

**SEMINAR UNITED NATIONS
GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
ASIA, SOUTHEAST DIVISION**

**“PLACE NAMES PRESERVING CULTURAL HERITAGE”
13 - 14 MAY 2013**

**AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY
OF GEOGRAPHICAL PLACE NAMES IN BRUNEI**

By

**Haji Mohd Rozan bin Dato Paduka Haji Mohd Yunos
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports**

Part I : Introduction

Geographical names or place names provide the most useful geographical reference system that can be used anywhere in the world.

In Brunei, any toponym hobbyists would have plenty to do. Toponymists are people who study place names. According to Wikipedia, toponymy is the scientific study of place names (toponyms), their origins, meanings, use and typology. The word ‘toponymy’ is derived from the Greek words τόπος (τόπος) (which means ‘place’) and όνομα (όνομα) (which means ‘name’). Toponymy is itself a branch of onomastics, the study of names of all kinds.

In Brunei, the origins of the place name are often shrouded in the mists of times. Even the name of the country Brunei Darussalam has many origins.

The one famous legend passed down the generations through its epic legend Syair Awang Semaun (Awang Semaun Epic Poem) about how the exclamation ‘Baru Nah’ upon discovering the Brunei River to be used as a new settlement for their families which later became ‘Brunei’ is not the only tale

about the origin of Brunei.

A toponymist should not only rely on maps and local histories, but should also interview local residents to determine names with established local usage. This is where historians especially those of the Brunei History Centre have done their best in publishing their findings in *Pusaka*, a publication of the Brunei History Centre about the origins of place names in Brunei.

The historians have applied the exact application of a toponym, its specific language, its pronunciation, and its origins and meaning. Many of us readers have found that those toponyms provide valuable insight into the historical geography of a Brunei village or ward.

For instance, for many villages in the Kampong Ayer, the names of those villages were named after events, important persons or occupations of the villagers. But for those villages not in the Kampong Ayer, other factors become more important in the origin of their names.

In Brunei Darussalam, toponymy is still more or less an open field according to one research paper in the 1996-1997 issue of the *Brunei Museum Journal*. The study of toponyms, if taken in earnest can provide significant knowledge about the culture of Brunei whether in the past or present.

The main toponym-classification of importance to Brunei according to a paper done by a UBD lecturer can be classified as follows:

Descriptive Names. Examples include Kampung Muara (village near the estuary of the river) or Kampung Bangar (village of smelly dryish deadwood swamp). Alternately, names can come from other languages such as Sungai Nagalang (Nagalang is a Murut word for 'circular bracelet' and named after the river as the river meanders);

Associative Names. Examples include Kampung Pandai Besi in Kampong Ayer (village of Blacksmiths);

Historical Names. Examples includes Jalan Kustin (Coastin was a construction company which used to be based at the end of the airport runway when constructing the new airport), was officially renamed Jalan Terunjing Baru

but recently reappeared again as Jalan Kustin when PWD put up the sign board at the new roundabout near the airport;

Commemorative Names. The prime example is Bandar Seri Begawan — Seri Begawan is to commemorate Sultan Haji Omar Ali Saifudien Saadul Khairi Waddien who took the title Seri Begawan Sultan when he abdicated in 1967;

Commendatory Names. Examples are all the Chinese shop houses with fancy commendatory names when the Chinese names get translated into Malay, like Kedai Sumber Makmur Mulia or Kedai Kekayaan Berpanjangan;

Numerical Names. Examples used to be Kampung Batu 18, Kampung Batu 19 and Kampung Batu 20 but, since then, the three have merged and been renamed Kampung Sungai Kelugos. Now we have the many streets in the housing development estates using these such as Jalan 10, Jalan 77 in the Lambak Kanan area and using alphabets such as Jalan A in the Mentiri area.

For the purpose of this paper, this paper will look at various other classification which can be used to identify place names in Brunei Darussalam.

Part II : The Origin of the name ‘Brunei Darussalam’

As one of the ancient kingdoms of the Malay archipelago, Brunei’s historical legacy is long and can be comparable or if not exceeding that of other better known empires in the region. Among others, its strategic geographical location and well sheltered harbour has made it a safe place for ships that ply their trade in the Southeast Asian region from as early as the 6th Century.

Brunei had been known by many names in the past.

In the Chinese historic annals, Brunei had been written about as far back as 1,500 years ago in the Liang Dynasty (502 to 566 AD). Then the Brunei predecessor state of **Poli** sent tributes to the Chinese bearing the produce of the country. Subsequent visits by other Chinese travelers to Brunei included that during the Sui Dynasty (581 - 618 AD), in the Tang Dynasty (618 - 906 AD) and Sung Dynasty (960 - 1279 AD).

During those years, the name **Poni** had also been spelled as **Bu-ni**, **Fo-ni**, **Po-ni** and **Po-lo**. It was recorded that the King of Po-lo had sent a mission to China in 669 AD. The differences of the names are said to be caused by the changes of the Chinese dynasties, each preferring its own way of spelling.

The Arabs however called Brunei by other names including that of **Sribuza**.

It was believed that around the 7th century, Brunei was captured by members of the royal family of Funan who in turn had fled when their own kingdom was attacked by Chenla, another historical empire.

