

The continuum relationship of aesthetic and social space in the *dhikr* performativity of the Sambas Malay in West Kalimantan



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ABSTRACT

Studies on performative issues in ritual practices often detach social practices from performative studies, emphasizing aesthetic elements instead. This separation creates a divide between aesthetic and social practices. This study seeks to describe *dhikr* practices that reinforce performative aspects by examining the continuum between aesthetic and social spaces. It highlights the importance of the reciprocal relationship between these two domains, which ultimately redefines the spaces where aesthetic and social practices are performed. The research employs a methodology centered on observations and interviews with informants, categorized by their use of traditional or contemporary songs in performing *dhikr*. Data analysis was conducted both on-site and off-site. On-site analysis involved recording local terms and describing them within their cultural context. Additionally, transcription was undertaken to convert sounds, movements, and voices into written form. Off-site analysis included verifying data completeness, classifying data based on research needs, reducing irrelevant data, coding the remaining data, and organizing it into themes before presenting it systematically. The findings reveal three key processes within the continuum. First, the configuration of traditional and contemporary songs illustrates a linear progression that reflects the formation of Sambas Malay culture. Second, the configuration of songs and cultural construction is mediated through both cultural and structural platforms. Third, this continuum extends to the internal experiences of *dhikr* practitioners, serving as a reflective process of their practices. The study's results have significant implications for understanding *dhikr* practices, demonstrating that they are not solely religious in nature. It also opens new avenues for research, particularly exploring the political dimensions of *dhikr* practices and their relationship to power dynamics within the Sambas Malay community.



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1. Introduction

This *Barzanji* reading tends to be seen as a religious practice [1]–[3], which emphasizes the aspect of solemnity or spirituality [4]–[6]. For the Sambas people in West Kalimantan, *barzanji*, which they refer to as reciting *dhikr*, emphasizes its performative aspect. This practice is carefully crafted to be showcased in rituals or as entertainment during festivals and *dhikr* competitions. The term "*dhikr*" underscores local traditions that distinguish the Sambas people from other ethnic groups engaging in similar activities. This distinction is particularly evident in the songs featuring unique Malay Sambas characteristics. Practitioners of *dhikr* categorize these songs into "old songs" and "new songs." The old songs embody the traditional values of the Sambas Palace, while the new songs reflect the contemporary values associated with the recitation of *dhikr*. The classification of songs highlights the

interconnectedness of aesthetic and social relations in the performative *dhikr* practices of the Sambas Malay community. This performative dynamic is encapsulated in a central research question: how are these aesthetic and social relations manifested in the *dhikr* practices of the Sambas Malay people?

Strengthening the performative aspect of reciting *dhikr*, which focuses on songs, creates social classifications [7],[8] within the Malay community of Sambas, West Kalimantan. This emphasis on performance is evident in ritual spaces and becomes even more pronounced during festivals. Songs are strictly categorized into "old" and "new," with clear boundaries: old songs cannot be mixed with new songs, and vice versa. This distinction extends to the performers themselves, meaning that those who recite old songs typically do not perform new songs, and vice versa. Metaphorically, these song types also differentiate the social positions of the performers. Old songs are associated with the city, while new songs are linked to the village. Each type of song is maintained and practiced using distinct patterns and methods: new songs follow a training regimen, while old songs adhere to a *dhikr* social gathering pattern. These classifications clearly illustrate that the differences between old and new songs also signify the social stratification within the Sambas Malay community. So far, studies on *dhikr* as an artistic activity have generally focused on three perspectives. First, *dhikr* is viewed phenomenologically [9]–[11]. This perspective sees *dhikr* as a cultural product that is supreme, sacred, and established. Second, it is viewed through the functional perspective [12]–[14]. Functionally, *dhikr* practices like reciting *barzanji*, *srakalan*, and *mawlid dhikr* can contribute to character education for children or serve as a medium for healing and spiritual therapy. This functional perspective highlights intra-aesthetic elements such as songs, reading structures, and pitch stresses, which impact the performer's body during *dhikr*. Third is the aesthetic perspective, especially in the study of musicality [15], [16]. This perspective emphasizes the intrinsic aspects of *dhikr*, focusing on the rhythmic structures of the songs used in its recitation. Among these three perspectives, it is evident that the connection between aesthetic space and social space has not been adequately addressed in these studies.

