

PERHUBUNGAN LAIN  
(OTHER COMMUNICATIONS)

ALPHABETISING PEOPLE'S NAMES - IT'S DRIVING ME  
CRAZY, DR. SIGMUND!

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The world today is international, and many aspects of culture, including science, are international. But, fortunately for the richness of the human race, cultures themselves still show great variation in many features. One of these is the way people are named. In European culture, an individual carries one or two (rarely more) individual names plus a surname, which is a continuing family name. However, in some other cultures, there is no continuing family name, but commonly individual name(s) plus the (individual) name of the father. Even in some cultures using family names, the order may be different, as with Chinese names, in which the family name comes first.

When a geologist publishes a paper, that paper may be referred to by others, and will almost certainly be listed by various abstracting and bibliographic services. In all these cases the paper will be listed alphabetically by the author's name - but which name? Unfortunately, the answer to that is not always clear, if you are not familiar with the culture the name derives from. Since most of the listing services are run by people from European cultures, non-European names often are mistakenly interpreted.

To illustrate the problem, perhaps the Malaysian readers of the *Warta* would like to take a short quiz? Listed below are the names of some authors as they were indexed (and alphabetised in the bibliography section) in the *A.G.I.'s Bibliography and Index of Geology*, Vol. 45, No. 7 (July 1981). See how many of these Malaysian geologists you can identify! To give you a hint, I indicate the general topic of the paper the author is indexed for.;

Chin, A.P. (kaolin)  
Choi, L.T. (East Sabah)  
Chye, O.A. (limestone in Kinta)  
Heng, K.C. (Sarawak & Sabah)  
Hock, T.L. (Quaternary)  
Hoong, L.K. (Gemau)  
Hoong, L.C. (Keluang)  
Kee, Y.S. (Straits of Malacca)  
Keong, C.S. and Heng, Y.E. (Peninsular Malaysia)  
Kiat, Denis Tan Ngoh (an easy one!)  
Mailvaganam, Y. (Hose Mountains)  
Peng, K.H. (Sg. Tekai)  
Peng, S.C. (Gunung Tahan)  
Sai, G.A. (Tanjung Malim)  
Siong, L.P. (east Sabah)  
Yeh, W.P. (Northwest Borneo)

Such mix-ups may be amusing, and in personal life they usually do no harm. I am by now used to being referred to as "Dr. Peter", though this tends to confuse me with our dogs' veterinarian. And I am used to looking for my name in lists under "P" (it has never been anywhere else in the books of the University of Malaya Cooperative Bookshop). When Malaysia's then Minister of Finance, Tun Tan Siew Sin, toured Europe some years ago and the press there referred to him as "Mr. Sin", again no real harm was done.

But when scientific works are indexed and alphabetised by different people in different ways, and when the result is that some authors' names are garbled to the point of unrecognizability, real confusion may ensue, leading to duplication and loss of time and effort. Therefore I would like to make a plea: Whenever we publish anything, let us ensure that it is clear which of our names is to be used for alphabetising. While things would be unambiguous if everyone used only one name plus initials, many people (myself included) prefer to use fuller forms of our names. Here editors and publishers could help by using a special style for the author(s) name(s) at the beginning of an article, as I have done on this note. The name to be used in alphabetising could be printed in all capital letters or underlined. If some such style were adopted, much confusion could be avoided, and bibliographers and others referring to papers would grow fewer grey hairs and be less likely to have to seek out the couch of one Dr. Sigmund's disciples!

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