The captured Brunei was renamed **Vijayapura** which the Chinese referred to as **Fo-shih-pu-lo** and the Arabs rendered it as **Sribuza** but would have been pronounced in the tenth century as **Srivijaya**.

Other Arabic names for Brunei include '**Dzabaj**' and '**Randj**'.

When did Brunei became Brunei?

According to the local historians as well as transmitted through the centuries and narrated in Syaer Awang Semaun, Brunei's legendary epic poem, the name Brunei came about when it was discovered.

A group of 14 brothers led by Pateh Berbai and 90 dayaks went in search of a new place to live. Then they were living in the present Temburong district area called Garang. They landed at a place called Burit at the Brunei River and found that the place seemed to be the most suitable as it was flanked by hills with ample water supply and the river abundant with fish. When they found the place, it was said that they exclaimed 'baru nah!' which loosely translated into 'now we found it'.

The Brunei epic poem, Syaer Awang Semaun (translated) described the finding as:

Pateh Berbai then said,

We entered into the country of Brunei River

With a total of ninety in number

All of them were Sakai.

They rowed up the river,
And caught a lot of sharks and rays,
Pateh looked left and right,
For a good place to rest and open a country.

To Damang Sari, Awang Alak says,
After looking left and right with Pateh,
If Awangku agrees with me,
In Brunei we shall build a country.

Each member of the group set up his own house on the Brunei river and eventually more people came to stay there. It was said that 'baru nah' over time became Brunei. The move and the change in name was said to correspond to Chinese records of the Ming Dynasty (1368 to 1643 AD).

It was stated that in the year of 1397, several countries which before then had stopped sending gifts to China had resumed sending gifts to China and included among the few was a country called 'Bruni'. It can be summarized that the move to the Brunei river and changing the name to Brunei took place around that time. The Chinese later described Brunei as 'Wen-lai' and 'Bun-lai'.

In historical annals around the region, in the earlier days, the word 'Brunei' appeared in many forms including as 'Buruneng', 'Bornei', 'Burneau', 'Borney', 'Borneo', 'Bruneo', 'Burne', 'Bornui' and 'Bruni'.

However the Europeans called Brunei as Borneo.

Hugh Low in 1848 wrote: "... the name Borneo, by which the island has always been distinguished on European charts, and which was probably applied to it by the Portuguese from information received prior to any of their visits to the island, is a corruption of the word Bruni, the name of a kingdom and town on the N.W. Coast of the island – Bruni being called by the inhabitants of the Malay

Peninsula ...”

In another writing in 1812 by a J. Hunt, he says: “... Borneo was the name only of a city, the capital of one of the three distinct kingdoms in the island, The natives pronounce Borneo, Bruni, and say that it is derived from the word ‘Brani’, courageous ...”

However, if one is to trace through history, it is possible that the word Brunei could have come from other sources.

J.R. Hipkins wrote in 1971, that the word Brunei is said to have come from the Sanskrit word ‘Bhurni’ which means land or country.

Brunei could have been called ‘Karpuradvipa’ which means camphor land as camphor was one export which Brunei was well known for in the ancient days.

One J.H. Moor writing in 1871 noted that the Sanskrit word ‘Varunai’ means ‘seaborn’ – again another characteristic of the Bruneian of old – seafarers, mariners and living on water (Kampong Ayer).

Interestingly enough, one Leon de Rosny writing in Paris in 1861 noted that when the ‘Po-ni’ characters were transposed into Japanese Hira-Kana script, Po-ni became ‘Borneu’ or ‘Bornerei’.

And ‘Darussalam’?

It was said that the word Darussalam was used by the third Sultan of Brunei, Sultan Sharif Ali which is the Arabic word ‘abode of peace’.

However, according to Groenvelt writing in 1960 that in the Ming Shih, it was said that Emperor Yung-lo conferred upon the mountain range (Kinabalu) behind Po-ni the title of ‘Mountain of Lasting Tranquility’.

Lasting Tranquility translated into Darussalam and that in the Chinese records in 1408 Po-ni had been known as ‘Chang-ning Chen-Kuo’ or ‘City of Lasting Tranquility’ thus ‘Brunei Darussalam’ of today.

Part III : Tracing Place Names in Brunei

Sometimes, the origin of a place name is a mystery. But even the general

public can guess that Kota Batu must have had some stone fort built there at some point. True enough, there used to be a stone fort built across the river as the main fortification of the Kampong Ayer settlements.

Muara is a fairly natural name. It is the Malay word for 'mouth of the river' and, of course, that's where the big mouth of the river entering Brunei is — so Muara became the name. In Malaysia, there is a town in Johor which is called Muar, its name derived similarly to Muara.

Some people assumed that Gadong most probably came from the word gedung or 'warehouse' rather than the colour green which, in Brunei Malay, is 'gadong'. In Gadong, there must have been in the past some warehouses and the name became metonymically associated with the area. The English word 'godown', defined as 'a storage place', is derived from the word 'gedong' or 'gudang' and in turn probably originated from the Indian Telugu word 'gidangi' or the Indian Tamil word 'kidangu'.

However, according to an old project by Universiti Brunei Darussalam on Brunei streets, the origin of the name Gadong is derived from a fruit of the same name which grows along the riverbank at Pulau Sungai Gadong. The flesh is purplish in colour and edible by boiling it after soaking it in water.

