

**Cultural Representation in the Betawi's Song "Kicir-Kicir": An Analysis of Folkloric Functions and Cognitive Meanings**

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**Abstract**

The aimed of this study is to examine the cultural representation of the Betawi's culture in the local song "Kicir-Kicir" by analyzing folkloric functions and cognitive meanings. The song "Kicir-Kicir" was considered part of an oral tradition used for entertainment purposes. Additionally, functions as a means for transferring cultural values and portrays Betawi's culture. This study combined a qualitative method combined with a descriptive approach. The words of the song Kicir-Kicir acts as the data source. The data was analyzed in three stages: data reduction and filtering, folkloric function classification using Bascom's theory (1954), and cognitive meaning analysis using Sapir's viewpoint (1929). The research's outcomes revealed that the lyrics of "Kicir-Kicir" serve a variety of folkloric functions, including a system for expressing collective feelings, a tool for validating social activities, a

method of moral teaching, and a mechanism for social control. From a cognitive meaning point of view, the vocabulary choices and language structure of this song represented Betawi society's social reality in terms of happiness, solidarity, life balance, and work ethic. Therefore, the song "Kicir-Kicir" might be viewed as a representation of Betawi culture.

**Keywords:** local song, Kicir-Kicir, folkloric functions, cognitive meaning, Betawi culture

### ***Abstrak***

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji representasi budaya masyarakat Betawi dalam lagu daerah Kicir-Kicir melalui analisis fungsi folklor dan makna kognitif. Lagu Kicir-Kicir dipandang sebagai bagian dari tradisi lisan yang berfungsi sebagai hiburan. Selain itu juga sebagai medium transmisi nilai budaya dan merepresentasikan budaya masyarakat Betawi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan penyajian deskriptif. Sumber data berupa lirik lagu Kicir-Kicir. Analisis data dilakukan melalui tiga tahapan, yaitu reduksi dan penyaringan data dilanjutkan dengan tahapan klasifikasi fungsi folklor berdasarkan teori Bascom (1954) dan diakhiri dengan tahapan analisis makna kognitif berdasarkan pandangan Sapir (1929). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa lirik Kicir-Kicir menjalankan berbagai fungsi folklor, meliputi sistem proyeksi emosi kolektif, alat pengesahan praktik sosial, sarana pendidikan nilai, serta mekanisme pengendalian sosial. Ditinjau dari makna kognitif, pilihan leksikal dan struktur bahasa dalam lagu ini merefleksikan realitas sosial masyarakat Betawi mengenai kebahagiaan, kebersamaan, keseimbangan hidup, dan etos kerja. Dengan demikian, lagu Kicir-Kicir dapat menjadi representasi kebudayaan masyarakat Betawi.*

**Kata kunci:** lagu daerah, Kicir-Kicir, fungsi folklor, makna kognitif, budaya Betawi

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## **1. Introduction**

The cultural diversity of Betawi is reflected in its traditional music. One example is local folk songs that have been passed down over generations. Within Betawi culture, local songs are the major means of maintaining the community's unique identity. Oral traditions, frequently known as folklore, are cultural characteristics that are transmitted verbally and through instances accompanied by gestures or remembering tools (Danandjaja: 1997). The term folklore is derived from the terms "folk" and "lore," and refers to the cultural information and practices that a society has and passes down, whether verbally or nonverbally, such as sign or mnemonic aids (Danandjaja: 1997).

The folk song "Kicir-Kicir" was one cultural heritage that exhibits both Betawi identity and evidence of a combination of cultures with Malay traditions (Betawi Culture: 2022). The song "Kicir-Kicir" is considered folklore since it continues to be utilized as accompaniment to numerous traditional ceremonies and cultural events, including Gambang Kromong, Tanjidor music performances, the "Kicir-Kicir" dance performance, and Jakarta City Anniversary ceremonies. To understand the cultural values and viewpoint of the Betawi tribes suggested in the lyrics of

"Kicir-Kicir," a theoretical framework of folklore functions based on Bascom's (1954) research is required.

This research utilized folklore function theory in order to more fully comprehend Kicir-Kicir's sociocultural value in Betawi tradition, as well as a cognitive meaning method to investigate how vocabulary choice and song structure represent the Betawi community's views and opinions. Bascom (1954) established the notion of function in folklore studies, which argues that folklore is a part of social life instead of an artistic outcome. According to Bascom (1954), folklore has four fundamental functions: entertainment (for comfort or amusement), educational tool, means of authenticating social structures and cultural institutions, and social control tool. Folklore might be defined as an instrument for expressing a culture's common experiences, beliefs, and value system. However, folklore theory does not limit itself to the social purposes and cultural values embodied in oral traditions; rather, it facilitates an investigation of how these meanings are interpreted and represented in human thoughts.

