



Sangku as Indonesian Cultural Property

I Wayan Mudra^{1(✉)}, I Nyoman Larry Julianto¹, I Ketut Muka P² and I Wayan Swandi¹

¹Design Study Program, Indonesian Arts Institute of Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia
wayanmudra@isi-dps.ac.id

²Craft Program Study, Faculty of Arts and Design, Indonesian Arts Institute of Denpasar, Bali,
Indonesia

Abstract. *Sangku* is known as a craft art property used in various regions of Indonesia according to the beliefs and culture of certain regions. Specifically, *sangku* has been used by the Balinese community for a long time. However, the material used as *sangku* has recently been renewed, taking into account the effectiveness of its use and current conditions. The paper aims to explain the shape, material, and function of *sangku* used in various regions of Indonesia. It is a sample study with a qualitative descriptive approach and both online and offline documentation techniques were used to gather the data. The research results revealed *sangku* with a cylindrical base and *sangku* made of clay, metal, or rock found in Indonesia. There is *sangku* applying regional cultural or plain ornaments. In addition, it also has diverse functions, e.g., as a place of holy water in Balinese Hindu ceremonies, as a container in *Basarah* ceremony called *Sangku Tambak Raja* by people of the Kaharingan Native Dayak Tribe of Borneo. According to the research findings, *sangku* is used as a container associated with religious ceremonies in Indonesia. The implication of this study is that researchers can inform the existence of *sangku* in Indonesia, which vary in shapes and materials.

Keywords: *Sangku*, Culture, Ceremony, Holy water

1 Introduction

Sangku comes in a variety of shapes, materials, and uses in Indonesia. Indonesians typically use *sangku* as a storage space for items needed for daily activities. An alternative term for *sangku* is a bowl used for hand washing before and after meals, according to the Great Indonesian Dictionary. However, *sangku* as a cultural object in Indonesia is used not only as a place of water but also as a connection with the implementation of traditional and religious ritual ceremonies in certain communities, in accordance with the traditions, cultures, and beliefs developing in these communities. The shape of *sangku* can also be found in various forms in each region, according to the functions and daily traditions of the pluralistic Indonesian society.

Research on *sangku* as a cultural property playing a role in preserving traditional inheritance has not been done by many related researchers. A few studies on *sangku* have been conducted, some of which are described below. Research entitled “The Cre-

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ation of Ceramic *Sangku* with Balinese Wayang Ornaments". This study describes ceramic *sangku* made by using rotary technique. The burning process of the *sangku* involved three stages, i.e., biscuit burning, glaze burning at 1250oC, and puppet ornaments burning at 1250oC. Wayang ornaments are applied using painting techniques; and the ceramic *sangku* functions as decorative objects, disposable objects, and souvenirs [1]. The *sangku* entitled "*Sangku Dewata Nawa Sanga I*" was created by Ni Made Sunarini. *Sangku's* work is inspired by the symbol of the nine concepts of God's weapons in Hinduism in Bali as *pengider-ider* in accordance with the direction, color, and the God residing. *The Nawa Dewata* (Nine Gods) or *Dewata Nawa Sanga* are the nine rulers of each cardinal point. These nine rulers are Lord Shiva surrounded by eight aspects. The nine images of nawa sanga weapons are applied as ornaments to the ceramic *sangku* [2].

The above-mentioned two studies do not explain the existence of *sangku* as a cultural property used in ritual events in several regions in Indonesia. To that end, the authors in this study describe its existence, thereby making it new research. Some ceramic artisans in Bali have been producing ceramic *sangku*, which is still ongoing and serving the needs of the entire community for religious ceremonial equipment. The resulting artworks vary greatly in shape, size, ornament, and finishing; however, they were not published in scientific papers. Therefore, this research stressed an urgency to be conveyed to the general public.

The significance of this study can be explained as an important reference for understanding *sangku* products as Indonesian cultural heritage properties existing in several regions of Indonesia, each of which is unique and becomes the pride of the local community. The cultural heritage of the past needs to be preserved and maintained [3]. In this regard, as a scientific paper, this research is also expected to promote a sense of love for Indonesian culture in the form of handicraft objects. Thus, *sangku* can still be developed into creative industrial products to meet the needs of the community in this modern era.