Gadong saw rapid development in the 1960s with the construction of a bridge connecting Bandar Brunei and Jalan Gadong with the new government infrastructures built in the area including the Gadong Power Stations and, later on, the Police Headquarters and the Land Transport Department. Jalan Gadong itself was completed around 1967 /1968 and eventually connected to Jalan Tutong at the current Jalan Tutong/Jalan Gadong junction sometime in the early 1970s. Before the road was built, the only way to get to Gadong from the capital was by using a barge travelling along the Menglait River.

The road to reach Jalan Gadong is Jalan Kumbang Pasang. Just for the record, Jalan Kumbang Pasang started after Jalan Dato Haji Basir (in front of St Andrews) and then goes all the way to the entrance to the Old Airport Government Building Complex. After that, the road is called Jalan Berakas.

The road is named after a place called Kumbang Pasang which means 'eddy water'. Some also said that the name originated from the word kumbang or 'beetle'. This road is one of the first main roads to be built under the Government's first RKN (Five Year National Development Plan) of 1953/1958. It linked the Berakas and Muara areas and, by the late 1960s, the Gadong area as well, replacing an earlier road built in the late 1920s to allow cars to reach a rubber factory at the village.

Jalan Berakas also has an interesting origin. The Berakas Mukim is probably among the most populated in the district of Brunei-Muara. The authorities had actually divided Berakas into Berakas A and Berakas B to distinguish between the two halves of the mukim.

In the olden days, around the late 1940s, Berakas was mostly forest land. The only people who lived here were the Kedayans and it was a while before other people started to live here.

They first began settling here around the 1950s then, under the first resettlement program, lands were allocated in the Anggerek Desa and the Burung Pingai area. There was only one main road, the Jalan Berakas which linked the area to the BSB area.

Before resettlement, people used to come from the Kampung Ayer area to gather firewood from the forest in the Berakas area. Imagine it at that time, no houses, no roads, nothing — just forest.

When they collected the woods, they bundled them together. The process of bundling the woods in Brunei Malay is called *berkas*. Gradually, people talked about *memberakas kayu* — and Berakas was born as the place where people come to *memberakas kayu* or 'to gather firewood'.

With regard to another road in Bandar called Jalan Kianggeh — according to a book entitled *Dokumentasi*, the author noted that the name Kianggeh may have been derived from the Chinese word *kiang* which means 'river'. Though it also possible that the name Kianggeh may have been derived from the name of a person but so far nothing has been written about it yet.

Another interesting name is Serasa which is a village in Muara. Serasa is believed to be named by a group of migrants who arrived at one of the rivers in that village. When they rested to partake their prepared meals of pais-paisan, they took some of the pucuk gajus and pucuk pawas as ulam.

When they ate the pucuk-pucuk, they found the taste to be serasa or “suited to their palates”.

They named the river Serasa and stayed there. For a while the village was known as Kampung Sebatik as these people actually came from Sebatik Island in Indonesia.

Part IV : The Origins of Kampong Ayer Village Names

As noted earlier, traditional formal history suggests that when the capital of Brunei was moved from Puni to the present area, the name Brunei came into being when the founders discovered the capital and exclaimed ‘baru nah’, which is literally translated as ‘now we found it’.

Kampong Ayer as the capital of Brunei would have existed as early as the reign of Sultan Muhammad Shah who ruled from 1363 to 1402.

In the 15th century, it was described by Pigafetta, an Italian traveler, the water village was made up of about 25,000 households surrounding a palace.

The village was a major port from which Brunei exported a variety of goods.

However, the fortunes of Brunei declined with the loss of its huge thalascocracy.

By 1840, it was only a shadow of its former self with a population of about 15,000.

Despite the difficulties, the water village remained and is still full of history. Most outsiders and even some Bruneians assume that Kampong Ayer is only one village. Most do not realise that the water village is divided into six mukims (counties) made up of many villages.

In general, the village names are based on several themes the title of the state dignitaries who lived there, the specialist trade of that village, the place where it is located or the place where a famous incident or celebration took place.

For instance, Kg Sungai Kedayan, Kg Sungai Asam, Kg Pekan Lama, Kg Sungai Pandan, Kg Lurong Dalam, Kg Lurong Sikuna, Kg Sungai Si Amas, Kg Ujong Klinik, Kg Sungai Kebun and Kg Bukit Berumput are names based on local places or rivers.

However, names can change. One interesting village named Kg Burong Pingai was originally named Kg Ulu-Ulu due to its location at the hulu (the interior or the beginning) of the Brunei River.

Legend has it that the village became Kg Burong Pingai when one villager (said to be a pembalat one who catches fish using a basket made from bamboo or makes fish traps from bamboo) from Kg Saba found a white bird making the sound “pingai, pingai, pingai” at the village.

The man knew that Sultan Muhammad's wife had recently lost a white bird named Si Pingai. He caught the bird and presented it to the Sultan. Ever since then the village became known as Kg Burong Pingai. Sultan Muhammad's wife was said to be a Johor Princess and this event was said to have happened around 1368.

Kg Sultan Lama, Kg Pengiran Bendahara Lama, Kg Pemancha Lama, Kg Bakut Siraja Muda, Kg Pengiran Kerma Indera Lama, Kg Pengiran Tajuddin Hitam, Kg Setia Negara, Kg Setia and Kg Setia Pahlawan are based on the titles or names of the important state dignitaries or the leaders of those villages.

