

Research Article

Manifestation Aspects in the Toponymy of Gampongs in Timang Gajah District, Bener Meriah

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the manifestation of toponymy in the villages of Timang Gajah District, Bener Meriah, reflecting the close relationship between place names and the social, cultural, historical, and natural aspects of the local community. A qualitative approach was employed, utilizing techniques such as in-depth interviews, observation, recording, and note-taking for data collection. Data were gathered through interviews with local figures, such as the village head (keuchik), tuha 4, tuha 8, and petue, who possess extensive knowledge of the origins of the village names. Data analysis involved selection, classification, and narrative description to uncover the symbolic meanings embedded in the toponymy. The results indicate that the village names in Timang Gajah District can be categorized into four main types: vegetation toponymy, historical toponymy, bestowed toponymy, and geographical toponymy. Vegetation toponymy reflects the community's relationship with their surrounding environment, while historical toponymy links village names to significant events in local history. Bestowed toponymy, associated with administrative decisions and influential community figures, represents social change and aspirations for progress, whereas geographical toponymy serves as a geographical and administrative marker. This study contributes to the development of toponymic studies, demonstrating how place names in Timang Gajah District not only reflect geographical conditions but also involve cultural, historical, and social dynamics that shape the local community's identity.

Keywords: Toponymy; Manifestation Aspects; Timang Gajah

1. INTRODUCTION

Toponymy is the field of study concerned with the naming of places, encompassing not only geographical and physical elements but also the cultural, historical, and social values embedded in place names. In this context, toponymy can serve as a means to understand the relationship between communities and their surrounding natural environments (Hestiyana, 2022). In Indonesia, particularly in Aceh, toponymic studies are crucial for uncovering the cultural and social meanings inherent in place names (Candrasari et al., 2024). Timang Gajah District in Bener Meriah is an area rich in toponymic heritage, where the names of gampongs (villages) reflect the identity of the community, which is closely linked to the natural, cultural, and social aspects of their lives. Research into the manifestation aspects of gampong toponymy in Timang Gajah District provides deeper insights into the social constructions that underpin place naming in this region.

Previous studies on toponymy in Aceh, especially in rural areas, have identified the influence of religion, such as Islam, and Acehnese customs in place naming (Muharna et al., 2024). Moreover, a linguistics lecturer, Ginting (2024), also predicted that some studies had revealed the role of local languages and dialects in the naming of Gampongs. However, most of these studies have focused on linguistic or colonial historical aspects, while the manifestation of toponymy, particularly with regard to the social and cultural symbolism in local contexts, remains underexplored (Erliani et al., 2021). Furthermore, many prior studies have primarily focused on urban areas, with rural regions like Timang Gajah receiving comparatively less attention.

This study aims to analyze the manifestation aspects of gampong toponymy in Timang Gajah District, Bener Meriah, focusing on how the names of gampongs reflect cultural and historical identities, as well as the relationship between the community and their environment. The research also seeks to explore various factors influencing place naming, such as colonial history, inter-ethnic interactions, and the socio-economic dynamics present in the region (Hilmi & Abasa, 2022). In doing so, this study aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of how place names are not merely geographic indicators but also representations of the cultural and historical diversity of the area (Tahta, 2021).

A gap in the existing literature is the lack of studies on how socio-economic dynamics influence gampong naming in rural areas. This research attempts to fill that gap by focusing on the impact of social, economic, and political changes in Timang Gajah District on place naming. The study will investigate whether local economic development, population

migration, or local government policies play a role in the alteration or creation of place names, and whether such changes in naming are a response to social or environmental shifts within the community.

Furthermore, this research emphasizes a contextual analysis of each gampong name, viewing it not only as a linguistic symbol but also as a representation of social history, tradition, and the community's relationship with the natural world. The study will discuss how gampong names associated with natural elements, such as mountains, rivers, and forests, reflect the local wisdom of Timang Gajah's inhabitants in preserving and maintaining their environment. Additionally, the research will explore the role of toponymy in preserving cultural identity, particularly in the face of the growing influence of globalization (Maharani & Nugrahani, 2019).