The folklore-based song "Kicir-Kicir" expressed the Betawi community's perspective, community experiences, and conceptual frameworks. In order to fully comprehend its meaning, a cognitive approach to interpretation is necessary, allowing for an examination of the connections between language, culture, and the process of meaning-making in the cognitive processes of its native speakers. A cognitive approach to purpose views linguistic meaning as the consequence of the speaker's mental construction, which is created by language exposure and habits throughout a society. Cognition was defined as a mental process in which perceptions are formed, leading to personal or shared knowledge. In the study of cognition, this issue referred to what and how individuals process their thoughts while they engage in conversation. Language and thinking have similarities, which means that what is conveyed is also considered.

According to Sapir (Wedasuwari, 2020), language does really alter reality. This happened because a person's linguistic habits influence their perceptions of reality, and language plays an active part in cognitive processes. In this study, cognitive meaning is defined as the process of meaning production that results from the interaction between the form of language (words or phrases) and the images or concepts generated in the text. The research emphasizes on how lexical elements in lyrics convey concrete imagery, meaning correlations, or metaphorical patterns that can be analyzed linguistically, rather than generalizing them as direct representations of societal reality.

Several earlier research have addressed the functions of folklore. Qodri (2024) conducted research on the shapes and functions of Jejampi Sasak. This study used folkloristic analysis to examine the roles of Jejampi Sasak as practiced by the Dusun Perasak group. In the functional analysis portion, this study looks at how Jejampi Sasak helps to preserve local values. Prameswari and Prawoto's (2025) research also examined the role of folklore in local arts. This study examined the

purposes of folklore via William R. Bascom's lens of the local art of wayang kulit in the drama Tirta Perwitasari. According to Bascom's theory, folklore served four functions in the wayang kulit art of the Tirta play: entertainment, legitimization of institutions and cultural organizations, education, and supervision or control of social values.

Natalia, S. (2019) also analyzed the significance of negative expressions using the Sapir and Whorf hypothesis (1956). This study defined the meaning of Japanese negative expressions using the Sapir and Whorf theory (1956). Anggarista et al. (2026) carried out another investigation on the Sapir and Whorf theory. This study looked at Sesengak Sasak, or Sasak proverbs, and discovered that they reflect the Sasak culture, worldview, and philosophy, as well as the aesthetics and logic of Sasak society.

According to several studies in the past, investigations especially focused on the song "Kicir-Kicir" are rare. Furthermore, few studies have examined regional songs as research subjects utilizing folklore theory (Bascom, 1954). Previous studies using folklore theory (Bascom, 1954) have mostly examined the arts, culture, and oral traditions. This study is intended to cover current research gaps and contribute to the advancement of linguistic studies and cultural analysis. This study also intended to preserve the Betawi community's oral traditions. The combination of these two theories has not been investigated in previous study, providing a novel perspective on interpreting the song "Kicir-Kicir." This study investigated how folklore functions are reflected in the lyrics of the Betawi song "Kicir-Kicir," as well as how the cognitive meanings in the lyrics of "Kicir-Kicir" symbolize the Betawi community's socio-cultural values.

## 2. Method

This study used qualitative methods and data are presented in descriptive form. Setyosari (Larasati, 2022) explained that descriptive research is research that aims to describe a situation or event, either an object or everything that involves variables and can be explained using words or numbers. Meanwhile, Ramdani (2022) stated that qualitative descriptive research aims to provide a correct description of the phenomenon under discussion. In this study, the primary data source is in the form of song lyrics.

The data collection technique in this study was carried out by literature study, namely data collection through the review of relevant data sources from various sources. The primary data source of this study was taken from the lyrics of the song "Kicir-Kicir". The lyrics of this song were taken from the [Kebudayaanbetawi.com](http://Kebudayaanbetawi.com). Secondary data came from literature and related articles on the folklore analysis of the lyrics of the song "Kicir-Kicir". The Kicir-kicir song was an anonymous song born from the Betawi oral tradition (Santoso, et al., 2023). The song was popularized more widely by Bing Slamet in the 1950s, but Bing Slamet was not the song's creator. The song Kicir-Kicir Betawi

was chosen as the object of research because this song has been close to the life of the Betawi people for a long time.