Kg Peramu, Kg Pekilong Muara and Kg Pandai Besi are named after the craftsmen of the villages. So is Kg Saba which was originally Kg Pabalat.

The oldest of the villages included Kg Sungai Kedayan, Kg Burong Pingai, Kg Saba and Kg Tamoi.

Kg Sungai Kedayan used to be where the rich traders stayed, with most senior government servants coming from there.

It still retains a certain aura today whenever someone describes the place as their village of “origin”.

Some names have changed over the years Kg Sungai Pandan used to be called Kg Sungai Kuyuk which was less preferred as kuyuk means dog in the Brunei dialect.

Another village which changed names was Kg Bakut China, built on a sandbank on the Brunei River (from the word bakut for sandbank and the Chinese businessmen who used to conduct trading there).

In the older days, it used to be the central market for the Kampong Ayer people and businesses used to be conducted in the area. It became a small business centre or a town and in Brunei language, pekan means town, thus the name change to Kg Pekan Lama.

The name remains as Kg Pekan Lama (old town) even though the market and the businesses are no longer conducted in that village.

Interestingly, Kg Lurong Sikuna is derived from the English word schooner as in the old days; this is where ships were anchored.

Another village used to be called Kg Antarabangsa (which means international) but renamed as the less upmarket Kg Ujong Kelinik.

Some villages were absorbed into others and their names disappeared. These included Kg Kandang Batu and Kg Alangan.

Some changed names because their craftsmen changed, for example, Kg Pandai Besi (literally good at metal) used to be called Kg Padaun and Kg Pemeiuk.

Some villages have disappeared completely. An English historian in the mid-19th century wrote about some villages such as Kg Saudagar, Kg Pasir, Kg Belanak, Kg Panchur Berasur, Kg Tekuyong, Kg Pengiran Daud, Kg Pengiran Ajak and Kg Jawatan Jeludin, but no one has been able to trace and place them.

An area around Kg Sungai Kebun is called Ayer Berkunci or literally locked water. It is said that in the 18th or early 19th century, it was the only place where piped water was available.

There used to be a small coal mine in that area and the piped water was controlled with a valve or tap, which could be controlled or locked hence the name of the place, Ayer Berkunci or locked water.

The Kampong Ayer of today is very much different from the Kampong Ayer of yesteryears. There are now more modern villages such as the newly built Kg Bolkiah or Kg Sungai Bunga.

The origin of the name of Kg Sungai Bunga is very interesting. The village is obviously named after Sungai Bunga (Flower River).

It is said that at certain times, the river emanates the smell of the jasmine flower.

The smell is sharpest especially at night. However, if one were to search for the source of the smell, one can never find it.

Locals believe that the sweet flower smell comes from “Orang Kebenaran” or “Orang Bunian” or suffice to say, the little invisible folk who live in the river.

With an area of 10 sq. km and about 20,000 inhabitants in today's Kampong Ayer of 42 villages, it still is the largest water village in the world.

Even with the advent of science and technology in the country, Kampong Ayer remains a unique national heritage that exudes a natural charm.

Its beauty lies in its uniqueness of “floating” above the water. The preservation of Kampong Ayer is indeed important for the heritage of Brunei Darussalam.

Part V : Trees as Place Names in Brunei

From the many origins of place names on the dry land of Brunei, surprisingly, trees play especially important roles when it comes to being chosen as place names in Brunei Darussalam. Some are not so obvious whereas some would be as obvious as the sun during noon.

Among the tree names are Mentiri, Tanjung Nangka, Pulaie, Tanah Jambu, Kapok and Madang. Nangka and Jambu are fruit trees whereas the others are

named after obscure and unusual trees.

These trees are often big or huge or some gigantic proportions such as a huge tall tree. That tall tree can be seen for miles and is often a single lone tree that also became a geographic marker for the residents to use in identifying and locating the places that they were staying in. Remember too, in those days, there was no central street with proper house numbers or simpang numbers as used in Brunei currently.

If the tree was not tall or with massive proportions such as girth size, then that particular tree would have to be full of juicy fruits that it would be as equally well known to those in the area. This is how Tanjung Nangka (nangka is the Malay word for the fruit called jackfruit) and Tanah Jambu (jambu is the Malay word for the fruit called guava).

Tanjung Nangka is most unusual in Brunei village names. As usual, the villages in Brunei either have a few names for it in the past or the village itself has many place names and one got chosen to be the name of the village. According to sources, Kampong Tanjung Nangka has three previous names, none of which survived. Most importantly all three names were tree related.

The first of the three old names of Kampong Tanjung Nangka is Kampong Temiang. Temiang is the Brunei word for one of the bamboo species of which a lot of that bamboo grew in the village previously.

Another name was Kampong Kayu Tinggi which is derived from an extraordinary tall tree around the area (kayu tinggi means high wood). The bark of the tree is said to be coloured red, green and black and of course, no one knows the identity of the tree.

The last name is Kampong Binjai Kunit. Binjai is the name of a local fruit, the same family as the mango. In this case, the Binjai tree belonged to a man named Kunit. Again the tree was said to be extraordinary - its fruits nicer, its size bigger and the tree taller than the usual binjai trees.

