



Strengthening Regional Identity Through Toponymy Areas in The West Kalimantan-Serawak Border

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ABSTRACT

The border region is at the forefront of the nation's resilience. Territorial claims by neighboring countries often occur due to many factors, including unclear boundaries of border areas. Therefore, research on strengthening regional identity through toponymy studies in the West Kalimantan-Serawak border area was carried out. The purpose of this study was to illustrate the way to strengthen territorial identity through toponymy in the West Kalimantan-Sarawak border area. The method used was qualitative with an ethnographic approach. The techniques used in this study were surveys, interviews, and literature studies. In addition, researchers also conducted FGDs by involving a purposively selected group of participants who have similar characteristics or experiences in the research topic being studied. To analyze the data, this study used related theories such as toponymy, identity, culture, and sociolinguistics. The findings show that the names of villages/hamlets, and places still use regional identity (Indonesia), especially West Kalimantan. The names of these regions reinforce the West Kalimantan-Sarawak territorial boundary to strengthen the position of the Indonesian state in the border area. However, most of the younger generations do not know or ignore the origins of toponymy in the region.

Keywords: Border, identity strengthening, territoriality, toponymy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Border areas have many issues that can be discussed from all aspects of life. Borders have paradoxical characteristics, meaning that on the one hand, they become special because of access to foreign countries and on the other hand become problematic because they are prone to conflict. One of the causes of the conflict is border claims. The study of border areas was conducted by Rodríguez (2022) in which he raised issues in the Falkland Islands. He explained that the Falkland Islands or *Islas Malvinas* for Argentina, are self-governing overseas territories in the United Kingdom. The region consists of two main islands: West Falkland and East Falkland. In Argentina, these islands are referred to as *Gran Malvina* 'Great Malvina' and *Isla Soledad* 'Soledad Island', respectively.

Other problems in border areas were revealed through research conducted by Yusriadi and Ruslan (2015). This researcher concluded that the country's territorial boundaries divided the Sambas Malay community into residents of two different countries. The Malays in Paloh, Sajingan, became Indonesians, and the Malays in Telok Melano, and surrounding areas became Malaysians. In fact, at the Camar Bulan point, Paloh area, shifting territorial boundaries into national and international issues, the interaction between Sambas Malay relatives occurred without hindrance. Related to this border conflict, Mursito (2019) also conducted a previous study entitled: "The Role of Archives in supporting diplomatic efforts to resolve the Border Dispute between Camar Bulan and Tanjung Datuk". His study confirms that Malaysia's claim to the Camar Bulan and Tanjung Datuk areas is based on the 1975 MoU signed in Kinabalu and the 1978 MoU in Semarang. However, the MoU is a temporary agreement (*modus vivendi*) and there is no sufficient explanation because Indonesia did not grant the complaint.

Dazey's (2020) research also raises problems in border areas. He mentions Islamist movements mobilizing and agitating in the political sphere while spreading signs and symbols from Islamic traditions. Some scholars often considered the transnational movement par excellence to foster cross-national political dynamics and foster a sense of pan-Islamic belonging (Dalacoura, 2001; Moghadam, 2009). Scholars from influential Islamic groups, such as Jamaat-e-Islami, Milli Görüs, and the Muslim Brotherhood, have emphasized their transnational characteristics in terms of intellectual influence, organizational relations, and circulation of people (Hasan, 2014; Karam, 2004; Rubin, 2010). The essence of this transnational circulation lies in a normative ideal: the imperative of pan-Islamic solidarity. Thus, Islamist actors are seen as challenging the territorial logic of nation-state sovereignty by calling for Muslim unity beyond ethnicity, race, and geography.

In contrast, the results of the research conducted by Adnan, Martina, Damayanti, Syamsulrizal, Amanat, Yusriadi, and Elmansayah (2022) regarding the boundary between Indonesia and Malaysia in this region have been clearly defined. In addition, their study shows that multiethnic societies show local and national identity according to situations and conditions. There is no use of foreign identities (citizenship and nationality) in the two border areas today. Dual citizenship occurred in 2015 and the use of foreign languages is casuistic. The research team recommends the importance of conducting further research in border areas to obtain an overview of the situation and conditions there to determine appropriate development programs.

