

**Family Addressing System in the Border Malay Community of Telok Melano:  
A Review**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study examines the Family Addressing System within the Malay community of Telok Melano, Sarawak, influenced by the Malay culture of Sambas in West Kalimantan. The limited scholarly attention to family addressing systems in this geographical context underscores a critical research gap. The primary objective of this research is to comprehensively document and analyse the practices of family addressing prevalent in Telok Melano. Employing qualitative research methods, particularly in-depth interviews, the study engaged 10 informants – comprising five elderly and five younger individuals from Kampung Telok Melano – to systematically collect data. The analysis draws on theoretical frameworks of bilateral family addressing systems articulated by Millar (1983) and Sorensen (1993), supplemented by comparisons with addressing systems in Sarawak and West Kalimantan. The findings underscore significant parallels with the addressing practices observed in the Malay Sambas community, evidenced by the usage of terms such as 'Pak Long' and 'Mak Long', indicative of the enduring influence of Sambas cultural norms. Furthermore, nuanced distinctions between the family addressing systems in Telok Melano and Kuching, Sarawak were discerned. This study contributes valuable insights into the cultural practices of the Malay community in Telok Melano, serving as a foundational documentation effort particularly relevant amidst socio-cultural

transformations following the opening of the Telok Melano-Sematan stretch of the Pan Borneo Highway in 2019.

**Keywords:** Family Addressing system, Malay Community, Telok Melano, Sambas Malay Culture, Infrastructure Development, Border Community

## INTRODUCTION

The National Family Policy (2010) defines family as a fundamental social unit contributing significantly to development and ensuring the continuity of future generations. The concept encompasses a group of individuals who live together, whether through blood ties, marriage, or adoption (Gullota et al., 1986; Coleman & Cressey, 1993). Traditionally, a basic family unit consists of grandparents, parents, children, and grandchildren. In the context of the Malay community in Telok Melano, their family structure is based on bilateral concepts as articulated by Millar (1983), aligning with Sorensen's (1993) view that a bilateral family system determines membership through both maternal and paternal sides. This system is also reflected in the family structure of Sarawak Malays described by Abang Yusuf (2008), categorising families into three groups: immediate family, close relatives, and distant relatives, with "others" referring to those outside these classifications. The existence of such family systems in Sarawak Malay society also maintains the tradition of family addressing systems, which are integral to the culture of Telok Melano's Malay community.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on family addressing systems among the Malay community in Malaysia has been extensively investigated by Amat Juhari (1985), Nor Hashimah et al. (2005), Ab Razak et al. (2018), Alizuddin & Nik Mohd Arif (2020), and Yusoff & Abdul Wahab (2021). In Borneo, studies focusing on addressing systems among indigenous communities have been conducted by Salbia & Dayang Sariah (2007), specifically exploring addressing and forms of addressing within the Melanau community. Additionally, Endang & Asmah (2017) examined the social meanings of addressing in the Malay community in Sambas. These studies collectively illustrate that addresses serve as markers of status, rank, age, and gender for those addressed. However, there remains a notable gap in research specifically addressing addresses among the Malay community in border regions of Sarawak, such as Telok Melano. This study is pivotal for bridging this gap in knowledge, particularly concerning addresses in a Malay

community situated distantly from the cultural hub of Kuching, specifically within Telok Melano village.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach involving in-depth interviews and focused discussions to gain current insights into the family addressing system among the Telok Melano Malay community residing along the borders of Sarawak which was observed influenced by the Sambas Malay culture in West Kalimantan, Indonesia. Ten informants, representing various age groups from Telok Melano village, were selected for interviews to collect data. The interviews and recorded discussions specifically explored the usage of family addressing within the Malay community of Telok Melano. These findings are crucial for contemporary documentation, particularly in an area previously marginalized but now undergoing transformation following the opening of the Telok Melano-Sematan stretch of the Pan Borneo Highway in 2019.