The final name Kampung Tanjung Nangka was derived from a Nangka (jackfruit) tree found in the area. Again the tree was said to be much bigger than

the usual Nangka Tree (it was said that the girth was twice a man's hug), the fruits much bigger and described to be as big as the Chinese salted eggs vase and can weigh as much as 50 katis (30 kg).

The tree became so famous that many people around the outlying area came to see it. It was said that a few people got attracted to it and decided to stay there in the hope that the area might be lucky for them.

For a Brunei place name, the tree could also be magical. It is said that the name of Kampong Mentiri is derived from an old tall tree. According to the older folks in the village, the trunk's girth was so massive that it took six adults holding hands to reach around the tree. This tree was unique and said to have magical powers. It has to be said, however, that nobody today can identify this tree. A number of elder villagers stated that it used to be located at where the roundabout is now.

One or two of the place names in Brunei would be 'tree related'. This includes the Menunggol, a village in the Kota Batu Ward (Mukim). Menunggol, it is said come from the word stumps of trees called 'tunggul' in Brunei. Kampong Menunggol was named after tree stumps though no one would really know where.

Nong Mayan is another tree related place name in Brunei. According to some of the villagers, Kampong Nong Mayan is named after a tree called 'kayu kemayan' whereas 'Nong' is a Dusun word which means 'hujung bukit' or the peak of the hill. So the place name Nong Mayan referred to a Kemayan Tree which was located at the peak of the hill.

Kampong Kulapis is another tree related village name. Kampong Kulapis was originally a small village but it was later merged with another village Kampong Damuan which was a village named after the Damuan River. Kulapis was the new name of the merged village and 'kulapis' was named after a type of wood called 'kulapis'.

Toponyms, the study of place names especially in Brunei can be an interesting hobby after all.

Part VI : Brunei Place Names derived from Native Words

Sometimes Bruneians forget that there are other puak jatis or native Bruneians in Brunei who are also Bruneians. Even though they belong to their own native races and speak their own languages and have their own cultures but nevertheless they have contributed to the cultural diversity of place names to our country Brunei Darussalam.

For instance there are two rivers in Temburong named Sungai Nagalang and Sungai Peliunan. These two place names come under descriptive names in a Brunei toponym (toponymy is the study of place names). The names of both rivers are derived from the Murut language. Nagalang comes from the word 'galang' (the standard Malay word is 'gelang') which means circular bracelet.

Sungai Peliunan comes from the Murut and Brunei word 'liun' which means to circle around. Most Bruneians would use the word 'beliun' which can mean circling around or to make a u-turn. These two names are considered as descriptive because these two rivers as do most natural rivers meander in a loop or loops.

Another place name in Temburong is Batu Apoi. Batu Apoi takes its name from Sungai Batu Apoi. Where does the word Batu Apoi come from?

Quite sometime ago, a Murut longhouse once stood beside that river. According to their legend, Batu Apoi takes its name from a fiery rock which was once upstream. This rock made the whole area inhospitable and uninhabitable by any human being.

Then one day a Murut culture-hero came along. He took a look at the fiery rock and with his great strength and force, he threw that rock far out into the sea. By doing so, he made the whole area inhabitable and safe for the Muruts to come and live there. So why Batu Apoi? Apoi is the Murut word for Api, hence fiery rock is Batu Api or Batu Apoi in Murut which became widely used until today.

Other Brunei puak jati or native words made up some other place names.

Because the majority of Brunei Malays speak Brunei Malay, there is a tendency to forget these other languages that a large number of Brunei place names come from these languages.

Although there are several versions on the origin of the names of Sengkurong and Bengkurong - according to Dusun speakers, Sengkurong means 'Kurong People' and Bengkurong means 'Kurong River'. The area around Sengkurong/Bengkurong was in the old days known presumably known as Kurong.

“Kurong” also means to be enclosed. At one time, the river around the area, as most rivers do, meandered. At one place, it was meandering to the extent that it almost a circle surrounding the area.

It was said that one day when flooding occurs the meandering part of this river met each other and forms a circle but because the flow of the river was so fast, this circular path got cut off. In geographical terms, the circle forms into an ox-bow lake cut off entirely from the river. Over time this cut off part disappeared but the name 'kurong' or 'to be enclosed' remained.

Similarly for Tutong - again for Dusun speakers, Tutong is a name of a turtle. There are a few other place names in Tutong whose place names are derived from the native words in Tutong.

Bukit Ambok, a hill near the Tutong Town is one. 'Ambok' as all Bruneians know is the Brunei Malay word for monkey. Presumably Bukit Ambok can be translated to mean Monkey's Hill or Hill of Monkeys. Most people would guess that there used to be lots of amboks or monkeys there for that hill to be name so. However according to Tutong speakers, this is not so.

Bukit Ambok is not named after a monkey. It is named after a fruit. 'Ambug' is an old Tutong word for buah mata kucing - mata kucing or cats' eyes is a type of longan like fruit but smaller. On this hill, there used to be many 'ambug' trees - so the hill was called Bukit Ambug. But over time, most people changed the name from Bukit Ambug to Bukit Ambok.

But surprisingly another animal place name in Tutong does not sound like

an animal place name unless you know the Tutong language very well.

Lamunin is derived from two words - Lat and Munin. Lat apparently means hill and Munin means musang or fox. Lat Munin the original name, means Fox's Hill or Hill of Foxes as there used to be foxes around the area. Over time, the two names merged and became Lamunin and thus concealing its animal connection and its origin.