Based on the explanation above, it can be stated that border areas are indeed very risky related to boundaries and territorial claims. Important issues related to border disputes lead to territorial identity issues. The territorial identity referred to in this research refers to the sense of belonging and attachment that individuals have to certain geographical areas or communities. This sense of identity can be shaped by factors such as cultural heritage, shared history, language, traditions, and physical features. Regional identity can play an important role in shaping an individual's sense of a place and can influence their sense of community and relationships with others within that geographic area.

Departing from the situation and conditions of border areas that have the potential to cause conflicts over regional boundaries and territorial identity issues, this study is intended to strengthen regional identity through a study of regional toponymy on the West Kalimantan-Sarawak border. Efforts to find explanations regarding the strengthening of territorial identity through toponymy in border areas require a variety of accurate information and data to strengthen evidence for dispute resolution. The investigation of the origin, form, and meaning of place names in linguistics is called toponymy which is a branch of onomastics. The study of toponymy is not simply an investigation of the origin, form, and meaning of place names; It also implicitly describes the history of past civilizations and the development of an area over time.

Toponymy research has been carried out, including those conducted by (Abdullina et al., 2019). The results of this study explain that toponymy is a science that studies geographical names, their origin, semantic meaning, development, current state, spelling, and pronunciation. The main role and purpose of geographical names is the fixation of locations on the surface of the earth. In this regard, the justification and assignment of geographical names for geographical objects such as the Mugalzhar mountains seem quite topical and currently toponymic and therefore historical-geographical issues. Then, research by Meijers and Peris (2019) shows that the highest concentrations of Zang-Mian (Tibeto-Burman) toponymy are in the mountainous regions of the Northwest and Northeast, and the Zhuang-Dong (Kam-Tai) toponymy clusters in the Southwest and Southeast lowlands. Centro-graphical methods were used in this study to uncover historical trends of the gradual expansion of Han settlement in Yunan as recorded in toponymy timestamps. This study maps aspects of toponymy to explore ancient history.

Another research was written by Erwantoro et al. (2014) which discovered that the population of Jakarta City consists of several ethnicities (Betawi, Sundanese, Javanese, and ethnic groups from various regions in the archipelago), as well as nations (European, Indian, Arab, and Chinese). Among them seem to have played a role in giving the name of geographical elements to the indigenous people (Javanese, Sundanese, and Betawi) and of course the Dutch who had held power in Batavia for a very long time. According to him, the naming of the earth describes the geographical conditions of the city of Jakarta and the various activities of its residents which gave birth to various events that would later be immortalized in the naming of a place. Geographically, the toponymy of Jakarta City illustrates that the city of Jakarta in the past was a virgin land that had diverse flora and fauna. The increase and development of the population, both in quantity and quality, changed the face of the city of Jakarta. Socially, the toponymy of Jakarta City describes to us how a community perceives the environment in which it lives.

Furthermore, the study by Saparov, Chlachula, and Yeginbayeva (2018) makes it clear that current linguistic evidence points to complex and chronologically long cultural-historical developments reflected by local place names that are best recorded for major rivers and mountains (hydronyms and oronyms, respectively). They add that not all geo-site names are safely determined using modern onomastics. Material culture records provide additional multi-

proxy information. The local uniformity of multiple toponyms across a wide area assuming a common cultural background attests to the broader ethnic homogeneity and/or mobility of ancient populations inhabiting this vast, geomorphic mosaic land.

In contrast to the studies above, this study examines the strengthening of territorial identity through toponymy in the West Kalimantan-Serawak border area with an ethnographic approach. The study also used related theories such as toponymy, identity, culture, and sociolinguistics. Research on strengthening regional identity through toponymy in border areas has never been studied. Therefore, it is important to conduct this research by raising the issue of how to strengthen regional identity through toponymy studies in the West Kalimantan-Serawak border area.

