Chapter I

Introduction

Fig. 1.1

Upper row from left to right:

Panji sculpture from Candi Selokelir (fig. 10.13a); Candi
Panataran, Pendopo Terrace, panel 4 (fig. 7.6); Candi Panataran,
Pendopo Terrace, detail of panel 54 (fig. 7.21)

Lower row from left to right:

Candi Jago, *Kunjarakarna*, initiation of Purnawijaya;
Candi Jago, *Tantri* story (detail of fig. 6.5)

INTRODUCING THE SUBJECT

The object of my study is a figure wearing a cap depicted in reliefs at East Javanese temples during the Majapahit period (ca. AD 1300-1500). I call this special figure the ‘cap-figure’ (fig. 1.1). The cap-figure constitutes one of many new features which were created in East Javanese art and were distinct from earlier Central Javanese art. In particular it represents an example of the richness and beauty of the Majapahit art.

Majapahit was the last Hindu-Buddhist kingdom in Java before the arrival of Islam. Centred in East Java, it was the last of a sequence of major dynasties which made up the East Javanese period of Javanese history after the centre of power had shifted from Central Java. The majority of the temples are scattered in an area roughly within a range of 100 kilometres to the west, south, and east of the former capital of Majapahit, located at the present-day town of Trowulan, around 70 kilometres south of Surabaya. Most of the East Javanese temples are of a rather small scale in comparison to the earlier Central Javanese temples. I have visited these temples over several years and have always been fascinated by their beautiful relief carvings and by the atmosphere of the temples.

Initially I became interested in the depictions of the cap-figures and, particularly, of the Panji stories when my teacher of Old Javanese, the late Mbah Padmapuspita in Yogyakarta, one day showed me a picture of one of the panels from Candi Kendalisodo and explained to me that it depicted a scene from a Panji story. Panji, the hero of the story, wore a cap as a specific type of headgear. Mbah Padmapuspita advised me to research this topic at some point in the future. When a few years later, in 1996, I visited Candi Kendalisodo on the slope of Mount Penanggungan I was reminded of his advice. Originally I had climbed the mountain to look at the reliefs in this site, which contained scenes from the *Arjunawiwaha*, a topic which I had researched before (Kieven 1994). However, the scene with the temptation of Arjuna, which I only knew through photos of the Dutch Oudheidkundige Dienst (Archaeological Field Survey Department), had disappeared, as had the scene with a depiction of the *Bhimasuci*.¹ My attention shifted from the character of Arjuna to the character of Panji, depictions of whom were still extant

¹ During my last visit in 2010, the panel depicting the *widadari* (heavenly nymphs) adorning themselves had also vanished.

in four beautiful relief panels. Since then I have systematically collected information about other depictions of Panji in East Javanese temples. From this I learnt that it is not only Panji who is depicted wearing a cap; other characters, such as simple commoners, also wore this headgear.

Investigation of the particular figure wearing a cap, be it Panji or another character, has never been carried out in a coherent and comprehensive manner. That the cap-figure is not only a minor element in the reliefs of the Majapahit temples, but did in fact have an important meaning and function, is evident through the frequency of its depictions. In this book I present the results of my studies, which have yielded new insights into the meaning of the cap-figure in narrative temple reliefs, and beyond this, of the Majapahit temples in general.

Since 1996 my research has led me to well-known sites such as Candi Jago, Candi Surowono, and Candi Panataran, but also to remote sites such as Candi Selotumpuk, Candi Gajah Mungkur, Candi Yudha on Mount Penanggungan, and Candi Penampihan on Mount Wilis, where relief panels were stolen but were documented in photos by the Dutch Archaeological Field Service Department. Eventually I also found the well-documented Panji sculpture from Candi Selokelir on Mount Penanggungan, which is kept in the art library in the ITB University in Bandung.

At the beginning of my research, I considered this cap simply to be an interesting new fashion of the time, and I was fascinated by the variety of the depictions and by the range of narratives in which the cap-figure appeared. Increasingly, my interest was directed to the various meanings of this figure, and to the question of its meaning and function within the particular narrative being depicted. In a broader sense, I became intrigued by its meaning and function in the very temple or sanctuary itself. Finally, the question arose as to why this figure appears only in the temples of the Majapahit period and not in earlier periods.