Another famous area in Tutong is Tasik Merimbun. Tasek Merimbun is probably one of the more internationally known park in Brunei. It is the only one in the country to be declared an ASEAN National Heritage Site way back in 1984.

The park has a total area of about 8,000 hectares. Two rivers flowed through to the lake named Sungai Meluncur and Sungai Bang Oncom. If you have ever been to Tasek Merimbun, the waters from the two rivers are fairly blackish as they flowed through swamp forests full of peat.

How does Merimbun gets its name? According to sources, Merimbun has been inhabited by the Dusun people more than a few hundred years ago. The Dusuns said that the area was discovered by someone named Imbun said to be the son of a Ketua Kampung from Merangking in Ulu Belait. It is said that while hunting, he reached this beautiful lake. He discovered that the place had plenty of food - fish in the lake and wild animals in the nearby forest.

He brought his family and several of his fellow villagers followed suit to build a new home there. Over time, the Tasek and its surrounding area is called Tasek Merimbun, as a tribute to the founder, Imbun.

However, another version of how the name Merimbun is derived is also interesting. It is said that after the area was settled by the Dusun people, traders would come to bring goods to the area. One such trader was a Chinese man named Eng Boon. It is said that eventually the name Merimbun came from this Eng Boon.

And finally, Bukit Udal in Tutong has an interesting story of how its name came about. Once upon a time it was said that there was a huge flood in the area. All human, animals and even insects ran up a high area called Bukit Kukub. Since

all living things were there, there was not enough food. Everything was eaten including all the grasses and the place was named Bukit Badal – badal is the Tutong word for ‘bald’. For reasons unknown, the word Badal changed to Dudal and in the 1940s, it was officially named as Bukit Udal.

Part VII : Brunei Place Names and the Animal World

This part will look at a number of place names in Brunei which based their place name origins from the animal world – both on land and at sea, small or big and even those from the insect world.

Judging by names alone, a number of place names in Brunei can be said to originate from the animal kingdom. One of the more famous place names is Bukit Beruang which means Hill of Bears. Currently Bukit Beruang area houses the largest national housing program in the Tutong District.

One legend said that the origin of the place name was because there were bears which used to be in the area. A stream in Tutong is also called Sungai Beruang (Bears’ Stream) which presumably could be referring to the same bears.

Another famous hill in Tutong is called Bukit Ambug which many Bruneians spelled and pronounced as Bukit Ambuk. Ambuk means monkeys in Brunei Malays and which is not surprising. There are a number of monkeys in Brunei ranging from all sorts of colours and shapes. However Bukit Ambug is not Hill of Monkeys. Ambug is the Tutong word for ‘mata kucing’, a fruit which belongs to the longan fruit family although much smaller in shape. The hill was full of the mata kucing trees and hence Bukit Ambug.

For the real monkeys, one has to go to Pulau Ambuk (Monkey Island). Another place which has monkeys would be the lovely Pantai Meragang or Meragang Beach. What is not much known is that Meragang in Dusun language means red monkey.

There are a few other famous place names which are thought to be of animal origin but are not. One is Pancur Murai (Murai is a type of magpie robin

bird). But according to legends, the name Pancur Murai came about from the story of a Princess known as Puteri Bongsu Kembang Kiapu who had a guard named Samurai. The Princess was staying in a luagan - a small swampy lake - and she wanted to take a bath from a 'pancur'.

A 'pancur' is like a natural shower - water sprouting or squirting out from a natural source. So she asked Samurai to make it. So Samurai scouted around and found the place and built it as requested by the Princess. When it was completed, the Princess took her bath there. That place became so famous that it was named as Pancur Samurai which later became Pancur Murai.

However one place name which does not sound as if it is based on an animal or a bird is Batang Tuau in Temburong. According to Awang Sigar, Tuau is the Murut name for Merak which is a type of peafowl. He said that in the old days, many peafowls were found in the area. One huge tree was favoured by the peafowls where they used to perch from the branches (batang) and thus the place was actually called that.

Another famous bird would be Burong Pingai. It is said that Kampung Burong Pingai was originally named Kampung Ulu-Ulu. It became Kampung Burong Pingai when according to history, one villager (said to be a Pebalat - one who catches fish using a basket made from bamboo or makes fish traps made from bamboo) from Kampung Saba who made a living at Kampung Ulu-Ulu found a white bird making the sound 'pingai, pingai, pingai.' The man knew that the Queen of Sultan Muhammad had lost her bird named Si Pingai. He caught the bird and presented it to the Sultan. Ever since then the kampung became known as Kampung Burong Pingai. Sultan Muhammad's Queen was said to be a Johor Princess and this event was taking place around 1368.

Another place in Kampong Ayer which used to be named after an animal was Sungai Kuyuk (River of Dogs). Kuyuk means dogs in Brunei language. It is not known how the name originated. Some people theorised that there were dogs near the area scavenging at nearby the rubbish dumping sites. However that name is no longer found on any map in Brunei. It is now known as Sungai

Pandan. Probably there was an objection to the name and it was changed.

