



# Love-Themed Story Relief on Javanese Temples A Phylo-Archeological Studies

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## ABSTRACT

Story reliefs are one of the media that artists use to relay a message to society. It mainly has stories with religious, heroic, to affection values written implicitly in the story reliefs. These messages can be understood well by us if the relief is sculptured in a communicative way, and vice versa, if we want to understand the meaning of the story relief, we must be able to understand the storyline well. One of the most timeless story relief themes are love-themed stories. In literatures, love-themed stories can be found in Rāmāyana, Pañji, to Sri Tañjung stories, and many more. These stories can be found in Javanese temples' relief. What kind of scenes are always sculptured in those love-themed reliefs, how are the characters portrayed, and what values can we get. The method that will be used is an observation to love-themed story reliefs on Loro Jonggrang Temple, Panataran Temple, Surowono Temple, and Jabung Temple. Aside from that, we will also be reading and understanding the stories comprehensively through the story scripts. The love scenes in the temple reliefs are depicted using very subtle and non-vulgar symbols, for example, one of the figures whose cloth is exposed indicates wanting to make love. Intimacy is described by the way a pair of lovers sit close together and so on.

**Keywords:** *Depiction, Javanese temples, Love-themed reliefs.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Relief as an artwork is a media that is frequently used by artists to convey messages to the public. Those messages are in the form of a story that contains teachings about religious values, heroism, loyalty, and so on (Kusen 1985; Hendrawan, 2021). Relief stories can also contain teachings on education and character (Retnosari, 2013; Lelono, 2016). If observed, it appears that the art relief style of the Old Classical period is different from the Young Classic Period. The reliefs of the Old Classical period are naturalistic or realistic in the sense that the human figure is depicted in accordance with reality, in the Young Classical period the figure is depicted as deforming into the form of *wayang kulit* (Kusen 1985).

There are two types of reliefs carved on the temple building, namely story reliefs and reliefs that function as decoration. Relief stories on Old Classical Temples (9th-10th centuries) that developed in Central Java, refers to Indian literature containing heroic and religious stories, for example the reliefs of the Rāmāyana, Jatakamala, Lalitavistara, Awadana, Gandawyuha, and Bhadracari.

Whereas the story relief in the Young Classical period temples (11th-15th centuries) that developed in East Java refers to the Old Javanese literature, although there are also adaptations of Indian literature.

Narrative reliefs on ancient Javanese temples of the Majapahit period during fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are classified by two distinct styles. Narratives being based on the Old Javanese kakawin literature, which draws back on the Indic epics Rāmāyana (e.g. at the Main Temple of Candi Panataran, mid-14th century), Mahābhārata (Arjunawiwaha) (e.g. at Candi Jago, mid-14th century), are depicted in a style which has been labelled as “wayang style” (Kieven, 2016). The love-themed relief appears in the temples of the Majapahit era (13th-15th centuries) sourced from *Kidung* Script (Munandar, 2011). Sometimes, love stories are not the main theme, but it will always accompany some of the stories made by the author. There are many love-themed stories contained in the temple reliefs but this paper will only limit the love story between *Rāma and Sītā* (the Rāmāyana story) carved in Loro Jonggrang Temple (856 M) and Panataran Temple; *Sri Tañjung and Sidapaksa* (Sri Tañjung story) that were carved on the stone pavilion of Panataran Temple (1375 M), Surowono Temple (1478

M), Gate of Bajangratu (1340 M) dan Jabung Temple (1354 M); and the love story of *Raden Pañji and Galuh Candrakirana* (Pañji's Story) carved in Batur Pendopo Panataran Temple, Kendalisodo Temple, and Selokelir Temple.