This paper addresses gaps in performative studies by focusing on the continuum between aesthetic and social events. The method involves analyzing the performative configuration in the recitation of *dhikr*, which continuously shapes the social structure of the Sambas Malay community. To achieve this, the paper will describe the configuration of old and new songs in *dhikr* recitation, examine the restorative media used for each song classification, and analyze the continuum process in relation to the cultural and personal spaces of the Sambas Malay community. The continuum flow of performative *dhikr* events will be narrated to provide an in-depth understanding. This article argues that *dhikr*'s performativity creates aesthetic and social spaces for mutual interaction. This reciprocal interaction is facilitated by restorative elements [17], suggesting that aesthetic classifications should not always be viewed as contestations but as part of a continuum. This perspective reshapes our understanding of the relationship between the sacred and the profane, as well as the inner cultural space of the supporting community—in this case, the Sambas community.

2. Method

The research data was collected through a qualitative study process rooted in the *dhikr* activities of the Sambas Malay community in West Kalimantan. Primary data comprises the performers' knowledge of the songs sung during the *dhikr* reading, their actions during the recitation, and their personal experiences with the practice of *dhikr*. This study involved several village-based *dhikr* groups to classify the songs prevalent in the community. The selected villages were categorized based on their use of traditional or contemporary songs in ritual practices. Villages using traditional songs, such as Tumok Manggis and Pasar Melayu, were chosen for their proximity to the Sambas Palace, reflecting its influence. Conversely, villages using contemporary songs, such as Tamang Sagang and Sentebang, located in the interior, were selected to observe how geographical and cultural distance affected the song structures. From this classification, informants enculturated with *dhikr* practices in Sambas were identified, including both men and women and divided into three categories. Key informants included individuals who were deeply integrated into the *dhikr* culture and actively participated in Sambas Malay cultural practices. These were: Haji Daeng Abu Bakar, a retired civil servant of the Sambas Regency Government; Mr. Usu Hamidi, a community leader and *dhikr* practitioner in Tamang Sagang Village; Mr. Long Astaman, a member of the Malay Customary and Cultural Council in Sambas Regency; and Syech Jayadi Mursyid, a leader of the Tariqah Qadriyah wa Naqshbandiyyah and a prominent figure in Sentebang Village, Jawai District.

The primary informants for this study were individuals with in-depth knowledge of *dhikr* practices. These included Ngah Dedy Rahamudi, the Head of the Hamlet in Pasar Melayu Village, who also serves as the organizer and trainer of the Pasar Melayu Village *dhikr* group; Sherly Narulita, leader of the Seven Princess *Dhikr* group; Kak Rahmawati, a *dhikr* practitioner from Tamang Sagang Village; Mr. Ismanto, a *dhikr* organizer and practitioner in Galing District; and Mr. Hilmi, a *dhikr* practitioner from Sentebang Village in Jawai District. To supplement the data, the researcher also involved incidentally supporting informants, such as festival committees, ritual hosts, and participants in related activities. The data collection process commences with a desk review of secondary data and written materials from previous studies to gain an initial understanding of the subject under investigation. Subsequently, interviews and observations are conducted in a conversational format, recorded with the informant's consent using a mobile phone. Structured interviews were conducted with key informants. From them, an explanation was obtained regarding the classification of *dhikr* and its relationship to the social life of the *dhikr* practitioners. Informal interviews were conducted with key informants and supporting informants. Informal dialogues often occur during training sessions or rituals, ensuring that information provided by the informant can be cross-checked directly with ongoing practices or events. This dual focus on the process and meaning of *dhikr* practice necessitates researcher involvement in participant observation, enabling the capture of visual and auditory data and insights into bodily experiences during *dhikr* practice. The observation data were documented both visually and audio-visually using a digital camera. Additionally, brief notes were taken to enhance the description of the observed data, including inscriptions and detailed descriptions of the expressions, gestures, and behaviors of the *dhikr* practitioners during rituals or practice sessions. Data analysis follows the steps taken by LeComte dan Schensul [18]. The data analysis unfolds in two stages: first, an analysis conducted on-site (in the field), and second, an analysis conducted outside the research location (out of the field). On-site analysis involved a gradual examination utilizing inscriptions, descriptions, and transcriptions. Through this process, in-depth information pertinent to the research objective was extracted. Off-site analysis included stages such as verifying the fulfillment of required data, tailoring data types to meet research needs, and eliminating irrelevant data unrelated to the research question. Subsequent steps included coding the data and identifying thematic elements before presenting them in a systematic description.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Song Configuration