These questions are informed by the approach that I took in my earlier study of the *Arjunawiwaha* reliefs, which I discussed in the context of their symbolic meaning and function within the temples and within the historical time period. A statement by Stuart O. Robson referring to Old Javanese literature reflects this approach: 'A fundamental assumption is that a poem expresses ideas *indirectly*, that is "a poem says one

thing and means another” (Robson 1983:299, quoting Riffaterre 1978).² This statement can be applied to objects of visual art, such as I discuss, to the narrative reliefs with cap-figures. In this sense, rather than only representing a contemporary fashion of headgear, the cap-figures tell us more about the culture of Majapahit. The interconnection between the literary and the visual form of art as two different kinds of medium for conveying a certain message is in fact crucial in my understanding of the ancient Javanese narrative art.

My approach stands in the tradition of earlier scholars who have investigated narrative reliefs on ancient Javanese temples, for example Willem F. Stutterheim in the early twentieth century and, in more recent times, Kathleen P. O’Brien, Marijke J. Klokke, and Peter J. Worsley. They drew on the fact that the narrative reliefs were carved not only to decorate the temple or to entertain the pilgrims, but also to convey a certain symbolism. Based on an iconographic analysis we can, taking into account the broader context of art, religion, mythology, history, and politics, draw conclusions about the symbolic meaning of the reliefs.

All ancient Javanese art and literature bears a deeper symbolism, and this deeper layer, this symbolism, is even today the basis of traditional Javanese culture. Myths, such as those performed in *wayang kulit*, are considered to have a deeper meaning in the teaching and understanding of *ngelmu* (mystic knowledge). P.J. Zoetmulder (1971:88) expresses this perception when, referring to the *Serat Centhini*, he describes the audience of a *wayang* performance: they ‘are not beguiled by outward appearances but see through them to what is hidden behind these stories of human events’.³ Thus Robson’s statement on Old Javanese literature, mentioned above, also holds true for the medium of *wayang*. Further on Zoetmulder observes: ‘perfect insight, the deeper meaning of the wajang, the innermost truth and reality, which remains hidden to the common man, [...] reveals itself to the initiate only’. The same is true for the temple reliefs: only the initiated was able to penetrate to their deepest meaning. The belief that magic power does exist in ancient sites still today leads many Javanese people to visit these sites. From this living tradition, and from sources in Old Javanese literature, we can understand that this belief is

² This statement stands in the tradition of Barthes’ theories of analysing texts. See my paragraph on methodology below.

³ See also Mangkunegara VII 1957.

deeply rooted in the Javanese culture. In a way, my research attempts to contribute to a greater comprehension of these roots.

I am particularly happy that my interest and my research results are much appreciated by people in Java, and that my work has been able to contribute to their efforts of revitalizing their old traditions.⁴ Panji has become an icon of the specific cultural identity of East Java, which points to the long tradition of the ‘Panji culture’ rooted in this region. This development has to be seen in the larger context of retraditionalization against the background of western globalization and Arabization.⁵

I need to take into account that I, as a person who is remote, in culture and in time, in relation to my research object, can only to a certain degree attempt to understand the deeper meaning of ancient Javanese art. However, my detailed and broadly acquired knowledge and analysis allows me to propose an argument. ‘Harus berani’ (‘You need to have courage’), as a Javanese friend said to me.

My interests as outlined above have led to the following research questions: What is the symbolic meaning of the cap-figure in the narrative relief depictions? What is the function of the cap-figure in the whole temple? Why was the cap-figure depicted frequently and exclusively in the Majapahit temples?

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

In the early research on ancient East Java carried out mainly by Dutch scholars, the historical and religious developments as well as the art forms were seen in relation to India. In the title of N.J. Krom’s (1931) overview of Javanese history, *Hindu-Javaansche Geschiedenis, nomen est omen*. The term ‘Hindu-Javanese’ has been used for many decades and has only in more recent times been replaced by names such as ‘classical Javanese’ or ‘ancient Javanese’. The tradition of looking at Javanese

⁴ An important initiator has been the environmentalist Suryo Prawiroatmojo from Trawas. The shared enthusiasm of several cultural groups led to a number of festivals, workshops, seminars, and performances. The first event, featuring academic lectures and performances, was held in Malang and Trawas in September 2007. Follow-ups have been held and are planned to be continued in the future. In this context the term ‘Budaya Panji’ has been created. It represents a revitalization of the Panji theme and is embedded in the broader context of retraditionalization. Articles and treatises on this theme, partly being published, attest for an increasing interest and importance. See for example Nurcahyo 2009.