Data analysis used three main steps (Miles and Huberman, 2002). First, data reduction, which is the process of selecting raw data. Then, the data is filtered based on criteria that the researcher has determined to focus on analysing. Second, the presentation of data, which is the process of data classification which has been reduced to four functions of folklore according to Bascom (1954), namely the function of entertainment, educational tools, the ratification of institutions, and the mechanism of socio-cultural control. Then, the data was analysed using cognitive meaning which referred to the theory of Sapir (1929). Third, drawing conclusions, which is the process of interpreting and concluding the meaning of the data that has been reduced and presented.

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### 3.1 Entertainment Function

One of the most prominent functions in the lyrics of the song “Kicir-Kicir” was as a medium of entertainment that is related to the expression of emotions. This function is evident not only through the content of the lyrics, which contain elements of enjoyment, but also through sound patterns, repetition, and rhythm that create a light and pleasant atmosphere. This aligned with the function of folklore according to Bascom (1954) where folklore serves as a means to channel feelings and enjoyment. The entertainment function in the song Kicir-kicir can be reflected in the lexical choices found in the lyrics, such as:

*Kicir-Kicir ini lagunya*

The repetition of the word *kicir-kicir* produced a rhythmic and light sound pattern, giving the lyrics a dynamic quality. In the mind, the word *kicir-kicir* conjures up thoughts of a spinning wheel or object. This visual of repetitive motion was consistent with the sound pattern in the repetitive words, emphasising the rhythmic quality and making the song easier to remember. Cognitively, the term *kicir-kicir* expressed the Betawi people's view of life as dynamic and ever-changing, rather than static. So, *kicir-kicir* is viewed not just as a physical image of a wheel or mechanical movement, but also as a cognitive representation of life's ongoing and dynamic unfoldment. The entertainment function was not only produced through repetitive music patterns, but it was also clearly expressed in the lyrics, as shown in the line.

#### 3.2 Educational Tool

In addition to providing pleasure, folklore served as an educational tool, conveying moral ideals and cultural knowledge passed down through generations. According to Bascom (1954), folklore can be used as an instructional tool because it depicts socially acceptable or ideal behaviour. Thus, folklore is used outside of official education to develop character and teach

values. This teaching purpose was clear in the song "Kicir-Kicir," which represents work ideals and character development. One of the lyrics that represented this tool:

*Siapa saya ya tuan rajin bekerja*

The phrase *rajin bekerja* emphasises a strong work ethic as a fundamental virtue that people must have in order to earn social respect. The rhetorical question *siapa saya* clarifies the normative message, ensuring that the lesson about hard effort is given in a light and easily accepted musical form rather than in a patronising manner. From a cognitive standpoint, this statement indicated how a work ethic is subtly taught in the subconscious, influencing the sense of self-identity within a social context. It was in line with Utami et al. (2014), who state that everyone's work ethic varies depending on their habits, culture, and personal character and temperament.

The *siapa saya* concept proposed that individual identity is understood through one's roles and contributions, rather than only personal characteristics. The term *rajin bekerja* emphasized work as the key criterion for assessing oneself and others. Thus, the language in this phrase represents the Betawi way of thinking, which determines an individual's worth in terms of work and social contribution.

*Badanlah sehat ya tuan hati gembira*

These lyrics expressed normative beliefs about the ideal human situation, specifically physical health and inner satisfaction. This verse promoted a worldview that emphasises physical and emotional balance as the foundation of a good and harmonious life. This verse exemplified how language impacts people's understanding of health and happiness. The lexical choice of *badan* and *hati* suggested that Betawi society views the human being as a unified body and mind that complements one another. The phrases *sehat* and *gembira* described well-being not just as a physical condition, but also as an emotional state with social significance. So, the language used in this stanza not only represents reality, but it also influences how Betawi society sees a balanced, joyful, and peaceful life within the context of community.

### 3.3 Ratification of Cultural Institutions

Besides serving as a form of entertainment, the lyrics of the song "Kicir-Kicir" could also represent other functions of folklore, namely as a means of legitimizing cultural institutions. According to Bascom (1954), folklore played a role in maintaining social practices, values, and traditions that prevail in a culture existing within a society. Through folklore, cultural elements that have existed are not only passed down but also affirmed as something natural, legitimate, and worthy of preservation. One form of such representation could be seen in the line:

*Lagu lama ya tuan dari Jakarta*

The phrase *lagu lama* in the lyrics referred to the song “Kicir-Kicir” as a traditional song that has long been known in Betawi culture in Jakarta. This is relevant to the excerpt taken from the Ministry of Education and Culture (2017), stating that the song Kicir-Kicir is often sung at Jakarta City anniversary events. Usually, the song is sung accompanied by the Tanjidor musical instrument, which is also a traditional musical instrument of Betawi.

