

The Existence of Pure and Sacred Silver Craft Creation in Gianyar Bali

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This study aims to discover in depth the existence of the creation of pure and sacred silver crafts today and the public's attention to these works. The results of this study will also be very useful for craftsmen, entrepreneurs, academics, and the government as information material about the growth and development of the creation of silverworks in an uncertain tourism situation. The decline in Bali tourism has impacted the decline in silver handicraft production in Gianyar, especially in products for tourism needs. Several areas that used to be centers of silver crafts, such as Celuk Village, Singapadu Village, and Taro Village, are now no longer productive because they rarely receive orders. In a quiet situation, some creative and highly skilled craftsmen began to divert their production by creating several pure art and sacred art as collectibles and *Sesuhunan* (sacred crafts) such as Barong, *Rangda*, and Masks which are purified and sacred by the Balinese people. The orientation of creating silverworks eventually leads to works of high quality and aesthetic value. A very interesting phenomenon to study holistically is the following: how is the existence of the creation of pure and sacred silverworks in Gianyar today? The method used in this study is a descriptive qualitative method with data collection techniques of observation, interviews, and documentation. This paper is also very appropriate to be carried out to examine in depth the development of silverworks of pure art and sacred art. There is a huge struggle between cultural and economic capital in the quest for power and the preservation of silverwork as noble works of art. This research is expected to contribute to science, especially related to arts and crafts in general.

Keywords: Existence, Pure silver craft, and Sacred silver craft

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, Balinese arts and crafts have experienced a drastic downturn, including silver crafts, because they cannot compete with silver crafts from other countries. Most of the silver companies went out of business, and the craftsmen could no longer work because the materials were very expensive, while the selling price was meager. The artisans became confused and began to switch professions to become construction workers, drivers, security guards, or take other odd jobs (Suardana, 2015: 525). This condition also occurs inseparable from the world entering the era of globalization, which has an impact on accelerating access, information, and interaction without borders (Widari, 2022: 61) that occurs in global arts and crafts marketing, while silver craftsmen have not yet mastered the process.

Craftsmen who are creative and loyal to their profession shift the orientation of their creation towards the creation of works for pure art and sacred arts, such as making *keris* sheaths, sticks, weapons, *sangku*, *sibuh*, *petirtan*, and some decorative elements for *Sesuhunan Barong*, *Rangda*, *Topeng*, and others. Sacred traditional works actually receive great attention from the public and craftsmen realize that the creation of works of art in Bali is not merely an economic demand, but also a sincere devotion to the Almighty (Gunada, 2021: 154), therefore silver craftsmen go into totality creating pure and sacred works of art in an effort to meet the needs of society for religious purposes.

Increasing public demand for pure and sacred silverworks opens up new market opportunities for silver craftsmen to remain creative and innovate in creating quality works. Some of the decorative elements of *Sesuhunan*, which used to use cowhide, are now starting to use silver. The quality of the work is the main demand because the community will sanctify the work. It is an extraordinary pride. The work created will be glorified and preserved by the community. Craftsmen would feel very proud because they can preserve local wisdom in a situation of scientific and technological progress (Tadir, 2021: 367).

Since the Bali Post published the “*Ajeg Bali*” Discourse in 2002, new market opportunities for pure and sacred silverworks of art have become increasingly open. *Ajeg Bali* is to maintain and preserve the precious Balinese culture so that it is not eroded by foreign cultures that enter Bali. In an effort by the community to play a role in preserving Bali, they use Balinese ceremonial facilities, carry out ceremonial activities that are thick with their

Balinese identity and collect unique and noble works of art. The community will be very proud if they have noble works of art such as *Keris*, sticks, unique necklaces, antique bracelets, and other ceremonial items made of silver (Karuni, 2018: 12).

From the explanation above, it is necessary to conduct research holistically to find out the real phenomena in silver handicrafts today. The results of this research will be very beneficial for the general public, the academic community, and the government. This paper aims to discover in depth the existence of current developments in pure and sacred art silver and the market opportunities that exist in society, how the process of its creation is, and what forms of silverwork are created and are in demand by consumers. This paper is also very appropriate to be carried out to examine in depth the development of silverworks of pure art and sacred art. There is a considerable struggle between cultural and economic capital in the quest for power and preserving silverwork as noble works of art. As an academic, it is our responsibility to study this phenomenon to be used as new knowledge to develop works of art further.