⁵ Throughout recent years forms of retraditionalization have developed, not only in Java, but also in other parts of Southeast Asia; these have become subject of sociological/ethnologic research.

history in the context of India was later transferred to the concept of the 'Indianization' of Southeast Asia. Georges Coédès (1968) created the term 'Indianized states', focusing on the impact of Indian culture instead of focusing on Southeast Asian culture for its own sake. This view provoked a long-lasting discussion about Java's position in this process of 'Indianization'. This discussion was to a large extent carried out in the field of art and religion, particularly in relation to the later phase of ancient Javanese history, before Islam took over in Java.

It was a commonly held opinion that East Javanese art, with its many new features which differed from earlier Central Javanese art, represented a degeneration within the development of classical art, caused by the gradually lessening influence from India. This position was certainly due to the training of the scholars as Indologists: they compared Javanese art and religion with the Indian model. While Central Javanese art was very close to the genuine Indian model, East Javanese art was considered a deviation from the Indian original which represented a loss in value. F.D.K. Bosch (1920) in his 'Een hypothese omtrent den oorsprong der Hindoe-Javaansche kunst' can be seen as an important proponent of this position. The outstanding scholar Stutterheim stands as a major counterpart to Bosch, in objecting to the idea of degeneration. In his publication on the *Ramayana* reliefs, Stutterheim (1925) explores the versions of the *Ramayana* depicted in the various temple reliefs in Java, particularly in the temples of Prambanan and Panataran, which constitute the two major examples of Central and East Javanese art and architecture, respectively.⁶ In comparing the elements and the styles of these depictions, he concludes for the East Javanese art: 'There can be no question of degeneration here and this is shown by the efflorescence of magicism in East Java. An art, in which such a process can be depicted, is not degenerate' (Stutterheim 1989:171). He refers here to the frequent emergence of magic elements in the *Ramayana* reliefs at Candi Panataran, such as depictions of ghosts in the shape of clouds and spirals, which he interprets as indicators of a magic symbolism.

Since the rejection of ideas of degeneration, a crucial new question arose concerning the development of religious life and art in the East Javanese period. Were there really new elements developed and created, independently from the earlier period, or was it just that old indigenous

⁶ This book, first published in 1925 in German, was later (1989) published in English.

elements emerged again when the Indian influence was weakening? The focus of discussion was specifically on the fifteenth century, since this period presented the changes in forms of art and religion in a most conspicuous way. In contrast to the former, derogatory idea of degeneration, this meant an acknowledgement of the specificity of the new styles and elements in ancient East Javanese culture. The resurgence of indigenous styles and elements became a major topic of discussion. Stutterheim (for example, in his 1936a publication) advocates this position, arguing that the new styles were based on the traditions of megalithic culture and of ancestor worship. In a further development of this position, H.G. Quaritch Wales (1951:11, 1974:138) coined the term 'local genius' of Java. Ancestor and mountain worship and the megalithic tradition would have re-emerged in the process of loosening ties with India, particularly during the Majapahit period between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The increased establishment of mountain sanctuaries during the late phase of Majapahit's rule would have been rooted in these ancient and prehistoric traditions. S. Supomo (1972:292) is one of a number of scholars who rejects this position. He argues that the worship of the sacred mountain had been common during the whole period of Indianization and not particularly in the era of Majapahit. In recent times Agus A. Munandar (1990b:6-8) and Hariani Santiko (1998), in their discussions of mountain sanctuaries, also oppose Quaritch Wales through their interpretation that these sanctuaries were meant for the worship of a certain god rather than for worshipping ancestors. The terraced sanctuaries on the slopes of Mount Penanggungan figure as major examples in these discussions. Thomas Hunter (2001) raises another issue in proposing that during the fifteenth century there was a revival in Java of Indian culture and some of its features, an example being the increased use of Sanskrit. All these various positions are crucial elements for my discussion of the mountain sanctuaries on Mount Penanggungan.