The dogs' worst enemy, the cats, have a place to themselves in Brunei. One hill famous for trekkers located along Jalan Subok is called Bukit Markuching (kucing means cats in Malay). What happened is that the early settlers there whenever they wanted to go to the Berakas or Bandar area, the easiest route for them is actually to go over the Bukit Markuching. Since the trek up and down the hill will take quite a while, the villagers would go up and bring along food with them. So during the rests, they would normally tuck in to the foods which they have brought with them. Leftovers which are normally thrown away attracted a number of wild cats that lived in the hill. Hence the word 'kuching' became Bukit Markuching.

One hill in Tutong is well known but not many knew its animal origin unless he or she is a Dusun speaker. Lamunin is derived from two words — Lat and Munin. Lat means hill and Munin means "musang" in Brunei Malay or "fox" in English. Lat Munin, the original name, thus means Fox Hill as there used to be foxes around the area. Over time, the two names merged and became Lamunin, thus concealing the animal connection of its origin.

Another place name not as well known and tucked away in the interior of Tutong is known as 'Kaut Mondow'. If one does not speak Dusun, one does not realise that this place is called 'Perigi Harimau' or the 'Tiger's Well'. Another dangerous sounding place name in Temburong is 'Ayur Buayeh' which in Murut means 'Crocodile River'.

For the animals in water, the fishes, their names tended to be used for the islands surrounding Brunei Bay. Among them are Pulau Bedukang, Pulau Kitang and Pulau Ayam-Ayam. Pulau Labi is not on Brunei Bay but is on the Meriumbun Lake. Though a number of land place names have fishes or the animal world connection, it is not known how their names were derived. These included Kampong Kupang and Kampong Belais.

Despite their numerous presence in Brunei, the insect world has not featured much in Brunei's place names. One will become well known once its

dam has been completed. Way deep in Ulu Tutong, the place must be abuzz with mosquitoes. The name accompanying it is equally telling, Nyamok Nying. Nyamok means mosquitoes in Brunei Malay and Nying refers to its buzzing sound.

There are others such as Meraburong (burong means bird in Malay), Burong Lepas (escaping birds), Kerakas Payau (payau means deer in Malay), Bang Kesapi (sapi means cow in Malay), Belais (a type of fish), Sungai Katam (crab river) and Sungai Biawak (biawak is monitor lizard) that one can only imagine how these names came about.

Part VIII : The Streets of Bandar Seri Begawan – The British Connection

A few streets in Bandar Seri Begawan were named in memory after the British Residents and officers in memory of their contributions to the country.

Jalan McArthur was of course named after M.S.H. McArthur, the author of the Brunei Report of 1904 – a report which some say saved Brunei from extinction – as well as being the first British Resident in 1906.

Another was Jalan Stoney named after B.O. Stoney who was Acting Resident in 1909.

Jalan Pretty is named after E.E.F. Pretty who was Resident in 1923, 1926, 1928 and finally from 1948 to 1951.

Jalan Chevalier (today's Jalan Pemancha) was named after H. Chevalier who was Resident in 1909 to 1913.

Jalan Cator was named after G.E. Cator who was Resident from 1916 to 1921. Two other European named streets in Brunei – Jalan Roberts was named after E. Roberts, the first head of Public Works in 1906 and Jalan James Pearce was named after the first Director of Education in the 1950s.

Part IX : Other Interesting Origins of Village Names

We looked at two village names today in Tutong District and Brunei/Muara District which have interesting legends as how their names originated.

Tutong is actually an interesting district. According to historians, Tutong used to be part of the Melanau government in the 14th century before becoming part of the Brunei Sultanate in the 15th century.

Compared to the many villages in Brunei, the Tutong villages have interesting beginnings. One of which is Kampung Keriam. This village was occupied since 1920s and became quite developed when the main road was built across it then.

The origin of the village was said to be when a Dusun family came over from Sungai Bera in Belait to another village in Tutong called Kampung Panapang. The head of the family was called Si Rium. They became very prosperous in Panapang until one day they were told by a shaman that their son will be in danger from a crocodile. So in order to protect their son, they then moved to this new place.

In this new place, they still managed to do quite well. They built a house to stay in and Si Rium would go fishing everyday. And everyday Si Rium would bring back a basketful of sand from the sea until the mound of sand surrounding the house became quite huge - that mound is still visible now with the sand much different compared to the sand in the area.

However one day while their son was asleep, a bag made out of crocodile skin fell on the boy and the boy then suffered from a strange illness. He lingered on without a cure and he passed away.

Over the years, many people came from the surrounding area to build houses around the area of Si Rium's house. Eventually as more houses were built, the whole area became known as Kampung Si Rium. That name would have stayed on but in 1926 the name of the village was changed to Kampung Keriam. In 1926, the then District Officer decided to rename the village as Kampung Keriam on the basis that Keriam was easier to pronounce than Si Rium.

However one village in Brunei District would have won the prize for the most interesting way how the place is named and rivaled the origin of the Tutong village.

The kampung is called Pancur Murai and if you have not come across it, it's located about 22 kilometers from the capital and is bounded by Kampung Batong and Kampung Wasan, in Mukim Pangakalan Batu.

According to the older folks, Kampung Pancor Murai was originally known as Pangkalan Imang. In those days, people especially local traders (called pengalu) came from the capital to the place via Sungai Imang. And Sungai Imang was not even a real river.

It was just a watering hole and a villager named Kajimang dug a waterway and made it into a river. The waterway became known as Kajimang River and later as Imang River. The interesting bit is why does this name of Pangkalan Imang not stick?

