

“THE ROLE OF BHIMA AT CANDI SUKUH”

As represented by a number of reliefs¹⁾

Hariani Santiko*)

Abstrak. Peranan Bhima di Candi Suku. Tokoh Bhima digambarkan dalam sejumlah relief di Kompleks Percandian Suku. Tokoh ini dijumpai pada episode-episode ceritera Bhimaswarga yang dipahatkan pada dinding Candi Kyai Suku, yaitu sebuah kuil kecil di muka kuil utama Candi Suku. Fragmen dari cerita yang sama juga ditemukan di gerbang Kala-mrga. Selain itu, ditemukan pula fragmen ceritera Sudamala yang menggambarkan Bhima menyerang tokoh iblis di sebuah papan batu, sedangkan sejumlah relief Bhima lainnya yang belum dikenali asal ceriteranya ditemukan tersebar di halaman Kompleks Percandian Suku. Berdasarkan studi banding antara data artefaktual dan data tekstual penulis meyakini bahwa tokoh Bhima dipuja sebagai perantara antara Dewa Siwa dan orang-orang yang ingin mencapai pelepasan akhir (*moksa*). Peranan Bhima sebagai penyelamat manusia dapat dijumpai pada ceritera Bhimaswarga. Pada relief yang menggambarkan episode terakhir Bhimaswarga, tokoh Bhima digambarkan sedang diberi sebotol *amrta* oleh Siwa.

Kata kunci: Werkodara, Amrta, Kala-mrga, Kebenaran Sejati, Sang Hyang Tunggal

Abstract: *Bhima figure is represented in a number of reliefs at the complex of Candi Suku. It is found in the Bhimaswarga episodes depicted on the wall of Kyai Suku temple, a small temple in front of the main temple of Suku. A fragment of the same story is also depicted in a Kala-mrga arch. A fragment of the Sudamala illustrating Bhima's attacks on a demon, is depicted on a slab of stone, and another unidentified reliefs of Bhima scattered in the courtyard of Suku. From the comparative study of the artefactual data with the textual data, I presume that Bhima was worshipped as a mediator between god Siwa and men who wanted to get their final release (moksa). Bhima's role as the saviour of men is found in the story of Bhimaswarga. In the final episode of Bhimaswarga-reliefs, Bhima is given a bottle of amrta by Siwa.*

Keywords: *Werkodara, Amrta, Kalamrga, Ultimate Truth, Sang Hyang Tunggal*

Introduction

The terraced sanctuary of Suku is situated on the western slope of Mount Lawu, east of Solo, Central Java, at the height of 910 metres above sea level. According to the inscriptions found at Suku, this impressive sanctuary dated from the late period of Majapahit ranged from AD 1416 to 1459. The complex of Suku comprises of three terraces courtyards and the entrance to the complex is from the west side. The gateway in the form of a *paduraksa* with a *kala* head looks like a *topeng* (mask) above

the entrance. On the floor of the narrow entrance way a naturalistic *linga-yoni* is carved in high relief.

The stone path leads from the western gate to the third courtyard through the first and the second courtyard. The main sanctuary lies in the third courtyard, the highest and the most sacred of the three. This main temple of Suku is actually a “*punden berundak*” (*terraced pyramide*), which looks like a *yoni*¹⁾ with a large naturalistic *linga*, height about 2 metres, formerly put on top of it.²⁾

*) Guru Besar Universitas Indonesia

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In this sacred courtyard of Suku there are many archaeological remains, beside the main temple, a small temple known as *candi Kyai Suku* by the people is located in front of the main temple. Reliefs of *Bhimaswarga* are depicted on its wall. There are two platforms, the northern and the southern ones. The northern platform, situated on the left side of the main temple, has a quadrangular obelisk decorated with the story of *Garuda (Garudeya)* and a fragment of *Bhimaswarga* carved inside a large *Kala-mrga* arch. A curious relief, probably *Siwa*, is depicted on the obelisk of the southern platform on the right side of the main temple. Many slabs containing panels with reliefs from *Sudamala* are also found in this third courtyard. What was the function of the temple *Suku* will be found out by comparing the archaeological finds with the textual data.