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

According to Sa'adiah and Teo (2019), family addressing refers to the terms used among family members or by individuals with blood ties. These terms signify both respect and intimacy between conversing parties (Sumalee, 1994). Muna Afifah et al. (2015) emphasize that the choice of addressing should align with roles, positions, and ages within the family hierarchy. Parents hold a senior position as the elder generation compared to their children, who belong to the younger generation. In the Malay community of Telok Melano, the specific forms of address or family addressing used by the elder generation are detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Family Addressing System in Telok Melano

No	Family Addressing System in Malay	Family Addressing System in Telok Melano
1.	Datuk 'grandfather'	Nek Aki [ne? aki]
2.	Nenek 'grandmother'	Nek Wan [ne? wan]
3.	Ayah 'father'	Bapak [bapa?]
4.	Ibu 'mother'	Mak [ma?]

In the Malay community of Telok Melano, there exist specific forms of address for siblings. Typically, these terms begin with the words [baŋ] 'Bang' for elder brothers, [ka?] 'Kak' for elder sisters, and [di?] 'Dik' for younger siblings. For instance, [ka? loŋ]

'Kak Long', [baŋ lon] 'Bang Long', [kaʔ ŋah] 'Kak Ngah' and among others. Table 2 below illustrates the forms of address for the ten siblings in Telok Melano.

Table 2. Sibling Addressing Terms in Telok Melano

No	Family Addressing Terms	Sibling Addressing Terms in Telok Melano
1.	Eldest child	Along [alon]
2.	2 <sup>nd</sup> child	Angah [aŋah]
3.	3 <sup>rd</sup> child	Ude [ude] udak [udaʔ]
4.	4 <sup>th</sup> child	Itam [itam] Tam [tam]
5.	5 <sup>th</sup> child	Anjang [anjaŋ]
6.	6 <sup>th</sup> child	Cik [ciʔ]
7.	7 <sup>th</sup> child	Deng [deŋ]
8.	8 <sup>th</sup> child	Mok [moʔ]
9.	9 <sup>th</sup> child	Uteh [uteh]
10.	The youngest child	Bongsu [boŋsu] Usu [usu]

For parental addressing terms among siblings, the terms of address change to Mak Long [maʔ lon], Pak Long [paʔ lon], Mak Ngah [maʔ ŋah], Pak Ngah [paʔ ŋah], Mak Udey [maʔ ude], Pak Udey [paʔ ude], Mak Udak [maʔ udaʔ], Pak Udak [paʔ udaʔ], Mak Itam [maʔ itam], Pak Itam [paʔ itam], Mak Anjang [maʔ anjaŋ], Pak Anjang [paʔ anjaŋ], Mak Cik [maʔ ciʔ], Pak Cik [paʔ ciʔ], Mak Deng [maʔ deŋ], Pak Deng [paʔ deŋ], Mak Mok [maʔ moʔ], Pak Mok [paʔ moʔ], Mak Uteh [maʔ uteh], Pak Uteh [paʔ uteh], Mak Su [maʔ su] and Pak Su [paʔ su]. Field observations reveal that nearly all residents of Telok Melano use this family addressing system, as approximately half of the population in Telok Melano share blood relations. Compared to the family addressing system of the Malay community in Kuching, Sarawak, there are significant differences with the family addressing system in Telok Melano. Table 4 below shows the comparison of family addressing terms in Telok Melano with those of the Malay community in Kuching, Sarawak.

Table 4. Comparison of family addressing system in Telok Melano with the Malay community in Kuching, Sarawak

