

“bin / binti” or “Bin / Binti”?

Many of us may be so accustomed to see “bin / binti” in the citation of Malay names but of late the typographical style of “Bin / Binti” is becoming so common. We do not seem to understand the proper way to document the name as though the capitalisation of letter ‘B’ is a matter of preference, as much as the neglect of spacing (unless for purposes of indexability) and punctuation is being portrayed in the media.

In reference to Muslim names, “bin” means “son of” and “binti” is “daughter of”, adopted from the Arabic name system. Generally, “bin”, “ibn”, “ibni”, “ben”, “binti” and “bint” should appear in lower case. If say, “bin” or “ben” is followed by family name or used as a compound surname, only then the first letter is capitalised, such as “Ibn Rushd” (Averroes), “Bin Ladin” and “Ben Ali”.

Rule for Malaysian Malay name is direct form—Malay name consists of a given name, followed by a filial indicator “bin / binti”, and the father’s name such as “Ahmad bin Mukhtar” or “Tengku Zulaikhah binti Tuan Yusuf”. Except those of Arabic, Indian Muslim and Western origins, majority Malays do not have surname and also do not place importance in ancestry and family names as in Arab culture. In recent Malaysia, Muslim naming convention of having “bin / binti” is not limited to just the Malays, but also the non-Muslim ethnic groups native to Malaysia and Indian Muslims for the purpose of standardization and identification in denoting filial relationship.

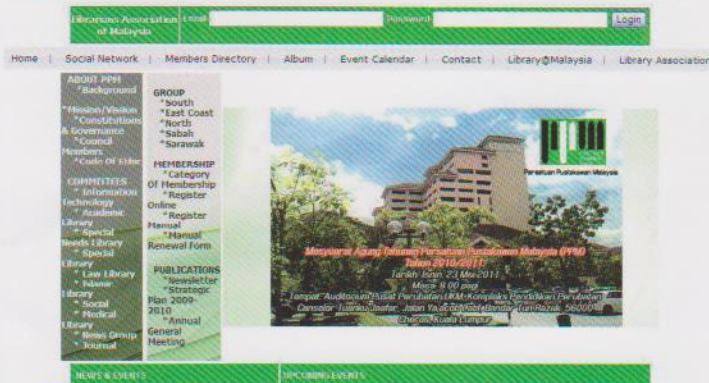
Because “bin / binti” is not an entry element in a direct order name or a middle name, it is not right to start the spelling with a capital ‘B’ or abbreviated it to “B. / Bt.” or other idiosyncrasies. Let us avoid the typographical error, so that those who are not familiar with Malay Muslim names would not mistakenly refer the bearer of the name as “Miss Binti” or “Mr. Bin” or lead to mistakenly take the filial indicator as the middle initial.

For practical purposes when traveling or residing in foreign countries, Malays may drop the word "bin" or "binti" in line with universal practice for definable rules of naming convention. There may be other naming with more complex permutations and spelling variants but it is unnecessary to have others grapple while trying to address the Malaysian names and titles.

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Kamal Sujak



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Balqis Suja'



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