The Statues and Reliefs of Bhima at Suku

1. The reliefs of Candi Suku

Many years ago W.F. Stutterheim (1956) wrote about "An Ancient Java Bhima cult" and according to him, the existence of Bhima statues in *Majapahit* period indicates this cult. These Bhima figures have a *wayang purwa's* form, known as *Werkodara*, two arms, the hair done up in *gelung supit urang*. The attire consists of *sumpings*, a snake neckband, snake *upawita*, wearing small cloth with the *poleng design*. Each hand is closed to a fist with the protruding thumb having a long dagger-like nail called (*kuku panchanaka*). There are more than one statues of Bhima considered to come from *Suku*, and one of them has the script in chronogram "Bima gana rama ratu"=1365 Śaka, or 1443 AD (Stutterheim 1956:108-114).

Other important findings beside statues are several reliefs of Bhima, among others are the *Bhimaswarga*-reliefs depicted on the walls of a small temple known as the *Kyai Suku temple*, and also in a *Kala-mrga* arch on the quadrangular obelisk at the northern platform. The reliefs of *Sudamala*, the

birth of Bhima, and a figure of Bhima holding a bow, probably leading a combat, a man in front of Bhima is running with a *pataka* in his hand. Curiously enough the *pataka* has the picture of Hanuman (with a tail), and not Bhima. Among the reliefs, the *Bhimaswarga* is depicted in several panels in two rows, upper and lower rows of reliefs starting from the west-side. To understand the purpose of the artist by depicting these reliefs, I will try study about this story more.

The Bhimaswarga

The Middle-Javanese *Kidung Bhimaswarga* has been studied twice, by Ratnadi Geria in 1972/1973 and by H. Hinzler in 1981.³⁾ This story is very popular in Bali, and according to Hinzler there are two versions of *Bhimaswarga* story, and she names them as version A and version B. Geria (1972/1973:1) makes a transliteration and translation of the *Bhimaswarga* A version MSS no.658 in the collections of Museum Nasional Jakarta. Here the summary of the *Bhimaswarga* versions A and B according to Geria (version A) and Hinzler (versions A and B).

Version A

Pandu and his wife *Madri* were suffering in the Copper Cauldron known as *Tambra Gomuka*, because Pandu was committed to a great sin by killing a brahmin (*brahmahatya*). Pandu shot two deers that turned out to be *Bhagawan Kindama* and his wife in disguise. Pandu and his wives were punished twice, first during their life-time and after their (Pandu and *Madri's*) death, they were put in hell for twelve years. After sometimes, *Kunti* asked Bhima to release Pandu and *Madri*. *Kunti* and Bhima's brothers joined Bhima by entering a part of Bhima's body (called *angkusprāna*). Bhima went to *Tegal Panangsaran* (the field of rebirth), he saw the Copper Cauldron known as *Tambra Gomuka*, and the sinners inside it. Bhima met the servants of hell, i.e. *Jogormanik*, *Suratma*, *Gorawikrama* and

Cakrabala. They forbid Bhima from entering further into Yama's place and they also forbid Bhima to take his parents' souls. Bhima was angry, they fight, and Bhima defeated them. They ran to report to Yama. Bhima went to the cauldron and turning it upside down to find Pandu and Madri. He couldn't find them, but the other souls being released, they thanked him. Bhima fought with Yama and in his anger, Bhima threw the Cauldron to Yama. Finally he was allowed to collect the bones of his parent and going home to re-assemble them. Pandu and Madri were recovered, but they couldn't speak because Bhima refuse to make a *sembah*. Nakula and Sadewa tricked Bhima to do *sembah*, so that finally Pandu and Madri could speak and return to heaven (Geria 1972/1973, Hinzler 1981:201-202).