Define The mastery of songs in the recitation of *Nazam* and *Mawlid dhikr* forms the cornerstone for individuals engaging in *dhikr* recitation. Proficiency in these songs often is a decisive factor in deciding to participate in *dhikr* recitation. Furthermore, songs also influence the role a person assumes within the practice, as articulated by Ngah Andre below. “*kite inda'an maok masok be bukannya inda'an bise mbace, bise kite mbace, Cuma' belagu yang indoan bise, apekan agik kalao' tinggi suarenye. indoan kuat. Kite udah biase dah ndengar nye', cuma' mun indoan nyobe yoo, indoan bise nak ngikot lagu nye.*” “We don't want to go in, not because we can't read, we can read. But we can't sing it, especially if the voice is high; it won't be strong. We are used to hearing (reciting *dhikr*) but have never tried it, so we won't be able to.” (interview, Ngah Andre, 5-11-2021). Ngah Andre's statement underscores how his inability to sing the *dhikr* recitation was the primary factor behind his reluctance to enter the living room where the *dhikr* readers gathered during a ritual or to attend the *dhikr* assembly. Within the knowledge system of the Sambas people, these *dhikr* songs are categorized into old and new songs, each with its own village-based structure and participants. The following elucidates the distinction between these two types of songs.

- **Old Songs:** Old songs are regarded by performers as the original compositions used during the inception of *Nazam* recitation within the Sambas community. These songs are predominantly employed by villages situated near the Sambas Palace in the Sambas District. Within the framework of Sambas community construction, these songs are comprised of three key elements: (1) the *ulama*, (2) the Quran, (3) and the Sambas Palace. The first element is the *ulama*. Those who recite old songs firmly believe in their direct connection to Syech Ahmad Khatib Sambas, the founder of TQN originating from Lubuk Dagang Village in Sambas Regency, who later became a renowned scholar in Mecca. The residents of the city (performers of old songs) hold immense pride in this figure, as Lubuk Dagang Village falls within their territory. When questioned about the origins of the old songs, the informant confidently and

proudly attributes them to Syech Ahmad Khatib Sambas. This sense of pride is not as prominent among performers of new songs, who often express themselves with the phrase “*katenye beh*” ‘they said’—if it is confirmed whether it is associated with an old song attributed to Syech Ahmad Khatib Sambas. The urban inhabitants firmly believe that their current song traces its roots to Syech Ahmad Khatib Sambas, brought by his students, Syech Nurdin and Syech Ahmad Saad, who also hailed from Sambas. The second aspect is the Sambas Palace. Historically, the Sambas Palace served as an institution that sanctioned the practice of *dhikr*, notably during the reign of Sultan Syafiuddin II. This endorsement continues to be upheld by descendants of the Sambas Sultanate, particularly Urai Riza Fahmi, the secretary of the Sambas Sultanate, and Pak Long Astaman. The perpetuation of this legitimacy is achieved through narratives relayed by characters associated with old songs. According to these figures, this legitimization is pivotal in defining *dhikr* as a fundamental aspect of Sambas Malay identity. Thirdly, the tone and rhythm in Quranic recitation serve as foundational elements for *dhikr* recitation with old songs. Generally, there are five types of Quranic recitation styles—*bayyati*, *hejas*, *rost*, *Sikka*, and *Masyri* songs. Performers of old song *dhikr* select one of these styles for their performance, contingent upon achieving optimal sound quality. This configuration underscores the emphasis on values ingrained in high culture, as reflected by the meticulous attention to configurative elements described above. This configuration has received political and cultural strengthening with the involvement of the government and MABM (Malayan Customs and Culture Council) of Sambas Regency, which is the agent for old songs to be used and maintained. The words “used” and “maintained” in this context are not only personal but more communal. This means that the song is performed during wedding rituals, *tepung tawar*, *aqiqah*, and others. In cases where individuals are concerned, some people partaking in *dhikr* within the “village” may also opt for old songs, although they typically utilize new songs in their daily practices. In such scenarios, old songs are elevated to the status of high art despite being exclusively performed by four villages surrounding the Sambas Palace. Old songs in the *assalai* recitation (*assalamualaika* chapter) consist of nine types of songs, sometimes also called the nine chapters. Unlike reading articles, song articles are always categorized by levels, such as article 1, article 2, and so forth. In contrast, reading articles are identified by their opening words, such as the *Assalamualika* article, the *Habibun* article, and others. According to Mujahidin (*dhikr* figure), the levels of songs in recitation of the *assalai*, according to Mujahidin (*dhikr* figure), have a regular level starting from the first song with a slightly slow tempo to fast and rising in the last song. The uniqueness of this old song is that it seems as if the letter *wau kasrah* (*wa*) has been added when chanting long letters, for example, *assalaamualaika* ... recited *assalaaa(wa)aaa mu alaiika* ... almost all long letters are added with the word (*wa*), especially those that are 4-6 long (*harakaat*). This “addition” serves to shape the tone so that it sounds more melodious. This kind of reading is a pattern of performing old songs that have been around for a long time. *Ngah Dedi* (*dhikr* trainer) said that he had heard songs to carry *dhikr*, like the current song, since childhood. All Sambas people use this old song. This is proven by the ability of the *dhikr* practitioners in the villages from the older generation to perform old songs, even though in their daily lives, they use new songs.

