Language and Culture:

Kinship System of Lampung Sai Batin Ethnic

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Abstract

Language, as an entity that binds human life, has the intention to convey something, perhaps the most complex and most interesting. Among the various languages in Indonesia, Lampung has unique and diverse greetings and is equipped with a set of rules for its use. However, although greetings in Lampung are very important as regional and national cultural assets that need attention and development, not many researchers have studied this. Therefore, this study aims to describe how the Lampung Sai Batin is created and used, especially addressing terms and to describe the use of addressing terms in the Lampung Sai Batin ethnic. The method used is a qualitative descriptive method with interview, observation and documentation through traditional figures of Sai Batin Kepaksian Pernong in West Lampung, Lampung. The study identified four main kinship groups: The Warei group, Apak Kemaman group, Adek Warei group, and the Children's group. The findings reveal a strong relationship between language and culture, where kinship terms reflect social hierarchy, lineage, and cultural identity. Preserving this kinship system is important because it safeguards traditional values, strengthens intergenerational cultural transmission, and maintains politeness norms embedded in Lampung society. The study also discusses its implications and limitations.

Keyword: *Kinship System, Lampung Sai Batin Ethnic, Addressing, Language and Culture*

Introduction

Preservation of language and culture since the central government granted regional autonomy has become a priority for both local government and private parties. As we know, Lampung is a province in Sumatra that has various ethnicities and languages. Based on Kartubi (Sunarti, 2019:237) in terms of customs and culture, the Lampung is divided into two main cultural communities: Sai Batin and Pepadun, which also have two main dialects there are Lampung Api (often known as Pesisir,

dialect A) and Lampung Nyo (also known as Abung, dialect O). Lampung language studies have become one of the important aspects in research. It causes; Lampung has a script and not all regional languages in the archipelago have scripts. This specialty makes Lampung have more potential in Indonesia (Warsiyem, 2016:1). Although research on Lampung linguistic preservation has increased, studies focusing specifically on kinship addressing terms in the Sai Batin community remain scarce. Most previous research concentrate on grammar, dialects, or vocabulary rather than how kinship terminology reflects social hierarchy and cultural identity.

Based on data from the Lampung Province BPS 2024, the current population of Lampung in 2024 is 9.04 million people with 13.56% of the population being native Lampung residents and the rest being transmigrates who live in Lampung. According to (Widiawati, A, 2021:41), even though the indigenous population is a minority, the Lampung indigenous people are seen as very open to residents who come to their area. The openness factor is influenced by the philosophy of life that they hold, namely Pi'il Pesenggiri. In line, (Hadikusuma, 1996:27) explained that Pi'il Pesenggiri or the philosophy of life which is interpreted as self-esteem has the following contents: 1) Pi'il Pesenggiri (self-esteem), 2) Juluk Adek (named with a title), 3) Nemui Nyimah (open arms), 4) Nengah Nyappur (living in society), 5) Sakai Sambayan (helping each other).

Similar to other cultural customs, Lampung also has a kinship system. The kinship system is a social unit in which there are several families who have blood relations or marriage relations (Irawan, 2019:97). In other perspective, (Santika and Eva, 2023:195) believe that kinship is the main principle in grouping each individual into a social group based on category, lineage and position. Each family member has a role, responsibility, and position that is not the same as each other. In general, Indonesia recognizes three forms of kinship systems, namely matrilineal, patrilineal and bilateral.

The matrilineal kinship system draws lineage from the female side (mother), where the position of the daughter is more influential, while the patrilineal kinship system draws lineage from the male side (father) where the placement of men is more differentiated than the placement of women in the inheritance system, and the bilateral kinship system draws lineage from both sides, namely the father and mother (Hadikusuma, 1987:23). From three of systems, Lampung adheres to the patrilineal kinship system which draws lineage from the male side (father).