Version B

This version is longer than the version A, because there is a kind of addition for Bhima to do another journey to heaven to get the holy water (*amṛta*), because his parent still couldn't yet walk. Kunti asked once more Bhima to go to Siwa's *swarga* to get the holy *amṛta* in order that Pandu and Madri obtained the final release. Bhima went to *swarga*, he met the minor gods who forbid him as a mortal being to enter heaven. Bhima fought with the gods and defeats them. They reported to Siwa, and Siwa asks Bayu to kill Bhima. Bhima was killed by Bayu three times, but brought to life again by Tunggal (variant: Nawaruci or Narada). So Siwa granted the holy water. Bhima gave the *amṛta* to his mother so Pandu and Madri were able to speak again. They obtained the final release and went back to heaven (Hinzler 1981:202-203).

Bhimaswarga is depicted on the wall of the *candi Kyai Sukuh* (fig.1). In this particular *candi*, the last part of Bhimaswarga version B is depicted, starting Bhima with his *punakawans* entering the *swarga* up to the episode of Bhima meets the Tunggal and Śiwa. There is no scenes of the torments of hell, also I do not see Bhima turning the Tambra Gomuka

upside down. However, I am still confused with the order of the scenes depicted on the rows, probably it is not a strict succession from right to left or from up to bottom.⁴⁾ For instance the reliefs on the westside depicting two different episodes, the lower row showing Bhima just enters the heaven, while on the upper row Bhima meets Tunggal and Śiwa. The reliefs starts from the southern lower row should be read from right to left (*pradaksina*):



(HNS, 2007)

(Fig.1) The Small Temple (Candi Kyai Sukuh) with Relief Bhimaswarga -Located in Front of the Main Temple of Sukuh



(HNS, 2007)

(Fig. 2) The Southern Side of the Temple

Scene 1 *Southern side-lower row*, Bhima with his two punakawans enter the gateway paduraksa of the heaven. There are four guards in front of the gate (Fig. 2)

Scene 2 *Western side-lower row*, (the left-hand side of the candi's door) a fine clad god stands in front of Bhima, probably telling him that a mortal beings are not allowed to enter heaven. However Bhima stay indifferent (the right hand side of the candi's door). A guard looks like a giant prevents Bhima from going further (Fig. 3)

Scene 3 *Northern side-lower row*, the god with fierce appearance confer with another god and his troop about Bhima and consider on what to do (Fig. 4)

Scene 4 *Eastern side-lower row*, Bhima with his two servants meets the same God of the previous scene, the one with a big knife. The god with his troops threaten Bhima with their weapons (Fig. 4)

Scene 5 *Northern side-upper row*, another god (Bayu?) with his two servants goes to report to a woman, probably a goddess with her servant also a woman. Who is she, probably Bhatari Durgā? The text does not mention a goddess at all. This case mentions that the gods report to Siwa about Bhima and not to a goddess. A punakawan is seen standing on the left-hand side of the panel, but he is actually a part of the westside -upper row panel (see Fig. 4)

Scene 6 *Eastern side-upper row*, Bhima lies down, killed his two punakawans sit near his legs. The goddess is seen on the right-hand side of the panel lift the body of Bhima with her left hand (see Fig. 5). Who killed Bhima does not show in the scene. According to the text, Bhima is killed three times by his spiritual father god Bayu, at the command of Śiwa, and then he is brought to life again by Tunggal or Dewaruci or Narada (Hinzler 1931:202-203).



(HNS, 2007)

(Fig. 3) The Western Side of the Temple on the Upper Row Right-Hand Sides Siwa Gives a Small Bottle of Amrta to Bhima



(HNS, 2007)

(Fig. 4) The Northern Side of the Temple on the Upper Row The God Meets a Goddess (Durga?)



(HNS, 2007)

(Fig. 5) Eastern Side-Upper Row on the Upper Row Bhima Lies Down, Dead

Scene 7 *Southern-upper row*, on the left-hand side of the panel, a *punakawan* is carrying Bhima on his shoulder, and the goddess points out to the *punakawan* probably asks him to leave. On the right-hand side two *punakawans* walking (see Fig 6).



