even in jaundice ([http://www.sanskritimagazine.com/rituals\\_and\\_practices/importance-of-mehndi-in-indian-culture/](http://www.sanskritimagazine.com/rituals_and_practices/importance-of-mehndi-in-indian-culture/)).

In Indonesia, henna is used also in wedding ceremony to the bride, groom, and family. This research describes the use of henna in Malay wedding ceremony. In Malay wedding ceremony, using henna is part of the cultural wedding ceremony which is called *Malam Berinai*<sup>3</sup>. It is the awarding ceremony henna to the bride and groom before the wedding ceremony the next day. *Malam Berinai* is usually carried out at night after the evening prayers finished. *Malam berinai* becomes a very important part in to the bride. The event signaled to the bride's Malay community has been known since centuries ago. This event came to be known until now and is commonly called "Malam Berinai". *Malam berinai* in the culture of the Malay people Tanjungbalai only carried out at the bride's home. The groom doesn't perform this ceremony at his house. Later, the groom will receive the henna from the bride's house. The groom will put on henna without any ceremony.

Giving henna to the bride is an attempt to give a sign to the bride as well as the blessing of the family to allow the bride and groom set up a new life. In addition, *malam berinai* is giving thanks and prayer to God asking for the successful of the marriage the next day, away from all obstacles and barriers.

In the past, *malam berinai* was carried out three nights in a row to produce the perfect color of henna. But, now it is only performed one night only, held on the evening of the day before the wedding ceremony. Moreover, there is now a henna-shaped gel which is very practical in use and produces great color. Before the ceremony, henna, typically presented several performances and celebrated with dances, *Qasida*, and *sinandong*<sup>3</sup>. *Gubang* dance danced in front of the bride. *Gubang* dance is a special dance dedicated to the bride and groom on the malam berinai held in Tanjungbalai. This event can only

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<sup>3</sup>Sinandong word is a word in Malay Tanjungbalai, in writing technique because it is seen as a term researchers wrote in italics. This term implies as a musical genre of the performing arts, especially the vocals (which are always accompanied by traditional Malay musical instrument). In the world of Malay performing arts, there is a difference between the word sinandong with humming. Sinandong is a genre of vocal music contained in the coal region, Asahan and Labuhan Batu (all of them in North Sumatra). On the other hand, the chanting is a tramp (hythm) typical in Malay music relatively slow tempo (60 beats per minute basis) -in addition to tramp mak host, Zapin, two songs (dancing), and others. It could also be interpreted to chant vocal music in general.

be found in *malam berinai* and not found in any other event in the offering art to the public. Because of the special show, the presentation of dance presentation *Gubang* unlike other Malay dances that can be displayed anywhere and anytime. *Gubang* dance has its own natural space and then specialized position.

*Malam Berinai* is an oral tradition that is still carried out in the Malay community, although the number has begun to diminish. *Malam Berinai* tradition is only done by the Malay society that has relatively good economy life. This is because in the tradition of this *malamberinai* requires a lot of money plus the cost of the wedding party. That is why, most people do not make this *malam berinai* tradition. They just put henna on fingernails for the bride without making ritual. Thus, *malam berinai* tradition is losing its meaning and function nowadays.

As a tradition, *malam berinai* of course has local knowledge. local wisdom is a set of knowledge developed by the ancestors to survive the life as a part of the culture being inherited across generations. Some of this local knowledge usually appears in the old tales, legends, songs, rites, or even the local law.

Local wisdom becomes important and useful only if the local society inheriting it is willing and claiming it as a part of their life. That way, local wisdom can be dubbed as the soul of local culture. Whether or not the local wisdom has been internalized well can be seen from how every part of society's life is guided wisely by their knowledge. This includes daily activities and interaction among the people in the society, and also some unexpected circumstances like disasters (<http://www.neraca.co.id/article/67230/utilizing-local-wisdom-to-combat-radicalism>).

Local wisdom has functions such as cultural reservation, human resource development, cultural and knowledge development by performing some traditional ceremonies, and as the advice and traditional belief (<http://novian25.blogspot.co.id/2012/03/local-wisdom-di-indonesia.html>).

Sibarani (2012), said local knowledge can be seen from the two senses. First, the "Local knowledge is wisdom or original knowledge of a society which is originated from the noble values of cultural tradition to set the order of a society." In this case, local wisdom is more emphasis on the wisdom or discernment to organize social life that comes from cultural values which are sublime. Second, local wisdom is the local cultural values that can be used to set the order of a society wisely and prudently. "In this case, local knowledge is seen as a cultural value that is used to regulate social life.