To strengthen the conceptual foundation of this research, this study adopts theoretical insights from linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics. (Dell Hymes, 1964:34) argues that speech forms including addressing terms must be understood within their cultural context, as they reflect social rules and community values. Likewise, (Alessandro Duranti, 2009:398) in the Journal of Linguistic Anthropology emphasizes that kinship terms carry encoded meanings related to lineage, authority, and tradition, demonstrating the inseparable relationship between language and cultural systems. From a sociolinguistic viewpoint, (Zhou, et.al, 2024:88) state the speech act of addressing is one of the most socially and emotionally sensitive acts

because forms of address show how speakers discursively present various aspects of their interpersonal relationships and regulate them. Forms of address may indicate closeness or distance, formality or informality, affection or hostility. In addition, these forms vary across languages and cultures, encode sociocultural norms, the cultural values of speakers, and their conceptualizations of polite or impolite behavior, and constitute an essential component of social and cultural identity. Actually, this theoretical lens is relevant to the Sai Batin community, where kinship addressing terms differ according to customary titles, seniority, and patrilineal descent. Furthermore, (Janet Holmes, 2022:45) which asserts that addressing terms play an essential role in maintaining social harmony and politeness, the values central to the Lampung cultural philosophy of Pi'il Pesenggiri, which emphasizes respect, dignity, and social balance.

The Lampung Sai Batin community also maintains a system of genealogical titles such as Sultan, Khaja, Batin, Radin, Minak, Kimas, and Mas which historically structure community roles and reflect inherited status. However, existing studies have not yet explained how these genealogical titles directly relate to the kinship addressing terms used in the Sai Batin ethnic group, particularly in the traditional leadership system of Kepaksian Pernong, one of the most significant cultural centers of Sai Batin identity. Thus, a clearer and more systematic explanation is needed to understand how kinship categories and addressing terms function within this social system. Based on these gaps, this research is guided by the following questions: 1) How is the kinship system of the Lampung Sai Batin community structured, particularly in relation to addressing terms? 2) How are these addressing terms used within social and cultural interactions in Kepaksian Pernong?

Understanding these questions is essential for both linguistic documentation and cultural preservation. As modernization and demographic changes continue to influence Lampung society, the traditional use of kinship addressing terms risks diminishing. Along with the development of the era and technology, kinship greetings need to be preserved so that they do not become extinct. Therefore, researcher was interested in discussing the kinship system within the scope of Lampung Sai Batin traditional addressing in Kepaksian Pernong Skala Brak in order to preserve Lampung cultural.

Method

The research method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method. According to Wiwin (2018:84), qualitative descriptive (QD) research uses a straight forward qualitative approach with an inductive flow, meaning that the researcher begins by observing events or explanations in the field and then develops general conclusions based on emerging patterns. This approach is suitable for describing cultural and linguistic phenomena in their natural context. The subjects of this study were three key informants selected through a snowball sampling technique. This technique was chosen because individuals who possess deep cultural knowledge are

best identified through community recommendations.

These three informants were considered qualified because they are native speakers of Lampung *Sai Batin* (aged > 50 years), have extensive experience in traditional ceremonies, and are descendants of Kepaksian Pernong Sekala Brak, evidenced by their traditional titles: *Khaja Batin, Khaja Paksi,* and *Raden Menang Betanding*. Although three informants were sufficient due to their cultural authority and comprehensive knowledge, future research is encouraged to examine how everyday community members use kinship addressing terms in real-life interactions with a larger sample. Data collection was conducted through natural fieldwork at Gedung Dalom Kepaksian Pernong Paksi Pak Sekala Brak, West Lampung, Lampung Province, in late December 2024. Several techniques were used:

1) Interviews: semi-structured interviews explored the structure of the kinship system, meanings of addressing terms, inheritance of titles, and usage norms.
2) Observations: non-participant observations focused on how speakers address elders, peers, and younger individuals during cultural activities, following a clear observation protocol.
3) Documentation and literature: traditional manuscripts, genealogical records, cultural archives, and photos were collected to support analysis.

The data were analyzed using three qualitative analysis techniques:

1) Data reduction: selecting, simplifying, and organizing relevant data from interviews, observations, and documents;
2) Data presentation: arranging data in the form of descriptive narratives and thematic charts to illustrate the four kinship groups;
3) Drawing conclusions or verification: interpreting emerging patterns and verifying findings through continuous comparison.

To ensure research validity, triangulation across methods was applied, and member checking was conducted by asking informants to confirm the accuracy of interpretations. Ethical considerations were carefully followed, including obtaining informed consent, respecting cultural sensitivity, and ensuring that traditional knowledge was handled appropriately.