2. METHOD

Since the purpose of this study was to explain the way to strengthen territorial identity through toponymy in the West Kalimantan-Serawak border area, a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach was used in this study. The techniques used in this study were surveys, interviews, and literature studies. Intensive interviews were conducted by the research team with several community leaders, one of whom was Mr. RD (69 years old). Mr. RD is a community and indigenous leader in the Kemite Hulu sub-district who knows and understands the ins and outs of the study area. In addition, FGD was also carried out by involving a group of purposively selected participants who have similar characteristics or experiences in the research topic being studied. The research location was in the border area of Kemite Hulu District, West Kalimantan-Serawak (Malaysia), namely Service Village, and Sui Village. Kelik, Sejawak Village, and Senaning Village.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Conditions of Existence of Toponymy

3.1.1. Community Knowledge

Of the people who know the border area community in Kemite Hulu District, Sintang Regency, West Kalimantan-Serawak regarding the toponym of villages/hamlets are only 20%, while 80% of them do not know the history of naming the area. The twenty percent is only controlled by people over the age of 50 years. The knowledge of the origin of the names of villages, hamlets, and places in their territory from this age range of 50 years and above is still good. This is supported by our resource person and informant with the initials Mr. RD (69 years old) who lives in Senaning Village, Kemite Hulu District, Sintang Regency. Mr. RD is known to the people in Kemite Hulu District because he is considered a traditional leader and community leader because of his extraordinary insight and knowledge. Mr. RD knows well about the toponyms of villages, hamlets, and places in his area. His insights on toponyms in villages, hamlets and places in the Kemite Hulu-Sarawak border area are well known. Although Mr. RD settled in Senaning Village, his knowledge of the origins of the names of villages, hamlets, and places in the border area is very familiar in his memory.

According to Mr. RD's explanation, the name Desa Jasa has a long history of naming. The location of Service Village is in the eastern part of Kelik Village, the western part is bordered by Riam Sejawak Village, the northern part is bordered by Serawak and the southern part is bordered by the Bugau River. The name Service Village is taken from the word Jasa which means cooperation. The naming was motivated by cooperation between the TNI and community leaders and all communities. Jasa Village consists of 3 hamlets, namely Wak Ampu, Wak Sepan, and Wak Batu Ampar (slapping stone).

The history of Jasa Village is in an area in Ketemenggungan Bugau. Bugau region, its territory up to Malaysia. Ketemenggungan Bugau is called the Head of the Continent. Bugau people are synonymous with good people. The origin of Bugau is from Tuak or Demong Jambi. Tuak means a smart person, he used to predict/predict during the age of styling. Demong Jambi is a Kemite Hilir people from Fever village. Once upon a time, Tuak Jambi's wife craved durian fruit. Then Tuak Jambi wandered for months until he arrived at Glong (circular). In Glong, a durian tree, but it is not known who planted it. Tuak Jambi found durian kampung (Kampung = Rimba). At that time, the village durian was fruitful. When he was about to return, cut off the *bemban* and durian skin, washed them into the river, and then washed the *bemban* away, along the river that had not yet been named, whose mouth was in the river Mite. At that time, the river and hill were not yet named. Then, he went back to the Kemite River together with his wife, and when they saw the *bemban* and durian skin, they entered the Kemite tributary, followed it until they came back to the circular *glong*/hill, and they stayed there. One day the *humgkapung* bird sounded, a bird that sounded during fruit season. The bird sounds "*Bukit Bugau Landau Wak*". The bird only sounds Bukit Bugau Landau Wak only when it is

around the hill *glong*, while in other places the bird does not sound so. The original sound of the bird is the *kapung* dragon. The sound of the bird was used as a name for the hill. Since then, the hill has been named Bugau Hill, and the river has been named Bugau River.