Local knowledge and local wisdom can be utilized to improve the welfare and create peace in society. Practically, indigenous knowledge and local knowledge is the real truth as it really is beneficial to human life (Sibarani, 2012).

Indonesian community local wisdom is often described as a way to find the solution of various problems that arise in society. Therefore, local wisdom generally interpreted as a way to solve environmental problems in society in their own way, so if compared to the modern society may be comparable to the term "negotiation" or "exchange thoughts". In this regard, the fundamental question is how the Indonesian people especially in rural areas can meet their need for various kinds of information, either through the modern media or the heritage media ([www.socialscienceresearch.org/index.php/GJHSS/article/viewFile/.../801](http://www.socialscienceresearch.org/index.php/GJHSS/article/viewFile/.../801)).

This research identifies the local wisdoms found in *malam berinai* wedding ceremonies. The research was performed in Malay society in Tanjung Balai, province of Sumatera Utara, Indonesia. This research is significant since the tradition of *malam berinai* is rarely performed nowadays. People in Tanjung Balai now have skipped this tradition from the wedding ceremony. So this research tries to preserve this traditional ceremony. Tanjung Balai is chosen as the research place because there are many Malay society in that place.

This study used a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach. The ethnographic approach to qualitative research comes largely from the field of anthropology. The emphasis in ethnography is on studying an entire culture. Originally, the idea of a culture was tied to the notion of ethnicity and geographic location (e.g., the culture of the Trobriand Islands), but it has been broadened to include virtually any group or organization. That is, we can study the "culture" of a business or defined group.

Ethnography is an extremely broad area with a great variety of practitioners and methods. However, the most common ethnographic approach is participant observation as a part of field research. The ethnographer becomes immersed in the culture as an active participant and records extensive field notes. As in grounded theory, there is no preset limiting of what will be observed and no real ending point in an ethnographic study.

Ethnographic approach is the work of describing a culture. The main objective of this activity is to understand a way of life from the perspective of indigenous peoples. As noted by Malinowski, ethnographic goal is to understand the viewpoint of the indigenous people, to do with life, to get his views through his world. Therefore, ethnographic research activity involves learning about the world of people who have learned to see, hear, speak, think, and act in different ways. Not only learning community, more than the ethnographic study of the community.

## 2.0 Methodology of the study

This research uses qualitative method with ethnography approach. Ethnography approach is used to see the culture of Tanjung Balai Malay society and to see the model of cultural inheritance. As it is stated that cultural data assume the form of directly observable material items (tools, cultivated fields, houses, statues, clothing), individual behaviours and performances (ceremonies, fights, games, meals) as well as ideas and arrangements that exist only in people's heads. From the perspective of the culture concept, anthropologists must first treat all these elements as symbols within a coherent system and, accordingly, must record observations with due attention to the cultural context and the meanings assigned by the culture's practitioners. These demands are met through two major research techniques: participant observation and key informant interviewing (<https://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/anthropology/courses/122/module1/methods.html>).

Participant observation is based on living among the people under study for a lengthy period, usually a year, and gathering data through continuous involvement in their lives and activities. The ethnographer begins systematic observation and keeps daily field notes, in which the significant events of each day are recorded along with informants' interpretations. Initial observations focus on general, open ended data gathering derived from learning the most basic cultural rules and usually the local language as well. This initial orientation process is important not only for providing a background for more narrowly focused investigation but also helps the anthropologist to gain rapport with his/her informants, avoid breaches of etiquette, and test out whether the original research objectives are meaningful and practical in the local situation.

This research was performed in North Sumatra province, municipality Tanjung Balai, Jln. Sudirman LK II Ex. Johor coast, district. Datuk Bandar, the house of Mr. H. Hasanuddin M. Yus. The data resource is from two wedding ceremonies held by the family in Tanjung Balai. The data were taken from two wedding ceremonies in Tanjung Balai, Sumatera Utara Province. The ceremonies were taken through video and interview. Recording the ceremonies by video is performed to get the real situation of the wedding ceremonies and the steps of *Malam Berinai*. The interview with the hosts of the parties and the leader of the society was performed to get more information about the custom and culture in the society.

The data analysis was conducted by describing malam berinai in the two wedding ceremonies. First, the researcher watched the ceremonies by video. Then, the researcher noted the local wisdoms performed in the ceremonies. The data from the interview help the researcher to give more description about the local wisdoms found in the ceremonies.