Result

The kinship system of the Lampung people is something that cannot be separated from the Lampung cultural tradition. The kinship system is carried out in order to maintain the customs and culture that have been ingrained since ancient times. The Lampung people highly prioritize honor and respect for someone so that in greeting father, mother, older brother, younger brother, uncle, aunt and others have been regulated in such a way. The Lampung traditional community, both *Pepadun* and *Sai Batin*, adhere to the principle of paternal lineage (patrilineal), where the eldest son (*penyimbang*) holds customary power. Every eldest son is a *penyimbang*, namely a child who inherits the leadership of the father as head of the family. The kinship relationships of the Lampung people are divided into three groups, one of

which is the blood-related kinship group.

The kinship system of the Lampung *Sai Batin* community consists of; Sekala Brak, Melinting-Meringgai, Pesisir Rajabasa, Pesisir Teluk, Belalu, Pubian, and others. In this study, the researcher has interested with Lampung *Sai Batin* ethnic in Kepaksian Pernong Skala Brak. According to traditional figures, after the 12th century, a group of *maulana/sheikhs* entered the Sekala Brak area with an Islamic mission from foreign countries. Shortly, after a war between the last King of Sekala Brak, namely *Raja Sekhumo*, who was defeated. After experiencing defeat, temporary power was taken by the four *Umpu* (*Paksi Pak Skala Brak*).

Kepaksian Pernong Skala Brak has four umpu, namely *Umpu Blungu, Umpu Pernong, Umpu Bejalan di Way* and *Umpu Nyerupa*. The four buay have their own kingdoms, have an agreement that; 1) *Makko sai tuho, makko sai mudo* which means no one is old and no one is young, 2) don't bother each other but work together. Furthermore, these four *Umpu* appointed *Umpu Bulan* as a sister. At that time, it was known as *Pak Cumbung Lima Siyyah*. However, to maintain balance, they appointed *Umpu Menyata* to guard all assets/judges of the *Paksi Pak Sekala Brak* to maintain the balance of the four kingdoms.

The following section presents the findings derived from observations and in-depth interviews with three native speakers from the Kepaksian Pernong Sekala Brak: *Khaja Batin*, *Khaja Paksi,* and *Raden Menang Betanding*. These individuals are recognized as authoritative cultural figures who possess extensive knowledge of genealogical structures, customary titles, and the system of addressing terms used within the *Sai Batin* community. The data reveal that the *Sai Batin* kinship and addressing system is a highly structured sociolinguistic framework, deeply rooted in lineage, customary hierarchy, and cultural continuity across generations.

Findings from Informant 1 – *Khaja Batin*

The narrative provided by *Khaja Batin* offers an essential foundation for understanding the historical origins, formation of the paksi, and the genealogical hierarchy that underpins the *Sai Batin* system of address. He explained that the polity of *Sekala Brak* existed as early as the eighth century, long before the introduction of Islam. A major transformation occurred when four Islamic scholars*; Umpu Belungu, Umpu Pernong, Umpu Bejalan di Wai,* and *Umpu Nyerupa* arrived in the region. According to him, these four *umpu* overthrew *Rajo Sekerumo* and established a new political and cultural structure known as Paksi Pak Sekala Brak.

He emphasized a principle that remains central to customary governance:

"Satu paksi, satu batin, satu pemegang adat."

(*One paksi, one batin, one holder of tradition.*)

He went on to elaborate the seven-tier genealogical hierarchy that determines kinship roles, social obligations, and forms of address: 1) *Sai Batin* 2) *Raja* 3) *Batin* 4) *Adok/Adin* 5) *Minak* 6) *Kimas* and last one 7) *Mas*. A person's position within this hierarchy directly determines the forms of address that may be used to refer to or address that individual.

Khaja Batin explains in detail several specific terms of address within the royal family. For example, *Tamong Dalom* is used to refer to grandfathers in the *Sai Batin* line, *Ina Dalom* for grandmothers, *Pun* for direct descendants, and other terms such as *Khatu/Ratu, Pak Batin, Ina Batin*, and *Atin*. These terms of address are not only markers of familial relationships, but also indicate traditional identity, genealogical position, and social connections within the Sai Batin power structure. In other words, a person's nickname reflects their lineage, not simply social proximity.