- **New Songs:** The new song encompasses a rhythmic style that draws inspiration from diverse sources, notably *qasidah*, Malay, and dangdut melodies. According to several informants, this musical genre emerged in the 1970s but underwent significant development in the 1980s, originating from coastal areas in the Sambas Regency, particularly villages in Jawai and Selakau Districts. Designed to appeal to younger generations and provide an alternative form of entertainment for those far from urban centers, the new song was introduced alongside percussion instruments to accompany the vocals. This initiative proved successful and has persisted over the years, becoming widely recognized as the new song. While initially featuring a mix of melodies contributed by *dhikr* members, the Sambas community has standardized the new song. Consequently, practitioners of *dhikr* across the region can perform this new song, albeit with some villages incorporating unique melodic patterns that reflect their distinct cultural identities. The new song, rooted in the tradition of the old song, also comprises nine sections, with transitions between sections occurring at the same junctures as in the old song. However, a slightly accelerated tempo marks changes within these sections and, notably, an upward modulation in tone. Unlike the old songs, the new songs refrain from adding elongated syllables such as “*waa*” or “*aawwaa*” to the elongated letters, adhering closely to the original

dhikr text. New songs typically evoke a cheerful ambiance, expressed emotively through lively body movements, occasionally accompanied by rhythmic handclapping. While conveying an aura of joyfulness, the facial expressions of performers often convey a profound emotional depth. This starkly contrasts with the solemn and contemplative ambiance characteristic of the old songs, particularly evident from the first to the fifth section. Regarding configuration, the new song lacks a fixed structure akin to the old song. Unlike its predecessor, the development of new songs is autonomous and does not hinge on endorsement from the Sambas Palace or governmental and traditional institutions. This independence stems from its inclusive nature, which embraces a diversity of musical styles emerging within society. This inclusive ethos underpins the widespread acceptance of the new song. Moreover, practitioners of the new song outside the Sambas Palace perceive the formal, symbol-laden, and elitist nature of the three configurations associated with old songs as unsuitable. Hence, the new song enjoys widespread adoption across most villages in Sambas Regency.

3.2. Media Restoration of Old Songs and New Songs

Performers of old and new songs employ distinct methods to culturally establish these songs, ensuring their integration into the community. This process is communal rather than individual, reflecting the shared classification of users of old and new songs. As such, *dhikr* recitation in Sambas is a communal practice, whether performed within ritualistic or non-ritualistic settings. To solidify these traditions, performers of both song types engage in a process of restoration tailored to their specific cultural contexts. Old songs utilize training as a restoration medium, while new songs rely on *dhikr* gatherings to achieve cultural validation.

- *(Pe)Latihan*: *(Pe)latihan* is a medium practitioner of old songs used to uphold and perpetuate their cultural significance. This training methodology encompasses three distinct forms: *pelatihan* (formal training), *latihan* (informal training), and *pencangkakan* grafting. *Pelatihan* (formal training) involves structured sessions led by an instructor or trainer who meticulously oversees the training process. Conducted over three months, participants are required to register with the training manager and follow a predetermined curriculum. Each participant's recitation is closely scrutinized by the instructor, who ensures the accuracy and appropriateness of the rendition. Errors prompt the instructor to request the participant to repeat the passage until correctness is achieved. Conversely, *latihan* (informal training) adopts a more collaborative approach, where participants collectively recite the songs without the presence of a formal instructor. Instead, a companion or facilitator guides the session, intervening when discrepancies are noted in the recitation. Unlike formal training, these sessions have no set time limits, allowing for continuity with the same group or accommodating new participants as needed. The *pencangkakan* (grafting) approach entails a government initiative initiated by the Sambas Regency to preserve and promote *Nazam dhikr* following its designation as an Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2020. Implemented in Dalam Kaum Village in 2021, this program involves delegates from every neighborhood (*RT*) within the village. Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 show the training and exercise patterns with one trainer or instructor.