Claire Holt (1967:72) rejects both ideas, of a 'degeneration' and of a 'resurgence', arguing convincingly that the 'art styles of East Java were a creative response of its architects, sculptors, and designers to the cultural climate of their time'. I see my discussion and analysis of the cap-figure and its symbolism in late East Javanese art as example and proof of this statement. My investigation will demonstrate the way in which the cap-figure is a part of this creative response, and what it tells us about the

new developments in Javanese religion, culture, society, and politics of the Majapahit period.

O.W. Wolters (1982:52-3) has introduced terms such as 'localization', 'adaptation', and 'synthesis', which are certainly more appropriate expressions for what occurred during the process of Indian influence in societies which had already developed their own 'local genius' in the pre- and proto-historic time. Wolters' newly created terms 'soul stuff' and 'men of prowess' as elements of this local genius have since then become part of the vocabulary of literature on the history of early Southeast Asia. Such elements correspond to the Hindu concepts of ascetic practice and spirituality as important qualities to justify leadership.⁷ This ascetic tradition continued to play a major role in the religious practice of the Majapahit period. Further discussion on the concepts of 'localization' and 'local genius', stressing the uniqueness of the ancient Indonesian culture, was carried out amongst Indonesian historians and archaeologists.⁸ Edi Sedyawati (1990:100) describes the process of Indian cultural elements being 'absorbed into a preexisting Indonesian culture, and remolded to conform with local needs'. This view provides another platform for my approach.

Investigations into ancient Javanese antiquities and art had, in early scholarly research, mainly consisted of inventories, descriptions, and regional surveys. Authors such as H. Hoepermans (1913), J. Knebel (1908a, 1908b), and P.J. Perquin (1915, 1916), who published in the early Dutch journals; Th. van Erp (1931) and Krom (1931), with their description of the Borobudur; and Krom (1923), in his accomplished survey of the antiquities: all completed outstanding work in this field, which provided the material and data for future studies.

Research on narrative reliefs began by taking as a model descriptive studies. The emphasis was placed on identifying the narrative reliefs with extant literary narratives. This can be seen in P.V. van Stein Callenfels' (1924, 1925a, 1925b) works on the *Krishnayana* at Panataran, on the *Sudamala* and *Mintaraga* reliefs, and also in J.L.A. Brandes' (1904) monumental book on Candi Jago. These authors were either able to read manuscripts of the original texts themselves, or they made use of the

⁷ Wolters 1982:101-4. In the revised edition, Wolters (1999:18-20, 93-5) elaborated further on this issue.

⁸ See Ayatrohaedi 1986. This remarkable publication contains the proceedings of a conference on this topic. Sedyawati's article in these proceedings was later published in English (1990).

translations and editions by philologists such as R.M.Ng. Poerbatjaraka (1926a, 1926b, 1931, 1933, amongst others). Again, these publications are very valuable for the studies carried out later.

Stutterheim's research is based on descriptive and iconographic studies, but goes beyond this by being dedicated to an analysis of the antiquities by offering suggestions for their symbolism. Thus, his approach denotes a new way of working in the studies of the East Javanese art. His interpretations provide the basis for his conclusion that East Javanese art does not represent a degeneration of the earlier Indian dominated art, but, rather, displays new features with their own value.⁹ At a higher level, the interpretation of the symbolic meaning of certain elements in a sanctuary led him to the interpretation of the all-encompassing meaning of this sanctuary. This can be seen in his investigation of the Bhima depictions at Candi Sukuh, where he argues that Candi Sukuh was 'a sanctuary where the salvation of the soul constituted the main purpose of worship' (1935a:119). From his broader iconographic studies of the Bhima theme, Stutterheim concludes that Tantric sects must have existed in ancient Java.¹⁰ His interpretations of the Panji theme are of interest with regard to my specific object of research: Panji depictions. After the discovery of the Panji sculpture from Candi Selokelir, Stutterheim observed that the character of Panji stands closer to the people than do Rama and Arjuna in the old Indian epics (1936b:333).