2 Methods

In this qualitative, or research using natural settings, researchers as research instruments used inductive data analysis, descriptive analysis, and others [4]. Research data were collected through observation, interview, and documentation techniques. Research data sources were *sangku* products from various regions in Indonesia, determined using purposive sampling. Data were obtained from offline and online analysis through interpretive methods. This method was applied because the qualitative data explain social and cultural events; the facts are unique, fluid, and have social context and meaning [5]. This study is also social research that can be investigated through an interpretive approach. The interpretive approach can be attributed to qualitative social sciences.

3 Results and Discussion

In Bali, *sangku*, associated with ritual cultural tradition, is found in cylinder form and generally has a height greater than the width, with the top tending to be greater. The beauty of the *sangku* form can be observed in the application of ornaments to the *sangku* body, but there are also plain ones (without ornaments). Some of the *sangku* have a lid and some do not. Substantially, *sangku* in Bali is made of earthenware (low burnt ceramics), ceramics (high burnt earth), aluminum, brass, silver, coconut shell, and padas stone. *Sangku* is also known as "kumba" in Bali [1].

In Bali, *sangku* functions as a place of purified water in the religious ceremonies and customs. Hindus in Bali use water for daily necessities (profane) and for religious purposes or for certain ceremonies (so-called holy water, M.M. Sukarto. K. Atmodjo, in Jaya) [6]. The use of *sangku* is found in sanctified places e.g., temples, pemrajan, and other holy places. *Sangku* serves as a means of equipment *upakara*, and as a supporting equipment *upakara*. *Upakara* is defined as a service in the form of material offered or sacrificed in a Hindu religious ceremony [7]. As one of the ritual objects used to carry out a successful ceremony, *sangku* serves a sacred value in this part. Some forms of *sangku* in Bali made with various materials in Fig. 1 - Fig. 8.

Sangku in Fig. 1 to Fig. 5 was taken from several sources, while Fig. 6 to Fig. 8 were the results of the author's research. *Sangku* in Fig. 1 to Fig. 8 all closely functioned as the implementation of sacred ceremonies, therefore the visuals were beautifully made due to the part of the offering to God. In an effort to bring out the visual beauty of *sangku*, the application of ornaments to its body becomes pivotal. The ornaments applied included raised *pepatran* objects, *nawa sanga* weapon motifs, and *wayang* motif depictions in Balinese style. The visual beauty that appears on the *sangku* causes the *sangku* to function as a decorative object that can beautify the room. In addition, the *sangku* can be used as a souvenir object because it is a typical Balinese souvenir that has its own uniqueness. These kinds of *sangku* are offered at various prices depending on the product's quality and material in markets throughout Bali. Moreover, *sangku* products have also been marketed on social media, e.g., Instagram, Facebook, and start-up media, e.g., Lazada, Tokopedia, Shopee, and Bukalapak. *Sangku* is also found in Bali as a relic of the past that is still sanctified today, as in the following description.

In Pura Pusering Jagat, located in Pejeng Village, Gianyar, is a large sanctified *sangku* made of stone called *Sangku Sudamala* or *Bejana Pejeng*. On the body of this *sangku* was saka (number) six hundred and forty-nine years ago (649) sculpted, as seen in *candra sangkala*. The *sangku* is embellished with this sculpture as an ornament. This sculptural ornament is shaped like a crescent, eye, bow, and human, and is worth the number of years caka 1251 or 1329 AD [6]. *Sangku Sudamala* is currently consecrated in a square open space roofed with beautiful fibers (Fig. 9). In this place does the community perform prayers and self-purification called *melukat*. According to local authorities *Dewa Ngakan Putu Bagiana* in <https://baliexpress.jawapos.com>, 2022, the tirta temple in *Sangku Sudamala* is believed to be the *tirta amertha* that *Ida Bhatara Siwa* got during the screening of Mount Mandara Giri.



Fig. 1. Brass *sangku*



Fig. 2. Silver *sangku*



Fig. 3. Fiber *sangku*



Fig. 4. Aluminum *sangku*



Fig. 5. Shell *sangku*



Fig. 6. Earthenware *sangku*



Fig. 7. Ceramic *Sangku* with nawa sanga weapons ornaments.



