

ARTS & CULTURES

curated by
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Naming as Cultural Artifacts: A Look at Malaysian Famous *Makciks* and *Pakciks*

By Nazima Versay Kudus

Asian culture pays great attention to mannerism especially to that of someone older. In the Malay culture, for instance, a person's hierarchy in the family is important so that appropriate form of address can be used. One's reference as *Mak* so-and-so (aunt so-and-so) or *Pak* so-and-so (uncle so-and-so) in extended family is based on the birth order of the person in her/his nuclear family. Take for example, a first child born to a couple will be addressed as *Along* or *Kak Long* if it is a female, or *Abang Long* for a male. Among her/his nieces and nephews, she/he automatically becomes *Mak Long* or *Pak Long*.

Name References in Malay Nuclear and Extended Family

Order of Children	Reference in Nuclear Family	Reference in Extended Family
First child	Along	Mak Long/Pak Long
Second child	Angah	Mak Ngah/Pak Ngah
Third child	Alang	Mak Lang/Pak Lang
Fourth child	Ateh	Mak Teh/Pak Teh
Fifth child	Andak	Mak Ndak/Pak Ndak
Sixth child	Uda	Mak Uda/Pak Uda
Seventh child	Tam	Mak Tam/Pak Tam
Eighth child	Acik	Mak Cik/Pak Cik
Ninth child	Anjang	Mak Njang/Pak Njang
Tenth child	Usu	Mak Su/Pak Su

Adapted from: Kedah Ohsem (2016)

Another more simplified or generic name reference to aunts and uncles are *Makciks* and *Pakciks*. Let's say, the aunt's name is Nora, so she becomes *Makcik* Nora. Her husband Borhan, is *Pakcik* Borhan. *Makciks* and *pakciks* are also common kinship references to elders who are non-family members among multicultural Malaysians. They could be one's neighbours, family friends or even strangers on the street. These references are used as a form of respect to the elders. Is it outright rude to be calling elders with their given names or unsuitable pronouns such as 'awak' (you). Malaysia is not short of its famous *Makciks* and *Pakciks*. Some are fictional while others are real-life individuals.

Makcik Joyah

The character Joyah is one of the characters of a famous drama series in the 1980s, *Opah*. Joyah portrays the character of a kampung gossip. The actor, Norlia Ghani even admits she is still addressed as Joyah whenever people recognise her (Jemang Rahman, 2017). The Urban/Uncensored Malaysian Dictionary (2012) listed *menjoyah* to refer to the act of gathering gossip.

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Makcik Petir

Makcik Petir (loosely translated as Thunder Aunty) came about from the character role of Makcik Mary played by the late Noryati Taib in a telefilm entitled *Cik Sindarella* (2008). Makcik Mary is portrayed having a big mouth, often giving sharp comments (just like the thunder) yet funny.

Makcik Bawang

The term Makcik Bawang (loosely translated as Onion Aunty) came about in the social media in 2017 (SoZCyili, 2018). In addition, there are also opinions that this term was first introduced on the *Kisah Rumah Tangga* (translated as Household Stories) Facebook page that often gets attention and criticism on social media because it shares household stories, including things that should not be discussed openly. In the original physical setting, this character is commonly present during *mise en place*, the preparation of dishes and ingredients before wedding feast, helping out the host for instance with peeling and cutting shallots and onions. Of course today, gossiping can occur almost everywhere, at work places, beauty salons, in cafes and restaurants or during shopping. Makcik Bawang takes note of things around her just like the channel CNN or a video surveillance camera, CCTV, making people feel uncomfortable and hurt with her comments, just like an onion, a substance that can make one cry. Some of the awkward questions/statements are “When are you getting married?” or “My daughter who went to school with you has a child already.” Aaron Peckham, the founder of Internet based dictionary, Urban Dictionary also listed Makcik Bawang as “low class aunties who know nothing but act like they knew everything. (They also) wast(e) time by talking about others, they also don't realise that they are worse than everyone else in their gossip (sic).” Kamus Dewan (2017) listed *membawang* just as “makan bawang” (eating raw onions) or “marah” (to be angry). The dictionary however does not provide the connotative meaning of *membawang*. However Wan Norasikin Wan Ismail and Nurul Najihah Jamal (n.d.) in their write-up, listed that *membawang* carries similar meaning to words listed of *mengata*, *mengumpat*, *gossip*, *berbual*, *bersembang*, *berborak*, *bergebang*, *mencela*, *mengkritik*, *mengecam* and *membidas*, all having shades of meaning to that of gossiping.