*Bilalah kita ya tuan suka menyanyi*

In this line, the phrase *suka menyanyi* describes the tendency of the Betawi people who are full of musical activities such as singing. This could be seen from the strong artistic traditions like Tanjidor, which function as collective entertainment. This showed that musical expressions such as singing are an important part of the cultural life of the Betawi people. The tendency of the Betawi people to be closely associated with musical activities can be seen from the context of Tanjidor performances, which are always present in various social and cultural events. This is as mentioned that “Traditional contexts are comprised of occasions and celebrations concerning the cultural practices or religious beliefs of the orang Betawi” (Iyer, 2026), indicating that music is part of celebrations and the social life of the Betawi people. Furthermore, in practice, Tanjidor performances even involve vocalists for long durations. Iyer (2026) added, “traditional Betawi events and entertainment functions lasted all day and night, requiring multiple vocalists with the tanjidor bands to balance the melodic duties with the instrumentalists.” This fact reinforces that musical activities, including singing, are an integral part of the cultural life of the Betawi people.

### 3.4 Social Control Mechanism

*Pasti menjadi menjadi warga berguna*

The line *Pasti menjadi menjadi warga berguna* as a function of folklore and as a social control mechanism proposed by Bascom contains norms that guide the behavior of community members. Bascom (1954) stated that social control mechanisms in folklore function is to maintain social order by instilling values that must be followed by individuals, both implicitly and explicitly. This line presented a normative cause and effect relationship, namely that someone who works diligently will surely become a useful citizen. It created a standard of behavior that is considered correct in Betawi society. It could be understood through the concept of social norms put forward by Soekanto (2012). That concept stated that norms benchmark regarding behavior that is considered appropriate in social life. In this context, the idea of hard work would create the status as a useful citizen. In which, it served as a behavioral guideline that directs individuals towards actions that considered accepted by the society

The word *pasti* played an important role in reinforcing that control function because it eliminates other possibilities outside the offered norm. This line does not leave room for alternative interpretations, but rather encourages acceptance of one main value, namely hard work as a

prerequisite for social legitimacy. In this context, folklore functions as a means to guide individuals to conform to collective expectations, while indirectly putting pressure on behavior that deviates from these norms.

The use of the phrase *warga berguna* indicated that an individual's value is measured based on their contribution to society. This reinforces the function of social control because individuals are not only encouraged to behave according to norms but are also evaluated based on the extent to which they fulfill their social roles. In other words, this line also served as a tool that instills and maintains cultural values in social life.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study shown that the Betawi song “Kicir-Kicir” serves as a medium of entertainment, an educational tool, a ratification of cultural institutions, and a social control mechanism, as proposed by Bascom (1954). The entertainment function of this song is the most prominent; this is reflected in its repetitive sound patterns, lighthearted tone, and easily memorable lyrical structure. The function of the “Kicir-Kicir” song as an educational tool was evident in the values of work ethic and the depiction of an ideal way of life. References to traditions and cultural practices not only serve as markers of identity, but also play a role in affirming the existence of living cultural institutions within society. Through the presence of these elements, values passed down through generations gain collective reinforcement and recognition. On the other hand, the function of social control was subtly present through the conveyance of norms that are not expressed directly but are implicitly embedded in the lyrics. In this way, normative messages could be received more naturally by the listener without coming across as patronizing, while remaining effective in shaping and guiding social behavior.

From a cognitive semantics perspective, the analysis revealed that meaning in the lyrics is constructed through the use of linguistic elements capable of evoking concrete imagery, sensory experiences, and simple associations familiar to everyday life. Thus, the process of meaning-making does not rely on abstract or speculative constructs but is rooted in the direct connection between lexical forms and the mental images constructed within the text. This relationship allows readers or listeners to grasp meaning more intuitively, as it is grounded in real, easily recognizable experiences within the context of daily life. Therefore, the song “Kicir-Kicir” could be understood as a cultural text that not only reflects the social functions of folklore but also constructs meaning through simple and contextual linguistic structures. This study emphasized the importance of integrating analyses of folklore’s functions and cognitive meaning to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of oral tradition texts.

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