Fig. 1. Women's *dhikr* training at the Tumok Manggis Village

Both images also show local government facilities in the form of training venues. In Fig. 1, the training venue is the Tumok Manggis Village Community Meeting Hall, while the *dhikr* exercise is carried out at the Pasar Melayu Village Study Hall. Therefore, this *dhikr* training is never carried out in people's homes. This applies in contrast to *dhikr*'s social gatherings, which always occur *in* people's homes. Apart from that, the actors involved in this (training) are village government officials; even Mr. Pung (village head) is directly involved in training or accompanying the participants, such as *Ngah Dedi* (Melayu hamlet head), Mr. Ismet (Tumok hamlet head), and Mr. Fitriandi (to Sukamantri Hamlet). Besides that, MABM figures were also involved, such as Mr. Anjang Mustafa (Chair of Cultural Preservation) and even the chairman of MABM Sambas Regency, Misni Safari, who was also a companion. In addition to building facilities, the village government routinely budgets Rp. 3,000,000/hamlet as a form of guidance for *dhikr* groups using old songs. In the restoration process, training nurtures the skills of *dhikr* performers, particularly in relation to songs. This training regimen prioritizes preserving the integrity of old songs abstaining from introducing any alterations or omissions. Instead, the focus lies on "cleansing" aesthetic elements that could disrupt these songs' rhythm and tone. As such, the restoration process primarily targets the acculturation or enculturation of *dhikr* recitation using old songs. The objective is to ensure that participants encounter no hindrances when singing old songs during the performance of rituals such as reading *assalai* or *asyraqal*.



Fig. 2. Men's *dhikr* training at the Pasar Melayu Village Study Hall

- *Dhikr Arisan*: For users of new songs, originality, genuineness, and standardness established through (training) are considered formal, rigid, official, *tadak besaprah* (not using *saprah*). This pattern is considered inappropriate in villages far from the center of government. "*Kame ni beh, masih nak suke-suke, kumpul same-kawan-kawan beh senang rasenye. Kite pun ingin ugak nolong kawan, kayak arisan zikir beh, kite bayar iuran untuk kite ugak, die nyiapke' kopi, kue, saprahannye sambil kite belajar same-same, begurau, pak pung jak ikut same kame' belajar same-same.*" Mr. Iswanto's statement emphasized that new song performers like togetherness, crowds and suke-suke (fulfilling feelings of joy) in the daily context. For this reason, they use *arisan* as a medium to process intra-aesthetic and extra-aesthetic elements in reciting *dhikr*, which is called *arisan dhikr*. Social gatherings always provide an atmosphere of warmth and intimacy because everyone is in the same position. In this pattern, everyone is an instructor and, at the same time, a participant/member of the *dhikr* assembly. When one of the people singing the *dhikr* song "Wind" is not quite right or his voice is not strong enough to rise, the other members will automatically help by reading together so that the lack or inconsistency of the "wind" in the rendition of the *dhikr* song can be achieved. Like an *arisan*, where each member is asked to pay dues according to the agreement, in *dhikr arisan*, the member fee is IDR. 50,000-Rp. 200,000. The number of contributions paid by a member can change because the harvest season or harvest determines how much contributions the member will pay. The person whose house is occupied by the social gathering for *dhikr* will receive all the money due to the social gathering. Next, the person is obliged to return the same amount when the other members of the *dhikr* have their turn at the social gathering. This amount will not be wrong because the record of the name and nominal contribution paid is recorded on a piece of paper

given to the person whose house is occupied along with the social gathering money. Fig. 3 shows that the *dhikr* gathering occurred in residents' homes and was conducted during the ritual. Notably, the gathering was carried out without the presence of a trainer or instructor. There were no mistakes in reciting the *dhikr* songs; however, challenges arose when hitting high notes. Participants would assist one another in such cases by collectively singing the article, ensuring the *dhikr* was performed correctly. As a means of cultural restoration within *dhikr* gatherings, apart from facilitating the process of enculturation, there's also a significant element of mimicry involved. The enculturation process is intricately linked to the practice of the *Nazam dhikr* tradition, encompassing the orchestration of social gatherings mirroring ritualistic elements, including the sequence of *dhikr* recitations, the composition of participants, and other accompanying traditions.