The hamlet that first developed and many people is Wak Ampu. Wak Ampu, which means flood in the Bugau Wak Sepan language. *Sepan* is a drinking place for deer, pigs, antelope, and birds. Usually, the water is slightly salty, which is visited by animals during drought. *Wak Batu Ampar* is so named because the river contains a *sandaran* of stones, slapping stones. Then, the origin of the naming of Riam Sepan is a canon place. In the past, heavy weapons were sent by the British to the West Kalimantan-Sarawak border area if there were war people (VC). At that time, this region was very difficult, a confrontation war with the war code “*ganyang* Malaysia”, Wak Sepan and Wak Ampu were transferred which were arranged by Dankos Joko Susanto *leknan* 2 soldiers. At that time, the TNI and village leaders agreed to move to Jasa.

Another source of information is from the chairman of BPD Desa Jasa, Mr. J (50 years old). Many place names have unique histories and stories. For example, the story of the *betajuk* stone tells a story of a girl looking for fish. In the past, people did not use clothes, only used ‘*kemban*’ (a piece of cloth). A girl took a fish, and a shrimp jumped and pinched her breasts, then the girl said, let alone humans, animals, and shrimp are hooked on me. Immediately, there came a rainstorm, and the girl did not have time to go ashore. The girl then froze, became a stone, and a hook beside her. Other stories that color the naming of places in border areas such as the name Jerup. Jerup is a hermitage, as well as a place to treat the sick. My father was sick, was taken for treatment to Malaysia, and was sick for a very long time, the deceased father was sick and almost taken to the rocks in the middle of the river.

Meanwhile, 80% of the community who are in the age of up to 49 years old, do not know the origin of the name of the village/hamlet in the region. This can be proven by interviews with several informants in several villages who stated that they did not know the origin of the names of villages and hamlets in their areas. Their lack of knowledge is caused by several factors, including parents who did not inform and even did not tell the history of naming villages, hamlets, and places to their children. Economic factors also support the erosion of knowledge about the origins of toponyms because people are more interested in economic interaction than in knowing the history of their region. Ringgit money is more attractive to border communities because its value is greater than the rupiah.

3.1.2. Community Affection

Affection is a psychological term used to describe a feeling. Related affection or emotive reactions of the community to the toponyms of villages, hamlets, and places in the region, especially the West Kalimantan-Sarawak border area is good. Although most people in this border area do not know the origin of the name of the village/hamlet/place in the area, it does not mean that the toponymy used does not contain the collective memory of the community. This can be proven by the toponymy used by the community related to situations that have occurred in their area.

Border communities prioritize local wisdom in naming their areas. The place names used by the community relate to the situation that existed at the time. For example, Sungai Kelik Village was chosen to be the name of the village because, at that time, this area was found with many catfish (*kelik*). The origin of Kelik River came from Lapot Hamlet, Sekae Village in 1979. They opened a village of 6 families and the confrontation period of the forest area was called the natural fence forest. On the one hand, during the communist war, it was also accessible from the National Army (TNI) and communists. According to the parents’ stories, they cleared land in Jasa Village, and asked permission from the Commander of Luansa, on the grounds of guarding Indonesia, so that the Kelik River was established which led to Jasa. The name of the caretaker there is *Kebayan* (deputy head of the village) and until now the old man’s name is Tamin. That is, the naming of the village is motivated by stories and history related to the existing natural environment.

3.1.3. People’s Attitude Towards Toponymy

People’s attitudes towards the toponymy of villages, hamlets, and places that use local elements or collective memory are positive. However, there is a tendency for the younger generation to ignore toponymy in their area. From the results of the interview, it was clear that the community, especially the younger generation, did not care enough and did not even want to know the origin of the names of villages, hamlets, and places in their area. Almost most people do not know the history of naming the villages/hamlets they occupy, especially the younger generation. The indifference of the younger generation because they think toponymy is not very important to them. The following table illustrates people’s attitudes towards toponymy in the border area of Sintang Regency, West Kalimantan-Sarawak (Malaysia).