Stutterheim's approach has been taken up by authors such as Bosch (1948), by A.J. Bernet Kempers (1959:42-5, 1981b), and by several authors investigating the symbolism and esoteric meaning of the Borobudur.¹¹ A major change in the perception and interpretation of the ancient Javanese *candi* was initiated by R. Soekmono's (1995) innovative research. He concludes that the *candi* was not meant to be a tomb monument of a deceased king – a belief that had characterized generations of research on the antiquities – but rather a commemorative shrine.¹² It therefore became necessary to drop the older concept that the deity, who was considered to be incarnated as the king, would be embodied in the

⁹ Examples are found in his discussion of the symbolism of Mount Meru in East Javanese art (in his article 'Oost-Java en de hemelberg' (1926)), and his interpretation of magicism as constituting one of the newly created features in art (in his book on the *Ramayana* reliefs (1989:164-5).

¹⁰ In his article 'An ancient Javanese Bhima cult' (1935a).

¹¹ For example, Stutterheim 1956:1-62, and a number of articles in the book about Borobudur edited by L.O. Gómez and H.W. Woodward (1981).

¹² The publication from 1995 is the English translation of the original Indonesian book from 1974.

corporeal remains of the king in the *candi*, and consequently replace it with the idea that the deity would be incorporated into the portrait image of the king (Soekmono 1995:12).

Research in the field of narrative temple reliefs has taken a major new turn in more recent times. These studies specifically consider the reliefs within the layout of the temple, referring to their selection, order, and placement in a temple, and analyse their symbolic meaning in this context. This way of analysis has yielded new insights into the symbolic meaning of ancient Javanese temples. Outstanding examples are Worsley's (1986, 1996) and Klokke's (1995) discussions of Candi Surowono and the seemingly disordered placement of reliefs in the temple.¹³ Other studies in this vein have been completed by O'Brien (1988, 1990, 1993) on Candi Jago, who concludes that this temple represents a *mandala* in the context of Tantric Buddhism;¹⁴ by Klokke (1993), in her interpretations of the Tantri reliefs at Javanese temples as expressions of the ideal kingship; by myself (Kieven 1994), with studies of the ascetic ideal in *Arjunawiwaha* reliefs; and by Jo-Anne Sbeghen (2004), on the religious function of Candi Sukuh.¹⁵ Klokke (1995), in her analysis of the orientation of temples, explains that the rear side of a *candi* is usually dedicated to the sacred sphere and that the relief depictions which emphasize sacredness are placed on this side. The significant results to emerge from these studies are that the specific selection, order, and placement of reliefs in the layout of the temples constitute a certain message within the function of the temple.¹⁶

Other investigations carried out on a larger scale are also relevant for my research. These are, amongst others, the presentations by Judith Patt (1979), on the symbolism of water in ancient Indonesian art; by Hariani Santiko (2000), on the religious functions of narrative reliefs; and by Edi Sedyawati (1994), in her broad investigation on the Ganesha statuary and its symbolism.

I see my own research as standing in the tradition of the approach outlined above. In my case this is the task of interpreting the symbolic role of a particular figure in narrative reliefs and, through its role, to

¹³ See Chapter VIII.

¹⁴ See Chapter VI.

¹⁵ See my discussion of Candi Sukuh in Chapter IV.

¹⁶ Compare McGowan 2005:249.

come to an interpretation of the religious symbolism and function of the respective temple.

Depictions of cap-figures and particularly of Panji stories have generated some scattered interest, but have never been systematically investigated on a wide scale.¹⁷ The interrelation between the literary and the visual aspects of the Panji topic has only marginally been a subject of research. Some incoherent identifications of Panji in reliefs and sculpture have been provided. For example, in his reports on the explorations on Mount Penanggungan, Stutterheim (1936a, 1936b) documents the Panji sculpture from Candi Selokelir and depictions of Panji stories in mountain sanctuaries. He bases his studies only on the cap as the typical headgear of Panji. His explanation (1935b) of the relief scene from Gambyok as a depiction of a scene from a Panji story was followed on by Poerbatjaraka (1940a:367, 1968:408), who identifies this story as the *Hikayat Panji Kuda Semirang*.¹⁸ The interpretations by the two scholars allow Satyawati Suleiman (1978:23-4) to conclude that the reliefs on the Pendopo Terrace at Candi Panataran display Panji stories. Satyawati Suleiman's work is the first discussion of Panji stories in a broader range, and the first examination of the symbolic meaning of the Panji depictions. Other studies on the symbolic meaning of depictions of Panji stories have been conducted by Agus A. Munandar (1990a, 1990b), in his investigation of the religious life on Mount Penanggungan. Elsewhere I present a tentative interpretation of the reliefs at Candi Kendalisodo to depict a certain Panji story (Kieven 1994). Furthermore, others have pointed to possible symbolic functions of the Panji figure in East Javanese art; for example, Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer (2000:200-1), who ascribes to the Panji sculpture from Selokelir the status of a deity.