From an academic perspective, Kuntowijoyo believes this study also introduces a methodological update compared to previous research. While prior studies have predominantly employed descriptive approaches or focused on linguistic analysis, this research utilizes a multidisciplinary approach, integrating linguistics, anthropology, and geography. By conducting in-depth interviews with local community leaders and government officials, the study aims to uncover deeper meanings in the manifestation of gampong toponymy. Through this approach, the research hopes to provide a more comprehensive picture of how place names in Timang Gajah District reflect the community's social, cultural, and dynamic aspects. Moreover, the study will examine the impact of administrative changes on the process of gampong naming. Some gampong names in this region may have changed as a result of local government policies related to administrative restructuring. Understanding this aspect is critical, as it can affect traditional place names' cultural and historical value. This research will analyze to what extent such changes diminish or erase the historical significance of these place names. This study is expected to significantly contribute to the field of toponymic studies, particularly in Indonesia. By highlighting the manifestation aspects of place names that reflect cultural diversity and local identity, the findings may serve as a reference for further in-depth studies. Additionally, the research could offer new insights into the interaction between local culture, social change, and regional development in Indonesia, with a particular focus on Aceh and rural areas in the country more generally.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study is conducted in Timang Gajah District, Bener Meriah, which includes 20 villages: Blang Rongka, Bumi Ayu, Cekal Baru, Suka Damai, Damaran Baru, Datu Beru, Gegur Sepakat, Kenine, Kulem Para Kanis, Linung Bale, Mekar Ayu, Mude Benara, Pantan Kemuning, Simpang Layang, Tunyang, Tunyang Induk, Bukit Tunyang, Lampahan, Lampahan Barat, and Lampahan Timur. The location was chosen due to its rich historical and cultural significance, which influences the naming of gampongs. Data for the study were collected through oral interviews with local community leaders, such as the keuchik (village head), tuha 4, tuha 8, and petue (elderly individuals), who possess in-depth knowledge about the origins of village names in Timang Gajah District. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, ensuring that they met specific criteria, such as being between 25 and 55 years old, working as farmers with a middle-class social status, and having a strong connection to their village (Muhyi, 2018).

The data collection methods employed in this study involve four primary techniques. First, observation was conducted to directly assess the social and cultural dynamics in each village involved in the research. This observation aimed to provide a deeper understanding of the context surrounding gampong naming and the community's relationship with their environment (Halfian et al., 2022). Second, in-depth interviews were carried out with community leaders knowledgeable about the history and origins of village names. These face-to-face interviews sought to uncover information regarding the process of place naming and the symbolic meanings embedded in the names. Third, recording techniques were used to document the interviews with informants, ensuring accurate and verifiable data. Finally, note-taking was employed to capture all information gathered from the interviews, which was later processed during the data analysis phase (Rais, 2008).

According to (Sugiyono, 2016), the data analysis in this study follows several systematic stages. First, the data collected from interviews and observations were selected to ensure accuracy and relevance to the research focus. The second stage involved classifying the data and grouping it according to categories relevant to the research questions. The classified data were then described in detail to reveal the meanings and symbolism within the toponymy of gampongs in Timang Gajah District (Muhyidin, 2017). This process involves presenting the data in narrative form, outlining the origins and historical context of the village names (Setiawan & Sudaryat, 2023). Finally, the researcher will conclude the analysis to provide a clearer understanding of the manifestation aspects in gampong toponymy, as well as the social and cultural relationships reflected in these place names (Zaim, 2014).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study on toponymy in the Timang Gajah Subdistrict, Bener Meriah, identified 26 types of toponyms across 26 villages. These toponyms can be categorized into four main types: vegetation toponyms, historical toponyms, assigned toponyms, and

regional toponyms. The collected data revealed three vegetation toponyms, eleven historical toponyms, four assigned toponyms, and eight regional toponyms. The following sections provide further explanations of each category.

3.1 Vegetation Toponymy

Vegetation toponyms refer to place names associated with specific plants or vegetation found in the area. The study identified three villages within this category: Kenine, Kulem Para Kanis, and Pantan Kemuning.

- a. Kenine derives its name from the Kina tree, which is known for its medicinal properties in treating malaria. Over time, the local community chose this name to honor the Kina tree's historical and functional significance.
- b. Kulem Para Kanis consists of two words: "kulem" meaning pond, and "para," referring to a platform used for cutting wood. The village name relates to the presence of a large Kanis tree and a pond formed nearby. It reflects the historical role of local vegetation in the community's livelihood.
- c. Pantan Kemuning combines the word "pantan," meaning hill, and "kemuning," which refers to the kemuning tree. The name was chosen due to the abundance of kemuning trees in the area, which contribute to the region's scenic natural environment.

3.2 Historical Toponymy

Historical toponyms are names that reflect significant historical events or figures. The study found eleven villages with historical toponyms, showing a strong connection between the village names and local history.