RESEARCH METHOD

The writing method is the method used in collecting data to achieve the purpose of writing. This paper uses descriptive qualitative methods: observation, interviews, and document review. This method is used because it directly presents the relationship between the writer and the respondent and is more sensitive and more able to adjust to the patterns of values encountered (Moleong, 2013: 10). Qualitative methods pay attention to the depth of information, explore the meaning behind the symptoms, and emphasize case studies, and the results are more narrative through words (Ratna, 2010: 98). Art research usually has two sources of data, namely: first, physical works of art (intra-aesthetic factors), and second, psychological factors, (extra-aesthetic factors) (Rohidi, 2011: 75).

Data Collection Techniques are carried out employing the following: library research was used to collect research data through written sources, including books, journals, magazines, and articles. Observational studies were conducted directly on artisans who are still creative and skilled and survive doing crafts manually. Study interviews were conducted with craftsmen, chiefs of traditional villages, collectors, academics, government officials, and humanists. Data analysis includes various stages: first is data identification, second is data classification, third is data selection, and the

fourth stage is conducting data analysis in accordance with a predetermined theory, using qualitative analytical analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The emergence of artistic expressions of the Balinese Hindu community is based on the belief that as a devout community, it is hoped that they can present the most beautiful and best works to the Almighty as pure and sincere devotion. Based on this belief, society will try to find and make the best and perfect for a great and holy offering (Karuni, 2018: 45).

Sacred art is an art that is arranged and performed at the time of the ceremony (*yadnya*) and adapted to its function and meaning. This sacred art is very sanctified and sacred by the Balinese people. In Balinese society, sacred art is synonymous with "*Tenget*" in the sense of placing works of art in a sublime and sacred position. It is the obligation of the Hindu community to respect, glorify, and sanctify sacred arts, both in the form of fine arts and performing arts (Yudabakti, 2007: 34).

For the Balinese, sacred is something that is holy (*Suddha*), always related to transcendental aspects, which are always related to the supreme. Sacred art is something sacred and venerable, created with a vertical dimension, and can only be created and performed by people with honest minds and wisdom. Balinese artists in creating, consciously or unconsciously, have been determined by the value of karma as a form of devotion to the Almighty, creating not only based on economic and political interests but also a sense of devotion to a supreme power (Triguna, 2011: 80).

Based on the above understanding, silversmiths believe that the creation of pure and sacred works of art will continue to be sustainable as the current orientation of people's lives is towards spiritual needs. The public's attention to sacred arts is increasing, which is actualized in making works of art as religious symbols.

Tracks of Metalcraft Art in Gianyar

Metalcraft art is one of the arts and crafts that has been developing for a long time in Gianyar. Even though a lot of metal is imported from outside, the expertise to smelt metal ore in Bali has developed since prehistoric times. This is evidenced by the many bronze artifacts found in several areas of Bali,

such as the kettledrum at Penataran Sasih Pejeng Gianyar Temple (Ardika, 2013: 73).

Entering the historical era, the skill to smelt metal ore was increasing under the auspices of the kingdom. As the ruler of the area, the king gave great appreciation to people who had various skills in doing something for the needs of traditional and religious activities. In the Lontar Religion-Adigama it is stated that professions belonging to the *Asta Cendala* are; *Undagi* (carpenter), *Amanlaten* (laundrette), *Amahat* (carver), *Anjun* (potter maker), and *Apande Sisinghen* (sharp weapons maker) (Haryono, 2008: 62). The metalworker profession is called "*Pande*" according to their respective fields such as *Pande Mas* (gold), *Pande Selaka* (silver), *Pande Tamra* (copper), *Pande Gansa* (bronze), and *Pande Wsi* (iron). The *Pande* form their own group chaired by "*Tuha Gusali*," and the place is called "*Besalen*," a metal carpentry place. Equally important are the people involved in various performing arts, such as dance, musical arts, and literary arts, called *Bhandagina* (Research Team, 2016: 46).

Metal smelting technology that was already known in the ancient Balinese era continued to develop in the ancient Balinese era. In the Tengkulak A inscription and Sukawati B inscription, it is stated that craftsmen produced various metal products from Gianyar, and groups of metal craftsmen have been formed (Research Team, 2016: 50). The kingdom is the master of various existing works of art so that the works created are of very high quality which is categorized as high culture.

