

An Exploration of External Influences on the Formation and Evolution of Toponyms in Brunei

Abstract

Toponyms, or place names, function as significant indicators of cultural and linguistic heritage, encompassing the history, identity, and ecological knowledge of an area. Toponym studies use approaches such as etymology to understand the meaning and motivation behind place naming. The etymological approach also provides information about the origin of a language, linguistic relationships, phonological and semantic structures, and lexical history, thus providing a deeper understanding of human settlement (Jordan, P et al., 2009). For instance, the use of dual nomenclature such as Casablanca and Ad-Dār al-Bayḍā illustrates how toponyms can represent multiple identities and histories, thus contributing to the cultural landscape of a place (Alasli & Gercsák, 2021). In Brunei, the linguistic pattern of place names such as Kiulap, Kilanas, and Kiudang shows the consistent use of the prefix 'Ki-'. In a broader context, a parallel prefix Ki- can be observed in Sabah (for example, Kinabalu and Kinabatangan), which raises questions about the origin and relationship of these names from the perspective of history, language, and the identity of specific communities. In this regard, this study uses an etymological approach to analyze toponyms in certain areas of Brunei. The methodology encompasses descriptive analysis methods, which involve the collection of gathered data, along with interpretation and the identification of distinct patterns. This study classifies the toponymic nominations by emphasizing the etymological features of geographic names. The results of the study will show the consistent linguistic relationship between the prefixes 'Ki-' and 'Long-' in Brunei with specific place names in Sabah, Sarawak, and Kalimantan. The phonetic and lexical analysis will provide evidence of this relationship, as well as explain how migration and cultural interaction influenced the evolution of toponyms in this region. Therefore, this study will contribute to a broader understanding of the linguistic history, culture, and migration patterns of related communities in Borneo Island.

Keywords: toponym, prefix, etymology, Brunei, linguistics

References

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