METHODOLOGY

The theoretical framework for my research subject is that of art history. It is based on the understanding that art is an expression of its cultural background, or, as the German art historian Erwin Panofsky (1975:41)

¹⁷ Klokke (1993:64) mentions that the topic of cap-wearing figures is still an open field for research.

¹⁸ He discovered this story in Cohen Stuart's manuscripts: Coll. Cohen Stuart No. 125. See the summary of the story in Poerbatjaraka 1940a:1-36, 1968:3-43. I will discuss the relief and this story in Chapter III.

phrases it: 'Ein Kunstwerk ... [ist das] Symptom von etwas anderem' ('A work of art is the symptom of something else'). With this view, Panofsky dissociates himself from the Swiss art historian Heinrich Wölfflin (1915), who had developed a theory of the perception of aesthetic art forms based on the core term 'reines künstlerisches Sehen' ('pure artistic vision'). This refers to a merely immanent perception of the work of art which does not consider it in its broader cultural context.

With his iconological method, Panofsky (1975:38-40) establishes three phases in the interpretation of the work of art:

1. In a pre-iconographic phase, the depicted forms and objects are identified as motifs.
2. In an iconographic phase, the motifs are seen as carriers of a meaning and thus are considered as images.
3. An iconological phase proceeds to further account for the all-encompassing meaning or the symbolic meaning of the work of art. In this iconological phase, the work of art is considered in the context of the 'Grundeinstellung einer Nation, einer Epoche, einer Klasse, einer religiösen oder philosophischen Überzeugung' ('principle attitude of a nation, of an era, of a class, of religious or political convictions') (Panofsky 1975:40).

Ernst H. Gombrich's approach (1985:7), which states that there are 'fitting subjects for given contexts' goes a step beyond Panofsky. This concept is based on the understanding that a given context bears certain implications. This applies to the concept that, within a particular temple, the symbolic meaning of the narrative reliefs reflects the meaning and the function of that very temple. The cap-figure in particular is depicted because it fits a certain purpose and function of the temple in its historical and religious context.

My object of art, the cap-figure, is not a single object; rather, it is embedded in several layers of context which determine its mythical or symbolic meaning. It can be part of a relief series, part of a combination of relief series, part of a building with a particular layout, part of the function of this building or complex, or part of a broader concept of religious buildings and religious practices within a certain time.

Thus, I make use of the iconological method in a modified and more detailed way in five steps, whereby steps 3, 4, and 5 constitute different meta-levels of Panofsky's 'iconological phase'. My first step (1), corresponding to Panofsky's 'pre-iconographic phase', is to identify the motif

of the cap-figures as certain characters, based on the iconographical conventions of the time.

The second step (2), complying with the ‘iconographic phase’, is an interpretation of the meaning of the cap-figure within the very scene. This will lead to a suggestion of an identification or interpretation of the narratives being depicted. In some cases the narrative is known, such as the *Sang Satyawana* story on the Pendopo Terrace at Candi Panataran, but in other cases I can only give a tentative explanation of the narrative.

The third step (3), then, is to decipher the symbolic meaning of the whole series of narrative scenes featuring cap-figures. An important aspect is the fact that, in the visual medium, only a selection of scenes of the narrative can be presented. This selection emphasizes certain elements of the story while omitting others, and this restriction is crucial to constituting the symbolism of the depiction. A well-known example is the *Arjunawiwaha* reliefs (Kieven 1994). In some sites, these reliefs illustrate the ascetic ideal by accentuating scenes of the meditating Arjuna, for example at Goa Selomangleng near Tulungagung; in other temples, the warrior ideal is emphasized through numerous scenes with Arjuna fighting, as in Candi Surowono. It is not only the deliberate selection of certain scenes, but also deviations from the known literary origins which contribute to the symbolism.