- a. Bandar Lampahan is named after its historical function as a coffee trading center during the Dutch colonial era. The name endures, preserving the memory of the village's role in the coffee trade, even though the Dutch coffee factory is no longer operational.
- b. Blang Rongka combines "blang" meaning field and "rongka," meaning frame. The name arose from a half-built structure called "rongka" and is also associated with buffalo pens used for farming. It illustrates the agrarian lifestyle of the local community.
- c. Cekal Baru refers to the feeling of being "bound" experienced by its inhabitants, who, attracted by the fertile land, were reluctant to leave the area. This name reflects the community's historical attachment to the land.
- d. Damaran Baru derives from the damar tree, symbolizing the pine trees planted in the area. The village became a model for other areas to cultivate pine trees, marking agricultural progress and change.
- e. Datu Beru is named after a prominent historical figure, Datu Beru, a local hero. The title "Datu" signifies an important leader, while "Beru" means young woman, commemorating the hero's legacy.
- f. Gegur Sepakat originates from a stone from Linge, which continually returns to its original location despite being moved. The name symbolizes a community agreement based on the stone's persistent return.
- g. Lampahan derives from the tragic event of an execution during the colonial period, where "lapah" means to be severed or cut, and "hen" means immediately, reflecting the somber historical event.
- h. Linung Bale comes from "linung" meaning shelter and "bale" meaning resting place. It refers to the village's role as a stopover for travelers seeking shelter.
- i. Suka Damai was formerly known as Contoh, which became the Dutch government's model for pine tree planting. The new name symbolizes peace and harmony after the colonial changes.
- j. Timang Rasa reflects a thoughtful decision-making process, where a family with four children in conflict needed a father's wisdom to prevent hurt. The name signifies the importance of family harmony.
- k. Tunyang refers to a natural event involving a fallen tree due to strong winds. This name connects the village's history with a significant environmental occurrence.

3.3 Assigned Toponymy

Assigned toponyms are names given based on decisions by authoritative figures or groups. Four villages in Timang Gajah fall into this category.

- a. Bumi Ayu was previously known as Blok C, governed by the Dutch. Local leaders changed the name to reflect the village's transformation into a more peaceful and progressive community.
- b. Mekar Ayu was named through a decision initiated by a teacher who had been invited to the presidential palace by President Soeharto. This name symbolizes hope and growth following the expansion of the area.
- c. Mude Benara was established after the division of Karang Jadi village, driven by a local leader who aimed to improve the region's welfare. The name symbolizes hope for future progress.
- d. Setie was originally called Setia but changed its name after administrative processes were completed, reflecting the region's growth and organizational restructuring.

3.4 Regional Toponymy

Regional toponyms are based on geographic or administrative locations. These names often describe the area's physical layout or boundaries.

- a. Bukit Mulie refers to a village located on a highland. The word "Mulie" means honored or elevated, indicating the village's geographical positioning on a hill.
- b. Bukit Tunyang reflects the village's location on a higher terrain near the Tunyang area, highlighting the hilly topography.
- c. Gunung Tunyang is named for its position in a higher elevation area, which is part of a broader regional name associated with the Tunyang area.
- d. Kampung Baru 76 is named after its location at KM 76 on the Bireuen-Takengon road, which serves as a distinct geographical marker.
- e. Lampahan Barat and Lampahan Timur emerged from the division of Lampahan village and are named based on their positions to the west and east of the original village.
- f. Pantan Pediangan refers to a place of recreation in the highlands, highlighting the village's topography with beautiful natural landscapes.
- g. Simpang Layang was previously called Godang but was renamed after accidents occurred at the intersection. The new name reflects the sharp turn in the road, which became a distinctive feature.

The study of toponymy within Timang Gajah District, Bener Meriah, reveals a diverse array of 26 types of place names across 26 villages, which can be grouped into four primary categories: vegetation toponymy, historical toponymy, bestowed toponymy, and geographical toponymy. Each category reflects the community's relationship with its environment, history, culture, and social dynamics. These categories not only shape the identity of each village but also offer insights into the historical and cultural narratives that influenced their naming.

a. Vegetation Toponymy

Vegetation toponymy represents the direct connection between place names and the flora present in the area. Three villages in Timang Gajah District fall under this category: Kenine, Kulem Para Kanis, and Pantan Kemuning. The name "Kenine" derives from the Kina tree, which is known for its medicinal properties, particularly in malaria treatment. This name reflects the local community's deep respect for nature and its practical significance in their daily lives. Similarly, "Kulem Para Kanis" is a compound of "kulem" (pond) and "para" (woodcutting platform), referencing a specific location where a large Kanis tree stood, thus highlighting the cultural importance of the tree species in the area's agricultural practices. Meanwhile, "Pantan Kemuning" combines "pantan" (hill) and "kemuning" (a type of tree), signifying the abundant presence of kemuning trees in the area, thus reinforcing the natural beauty and ecological richness of the village. These names underscore how the local environment influences the cultural identity and history of the villages.

b. Historical Toponymy

Historical toponymy, encompassing place names linked to past events or significant figures, is a prominent feature of Timang Gajah's landscape. Eleven villages in the district carry historical names, often tied to key moments in the region's socio-political or economic past. For instance, "Bandar Lampahan" refers to the historical role of the village as a coffee trading hub during the Dutch colonial era, symbolizing its importance in regional commerce. Similarly, "Blang Rongka" is derived from local history, where the word "rongka" refers to an unfinished building or a buffalo pen, reflecting the village's agrarian roots and the social practices of the past. "Cekal Baru," on the other hand, alludes to the emotional ties the villagers have to their fertile land, which became a symbol of attachment and belonging. Through these names, the historical events, figures, and social contexts of each village are preserved and conveyed to future generations.