3.2. Efforts to Strengthen Regional Identity

3.2.1. The Importance of Toponymy

The toponymy of a place is related to the stories, legends, myths, culture, and history behind it. Preservation, heritage of knowledge, and culture in society result in the habit of telling or telling stories (folklore). Danandjaja (2002) views that one of the functions of folklore is related to toponymy as a projection system, namely as a means of reflecting the wishful thinking of a collective. The concept of toponymy regarding place in an area can be seen in how the community portrays itself and how it brings out its image to the outside world. Cultural patterns owned by humans will be recorded through the identification of place names (toponymy) from the culture of a society.

Regarding place naming, (Wang et al., 2019) view cultural landscapes, and toponymy as the preservation and cultural mark of the region that directly reveals the spatial distribution of culture and ethnic origins. Toponymy as a cultural landscape due to the tribal identity of the people living in administrative areas can still be seen from the use of language in naming the region, including in the West Kalimantan-Sarawak border area. Abdullina, Saparov, Sergeyeva, Yeginbayeva, and Atasoy (2019) define toponymy as a science that studies geographical names, their origin, semantic meaning, development, current state, spelling, and pronunciation. The basic and main role and purpose of geographical names is the fixation of locations on the surface of the earth.

This goal is following government directions regarding the naming of the earth. Standardization of the name of the earth is also regulated by the government with laws and regulations in Indonesia, West Kalimantan that each element of the earth must be named and standardized to create administrative order in naming the visual elements. The institution authorized to carry out the establishment of the name of *rupabumi* is the National Team for Standardizing the Name of *Rupabumi* as specified in Presidential Regulation Number 112 of 2006. This institution has the task of establishing guidelines, principles, rules, and procedures in the establishment of the name of the earth. Many challenges and obstacles are faced in giving and naming the earth. One of the causes of obstacles is the lack of socialization to the community regarding the naming of the elements of *rupabumi* the term *rupabumi* is still many people do not know the meaning and importance of the naming of this *rupabumi*.

The regulation on the establishment of the name of the earth and toponymy refers to (1) Law Number 24 of 2009 concerning the Flag, Language, and National Emblem, as well as the National Anthem. (2) Law Number 4 of 2011 concerning Geospatial Information, namely Article 12 states that the base map includes coastlines, hypnosis, waters, names of terrain, and regional boundaries. (3) Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government contained in Article 48 states that changes in regional boundaries, changes in regional names, naming and changing the name of parts of the earth, moving the capital and changing the name of the capital are determined by PP. (4) Presidential Regulation of Indonesia Number 112 of 2006 concerning Standardization of the Name of *Rupabumi*. (5) PMinister of Home Affairs Regulations of Indonesia Number 39 of 2008 concerning General Guidelines for Standardizing the Name of *Rupabumi*. Finally, (6) Government Regulation Number 57 of 2014, among others, regulates efforts to foster and develop regional languages. That is, regional languages must also be fostered and developed with various efforts such as ethnic identity and cultural heritage.

In line with regulations issued by the central government, (1) West Kalimantan Governor Regulation Number 111 of 2022 concerning the Implementation of the Name of *Rupabumi*, namely a) refers to realizing orderly government administration and preserving cultural, historical, customary and environmental values, it is necessary to regulate the implementation of the name of *Rupabumi* in West Kalimantan Province; b) the implementation of the name of *Rupabumi* must be carried out in an orderly, integrated, successful and cultural manner so that accuracy, up-to-date, and legal certainty are guaranteed; c) provide legal certainty for the implementation of the name of *Rupabumi* in West Kalimantan Province, which needs to be regulated in a governor's regulation; d) refer to the regulation of the Minister of Home Affairs Number 39 of 2008 concerning General Guidelines for Standardizing the Name of *Rupabumi*; e) Geospatial Information Agency Regulation Number 6 of 2017 concerning the Implementation of Standardization of *Rupabumi* Names as amended by Geospatial Information Agency Regulation Number 12 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Geospatial Information Agency Regulation Number 6 of 2017 concerning the Implementation of Standardization of *Rupabumi* Names. The regulation is strengthened by the Decree of the Regional Secretary of West Kalimantan Province Number 1634 / RO-PEM / 2022 concerning Amendments to the Annex of the Decree of the Regional Secretary of West Kalimantan Province Number 466 / RO-PEM/2022 of 2022 concerning the Establishment of a Team for Updating the Name of Natural, Artificial, and Cultural Heritage in West Kalimantan Province in 2022. With the above regulations, the naming of *rupabumi* in West Kalimantan has been well-regulated.