Fig. 3.Dhikr Arisan

The sequence of *Nazam dhikr* typically commences with prayers, followed by the recitation of *assalai* (specifically the article *assalamualaika*), reading of rawi, recitation of *asyraqal* while seated (*mahallul qiyam*), additional prayers, and culminating with the consumption of *besaprah*. The structure of *dhikr* performers is delineated into several roles: the *kalipah*, responsible for organizing the *dhikr* recitation process and overseeing the sung melodies; the *dhikr* priest, who leads the recitation and rotates every two stanzas; the *makmum*, who follows the priest's lead; the singer, who harmonizes with the *makmum* and interprets the verses and songs sung by the congregation; and finally, the musicians. Additionally, partaking in *besaprah* is significant in the ritual, reflecting an integral facet of the Malay Sambas tradition. The mimicry process in this *dhikr arisan* is related to the production of new songs, as stated by the following informant. The process of applying a new song can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The Process of Applying A New Song

Informant	Statement
Mr. Usu Hamidi	Pertame beh kite dengar lagu nye, kite ulang-ulang, behari-hari kite ndengarnya. Lamun dah hapal nadanye, kite sesuaikan dengan bacaan jiker nye. Laka' ito' baru kite cube. Pas arisan tok lah beragam lagu be dimaing kan nye.
Mr. Usu Muazzin	Kalo' saye beh senang lagu-lagu nasyid, saban hari saye dengar lagunya. Makenye saye tau nadanya, jadi mun kite pake bace zikir beh, pas lagu nye.
Reni	Pertame kite biase kan beh telinge kite ndengar nye'. Lama-lama kite jadi hapal lah lagunya. Laka' tok kite ajak lah kawan-kawan nglaguek nye.

Information from the three informants shows the process of mimicry of new songs in reciting *dhikr*, which originates from song rhythms that develop in the media. The first is the habitualization stage, namely the habituation of body parts to the rhythm of songs that are listened to repeatedly via the electronic media devices they own. Second is the process of adapting the rhythm and atmosphere to the *dhikr* text, which is carried out personally. This process is carried out for quite a long time because songs in Indonesian or regional languages are used to read *dhikr* texts in Arabic; in this process, they have to adjust to the "*anginnye*," namely the suitability between the atmosphere, rhythm, and language/*cengkok* which are formed culturally. Third is the processing process at the *dhikr* gathering, where there are additions or subtractions to the rhythm of the song so that the "wind" matches the recitation of the *dhikr*. The structural classification of the *dhikr* performers in this *dhikr* social gathering

does not correlate with the social status of the people involved in the social gathering. Mr. Pung sat with other *dhikr* performers without any separation or specificity. When the book of *dhikr* was in front of him, he acted as imam; after that, he became a *makmum* again, as did Haji Habiri; his role and position are the same as other performers of *dhikr*. This is different from training because Mr. Pung or someone with a Haj title will be outside the circle of training participants.

3.3. Continuum Relationship between Sacred and Profane Space

The presence of new songs and old songs in the recitation of *dhikr* shows that there is a process of reinterpreting space from the perspective of the Sambas Malay Community. The performativity of *dhikr*, which originates from ritual and the mimesis process carried out by village communities, provides another understanding of sacred and profane relations. Sacred and profane are not oppositional things that confront each other. The relationship between the two is a continuum process that moves reciprocally, namely that there is no clear dividing line between special events and everyday life [19]–[21]. The continuum process that moves from one pole to another in performative activities allows for stylization and modification to present a "highlight" of the activity being carried out. In line with this opinion, Ingjerd Hoëm provides a simpler definition, namely, a process of an everyday event that then appears in the form of rituals and festivals. The continuum process from sacred to profane explains the direction of the continuum from symbolic to structural movements. The *dhikr* presented for ritual needs is full of generative symbolic elements in the cultural system of the Sambas Malay community. In line with this, Victor Turner positions rituals as symbolic actions [22]–[24]. In the context of *dhikr*, these symbolic elements can be seen from the terms old and new, which show both continuity and do not stand alone. This can be seen from three things. Firstly, the new song configuration basically also starts from the same configuration as the old song. Second, the song changes are in the same verse. The three purposes of songs are not only for ritual needs but also for entertainment needs. The structural enactment of *dhikr* within mundane spaces places significant emphasis on fostering social constructs and relationships. These relationships are viewed dichotomously, each embodying its own distinctiveness. This dichotomy is evident in the restoration practices undertaken by the two groups of singers, namely through training sessions and *dhikr* gatherings. Through these restoration mediums, characterized by their unique methodologies, the value and performative essence of *dhikr* are either augmented, diminished, or preserved, with the overarching objective of facilitating enculturation and mimicking *dhikr* rituals. These dual processes within the restoration framework prepare *dhikr* songs for recitation during rituals or festivals, while also serving as a validation process determining one's inclusion or exclusion from ritualistic spaces. Moreover, the migration of *dhikr* practices into the realm of structure is further accentuated by the instrumentalization of *dhikr* for practical political ends, as observed in its utilization by political factions or contenders during Sambas Regency's regent elections. The intricate relationship between these two continuum processes can be depicted in Fig. 4.