(HNS, 2007)

(Fig. 6) Southern-Upper Row A Punakawan carrying Bhima in his Shoulders

Scene 8 *Western side-upper row*, on the left-hand side of the panel, Bhima is already brought to life again, kneels with a *sembah* in front of someone, usually considered as Bayu or Śiwa (Fic 2002: 46) (see fig 2) In the Javanese *wayang*, Bhima does not kneel or doing *sembah* to anyone even though to Siwa. He only kneels and does *sembah* to his Guru, Dewaruci. In this scene probably an exception, because in the Middel-Javanese Kidung, Tunggal or Sang Hyang Tunggal is the highest god, “the father” of Siwa and other gods. In the Old-Javanese *Tutur*,⁵⁾ Sang Hyang Tunggal is considered as reigning over the world (*Sang Hyang Tuṅgal sira ta sinangguh aṅakra-bhuwana kabeh. I kang bhuwana kabeh kawēngku ta de nira Sang Hyang Tuṅgal*) (Soebadio 1971:88). Behind Bhima there is someone like a *pandita*, probably Dewaruci or Narada. On the left-hand side of the panel, Bhima with his *punakawans* is standing in front of Siwa (Bhatara Guru). Siwa holds a small bottle of *amṛta* in his right hand. Bhima is showing his gratitude by placing his right hand on his chest (see Fig 2)



(HNS, 2007)

(Fig. 7) The Kala-Mṛga Arch on the Northern Platform

The story of Bhimaswarga is also depicted in a *Kāla-mṛga* arch⁶⁾ on the pylon of the northern platform. Bhima stands in front of four-armed god, both of them stand on a double-headed naga (Fig 7). This relief is usually considered as a fragment of Bhimasuci or Dewaruci. Stutterheim proposes that the relief depicts the episode from the kidung Bhimaswarga, because Bhima in the episode does not kneel and making *sembah*. In the custom of Javanese *wayang*, Bhima kneels for no one except for Dewaruci (Stutterheim 1956:123). I agree with Stutterheim that the relief depicts the episode of

Bhimaswarga. However, I don't agree with him that Bhima in the Majapahit era was the Saviour Bhima-Siwa or Bhairawa-Siwa. He identified Bhima with Bhairawa-Siwa, because in the Brahmandapurana there are eight names of Siwa (*astasanjña*), and one of Siwa's name is Bhima (Stutterheim 1956:116). There is no attribute of Siwa or Bhairawa in the statues of Bhima, because from his attributes Bhima in East-Java is most closely related to Bhima-figure of Javanese *wayang*. However why did the Majapahit people choose Bhima instead of Arjuna?

In the Javanese *wayang*, Bhima has characteristics of a hero. He symbolizes the courageous, the honest, strong willed, he is grumbler but kind at heart. He is endowed with fine physical features, handsome, sturdy and strong, etc. He is always determined to achieve his goal, obedience and loyalty to his mother, his Guru, his brothers, etc. Because of these qualities, he is chosen by gods to know about the Ultimate Truth through his Guru Dewaruci (Subardi 1974:45-46; Santiko 1995:129-130). In Majapahit era he was considered as the mediator between god Siwa and men who want to attain *moksa*. The relationship between Bhima and Siwa is probably shown by Bhima's uncovered phallus (*liṅga*). So Bhima was not god, but he is a hero, a god mediator.

2. Another reliefs of Bhima

There are other reliefs of Bhima in Sukuh. One relief is found in the lower part of the Kalamrga arch below the naga, representing two hermits pulling a creature which they hold between them. Upon this relief a hermit sits on a *lapik* holding a child. According to Stutterheim this reliefs are related to a lakon *Bimabungkus*, a story about the birth of Bhima. The newly born son of Kunti and Pandu was bound by a caul and can be opened by the Gajahsena, the mighty elephant of Sena, the son of Bhatara Guru. The elephant broke the caul with his tusk and brought Bhima into the world (Stutterheim 1956:120-121). In the second courtyard of Sukuh, there is a statue of an elephant with two things looks like balls on his tusk, the relief probably representing Gajahsena with the caul of Bhima.