In this paper, the story of Rāmāyana is chosen because the love story of Rāma and Sitā is a very well-known story in Indonesian society, moreover in Southeast Asia because the story originated from India. At Loro Jonggrang Temple, the reliefs of Rāmāyana are carved in the Śiwa Temple and continued at balustrades the Brahma Temple (Restiyadi, 2020; Iskandar, & Maulana, 2021). Meanwhile, at Panataran Temple, it is carved on the temple wall which is punctuated by relief medallions (Satari 2000; Andito, 2017). The Sri Tañjung stories and Pañji stories are based on original Indonesian scripts and were very popular during the Majapahit era. The difference in the time of carving the reliefs of these stories is interesting to discuss to find out how they are similar and different. The purpose of this study was to find out how the sculptors described the main characters of the story and what scenes were carved so that temple visitors could understand. This discussion is limited only to scenes related to the theme of love.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been many discussions about temple reliefs, for example J. Kats who discussed the Rāmāyana reliefs at Loro Jonggrang Temple and Panataran Temple (Kats, 1925). Satyawati Suleiman, 1980/1981 identified relief stories found in Batur Pendopo Panataran, namely the story of Bubuksah-Gagang Aking, Sri Tañjung, Sang Setyawan, Jaruman Atat, and the unknown story (Suleiman, 1980). For the unknown story in 2014 it is interpreted by Kieven as Pañji's story (Kieven, 2014). Susetyo (1993) compares the reliefs of the Sri Tañjung story carved on temples in East Java and compares the depiction of the story in manuscript form with reliefs. The process of transforming stories into Sri Tañjung reliefs is thought to have originated from oral stories, because Sri Tañjung manuscripts from the time of making the reliefs were not found.

Ph Subroto 1997 studied the reliefs of Rāmāyana at Loro Jonggrang Temple with Philo -Archaeological Studies. The results of his study strengthen the previous opinion regarding the time of the founding of the temple and the founding king of Loro Jonggrang Temple. The study was carried out by studying the *Kākawin Rāmāyana* and the Śiwagrha Inscription during the founding of Loro Jonggrang Temple (Subroto, 1997). Edi Sedyawati (2007) in one of his writings discusses the relationship between sculpture in story relief and the literary text of the Natyasastra, a text guide in performing arts and music. According to him, relief sculptors studied the Natyasastra in carving the story characters and their expressions. The reliefs discussed are the Rāmāyana

story carved at Loro Jonggrang Temple, Jago Temple, Tegawangi Temple and Kedaton Temple. It is suspected that the Rāmāyana relief at Loro Jonggrang Temple depicts the tradition of performing at that time so that the Natyasastra rules were not followed by all (Sedyawati, 2007).

Kieven (2014) observes the reliefs of figures with hats carved in many temples during the Majapahit era. In his study, the hat which came to be known as the 'pañji hat' was originally used by commoners and servants, in later times the hat figures depicted: musicians, warriors and even princes. The status of the hat finally increased which is known to the statue at Selokelir Temple which represents a demi-god. Furthermore, Kieven said that narrative reliefs are not only to decorate temples, but also convey certain symbols that can be related to the context of art, religion, mythology, history and even politics (Kieven, 2014). The relief of the story as a reflection of political events at the time the relief was carved can also be observed in the Rāmāyana relief of Prambanan Temple which was studied by Andri Restiyadi. The political events in question are mainly related to the transfer of power from Rakai Pikatan to Rakai Kayuwangi (Restiyadi, 2020).

Meanwhile, Ikadewi Retnosari studied the reliefs of animal stories in Sojiwan Temple which contained character education content. The teachings on these reliefs are rooted in local culture and can be incorporated into the school education curriculum (Retnosari, 2013). Hari Lelono observed the same thing by observing the reliefs at Mendut Temple (the story of the Swan (*Cygnini*) and the Turtle (*Testudines*), Panataran Temple (Bubuksah-Gagang Aking), and Surowono Temple Grouse (*Dendrocygna*) and Crab (*Brachyura*). The values contained in the story remain relevant to be applied in today's school education (Lelono, 2016).

In contrast to the writings of previous researchers, this paper discusses the love scenes on the love-themed reliefs carved on temples in Java. The choice of depiction of the scene by the sculptor is certainly influenced by the meaning of certain symbols and gestures that may have been mutually agreed upon.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

Data collection techniques in this paper are direct observation, indirect observation and documentary study techniques (bibliography) (Nawawi, 1990). In direct observation, observations were made on the reliefs of the story of Sri Tañjung which were carved in the Surowono and Panataran temples; as well as the reliefs of the Pañji story on the Panataran Temple. Meanwhile, indirect observations were made through photographs of the Rāmāyana reliefs carved at Loro Jonggrang Temple; the relief of the story of Sri Tañjung on the Jabung Temple; and the relief of Pañji's story on Kendalisodo Temple.