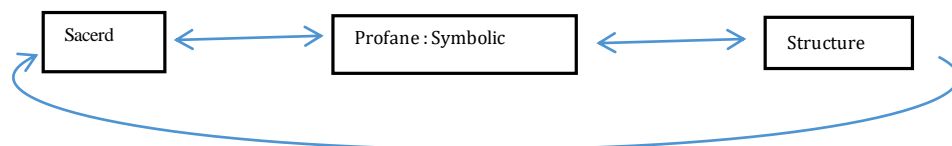


Fig. 4. Continuum Process

The illustration above illustrates that the continuum process from the sacred to the profane embodies a transition from the symbolic to the structural realm. These structural practices inherently encompass sacred elements, as the cultural space fostering *dhikr* rituals is deeply rooted in the belief system of the Sambas Malay community. This is evident during various cultural events such as the commemoration of the Prophet's birthday, weddings, circumcisions, and other ceremonial activities. This restoration media functions to bring everyday actions into rituals or to bring rituals into festivals. This means that this restoration media plays a role in adding or subtracting practices that are presented in daily life or rituals when they are performed. This means that on a continuum, rituals take their narrative inspiration from everyday life, while festivals or gatherings take their narrative inspiration from rituals, and this process can occur in reverse.

3.4. Catharsis: Redefinition of the Emotional Space of the Sambas Malay People

The classification of songs with their distinctive patterns can also be understood as a process of redefinition of the emotional space of the Sambas Malay people, which means catharsis as a result of the process of cultural reflection. Catharsis, in the general sense, is defined as a form of emotional release, both personal and communal. This catharsis is carried out because of experiences that do not match expectations [25], [26]. The categorization between old and new songs represents a longing to fulfill nostalgia, with urban dwellers embracing old songs and rural inhabitants favoring new ones. Those residing near the Sambas Palace assert their right to uphold traditions legitimized by this historical institution, making the narrative of the palace central to the storytelling surrounding old songs. Similarly, users of new songs evoke memories through the rhythmic melodies, engaging in a process of mimesis to connect with the past. Consequently, during *dhikr* performances, anecdotes from fellow practitioners often emerge, reflecting the emotional resonance evoked by the sung melodies. This underscores how reciting *dhikr* can serve as a cathartic release, fulfilling the emotional yearnings of the performers. The cathartic process within the Sambas Malay community manifests as a manifestation of cultural identity awareness, which is actively constructed and upheld. Identity transcends mere labels, fostering a profound understanding among *dhikr* performers regarding their engagements. This process underscores that cultural awareness emerges from the emotional resonance of *dhikr* performativity, enabling individuals to connect with their social, cultural, and natural milieu through actions. Consequently, *dhikr*, initially steeped in religious devotion, has evolved to encompass performative expressions and an atmosphere of imitation, expanding its scope beyond mere ritualistic significance. This evolution does not diminish the intrinsic value of Sambas Malay culture, as the practice of *dhikr* for ritual purposes remains integral to the lives of the community. Instead, it signifies a broadening of the *dhikr*'s meaning, positioning it on par with other forms of Islamic arts. These diverse explanations underscore the emotional significance of *dhikr*, culminating in a cathartic process within the Sambas Malay community. This catharsis entails a personal negotiation unfolding within both performative and social spheres. Remarkably, this cathartic experience contributes to mitigating the economic and social disparities among the Malay community in Sambas Regency. Through this process, catharsis serves as a form of emotional "purification," eliciting feelings of joy, compassion, and fear [27].