The art of silver as a metal object, its initial appearance was made as a religious means to be purified and blessed as a symbol of the Gods in the form of *Pretima* and *Prelingga*, as well as a means of ceremonies to support the ceremony itself. *Pretima* is made entirely of silver and a combination of silver and wood or iron. The wood used is sandalwood, *cempaka* wood, agarwood, and *majagau* wood. *Pretima* is stored in temples and other holy places, symbolized as Gods who reside in these holy places. Ceremonial facilities to support the implementation of the ceremony have more functional value, such as a place for offerings, a place for holy water, a place for *bija*, and others. This ceremonial facility is also sanctified as "*Sukla*" and cannot be used carelessly and should be placed in a special place.

Figure 1. Silver *Pretima*

(Source: Komara Yana)

Silverwork is a special item with high value, both economic value and artistic value contained in it, therefore, it is only owned by certain people, such as aristocrats and other wealthy people. This work will be more valuable when decorated with exquisite gems (beads) and attractive colors. The silverwork can be perfectly combined with the beadwork which causes the work to be luxurious and elegant. As a special work of art, besides having a practical function, silverwork also has a social function, namely showing the status of the wearer's social position.

Center for Silver Creation in Gianyar

Silver creation centers in Gianyar develop in the Celuk area, Singapadu Sukawati, and in the Taro Tegallalang area. The history of the development of silver crafts in Celuk village cannot be separated from the tenacity of the Nang Gati family silversmiths who have long been engaged in silversmith work by making ceremonial items and jewelry such as making bowls, *dulang*, *penastan* kettles, bracelets, necklaces, rings and *subeng* (Lodra, 2012: 54). The process of making silver was still very simple with carving techniques and was done manually. The decorative motifs used are traditional Balinese decorative motifs that are widely applied to wood and stone carvings such as *keketusan*, *pepatran*, and *kekarangan*.

Figure 2. Silver *Sangku*, *Payung Pagut*, and *Bokoran*

(Source: Komara Yana)

The influx of tourism in Bali has greatly impacted silver craftsmen in Celuk, because the demand for orders is increasing. Silverworks are sought after by the local community as necessities of the ceremony and by tourists who come to Bali as souvenirs. Many jewelry items are requested by tourists, not only for personal use but also for souvenirs for family and friends in their countries. Silverworks are diverse, not only having symbolic meaning but also aesthetic, economic, and sociocultural meanings (Kurniawan, 2018: 2613).

The demand for silverwork continued to increase. Silverwork eventually became the main occupation. The Celuk people became very productive. Men and women, young people, and adults all worked as silversmiths. Those with a large capital and management skills have started to open businesses

to set up art shops and galleries by accommodating existing silverworks. Along the Celuk Sukawati highway are many art shops that offer a variety of silver and gold items. The many art shops and galleries make it very easy for silversmiths to sell their work because they have a definite place for sale. These conditions and situations encouraged and triggered the development of silver craftsmen and entrepreneurs in Celuk Village (Lodra, 2012: 57).



Figure 3. Jewelry made of silver for souvenirs

(Source: I Wayan Suardana)

The productivity of the Celuk people was eyed by the people from the neighboring village, namely the people of Singapadu Village, who learned a lot by pursuing silverwork in Celuk Village. Based on a high artistic spirit, many Singapadu people have succeeded. They are also creative and innovative in creating new works that are very interesting. Silverworks eventually developed well in Singapadu and became a supplier of silverworks to art shops and galleries in Celuk.

Far from the Celuk and Singapadu areas, silver crafts are also developing in the Taro Tegallalang Village area. The development of silverwork in Taro Village cannot be separated from the existence of silver in Celuk Village, which was brought by a resident of Taro Banjar Delod Sema who studied silver in Celuk in the 1970s named I Ketut Gunung (Darsana). After becoming an adult and having the expertise to work in the silver industry, Ketut Gunung returned home and decided to continue

working on silver by taking orders from Celuk and doing it at home. Ketut Gunung has quite a high level of expertise, so he is still sought after by silver businessmen in Celuk to work on unique and complicated orders.

Seeing that the prospect of working in silver was up-and-coming, Ketut Gunung began inviting young people from his hamlet to learn how to work in silver. Because they already have the basics of carving, they are swift to be able to work on silver because what is different is the technique and form of work. In its journey, Taro's silver became a very different silverwork from the works in Celuk, which are more unique and have strong characteristics and traditional content. The works created are more towards ceremonial means and collectibles.