### 3.0 Local wisdoms in Malam Berinai

In a study of cultural traditions or oral traditions there are different values and cultural norms as a heritage that according to its function in structuring the social life of the community can be classified as local wisdom. According to Sibarani (2012), there are two types of local wisdom core (*kearifan lokal*), which is indigenous to (1) prosperity or well-being, and (2) peace or kindness. Local wisdom for the welfare or well-being include hard work, discipline, education, health, mutual cooperation, gender management, conservation and cultural creativity, and care for the environment. While local wisdom for peace or kindness includes politeness, honesty, social solidarity, harmony and conflict resolution, commitment positive thoughts, and gratitude.

In the study of local wisdom traditions *malam berinai* there is some wisdom which is the heritage of values and norms which, according to its function in structuring social life community as the author of the analysis based on the text, context, and contexts of the humming. The local wisdoms contained in the tradition of the Malay community *malam berinai* Tanjungbalai are as follows:

#### 2.01 Politeness

Islam teaches that the people who live in a society should have mutual help between one another in solving all the problems. The people in Tanjung Balai always get along with their neighbors so that their lives intertwined wisely. In the relationship, they can distinguish between good and bad relationships, and good at putting themselves in order not to oscillate in life.

Religion plays an important role in regulating the interaction in society. One of them is politeness. This principle emphasizes that residents of Tanjung Balai must always show respect for the other person in talking and behaving themselves, in accordance with the status and position. When they meet, they must use polite language and attitudes to express a recognition of the position of each of them in a social order that is structured. They must follow the rules of the appropriate manners and respect.

Islam also rules the way of dressing for the people, particularly Tanjung Balai community. There are some rules in dressing according to Islam. However, today's teens have a tendency practicing western culture. The teens dress like the western people which is absolutely forbidden in Islam. In this case parents play an important role in Tanjung Balai because they are responsible for educating the children. Parents need to show a good example to children to stimulate mental and spiritual development of children. But the conditions are now many social problems that plagued the community stems from the negligence of parents supervise their children's movements. Thus, the Malays need to reassess their lives to perpetuate the politeness image of Malay.

these manners can be seen in the tradition berinai bersinandong at night, that is, in tepung tawar ceremony. In this ceremony, the elder person gives tepung tawar first. After that the younger people take their turns. Giving first turn for the older people, such as grandparents, mom and dad are ethics in manners. In dance, it is reflected in the rules used by the dancers. They simultaneously dance arranged by the variance in their dance movements.

Politeness towards parents also can be seen through the text contained in *sinandongdadong* (1) "*Sinandong Membuai Anak*", the third row and the sixth stanza of four. *Kalau boso balaslah jaso*, the meaning is "if you have grown up, should be good to your parents". Being good with the parents is the value manners of a child to a parent. Since the parents have cared and educated us so we must do the

same to them. The children should obey what the parents tell them. If the children are good so the parents will pray the successful for them. It can be seen following sinandong:

Kalau boso balaslah jaso  
Kemano pogi dapat jeroki

## 2.02 Gratitude

Thankful is more likely to show a happy feeling appreciated. As for gratitude to God is more inclined to the recognition that all pleasure is a gift from God. This is what is called gratitude. The opposite of gratitude is denying the pleasure given by God. Kufur potentially damage our faith to God. Give thanks to God is one of the concepts in principle affirmed in the Qur'an. The parable of those who are grateful and Kufur given and their situation in the hereafter described. The reason why it is so important to thank God is its function as an indicator of the faith and the recognition of the oneness of God.

It commands to remember the favor of Allah repeatedly because people tend to forget. All the books in the world will not be enough to write God a favor. God created man in perfect form, have five senses which allow humans to perceive the world around him, guided him towards the right path through the Al-Quran and Al-Hadith, creating fresh water and food was plentiful, launching cruise, all of which intended for human benefit.

Everyone who prays and does good deed, surely also thanks God because those who deny Allah's favor certainly never remember God. Someone who behaves like animals, eating everything given to him without even thinking why it was awarded and who confers, should change such behavior. Instead, thankful only when receiving great favors alone would be meaningless. That is why we should never forget to give thanks to God everytime in any condition.