Findings from Informant 2 – *Khaja Paksi*

Khaja Paksi provided a more detailed explanation of the internal social structure, including territorial divisions and the roles of the *kebuayan* within the *Sai Batin* community. He stated that the four founding *umpu* stand on equal footing, without superior or inferior ranks:

"Tidak ada yang tua dan tidak ada yang muda. Kedudukannya sama."

(*None is older and none is younger; their status is equal.*)

He described the six *buai*, there are *Buai Belungu, Buai Pernong, Buai Jalan di Wai, Buai Nyerupa, Buai Bulan, and Buai Menyata* which continue to serve essential functions in the customary system. Two of them hold specific roles there are *Buai Bulan* functions as the "adat sister," maintaining internal balance and *Buai Menyata* serves as the custodian of ancestral assets and historical records.

Regarding kinship addressing, he explained the birth-order terms that govern interaction among male siblings: 1) *Pak Balak* (oldest), 2) *Pak Lunik*, 3) *Pak Cik*, and last 4) *Mamak* (youngest).

These terms are fixed and cannot be changed, regardless of changes in social status or personal circumstances. He also emphasized the strict rule of hereditary succession:

"Gelar Sai Batin turun ke anak laki-laki tertua dari istri pertama."

(*The Sai Batin title is inherited by the eldest son of the first wife.*)

In this occasion, *Khaja Paksi* explained basically, all areas in Lampung *Pepadun* or *Sai Batin* have the same kinship structure. Below is a description of the kinship system of the Lampung *Sai Batin* ethnic:

1. The *Warei* Group

The Warei group consists of siblings of the same father and mother or siblings of the same father and mother, drawn according to the male line upwards and sideways including unmarried female siblings or siblings of the *datuk* (grandfather) according to the male line. This means that the *warei* group are all children of the first wife or second wife and so on. The children of the descendants down and so on, sideways and so on are the *warei* group. The title for each warei group follows the order from the oldest, for example *Sultan, Khaja, Batin, Radin, Minak, Kimas,* and *Mas.*

2. *Apak Kemaman* Group

This group consists of all the father's male brothers or uncles, both siblings or fathers and grandfathers or brothers of grandfathers or grandfathers along the male line. In relation to *Apak Kemaman*, *penyimbang* has the right to ask for opinions or advice and is obliged to manage and maintain *Apak Kemaman*. On the other hand, *Apak Kemaman* has the right to be managed and is obliged to advise. *Apak Kemaman*'s position lines with the father's younger siblings among all of the father's descendants. Apart from that, *Apak Kemaman*'s position lines with all of the father's descendants and all of the father's children's descendants. *Apak Kemaman*'s position and so on follows his father's lineage as a balance. Calls for each *Apak Kemaman* group follow the order of the elders, for example *Pak Batin, Pak Balak, Pak Lunik, Pak Cik, Mamak*, and etc.

3. *Adek Warei* Group

This group consists of all male siblings with *Penyimbang*, both those who are married and those who are not. The position of *Adek Warei* lines in all descendants from the grandfather and the grandfather's siblings to the next generation. However, for this group it is not like other groups, because this group calls according to their customary status or title.

4. Children's Group

This group consists of biological children. The position of biological children is to inherit and replace the position of their biological parents or father. The call or nickname for a child depends on the position of the parent. If the father is a *Penyimbang*, then the child will get the same position, and vice versa. If the father's position is as a *Penyimbang*, then all male descendants have the same position, namely as a *Penyimbang*. The call for each group of children follows the order from the oldest, for example *Atin, Udo, Abang, Kakak*, etc.

The addressing in the tradition is passed down from ancestors, do not change, and the above calls can be used with the approval of *Sai Batin*.

These rules demonstrate that the addressing system in *Sai Batin* is strict, genealogical, and non-negotiable, even as social conditions change. Addresses not only represent family relationships but also regulate how people carry out their roles

within customary structures and relationships between communities and between cultures.

Findings from Informant 3 – *Raden Menang Betanding*

Raden Menang Betanding's highlights issues of cultural preservation, generational change, and the transmission of customary knowledge. He explained that historical records were traditionally inscribed on organic materials such as bark, leaves, and stone, reflecting long-standing practices of documentation within the community.

Concerning contemporary practices, he observed:

"Hari ini anak muda jarang yang belajar adat, banyak yang sibuk dengan teknologi."