Six slabs of reliefs Sudamala are found in the third courtyard, near the northern platform. Probably those slabs were used as a fence of a holy pool near the northern platform. The water comes from the top of the main sanctuary flow to the northern platform near the obelisk, and there is still the remains of the *jwaladhara* in the form of naga's

head (Bernet Kempers 1959: 102, Suprpto 1998: 69-70). These water system which seems to have had an important function in the rites performed on the terrace or in the *patīrthan* nearby. On one of the stone slab with relief Sudamala representing Bhima fight with a demon, an inscription is depicted on the upper part of the stone. The inscription is "... *padamēl rikang bukuṭīrtha sūnya* means "doing honour to that holy water for achieving the highest void" (Santiko 1996).

Bhima and the Rites of Deliverance of the Soul

According to Bhimaswarga the deliverance of the soul can be attained by two stages, i.e. *the release from hell* and *the final release to get a seat in heaven* (Hinzler 1981:199-224). The release of the soul from hell is mentioned in part of the story telling how Bhima turns the cauldron upside down so the punished souls fall out and are released. The second stage can be reached after Bhima obtains the *amṛta* from Siwa, and in the story of Bhimaswarga the holy water is for Pandu and Madri. In Bali, the reliefs or paintings of Bhimaswarga are used in the death rituals. Those sculptures and reliefs are found on the walls of Pura Dalem and Pura Prajapati, temples devoted to the goddess and god of Death (Hinzler 1981:226).

What happened during Majapahit period? From archaeological remains, Bhima was an important figure, the statues of Bhima are found especially on the mountain slopes nearby the temples for the ṛsis.⁷⁾ Bhima was worshipped by the ṛsis because he had already known the Ultimate Truth from his Guru Dewaruci, the Ultimate Knowledge which the ṛsis strived for in their lives. So the ṛsis depicted Bhima entering the ocean, story of Dewaruci, on the wall of a hermit cave Kendalisada, on the slope of mount Penanggungan.

Candi Sukuh was also the temple belonging to the ṛsis. On the big *liṅga* of Sukuh, there is inscription about the "*abhiseka yang bhagawan*

ganggasuding, laksana purusa sorning rat”⁸⁾ means “the consecration of Bhagawan Ganggasuding, distinguish (special) person who defeated the world/mankind.” Dated 1362 Śaka (1440 AD) *Bhagawan* or *hēmpu* is the title of a religious person especially for the rsi (Fig 8).



(M. Fics 2003)

Fig. 8. The linga from Sukuh

There are reliefs of people wearing turban in Sukuh. For instance on the upper part of northern obelisk, on the relief tell the story of Garuda’s quest for *amṛta* to ransom his mother from the snake, we saw on the scene two men wearing turban. If we compared with the reliefs of rsis in East-Javanese temples, the rsis especially the siddharsi or maharsi usually wearing turban.

The relief of Bhimaswarga depicted in Sukuh is the last part of

version B, about Bhima’s departure for heaven for the holy water *amṛta*, and he obtains the precious water from Siwa. Why did the *silpins* choose the last part of the Bhimaswarga? The choice of any story to be depict in one’s temple only when the purpose, the character or the meaning of the story fits in with the character, and the function of the temple also with the ceremony performed in the temple. It means that the function of candi Sukuh was for doing ceremonies in order to attain the final

release. In this ceremony they worshipped Siwa in the form of *liṅga*, i.e. the big *liṅga* on top of the candi. According to Subadio *liṅga* is worshipped in his two aspects, *Śiwaliṅga* and *Atmaliṅga*, and this *liṅga-worship* is the most important feature of the Śiwasiddhanta. Śiwaliṅga is the stage at which Siwa enters the human body, whereas the Atmaliṅga is the stage at which the soul unifies with Śiwa, through the fontanel, or in the material *Liṅga* in front of the woshipper, on the occasion of the Śiwaratri ritual (Subadio 1971:30-31).