3.2.2. Existence State Data as Basis

The toponymy of villages/hamlets/places located in the West Kalimantan-Serawak border area mostly still uses local language terms or refers to the collective memory of the local community. In addition to using terms in regional languages, such as Bugau (*benadai-nadai*) and Iban, place naming is also colored by elements of mountains, hills, water, flora, and fauna, both in the waters and on land. For example, Bukit Bugau and Sungai Bugau are taken from the sound of the pung kapung bird that sounds “*Bukit Bugau Landau Wak*” when passing on one of the hills. The bird does not emit Bukit Bugau Landau Wak if it passes elsewhere. therefore, the people named the hill Bugau Hill.

3.2.3. Identity Strengthening Efforts

Efforts that can be made related to strengthening regional identity include the use of regional/local names, reviving speech culture, good documentation, and socialization of toponymy knowledge.

The use of regional or local names becomes very important for the names of villages, hamlets, and places in border areas because it will give a firm boundary of a country’s territory. The village/hamlet/place boundary between West Kalimantan and Serawak becomes clear so as not to cause complexity of the border areas of the two countries. For example, Jasa-Sarawak Village, Kelik-Sarawak River Village, Riam Sejawak-Sarawak Village. These names become territorial identities in the border areas of West Kalimantan, thus strengthening the existence of the Indonesian state in the eyes of neighboring countries.

In addition to the use of local names, it is no less important to revive the culture of speech or the decline of stories about the origin of the names of villages, hamlets, and places by parents to their children so that they are maintained and sustainable. The decline of local naming stories or legends is important for parents to do with their children. There is a term used by experts that the loss of a civilization of a people is because the collective memory of that society is no longer known. That is the disconnection of information that once existed and lived in his time, until finally it was not known at all by the people in the next era. Parental negligence related to the decline will destroy past civilizations for the next generation.

To anticipate the above, good documentation is necessary. For example, a good recording of place names in the West Kalimantan-Serawak border area is carried out so that people can know and understand them. After recording, the steps are recorded so that they are well-read and not lost to the times. The last step is to publish it to the public so that it is widely known, both regionally, nationally, and internationally.

It is important to do socialization or technical guidance related to toponymy. Based on findings in the field, it was found that most people do not understand and know what toponymy is. Therefore, socialization related to toponymy or terrain must be carried out for people in border areas to strengthen territorial identity. The purpose of providing socialization or bimtek is to provide insight and strengthen regional identity through knowledge about the toponymy of villages, hamlets, and places in the West Kalimantan-Sarawak border area, especially those in the Kemite Hulu District, Sintang-Sarawak Regency.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the strengthening of territorial identity can be seen in the conditions of toponymy existence and efforts to strengthen its territorial identity. The existence of toponymy of people over the age of 50 years who know about the origin of the names of villages, hamlets, and places in their area is only 20%. Meanwhile, 80% of people with the age under 50 years do not even know what toponymy is. In general, people’s affixation on toponymy is good, but most people’s attitudes are less concerned or ignorant of the origin of naming areas. With this picture, efforts to strengthen regional identity to provide understanding to the community of the importance of toponymy can be carried out as follows: 1) the use of local names as toponymy in border areas; 2) reviving the culture of speech for the younger generation; 3) documenting the origins of toponymy; 4) socialization and publication.

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