(*Today young people rarely learn about cultures, most of them are busy with*

technology.)

He stressed that traditional addressing terms retain their authority regardless of shifts in economic or social conditions:

"Sapaan adat tidak boleh diganti hanya karena ekonomi berubah."

(*Customary addressing terms cannot be altered simply because a person's economic*

situation changes.)

His statements underscore that addressing terms are not merely linguistic forms but cultural symbols that safeguard identity, reinforce moral values such as *pi'il pesenggiri*, and ensure the continuity of tradition across generations.

Discussion

The results of this study show that the system of kinship and addressing terms used by the Lampung *Sai Batin* community is closely intertwined with their historical foundations, social organization, and cultural values. Although these terms may seem like mere family terms, the informants' narratives show that these forms of address contain deeper meanings, particularly regarding lineage, customary obligations, and a person's position in the societal hierarchy.

Firstly, the explanation given by *Khaja Batin* helps situate the addressing system within the broader history of the *Sai Batin* ethnic. The establishment of *Paksi Pak Sekala Brak* by the four *umpu* is not only a political event but also a cultural moment that shaped the way kinship is structured. The seven genealogical levels he described which beginning with *Sai Batin* and descending through *Raja, Batin, Adok/Adin, Minak, Kimas,* and *Mas* form the backbone of the system. The addressing terms used by noble families, such as *Tamong Dalom*, *Ina Dalom*, *Pun*, and *Khatu/Ratu*, reflect this hierarchy. These terms signal a person's ancestral line and customary role, and their use reinforces the idea that lineage is central to how social identity is constructed in *Sai Batin* society. Secondly, the information shared by *Khaja*

Paksi adds a clearer picture of how these addressing terms function within everyday social relations. His description of the six *buai* and the rule that none of the four original *Umpu* holds seniority over the others illustrates a strong emphasis on balanced relations between lineages. These terms guide how individuals interact within their own lineage and how responsibilities are distributed. The hereditary rule that titles must pass to the eldest son of the first wife further shows that kinship terminology in *Sai Batin* society is not flexible or negotiable; it is governed by long-standing customary law that preserves stability and continuity.

Moreover, a different yet perspective comes from Raden Menang Betanding, who focuses on how these addressing traditions are maintained or challenged in contemporary life. His observation that young people are increasingly distracted by technology reveals a cultural tension between tradition and modernization. Despite these changes, addressing terms remain protected and cannot be altered simply because a family's economic standing shifts. This insistence on preservation shows that the forms of address serve not only as markers of family relations but also as symbols of cultural identity and social ethics. Their use keeps important values alive, such as respect, humility, and the customary code of Pi'il Pesenggiri, which has long guided moral behavior in Lampung.

These findings align with broader cultural patterns in Lampung society. Lampung people are generally divided into two major customary systems: Pepadun and Saibatin, each of the system has social structure, forms of address, and historical background. Both groups maintain a patrilineal system, yet their cultural development has been strongly influenced by geographical environments and historical interactions, especially during the process of Islamization. The Pepadun community, living in inland and mountainous areas such as Central Lampung, North Lampung, and Way Kanan, maintains a more egalitarian social structure. The positions like Punyimbang can be obtained through the cakak pepadun ritual, allowing greater social mobility. Forms of address such as Appak, Mak, Kemaman, Keminan, Kiyay, and Atu reflect flexible kinship terms, while titles like Suttan and Raja Jejamo are used mainly in formal customary contexts.

In contrast, the Sai Batin community, residing in coastal regions, was the earliest group to receive external influences, including the arrival of Islam. From the 13th to the 15th century, the Sumatra coastline was connected to Arab, Gujarati, Persian traders, as well as the Sultanates of Demak and Banten, enabling Islam to spread earlier among Sai Batin than Pepadun. Their social structure is more hierarchical, with hereditary titles such as Ratu, Dalom, Minak, and Kimas. Their forms of address also reflect strict social stratification.

Thus, the differences between Pepadun and Sai Batin are visible not only in kinship, forms of address, and social structure but also in geographical conditions and historical interactions with the outside world. These insights highlight that the system of addressing terms in the Sai Batin community is not an isolated linguistic feature, but a cultural institution shaped by history, lineage, and long-standing

customary principles, all of which continue to define and preserve Lampung identity across generations.

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