Relief photographs published in the book *Batur Pendapa Panataran* (Suleiman, 1980) are also used as an important source of observation in this paper. In this study, a phylo-archeological study was also carried out, which is an approach in archeology using philological data as a working tool. The trick is to study literary works as outlined in the form of story scripts and story reliefs (Subroto, 1997). The philo-archeological study is a comprehensive study between philology and archeology (Agusta, 2018). It is necessary to conduct a philo-archeological study because the relief of the story only depicts the story scenes that are considered important by the sculptor, due to the limitations of the sculpting field. The script for the story of Sri Tañjung used is *Kidung Sri Tañjung Banyuwangi*, a script that uses Arabic letters pegen which has been translated by Anis Aminoedin (Aminoedin, 1986). It should be noted that the number of manuscripts of *Kidung Sri Tañjung* is recorded at around 15, four Arabic scripts, seven Balinese scripts, and the remainder using Javanese characters (Pigeaud. Th. G. Th, 1967). Meanwhile, in understanding the Rāmāyana story and the Pañji story, the author uses a summary of the story in the book *Kalangwan* and the *Javanese Library* (Zoetmulder, 1983; Poerbatjaraka, 1952).

#### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The romance-themed stories studied in this paper, the summary of the story is as follows. In the Rāmāyana story it is told: Sitā was married to Rāma, but a giant named Rāwana tried to seduce him. Śūrpaṅkhā is Rāwana's younger brother who incites his older brother to possess Sitā. Śūrpaṅkhā's incitement caused by Śūrpaṅkhā's love for Lakṣmaṇa (Rāma's sister) was rejected. Rāma was actually the king of Ayodya but he relented and left the throne to be occupied by Bharata. Rāma went to the forest with Sitā and Lakṣmaṇa. With Rāwana's ruse, his subordinate Marica turned into a golden deer to fascinate Sitā and ordered Rāma to catch the animal for him. It was at this time that Sitā and Rāma separated, and Rāwana approached him disguised as an ascetic. Through a long and winding road filled with scenes of war between Hanuman's monkey army attacking Alengka, the end of the story Rāma and Sitā can be reunited (Zoetmulder, 1983).

The story of Sri Tañjung is a Banyuwangi folk tale that is also popular in Bali. The story of Sri Tañjung tells of a husband and wife, Sri Tañjung--Sidapaksa who was about to be separated by King Sulakrama, because the King had fallen in love with Sri Tañjung. King Sulakrama sent Sidapaksa away to a faraway place, and when Sidapaksa left, King Sulakrama tried to seduce Sri Tañjung. Because his seduction did not work, King Sulakrama slandered Sri Tañjung for having an affair with another man. Unfortunately, Sidapaksa simply believed Sulakrama's words, and dragged Sri Tañjung to Setra Gandamayu and killed him. At the time of death,

Sri Tañjung said if his blood smelled rancid then he was guilty, but if his blood smelled good then he was innocent. It turned out that Sri Tañjung's blood smelled good, this caused Sidapaksa to regret incomparably. Because it was not yet time to die, Sri Tañjung could be brought back to life by Ra Nini. At Sri Tañjung's request, Sidapaksa killed King Sulakrama and finally Sidapaksa succeeded him as king (Zoetmulder, 1983).

Pañji's story has a palace background in Java such as Kādīri, Janggala, Gêgêlang and Singhasari. The central theme of all Pañji stories is the marriage between the crown prince Janggala and princess Daha. The prince is usually called Raden Pañji, or Raden Ino and the princess is called Raden Galuh. The beginning of the story the two are engaged but the princess disappears and Pañji leaves the palace to look for her. Often the two live close together but are not known because each has a different name. All Pañji stories have a happy ending, the two recognize each other again, the people rejoice, and the wedding feast is held with great joy (Zoetmoelder, 1983: 534-535). A distinctive feature in Pañji's story is: Pañji is always accompanied by his friends, namely Jurudeh, Punta, Prasanta, Kertala etc. Meanwhile, the ladies-in-waiting who accompanied the princess were called Bayan, Sanggit, Pangunengan, and Pasiran. In describing the love-themed story on the temple reliefs, the author categorizes into 3 important scenes, namely:

##### 4.1. *The Beginning of the Story/Love*

A love story usually begins with a feeling of falling in love. In the relief of the love story of Rāma and Sitā carved on the Śīva and Brahma temples at Loro Jonggrang Temple, it begins with a scene when Rāma takes part in a competition (archery) to get Sitā. Rāma is described as a knight wearing a crown and glorious jewels. The relief is depicted as a naturalist in high relief with a front view, a feature of the relief style of the Old Classical period (8th-10th centuries). Feeling in love/falling in love with the story of Sri Tañjung by the sculptor is depicted by the way the male/female character sits while holding a rolled lontar (love letter) (Figure 1). Sidapaksa is depicted as a male figure wearing a Pañji headgear, while Sri Tañjung is depicted as a woman with flowing hair. These scenes are found in the reliefs of Batur Pendopo Panataran Temple (Blitar) and Jabung Temple (Probolinggo).