Give thanks to God is one test from God. Human blessed with a lot of pleasure and told how to use it. In return, people are expected to obey the creator. But human beings are given the freedom to choose whether to be grateful or not as in the following verse: "Verily We have created man from a drop of mingled sperm. We want to test it with a load of commands and prohibitions. We therefore made he heard and saw. Indeed, we have showed straight way: some are thankful, but some are infidels ". (Al-Insan: 2-3) "And remember precisely when the Lord gives a statement:" If you are grateful definitely I will add more My favor unto you; otherwise if you show ingratitude, naturally my punishment will be more powerful. "(Ibrahim: 7)

Implementation of the wedding ceremony is one of the forms of local wisdom in realizing gratitude conducted by the Malay community Tanjungbalai. Marriage is not just to run the command alone but also expect sustenance by God's mercy by working. Husband shall work to provide for his family, both his wife and his children. Son is a mandate for parents to be guarded, educated and brought up in order to bring the truth later life bias for duni and hereafter. Forms of *tepung tawar* contained in an *malam berinai* ceremony also an expression of gratitude to the creator.

## 2.03 Mutual-help

According to the nature, humans anywhere and at any age always live together, live in groups. At least living together consists of two people, a husband and wife or parents and their children. In the history of human development, there is no one who lived alone, apart from other human groups, except in urgent situations, and even then only temporary.

Human beings are called social or community, that is a human life in a group are interconnected. Individual human can not be disassociated with other individuals. Between one individual with another individual are associated each other. In addition, as social beings, humans are creatures of the individual

or individuals. Among one individual with other individuals need each other and help each other. Therefore, we must develop an attitude of mutual help and mutual respect.

Residents of a rural community have closer and deeper boundary than their relationship with the citizens of other rural communities. The system of people's lives are usually grouped on the basis of kinship systems. Residents of rural communities generally live from agriculture, although the visible presence of carpenters, brick masons, carpenters make sugar, tailor, even a scalper, but the core work of residents is farming.

At the time of the opening of the land or at planting time arrives, they will work together to do it. This was done because usually one family did not have enough manpower to work the land. As a result of cooperation before, there arose a community institution known as mutual assistance which is not an institution that deliberately.

Mutual assistance (*gotong royong*) is a concept that is closely related to people's lives as farmers and agrarian society. The term comes from the Java language. The term of mutual assistance is not found in the books of the Old Javanese Literary and Java Associate (*kakawin, kidung, and so on*). In fact everyday language, between the people in the villages, the term also does not exist. In various regions in Java, the specific terms vary from one another. The term of mutual assistance for the first time appeared in written form in essays about customary law and also in the essays on the social aspects of agriculture, especially in East Java by agricultural experts Netherlands graduate Wageningen (*Koentjaraningrat:1987*).

In a simple society as a communal society or tribal and rural communities, *gotong-royong* has already been institutionalized in almost every work, such as hunting, fishing, open fields or new farm, working the fields, repair dams, irrigation, making the bridge, held sacred ceremonies such as traditional and religious ceremonies, and others.

This value can be seen clearly when there is death in one family and disaster. The public will voluntarily and spontaneously contribute both energy and money. This contribution is not quantified. If the person who died comes from poor family, so everything will be served by the people for free. When there is disasters, such as fire, usually the village people will give donation to people's homes. This donation will be handed over to people whose homes were burning, to repair the house and completeness. This house will be set back by *gotong-royong*.

Mutual assistance can also be seen in weddings party. It Also can be seen in the *malam berinai* ceremony which is a series of activities in the wedding party. Relatives and nearest neighbors will come to help working in the event of the party. Usually they come two days before the feast is held. Mutual assistance is carried out starting from establishing hut, cooking food for the party, wash dishes, until cleaning the house after a party. This work is carried out by *gotong-royong* for approximately four days. In return people who participate in *gotong-royong* will receive food from the family who hold the party. it is like the thanking of the family who hold party to the people who help them.

According *Koentjaraningrat (2002)*, there are three values that realize the villagers in conducting *gotong-royong*: First, the person must be aware that in his life in essence it is always dependent on one another, and therefore he must always strive to maintain good relations with fellows; second, the individual must always be willing to help others; Third, the individual must be conform, it means that people should always remember that he should not seek to stand out, exceed the others in the community.

Malay community harmony life appears when communities hold great ceremonies. Mutual cooperation is needed in maintaining harmony in society. Each party has to know the functions and roles of each. Forms of mutual assistance can be seen in the implementation of the traditional wedding ceremony. In the marriage ceremony, the Malay community in Tanjungbalai usually cook the food together by the

neighbors and relatives. They cook together without any expectation of given money. They cook voluntarily.

Meanwhile, at the party, it is a social duty for every guest is to donate a sum of money to host. The amount of donations was remembered by both parties and the giver can expect to receive a similar donation when they hold the same celebration. In all forms of gotong-rotong the Malays Tanjungbalai know the exact amount of work time or the amount of money how much still remains to be the return and how many are still entitled demanded of others.