Makcik Kiah

Makcik Kiah a fictional character who came to light in Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin’s speeches. In announcing the Prihatin Rakyat Economic Stimulus Package, the former Prime Minister gave the example of a *Makcik Kiah*, a banana fritter seller to exhibit the typical Malaysian citizen who is entitled to cash aid from the government as a result of COVID-19. She is portrayed as a hard working person, a representation of most everyday Malaysians.

Makcik Yah

Makcik Yah or Cikyah, a fictional character designed by Amar Reza Zainalabidin made her appearance on social media platforms TikTok and Instagram. She is depicted through the animoji of an old kampung lady clad in a yellow *tudung* and behaving like a village aunt. With a granny tone she is depicted as the village gossip yet at the same time delivering useful advice in her rants.



Pakcik Kordi

Pakcik Kordi is a kampung character featured in Bahasa Malaysia primary school textbook in the 1980s. Though he is an adult, he is depicted having a childish behaviour. He is a likable character among the village children. Ujang, the cartoonist adopted this character and wrote and drew cartoons about Pakcik Kordi’s silly jokes in his column *Pakcik Kordi dan lembu beliau* (*Pakcik Kordi and his Bull*) in a humour magazine.



From: Pendidik MY (2019)

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Pakcik Shell

Shairan Huzani Husain is the Managing Director of Shell Malaysia or better known as Pakcik Shell on social media. Despite his position in a multinational oil and gas company, he is known for his down-to-earth personality such as helping to refuel customers' vehicles who visited a branch of the gas station, awarding a part-time staff member who scored 5As in his SPM and offering a homeless young man a job at a gas station.

Pakcik Jamal

The late Jamal Mohammed, also known as Pakcik Jamal to his young fans, was a popular television personality on Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM). He played the character of a Speaker through the Mini Parliament programme produced by RTM in the 1980s. He also trained the children who acted as Members of the House of Representatives.

Uncle Kentang

Johor born, Kuan Chee Heng or better known as Uncle Kentang (to mean Potato Uncle) is a Malaysian activist noted for his charitable deeds. His popular moniker comes from his habit of donating potatoes compared to other basic foods to those in need. Nowadays his assistance includes among others paramedic services, transportation and groceries. In 2021, he was conferred the Commonwealth Points of Light Award by Queen Elizabeth II in recognition of his charitable work.

Uncle Roger

Nigel Ng or better known online as Uncle Roger is an Internet celebrity and Malaysian stand-up comedian residing in London. Clad in his orange polo t-shirt and speaking English in a Malaysian Chinese accent he has shared his critique video online of fried rice cooked by famous chef celebrities such as Jamie Oliver, Gordon Ramsay and Hersha Patel.

Pakcik Gaming

Noorhisyam Razali is a lecturer-cum-entrepreneur. Despite being middle-aged he is among one of the active local online streamers playing Mobile Legend and PUBG. To date he has a 100K fanbase. While playing, he makes efforts to advise and teach the youngs about life and the importance of studies. This noticeable gamer dons tengkolok while playing online games.

Conclusion

Identification is accomplished through the process of naming. In a multi-racial society, the politeness strategy of addressing the elders must be practiced to foster racial harmony. This is in line with the three concepts of *Keluarga Malaysia* as outlined by the current government, which include inclusivity, common ground and contentment among the large Malaysian family.

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