In the fourth step (4) I proceed to an interpretation of the function of the narrative reliefs with cap-figures within the context of the temple, going beyond their immanent symbolic meaning. This includes an integration of the symbolic meaning of the particular stories and scenes with other depicted narratives, as well as the symbolic meaning of the specific placement of the reliefs within the temple layout. A major issue is the seemingly ‘out of order’ placement of relief scenes in some temples, which deliberately contributes to the symbolic meaning and the function of these reliefs within the temple. Here I need to take the broader context into account: religion, history, literature, art, and architecture.

The fifth step (5) goes beyond the particular temple under research and yields conclusions relating to the symbolic meaning and function of the cap-figure within the religious system of the time, that is, the Majapahit period. I have focused my research on the religious meaning and function of the temples rather than their position in the political system of the time. One reason is that this reflects my personal priorities; the second reason, that an analysis of both aspects would go beyond the

scope of this work. However, I will discuss the political meaning of the temples and the narratives to a certain extent where appropriate.

I will investigate a sample of temples. Proceeding along the five steps for the respective temple I aim to answer the following two research questions: ‘What is the symbolic meaning of the cap-figure in the narrative relief depictions?’, and ‘What is the function of the cap-figure in the whole temple?’. Moving on from this analysis, the final step will then enable me to answer my third research question: ‘Why was the cap-figure depicted frequently but exclusively in the Majapahit temples?’

Taking into account the interrelation between the literary and the visual medium, I can make use of the symbolic meaning of narratives in their literary form and try to apply it to the visual forms. In some cases we are familiar with the symbolism of certain narratives which have been investigated and interpreted, such as the *Sri Tanjung* story which has exorcist symbolism. In many other cases, though, the narrative depiction has not been identified and I am not able to identify it either. I will offer suggestions for the symbolic meaning of the depictions by interpreting the obvious; for example, water as a symbol of purification. Or I will compare the depictions with those in an identified narrative; for example, the posture of a man sitting with one leg stretched out and the other placed on the thigh – as found in the depiction of the mourning Sidapaksa in the *Sri Tanjung* story – symbolizes longing and mourning.

For my object of research it is not necessary to give conclusive identifications of the narratives because, as my analysis will show, it is the narrative theme which is fundamental to my interpretations and not the story identified wholly and thoroughly. The theme itself carries enough information to justify an interpretation of the symbolism of the depictions. I am aware of the pitfalls of over-interpretation, as warned for by Brandes (1902a) in his frequently quoted article on the danger of explaining unidentified temple reliefs; however, cautious analysis will lead to warrantable interpretations. I will show in particular that the cap-figures symbolize an intermediary character as a kind of ‘religious guide’ between the mundane world of the pilgrims and the sacred sphere of the temple.

From a discussion of the literary form of Panji stories, I will conclude that variations of this genre of stories were indeed depicted in many reliefs, featuring Panji as a cap-figure. The typical narrative preoccupations of Panji stories are love between a man and a woman; their

separation and reunion; the crossing of water; and meeting with hermits. Particularly scenes representing the two latter topics are more dominant in some of the Panji reliefs – for example, on the Pendopo Terrace at Panataran – than they are in the literary forms of the Panji stories, reflecting the aforementioned interrelation between the visual and the literary medium.

It would go beyond the scope of this study to analyse all 20 sites with depictions of cap-figures in the same detailed way. I have therefore selected some exemplary *candi* and a sculpture for particular scrutiny.

OUTLINE

In the first part (chapters II-IV) I will outline the context of my research object, the cap-figure in specific narrative reliefs: the relevant factors in art, literature, religion, and history. This gives the contextual basis for the second part of the book (chapters V-X). This is the core part of my study which, following the method of five steps explained above, discusses a selection of sites with reliefs depicting cap-figures. This discussion draws on relevant contextual elements presented in the introductory chapters. From my detailed analysis of six temples and one sculpture, I develop my new ideas of interpreting the symbolic meaning and the function of the cap-figures within the narratives, within the temples, and within the belief systems of the Majapahit period.