#### 2.04 Environmental care

The struggle of the Malays with nature such as doing agriculture, forest and water help the Malays to lay the foundations of society and culture. Especially the rice cultivation force someone to develop forms of advanced social collaboration. Rice cultivation is very encouraging activity directed at controlling the forces of nature that is ferocious. People are stimulated to achieve the high level of cooperation and mutual assistance.

Guidelines for the Malay community life in the care of the natural environment is expressed by Rachmatullah (2010) that anyone who understands his place in society and the world, it also has the right mental attitude and thus will act appropriately. Otherwise, they who let themselves be taken by passion and unconditional, who neglect their duties and indifferent to the pillar and respect, thus testifying that they have not understood their place in the whole universe.

Common Malay society guidelines expressed by the maxim *biar lambat asal selamat*. The maxim intention is that the motto of the Malays who are more concerned with the achievement of goals, despite a long time. Something done in a hurry will not get anything even vices received for exceeding the limits given by God.

It is taught in Malay to warn that anyone who wants to act responsibly should be able to understand the limitations and act in accordance with his position, because any disruption to the harmony of life will be detrimental to all. Man who made big plans to improve this world and try to implement them without regarding the society and nature is a sign of arrogance, because the power to change anything in reality does not lie in the hands of man.

While the second concept in the indigenous Malay is governing the relationship between man and nature, as well as sanctions against violations. Malay, always avoid violence and destructive behaviors and moral state.

The use of words *Boting Bogak, Siapi-api, Tanjungnapal, Limaumanis*, referring to the name of the place. *kopah, korang, kupang, and ikan cengcaru*, referring to the name of food that come from the sea. Both of these indicate that the Malays Tanjungbalai care about the environment. *Bubur sagu, wajik, and kueputu*, referring to the care of the environment on staple foods. All the raw materials of the cuisine is the staple food, such as corn, rice, sticky rice, brown sugar, and coconut. The use of words *pucuk paoh, delimo batu, and galenggang*, are herbs that have medicinal properties. Pomegranate contains many oxidants, good for your health and skin. *Galenggang* leaves can be used as a cure tinea versicolor.

The use of equipments during a ceremony of tepung tawarare derived from nature, all of which are included in the maintenance environment. When the plants are entered into the device ceremonies, meaning that the plant should continue to grow, so that it can be used. It is an obligation for the Malays to preserve it, although not by all Malays. Likewise with the dishes served at the party. The raw material must be provided such as coconut and rice.

In the life of the Malays, their work ethic has been passed down by older people for generations. The Malay have the motto *angin berombus layar terkombang* (wind sail). It is found in the *sinandong Didong* (chants calling the wind) which reminds us of the history that the Malays is an accomplished sailor. Warriors across the sea, driven and desperate despite a rainstorm hinder.

Tanjungbalai Malay society concerned with the value of work earnestly. This value is also the part of the teachings of Islam, which is demanding honesty and sincerity to work. Follow this in mind, the results of the work will be given to family. Where do the job that is unlawful or not do the job perfectly, and things that are good will not result in self and family. Prophet Muhammad asserts that believers love Allah very meticulous in performing a job.

The main livelihood is fishing Tanjungbalai Malay community. Almost all the men who are in this village are dependent with the results of the sea, though its population has additional livelihood by farming, labor, and services. Enterprises of the women is a cottage industry, such as making fishing nets and selling in front of the house.

#### 4.0 Conclusion

*Malam berinai* is the giving henna ceremony to the bride and groom before the wedding party the next day. Local wisdoms found in this berinai night tradition are politeness, grateful, mutual help, and care for the environment. Local wisdoms can be used by the Malay society Tanjungbalai to set the order in social life. The Malays are well known as a nation of manners and obedient to the teachings of Islam. The fourth local wisdom found in this berinai night tradition in accordance with the concept of Malay life that is synonymous with the religion of Islam and naturally can be used as a way of life. Manners are the main character that should be owned by every person. Mutual cooperation is an attitude of helping that occurs in a society that is still a strong sense of brotherhood. Care for the environment is closely connected with the people whose lives depend on nature, such as the Malay community Tanjungbalai who are predominantly fishermen. The local wisdoms found in the ceremony is the reflection of the life of the Malay society in Tanjung Balai. The Malay society in Tanjung Balai is the polite people and always grateful for what they have in their life. They also live in harmony by helping each other, especially when one family has problem or party. The Malay society there always take care the environment obviously the sea since most of them are fishermen. They earn their life from fishing in the sea.

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