No	Family Addressing System in Telok Melano	Family Addressing System of the Sarawak Malays in Kuching
1	Nek Aki [ne? aki]	Ninek [nine?] / Pak Nek [pa? ne?]
2	Nek Wan [ne? wan]	Ninek [nine?] / Mak Nek [ma? ne?]
3	Pak Long [pa? lon]	Wa [wa]
4	Mak Long [ma? lon]	Wa [wa]
5	Pak Ngah [pa? nah]	Ngah [nah]
6	Mak Ngah [ma? nah]	Ngah [nah]
7	Pak Udey [pa? ude]	Udak [uda?]
8	Mak Udey [ma? ude]	Udak [uda?]
9	Pak Itam [pa? itam]	Tam [tam]
10	Mak Itam [ma? itam]	Tam [tam]
11	Pak Anjang [pa? anjan]	Anjang [anjan]
12	Mak Anjang [ma? anjan]	Anjang [anjan]
13	Pak Cik [pa? ci?]	Cik [ci?]
14	Mak Cik [ma? ci?]	Cik [ci?]
15	Pak Deng [pa? den]	Yak [ya?]
16	Mak Deng [ma? den]	Yak [ya?]
17	Pak Mok [pa? mo?]	Mok [mo?]
18	Mak Mok [ma? mo?]	Mok [mo?]
19	Pak Uteh [pa? uteh]	Uteh [uteh]
20	Mak Uteh [ma? uteh]	Uteh [uteh]
21	Pak Andak [pa? anda?]	N/A
22	Mak Andak [ma? anda?]	N/A
23	Pak Uning [pa? unin]	N/A
24	Mak Uning [ma? unin]	N/A
25	Pak Su [pa? su]	Usu [usu]
26	Mak Su [ma? su]	Usu [usu]

The findings of this study demonstrate that the family addressing system

within the Malay community in Telok Melano is heavily influenced by the Malay culture of West Kalimantan. The forms of address used in Telok Melano resemble those employed by Malays in Ketapang, West Kalimantan, particularly for titles such as Pak Long, Mak Long, Pak Udey, and Mak Udey (Martina and Irmayani, 2004). Additionally, these forms of address also mirror those used in the Sambas Malay community. According to Yusriadi (2015), each form of address starting from Along to Usu is augmented with 'Pak' or 'Mak' when it reaches the level of relation akin to uncle or aunt. At the higher level, such as grandparents, the form of address changes to 'Nek Aki' for men and 'Nek Wan' for women. These forms of address are widely used in Telok Melano and indicate descent from Sambas heritage (Yusriadi, 2015).

Furthermore, the study found that almost all residents of Telok Melano use this family addressing system, underscoring the importance of respect and intimacy in family relationships. This aligns with the view that the use of family addressing system signifies respect and intimacy. The use of appropriate titles corresponding to roles, positions, and ages within the family reflects a deep understanding of hierarchy and social functions within the Malay community of Telok Melano.

Although there are similarities with the addressing system in the Malay community of Kuching, Sarawak, significant differences also exist. For example, titles like 'Ninek' and 'Pak Nek' in Kuching are not used in Telok Melano, where 'Nek Aki' and 'Nek Wan' are preferred. This variation highlights differences in the use of family addressing system even within the broader Malay community. These differences may stem from historical factors, geography, and differing cultural interactions between the Malay communities in Sarawak and West Kalimantan.

Moreover, infrastructure development such as the opening of the Telok Melano-Sematan stretch of the Pan Borneo Highway in 2019 has brought about significant changes in the Telok Melano community. Improved accessibility has strengthened interactions among previously isolated communities, potentially influencing the use and evolution of the family addressing system. This study indicates that infrastructure development can reshape the social and cultural dynamics of a region.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significance of the family addressing system within the Malay community of Telok Melano, significantly influenced by the Sambas Malay culture from West Kalimantan. This system not only reflects the social hierarchy within families but also underscores deep-seated values of respect and intimacy in border community life. A comparison with the family addressing system in Kuching,

Sarawak, reveals intriguing variations in the use of titles that reflect cultural adaptations to different geographical contexts. The impact of infrastructure development, such as the opening of the Pan Borneo Highway in 2019, has played a crucial role in reshaping the social and cultural dynamics of Telok Melano by enhancing interactions among previously isolated communities. In conclusion, this study contributes significantly to understanding cultural diversity, particularly the family addressing system as a social identity among the Malay communities in the border regions of Sarawak and West Kalimantan.

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