The Existence of Pure and Sacred Silver

Unhealthy competition between silver craftsmen, silver entrepreneurs, and the tour guide's hegemony made silver marketing chaotic. At the same time, several countries, such as Taiwan, China, and Thailand, began to spread jewelry to various countries with more attractive shapes and lower prices. Overseas markets, which were previously dominated by silverworks from Gianyar, have finally begun to close. This condition was further exacerbated by the emergence of the Covid 19 outbreak that has hit the world. Bali tourism has become totally dead, and many people have lost their jobs and livelihoods.

Under these conditions, creative silversmiths began to turn to creating works for the benefit of the local community. They create works that are oriented towards pure art and sacred art with carving techniques. Market opportunities for local communities actually continue to run on an ongoing basis as the traditional and religious activities of Hinduism in Bali continue. Sacred-oriented silverworks still exist, such as making *pretima*, *prerai* for deities, *sesuhunan cundang* ornaments, *keeling*, *petitis*, *sekartaji*, and others. Many other ceremonial facilities are still needed, such as *bowls*, *wanci*, *petirtan*, *pemuspan*, and *canting tirta*. Likewise, works of pure art in the private collection of art-loving people are still going well. Opportunities for silversmiths to create silverworks with carving techniques are still very wide open.

The community has various considerations for using silver as a material in making sacred works of art, not only for the economy of an established society but more for taste and soul. Society will always prioritize their needs for sacred things and for their inner satisfaction. Silver is a very valuable material

as a luxury item and is very worthy of being positioned in a place of honor and holiness. In addition, silver artwork is very easy to combine with various beads (gems). The combination of carved motifs and colorful gems makes the work look very unique, luxurious, and elegant. A luxurious appearance will show that the *sesuhunan* is noble and dignified. Quality silver is stronger than leather; physically, silver does not undergo many changes in form over a long time. Making silver look like gold can be done by *pleting*, *kokting* finishing, and coloring with pure gold (*Praga gede*). The aesthetic value of silverwork is very high when finished with gold because it has very deep characteristics.

As pure art, the Balinese people have long favored silverwork, especially by the nobility and the rich. In this case, silverworks, apart from fulfilling a practical function, also fulfill a social function of art, namely works of art to show the social stratification of those who own them. Silver art was made into a luxury item and wealth for the royal class and other wealthy people. In carrying out traditional or religious ceremonies, the use of silver means that they have a high social position as noble or rich. Using such crafts will show the authority and charisma of the wearer.

Even though those interested in pure and sacred art silverworks are highly selected, the demand for them continues on an ongoing basis.



Figure 4. Silverworks of sacred art and pure art

(Source: I Wayan Suardana)

CONCLUSION

Skills in processing metal materials have long been known to the people of Bali since prehistoric times in the metal age. This is evidenced by the discovery of a colossal drum relic at Penataran Sasih Pejeng Temple Gianyar. In the historical era, this skill was growing because the kingdom supported it by making various ceremonial facilities. People with expertise in metal processing are called "*Pande*" and get a special position before the king. Silver is the easiest metal to process, which has a medium quality below the precious metals and gold. In addition to making ceremonial items, silver is appropriate for

making various jewelry to beautify appearances. Gianyar Regency has three villages whose people depend on silverwork: Celuk Village, Singapadu Village in the Sukawati area, and Taro Tegallalang Village.

When tourism in Bali was proliferating, silverworks, especially jewelry items, were in great demand by tourists who were used as souvenirs to bring back to their country. The silver craftsmen's economy improved rapidly as they had enough income to support their families. There are many silversmiths and entrepreneurs, and in the end, competition cannot be avoided. In competition, quality is at stake, and in the end, the quality of silver decreases, and the selling price increases. Consumers eventually drifted away, and silversmiths lost their jobs because silver jewelry was no longer selling.

In this downturn, local consumers are actually growing, especially those who are looking for quality silverwork for their collection or to purify and make it sacred. Many people are interested in collecting silverwork, such as daggers, sticks, and kitchen utensils such as *blakas*, *pengutik*, knives, etc. Likewise, many now use silver to replace wood or cowhide for sanctified ceremonial means. The statues symbolizing the gods use silver or a combination of wood and silver. Likewise, many *Sesuhunan*, which used to be made of leather, now use a lot of silver. Thus, silverworks are still growing and developing, especially those related to pure and sacred silver crafts.

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