In the relief of the Pañji story the depiction of people in love is like the relief of Sri Tañjung, namely a man wearing a Pañji headgear, sitting pensively holding a love letter (rolled palm). The dove that is near the character of the story. The similarity in the descriptions is since the two stories were carved in the same temple, namely Panataran Temple, so it can be ascertained that the sculptors are also the same. Love from Sidapaksa through a dove.



**Figure 1** A man and woman who are in love are depicted holding a love letter.

Even though the location of the two temples is hundreds of km, and if we simulate it on foot, it takes about 34 hours of travel. Then how can the sculptor depict in the same form?

From observing the series of scenes in Sri Tañjung's story at Jabung Temple, Probolinggo, the depiction of a letter seems to be a symbol that can be interpreted as a statement of "a certain purpose", one of which is an outpouring of love. This can be deduced from a scene in Sri Tañjung's story: Sidapaksa gives a letter to Bhagawan Tambapetra. The letter was interpreted as an outpouring of Sidapaksa's heart about his regret because he had done something bad to his wife (Bhagawan Tambapetra's granddaughter). The relief scene was carved after the scene where Sidapaksa regretted killing Sri Tañjung (Susetyo, 1993).

The romance in the relief of the Rāmāyana story at Loro Jonggrang Temple is depicted when Rāma and Sitā ride a horse together, accompanied by Laksmāna. The three of them headed for the forest to become hermits. This scene in the Kākawin Rāmāyana is found in Pupuh 3 (1-89) namely at the Ayodhyā palace, Rāma is about to be crowned king, but it is canceled because Kaikeyi (Bharatha's mother) demands a promise to Dasaratha (Rāma's father) and asks that Bharata be the king. Rāma relented and left the palace to become a hermit in the forest. The intimate scene in the relief can also be seen at the wedding of Rāma and Sitā who is depicted riding a golden chariot. The depiction of romantic scenes seems ordinary. Likewise, in the story of Rāmāyana at Panataran Temple, a romantic scene is found when Rāwana is chatting with his two wives (Figure 2).

The romantic scene in Sri Tañjung's story can be seen when Sidapaksa comes to Sri Tañjung who is sleeping in the hermitage, besides that there is also a scene of Sri Tañjung being carried by Sidapaksa. The scene is engraved on two relief panels at Surowono Temple (Figure 3). In the script of Kidung Sri Tañjung Prijono (KSTP) Pupuh I it is told that Sidapaksa fell in love with Sri Tañjung when he first visited the hermitage of Bhagawan Tambapetra to find medicine for King Sulakrama who always had headaches. Because of anxiety, at night Sidapaksa met Sri Tañjung in his studio. It turned out that Sri Tañjung welcomed his love and both



**Figure 2** Intimate scene. Rāwana with his two wives.



**Figure 3** Sidapaksa carrying Sri Tañjung.

agreed to leave the hermitage that very night (Susetyo, 1993).

It seems that the most romantic depiction is found in the reliefs of the Pañji story. At Kendalisodo Temple, a romantic love scene is depicted, a nobleman holding a woman while playing wina. The romantic atmosphere is reinforced by the depiction of a lake with a shower where



**Figure 4** Raden Pañji holds his lover while playing.



**Figure 5** Raden Pañji gives a signal inviting him to make out.

they rest in the middle of the trip. The nobleman is Pañji who displays his musical talent and is depicted playing music (Figure 4) (Kieven, 2014). Kieven believes that there is a special meaning of posture, namely a man sitting with one leg stretched out on the ground and the other leg resting on his thigh (Figure 5). This posture illustrates the feeling of longing for his lover. While the pose of a woman sitting on a man's lap in *kākawin* is often referred to as a symbol of the act of intercourse. In this romantic situation, the woman usually has her hair loose, holding her head in a tilted position to the side and touching her head with one hand (Kieven, 2014).