Catharsis in the recitation of Sambas *dhikr* often begins with a process of mimesis [28]. As elucidated in the preceding discussion, the identity embodied in both the new and old songs fundamentally entails an act of mimesis undertaken by the respective social entities employing these songs. For users of old songs, mimesis entails the emulation and preservation of traditional palace songs directly attributed to Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas. Conversely, village communities engage in mimesis by replicating popular melodies prevalent within the community, including Malay, dangdut, or Islamic songs. However, this mimetic practice undergoes a filtering process during rehearsals or *dhikr* social gatherings, serving as a restorative medium to fine-tune the tone or rhythm of the songs for *dhikr* recitation. Moreover, this act of replication is a concerted effort to represent Sambas culture within performative spaces, with the presence of *makmum*, *kalipah*, letter carriers, and other participants. In the context of catharsis, the mimetic process undertaken by *dhikr* performers, who replicate songs for their recitations, serves as a cultural expression reflecting both the performers of *dhikr* and the broader Sambas community within their social milieu. This reflective process extends beyond the confines of performative spaces, such as cathartic performances, to encompass the everyday lives of the Sambas Malay community, particularly in fulfilling their entertainment needs. They often draw comparisons with dangdut, be it a solo organ or a musical ensemble performing at weddings—an integral form of entertainment for the community, albeit not present at every celebratory event due to varying economic circumstances. In this context, reciting *dhikr* emerges as a medium through which they articulate their longing for performances akin to *dangdut* by mimicking the rhythm or tone of dangdut songs. This cultural reflection serves as a cathartic response to the absence of entertainment typically associated with dangdut. Through imitation, the Sambas community seeks to fulfill their entertainment desires, drawing from a variety of song genres. This underscores how the performativity of *dhikr* is positioned as a form of performance catering to the cultural and emotional needs of the community [29].

4. Conclusion

The integration of performative elements in the *Nazam dhikr* recitation among the Sambas Malay community unfolds as a continuous process reflected in various classifications. Three primary findings exemplify this continuum. Firstly, the configuration established by old and new songs delineates a linear progression, illustrating the evolution of Sambas Malay culture. This configuration serves as the bedrock for either the creation of new songs or the preservation of old ones. Secondly, the song arrangement and cultural development are rejuvenated through cultural and structural mediums. New songs utilize social gatherings of *dhikr* as their cultural platform, aligning with the societal norms of an egalitarian and inclusive community. Meanwhile, old songs rely on structural mediums, such as training, characterized by regularity and uniformity. Thirdly, this continuum process extends into the inner realm of the *dhikr* performer, fostering a reflective process on the practice itself. These findings underscore that the continuum of *dhikr* performativity traverses from performative to social spaces and vice versa. Theoretically, this performative perspective challenges the traditional functional view that positions *dhikr* solely as a religious practice. Instead, this study demonstrates that *dhikr* recitation is a cultural practice within the Sambas community, reflecting individual and communal identity. As a cultural practice, *dhikr* and other performative acts should be analyzed within the broader social constellations of society. This shift also has methodological implications, emphasizing that actions such as voice, gestures, and expressions of *dhikr* practitioners are not merely symbolic elements but primary sources that must be examined in relation to the practice of *dhikr*. The findings of this research contribute to existing studies that predominantly explore the practice of reciting *dhikr* through the lens of religious devotion. This descriptive study offers critical insights into the posed research inquiries. These findings are anticipated to enhance comprehension of the *dhikr* practice in Sambas, which has often been perceived as contradictory due to variations in the sung songs. Moreover, it is hoped that this research will serve as a foundation for future inquiries, particularly regarding the interplay between *dhikr* practice and the socio-cultural fabric of society. Nevertheless, this research has its limitations. The primary data solely focuses on *dhikr* performers without delving into the perspectives of the broader Sambas community, who, although not actively participating in reciting *dhikr*, are integral to the rituals. Furthermore, the presented data predominantly reflects the internal viewpoints of the practitioners and lacks substantial validation from other *dhikr* performers' communities. However, these limitations can serve as a pathway for conducting more comprehensive investigations involving all relevant stakeholders, particularly in exploring the relationship between the continuum of *dhikr* practice and societal dynamics.

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