In the ceremonies performed at Sukuh temple, the role of holy water was very important. There are many reliefs on Garudeya and Samudramanathana which support the importance of *amṛta* in the ceremonies. If there was really a sacred *patīrthan* nearby the north platform with the slabs of stone with reliefs of the Sudamala as its fence, probably the ceremonies started from the *mathīrtha* in the pool i.e the purification of the body and soul. They washed the body and then doing yoga. (Sukesi 1993; Santiko 1998:181-182). What happened next, did the ceremonies cover the two stages of release or only the second stage i.e for obtaining final release, more evidences are still to be needed. However, since the reliefs of Bhimaswarga, depicted on the walls of candi Kyai Sukuh, is the last part of version B, the deliverance of the soul ceremonies at Sukuh should be covered the two stages of release especially the final release.

Conclusion

Bhima’s role as the saviour of men is found in the story of Bhimaswarga and the story is depicted on the wall of candi Kyai Sukuh, a small candi in front of the main candi. In the relief, Bhima is given a bottle of *amṛta* by Śiwa, and it means that Bhima is able to help people to get their final release, to enter *swarga* as Pandu and Madri do. The people worshipped the god Siwa at Sukuh in the form of *liṅga*, and Bhima was the mediator between Śiwa

and men, he was a hero and not god. However he was also worshipped, because Siwa had given the authority to Bhima by giving the bottle with *amṛta* as a symbol to help people who wanted to get final release (*moksa*). So, there are many statues of Bhima are found at Suku as well as from other areas dated from Majapahit period.

However, there are still many things we have to uncover, for instance why do the statues (the

dwarapalas, *the gaṇas* etc.) always showing their phallus? Is it just as a sign their connection with Bhima? Also nearly all of them have demonic appearance. The people surrounding the Suku up to now still believe that Mount Lawu and Suku was the kingdom of Bhima and the family of his demonic wife, Hidimbi or Arimbi, known as Pringgandani, located in the Suku area. This story is also mentioned by the *Serat Centhini*, the modern Javanese Sastra from the 17th Century.

NOTES

- 1) During Majapahit era there are two kinds of terrace-pyramid structures built on the slope of mountains, such as the mountain Arjuna, Lawu, Welirang, Penanggungan, Wilis etc.
- 2) The form of this lingga is unique, because there are 4 "balls" placed below the tip. According to Fic (2002) the four balls being perceived as the four faces of Siwa in Caturmukhalinga. However, there are statues with phallus which has three balls, two balls or none.
- 3) Hinzler studies the Bhimaswarga in the relationship of the Balinese wayang. However, there is possibility that the manuscript was written during Majapahit era, such like the Calon Arang, according to Poerbotjaroko, the old version was come from Majapahit period
I read the dissertation of Hinzler to find out the order of the scenes on the temples or paintings of Bhimaswarga in Bali, to find an example for my reading of the reliefs of Bhimaswarga at Suku
- 4) Lefthand side and righthand side is seen from the temple.
- 5) *Tutur* according to Haryati Subadio (1971:3) is a kind of Indian *smṛti* as they both contain the same basic elements: an authority for teaching and for memorizing by the adept.
- 6) *Kāla-mṛga* is an arch with a Kala on top and the heads of two deers on each point of the arch facing outward.
- 7) In Java there are two kinds of ṛsis, the mythical ones such as Narada, Jamadagni, Marici etc. and those leading the third stage of life (*wanaprastha*) and the fourth stage, the *sanyasin*, by isolating themselves, leading an ascetics life in remote places, in the wilderness, on the slopes of mountains etc. Their temple are also built on the slope of the mountain. The tranliteration comes from Mr. Riboet Darmosoetopo in 1975/1976.

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