Because the next story is more interesting. According to legends, the name Pancor Murai came about from the story of a Princess known as Puteri Bongsu Kembang Kiapu who had a guard named Samurai. The Princess was staying in a luagan - a small lake, but she wanted to take a bath from a pancur.

A pancur is like a natural shower - water sprouting or squirting out from a natural source. So she asked Samurai to make it. So Samurai scouted around and found the place and built it as requested by the Princess. When it was completed, the Princess took her bath there. That place became so famous that it was named as Pancur Samurai which later became Pancur Murai.

So many people wanted to marry the Princess but she rejected all suitors. It was said that because she did not want to be married, she fled to Mount Mulu in Sarawak.

Today, Kampung Pancur Murai still has many attractions such as Wasai Mandian Jin (apparently a 'jin' or 'genie' has been seen to take a bath there together with his 7 children); and Wasai Si Abdul named after many villagers had dreamt that the wasai belonged to 'Si Abdul' who was an 'orang kebenaran' or a

fairy.

There are also Telaga Lakau and Telaga Lubok Si Untong - water wells which used to be the main source of water for the village. Telaga Lakau is said to be the site of an old treasure burial grounds. At one time the villagers tried digging for it but thunder and lightning appeared as well as the appearance of numerous snakes stopped the efforts. The hole for the attempted dig remained till today.

Two more smaller lakes are also known as Luagan Bumbun and Luagan Kembang Kiapu. The Kampung also has a couple of hills with their own stories - Bukit Tenggilan and Bukit Si Madat; and an island called Pulau Durian Basing.

In Tutong, two village names are called using the word 'pancur'. One is Kampong Pancur Papan and the other Kampong Pancur Dulit. Both are naturally named after sources of water – spouting from a hill or any water source.

Pancur Papan gets its name from the way the villagers who stayed in the area obtained their water. In Pancur Papan, they used wooden planks (or called papan in Malay) to divert the water from the source to their houses. And hence the name of the village, Pancur Papan, It is in memory of using the wooden planks.

Pancur Dulit also gets its name from the way the villagers get the water into the village. In their case, they did not use wooden planks but used the bark of trees (or called kulit kayu in Malay). Hence over time, the place name became Pancur Dulit.

In fact the amount of water which came from Pancur Dulit was so plentiful that the authorities in the 1950s decided to use it as the source of water for Tutong Town. It was used until the 1970s and stop being use as a water source when Layong came into full operation.

Part X : Conclusion

The choosing of names can be mundane or it can be one where a lot of

pitfalls lie. Names carry on throughout history. Some names became well known for certain events. For example, in England Sellafield was associated with a nuclear power plant accident. It was Three Mile Island in United States, Chernobly in Russia and lately Fukushima in Japan. The names Hiroshima and Nagasaki invoked the memories of the first atomic bombs. We have the Nanking Massacre. Americans associate with the Korean War, the Vietnamese War, the Gulf War and later the Iraq War. These names were not given but nevertheless their association with events will always be remembered.

Naming new place names have the potential for conflict. Even small changes can get local residents riled. The Public Works Department built a housing estate and called it the Katok 'B', the main reason I was told that the budget allocated was originally for Kampong Katok and there were either left over funds or new funds and the decision was made to continue building in another area. However for administrative budgetary purposes, the development name of Katok was retained. So when a new area a few miles away was developed, the name Katok B was used. Local residents will keep pointing out that Katok B is nowhere near the original Katok.

Similarly the name Lambak. Lambak was an old established village when new housing estates were built to the left and right of the village and extending way into other villages areas. Lambak Kanan and Lambak Kiri was used. However the interesting story was that originally Lambak was just a spot in the old Lambak village. Lambak village had many spots but authorities chose Lambak as the name of the village and all the other names disappeared. And the name Lambak now became synonymous with the huge housing development. Who a hundred years ago would have known Lambak would become a household name.

A new comer to Brunei soon realized that in Brunei, there is a number of geographical place names which ends in '-Ong'. The most obvious are Gadong, Tutong, Jerudong. One may include Bengkurong, Sengkurong and Kiarong. Those with '-rongs' may be explained by the possibility of a meandering river which loops around a certain place. Some are not easily explainable. A number of people

speculated that these are related to the Chinese past.

If one is in Seria or Kuala Belait, take a look at the street names. Seria and Kuala Belait are relatively new in terms of infrastructure and the authorities then had a lot of choices to make for naming street names. However interestingly enough, the names generally reflected not the local history of either Seria or Kuala Belait but names from Brunei's past. For instance Istana Mangalela is named after a fort in Padas Damit in Sabah where heroic Brunei Malays fought against the army of the British North Borneo Company. Street names such as Jalan Puteri Cina or Jalan Dakula invoked memories of ancient Sultans. Dakula is named after Datu Dakula whose mother was captured by the Sulus during the civil war between Sultan Abdul Mubin and Sultan Muhydin. His mother was pregnant and when he grew up, he realized that his mother was the concubine of Sultan Abdul Mubin. He came back to Brunei to avenge his father's death.

There are many place names with interesting and sometimes controversial stories. Names can be political tools. Names can be used as propaganda tools. Names can be anything that one wants it to be. The choice of names is an important issue. The names you chose today may last hundreds and thousands of years. People may forget why a geographical name receive the name but the name will remain.

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