c. Bestowed Toponymy

Bestowed toponymy refers to names given to places as part of administrative decisions or as honors from influential figures. In Timang Gajah, this category is represented by four villages: Bumi Ayu, Mekar Ayu, Mude Benara, and Setie. "Bumi Ayu" was named following a change initiated by local authorities, marking a shift from a colonial-era name to one that reflects the village's new identity. Similarly, "Mekar Ayu" symbolizes a new beginning, with the name inspired by a suggestion from a local teacher after an official visit to the national palace, embodying hope and progress for the region. "Mude Benara," stemming from a division of the former Karang Jadi village, illustrates the role of youth-driven initiatives in shaping the community's future through new administrative boundaries. "Setie," formerly known as Setia, highlights the role of government intervention in rebranding and reshaping local identity. These names reflect both the

administrative changes and the aspirations for future development that the communities experienced during times of transition.

d. Geographical Toponymy

Geographical toponymy is the naming of places based on their physical location or topographical features. This category is particularly evident in the naming conventions of villages such as Bukit Mulie, Bukit Tunyang, Gunung Tunyang, and others. "Bukit Mulie" translates to "Noble Hill," emphasizing the elevated location of the village and its symbolic connection to honor and respect. Similarly, "Bukit Tunyang" and "Gunung Tunyang" highlight the geographical prominence of the village as being situated on higher ground, which not only defines its physical landscape but also reflects its symbolic significance as a place of elevation. These names align with the natural landscape's impact on community identity, where the physical environment becomes central to how people relate to their surroundings and heritage.

e. Symbolism in Toponymy

Each category of toponymy in Timang Gajah District also carries symbolic meaning that extends beyond mere geographical or historical reference. For instance, the name "Damaran Baru" refers to a newly established pine plantation, symbolizing progress and agricultural innovation. Likewise, "Suka Damai" reflects a sense of peace and harmony that emerged after the village became a model for pine tree cultivation during the Dutch colonial era. These names encapsulate both the aspirations of the community and the historical milestones that shaped their cultural and agricultural practices. By linking places to both material and symbolic transformations, these toponyms offer insights into the socio-economic developments that the villages underwent.

f. Toponymy and Social Dynamics

Toponymy in Timang Gajah District also reflects the dynamic social and cultural exchanges that shaped the region. The names "Lampahan Barat" and "Lampahan Timur," derived from the geographical division of the original Lampahan village, underscore the impact of administrative decisions on the social landscape. These names convey the changes that arose from the division, which were based on both geographic and social considerations. Similarly, "Simpang Layang," formerly known as Godang, reflects a community's response to the dangers posed by a sharp road bend, symbolizing local efforts to address safety concerns and transform the place's identity. Such toponyms highlight how naming practices can reflect shifts in social values, public safety concerns, and the communal desire for change.

g. Toponymy as a Cultural Record

The toponyms of Timang Gajah serve as a cultural record that encapsulates the relationship between the local population and their environment, history, and social developments. The study reveals that place names are not just labels, but narratives that preserve cultural values, commemorate historical events, and reflect the community's interactions with the natural and social world. These names continue to carry deep meanings for the local population, serving as reminders of their heritage, struggles, and aspirations. As such, toponymy is an important aspect of cultural identity, offering a rich field of study that reveals much about the past, present, and future of the communities in Timang Gajah District.

4. CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the toponyms in Timang Gajah Subdistrict, Bener Meriah, not only reflect geographical conditions but are also closely linked to the local community's social, cultural, historical, and environmental factors. The place names identified in this study fall into four primary categories: vegetation, historical, assigned, and regional toponyms. Each category illustrates the profound relationship between people and their environment, significant historical events, administrative policies, and social dynamics. Overall, the toponyms in this region embody the richness and diversity of the local culture, preserved through place names that serve as symbols of the community's collective experience. Further, the study of toponymy in Timang Gajah reveals how the community integrates elements of nature, history, and social structure into the naming of places. The vegetation-based toponyms highlight the intimate relationship between people and the natural world, while the historical toponyms remind us of the past events that shaped the community's identity. The assigned toponyms, influenced by administrative decisions, reflect social changes and aspirations for progress. Finally, regional toponyms assist in identifying places based on geographic locations, ensuring the practical functionality of place names. This study enriches the field of toponymy and provides valuable insights into how place names in Timang Gajah serve as a means of cultural preservation and identity in the face of social change and regional development.

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