Fig. 8. Ceramic *Sangku* with wayang ornament

If more closely observed, the details of this *Sudamala sangku* ornament, at a glance, display a puppet shape with a vague background and a less sharp surface texture. The surface of the *sangku* body is gray, which is the color of the original stone without the finishing process. The ancient visual appearance made with the original materials and ornaments is able to display a sacred and beautiful impression of the place. The visual form of the ornament that fills the surface of the skuku's body and leaves no residue makes the work give a complicated and geometric impression, even though the visuals don't look detailed. The visual form of the ornament that fills the surface of the *sangku*'s

body and leaves no residue makes the work give a complicated impression even though the visuals don't look detailed [3].



Fig. 9. Sangku *Sudamala* ornament detail appearance and holy place of *Sangku sudamala*

Similar to Bali, Kalimantan employs *sangku* in traditional ceremonies. This *Sangku* is used by the Kaharingan people of the Dayak tribe in the *Basarah* ceremony and is named “*Sangku Tambak Raja*,” “*Saparanggun Dalam Kangantil Bawak Lamiang*,” or “*Sangku Tambak Raja*” (Sangiang language). *Sangku*, in Kalimantan, is equipped with various ceremonial tools for *Basarah* activities. *Sangku Tambak Raja* is presented during the *basarah* ceremony on a small table covered in a clean, non-black cloth. The placement of the *sangku tambak raja* looks higher than the seating floor. *Sangku Tambak Raja* is always positioned in the center of the *Basarah* place because he represents all of *Ranying Hatalla Langit's* omnipotence and serves as a representation of the inner unity of the Kaharingan people performing *Basarah* to *Ranying Hatalla Langit*.



Fig. 10. Sangku *Tambak raja* and small *sangku* model dayak

Sangku from Kalimantan is made of brass, shaped like a bowl on top, with a cylindrical leg. In Fig. 10, *Sangku's* top and legs are equipped with geometric ornaments and Dayak motif ornaments that are quite detailed and exhibit a high level of complexity. The surface texture of the ornament seems smooth because it was seemingly done with

the incising technique and high-quality workmanship. This detailed ornament makes *Basarah Sangku's* appearance beautiful. *Sangku*, as described earlier, functions as a container equipped with various means in the *Basarah* ceremony (worship) such as rice, yarn as a sangkau base, milled areca palm, ruku 7, one pack of *hambaruan* rice (7 seeds or 8 seeds) wrapped based on local tradition, *unag singah hambaruan/Lilis lamiang, dandang tingang* in the middle of *sangku*, tamping tawar, undus oil, and eggs, flowers, *paramun sandah/janur* decoration made from young coconut leaves), and *parapen, garu manyan* (incense).

Fig. 10 shows a brass *sangku* with a Dayak motif that was cast using brass. This *sangku* shape has almost the same shape as the *sangku* in Fig. 10, but is smaller. The ornament applied is a typical Dayak tribal ornament motif: firm curved lines, symmetrical, and rich in color. It is also used as a religious ritual (<https://id-id.facebook.com/marketplace>). Viewed from the shape and ornament, *sangku* looks beautiful, and the workmanship is very detailed with a smooth texture on the surface. This *sangku* looks new; the brass material still looks clean, which implies that it has never been used.

4 Conclusion

From the aforementioned description, it can be concluded that the basic shape of *sangku* ceramics in Indonesia is a cylinder, which is then developed with various shapes on the upper body and on the legs. Some of the legs have lids, while others don't. Some have wide mouths, some have narrow mouths, and some have ornament on the outside, some do not. The decorative items used take on the motif of tradition in their respective regions and distinguish one area's *sangku* type from other areas. *Sangku* materials are made of various materials according to the existing resources in the area, e.g., earthenware clay, ceramic clay, brass, metal, aluminum, silver, fiber, and shell. The use of this material also adapts to user needs based on perceived costs and preferences. As explained in the description of this study, the functions of *sangku* are all related to a religious ceremony or belief, that is, as a container or place. It serves as a location for tirta (holy water) in Bali while serving as a container for equipment during the *Basarah* ceremony in Kalimantan. The diversity of *sangku* in Indonesia shows the diversity of Indonesian culture, each of which has its own peculiarities. The diversity of *sangku* is the local wisdom of the nation as cultural capital that should be proud of and developed for the welfare of the community in general.

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