#### 4.2. Conflict

In a love story sometimes, there is a conflict that ends in separation, even though they are finally reunited. One of the conflicts in the *Rāmāyana* story is when Rāwana wants Sitā to be his wife, by telling Marica to transform into a golden deer. Sitā was attracted to the deer and Rama went after him to present it to his wife. It was at this time that Rāma parted with Sitā. In the relief at Loro Jonggrang Temple, the incident is depicted with the scene of Rāma shooting a golden deer. Furthermore, the separation between Rāma and Sitā is shown by the depiction of the relief scene: Rāwana kidnaps Sitā (Kats, 1925).

The conflict in Sri Tañjung's story is when King Sulakrama slandered Sri Tañjung for having an affair with another man, when in fact it was King Sulakrama himself who tried to seduce Sri Tañjung. This vile slander made Sidapaksa angry and killed Sri Tañjung. The scene



**Figure 6** Sidapaksa regrets.

is not carved in relief, but what is carved is the scene after, where Sidapaksa is very sorry for killing Sri Tañjung, let alone knowing that his wife's blood smells good which indicates that he is innocent. The feeling of regret and sadness in the relief is depicted by Sidapaksa sitting pensively on the bank of the river (Figure 6). Elsewhere the spirit of Sri Tañjung slowly left his body to the spirit world, when he arrived at a place called Pamêgat Sari he was confused. Suddenly a 'white crocodile (bajul putih)' appeared and helped him. This event is depicted in the reliefs of Sri Tañjung riding a fish (not a crocodile) to the afterlife (Figure 7). These two scenes are depicted in 4 temples, namely Panataran Temple, Surowono Temple, Gate of Bajangratu and Jabung Temple. It seems that these two scenes are very important scenes to describe Sri Tañjung's story. Kusen calls it a key scene (Kusen, 1985), while Munandar (2011) calls it a guide scene.



**Figure 7** Sri Tañjung goes to the afterlife.



Figure 8 Sidapaksa and Sri Tañjung reunited.

### 4.3. Ending

The end of Rāmāyana's love story is that Rāma and Sitā are reunited after a long and winding road. In the reliefs the story is filled with scenes of war between Hanuman's troops against giants in the Rāwana Kingdom. In the Kākawin Rāmāyana pupuh 26 (1-52) it is narrated that Rāma and Sitā return to Ayodhyā to be greeted by Bharata and Rāma's mother. Their arrival was also greeted with a festive party and the people were happy (Zoetmulder, 1983).

At the end of the story Sri Tañjung and Sidapaksa reunite after Sidapaksa kills King Sulakrama. The depiction of this scene can only be seen in the last panel of the Sri Tañjung relief series at Jabung Temple. The relief depicts a house on stilts below which is guarded by a dog, giving an impression of the silence of the night. Inside the stilt house, the two characters have reunited (Figure 8).

## 5. CONCLUSION

The way the sculptor conveys the message through the reliefs can be understood by those of us who live in a much different era, by paying close attention to the scenes in the relief panels. In addition, we also study the story in the form of Old Javanese literary works.

In the reliefs of Sri Tañjung and Pañji stories, the female main character is depicted with her hair loose, while the male main character is depicted wearing a Pañji hat. The depiction of these figures is found in the reliefs of temples during the Majapahit era. The main male character is depicted wearing a panji headgear. While the

main character in the Rāmāyana story (Central Java) is described as a noble with royal clothes and jewelry.

In depicting a character who is in love, the sculptor depicts him sitting pensively, holding a letter from his lover. The dove oversees delivering the love letter. Love scenes are depicted using very subtle symbols, such as an open cloth or a pair of lovers sitting close together. Of all the reliefs themed on love, none of the scenes are depicted in a vulgar way. This is different from the reliefs that exist in India, for example at the Sun temple in Konarak which shows real erotic scenes.

As we know in Indonesia, the love story of Rāma and Sitā is very famous and well-liked, even today the Rāmāyana Ballet is routinely performed on the open stage of Loro Jonggrang Temple. Basically, Rāmāyana is a heroic story (*epos*), so the depiction of the reliefs of the Rāmāyana story at Loro Jonggrang Temple and Panataran Temple is dominated by scenes of battles between the monkey army led by Hanuman against the giant army of Rāwana. It is not surprising that the portion of the Rama and Sitā scenes is only a small part.

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