The contextual chapters (II-IV) lay the foundation for an understanding and further discussion of the research object. There is no one single thread that runs through the arguments of these chapters; rather, they are interwoven with each other in a complex web. I present these points in several distinct sub-chapters.

Chapter II presents the concrete material on the research object. I will discuss the visual medium of the narrative reliefs – particularly the cap-figures – and the different ways in which their symbolic meaning is expressed. This leads to an exploration of the narratives themselves, and of the literary traditions in East Javanese culture, such as *kakawin* and *kidung* literature. The differing character of these two kinds of literature is a crucial issue in my research. The Panji stories, constituting the major narratives under investigation, are a specific genre in *kidung* literature

which includes depictions of cap-figures. An interpretation of the visual depictions of Panji stories requires knowledge of their literary form.

Chapter III provides verified knowledge and facts about the iconographical conventions in the relief depictions within East Javanese art. I focus mainly on the iconography of the various types of cap-figures. The character of Panji, the major cap-figure, is often depicted with a companion, or *kadeyan*, whose iconography will be the topic of a special sub-chapter.

Chapter IV deals with the correlation between temple architecture, religion, and politics, based on the fact that a temple has a certain function within the contemporary religious and political system. We need to consider the architecture, the layout, and the geographical position of the temples with their features and styles newly created in the East Javanese period: the terraced structure of the temples, the orientation of the temples, and the arrangement of a mundane sphere and a sacred sphere within a temple. A distinction has to be made concerning the various functions of the temples – as places for the worship of a god or of a deceased king, as hermitages, water sanctuaries, or mountain sanctuaries. Temples serve as places for rituals and other kinds of religious practice. However, these rituals and practices are no longer tangible. Information from art and Old Javanese texts help to construct an image of the religious practices and belief systems. On a broader level, I will present relevant facts about Hinduism and Buddhism as well as the specific blend of Saivism and Buddhism that was practised in Majapahit. A particular orientation in both religions was Tantrism, which will be discussed in its various forms since this is a major topic in my investigation of the reliefs. Drawing on these discussions, I can then present information and data on the religious beliefs and practices which were observed in the Majapahit temples.

The political conditions are the other major factor shaping the function of the temples. The political importance of the temples, which constitutes their other contextual dimension, will be discussed in Chapter IV. This raises the question of how political issues were related and connected to belief systems, and the way in which they manifested in the temples. I will first provide some basic and relevant facts about historical Majapahit and its politics. The Majapahit kings corroborated their claim of power and authority with certain religious and ritual practices which found their manifestation in the particular temple system and religious

administration. A special issue of interest is the concern in Majapahit politics to affirm and sustain the unity of the realm, as expressed in the *sraddha* ritual, which was practised in a temple.

The fifteenth century represents a crucial time in the political as well as the religious development of Majapahit. This time of political decline yielded an increase in the number of mountain sanctuaries which frequently display depictions of Panji stories. The connection of the Panji stories to religious practices as having major importance in the late Majapahit period will be the subject of another sub-chapter. Furthermore, the symbolism of the mountain in ancient Javanese mythology is significant for an understanding of this development. Related to the mountain is the symbolism of water, which is an important element in the symbolism of the relief depictions under research. I will provide an extensive discussion on the mythology of water and mountain.

The second part of this work first presents an overview in a table containing data on all existing depictions of cap-figures and of Panji stories. This serves to demonstrate the popularity and dominance of this motif in the Majapahit temple reliefs. Based on this information, I will present the reasons for the selection of certain temples for closer scrutiny in the following chapters.

The core part (Chapters VI-XI) will then comprise the detailed discussion and analysis of six selected sites and one sculpture. Overviews of the previous research on each single site and sculpture are presented in an Appendix at the end of this book. The investigation of the case studies follows the historical chronology of the sites' establishments: Candi Jago, Candi Panataran, Candi Surowono, Candi Mirigambar, Candi Kendalisodo, and Candi Yudha. The analysis of each site follows the method explained above, making use of the interwoven aspects of the context demonstrated in the first part of the book. Finally I will interpret the sculpture from Candi Selokelir, which will, at a higher level than the relief depictions, yield a concise understanding of my research topic. The all-encompassing ensemble of these conclusions will then yield a chronological development in the symbolism of the cap-figure and will allow me to answer my research questions.