

BOOKLORE ON  
BOROBUDUR IN 9<sup>TH</sup> CY  
CENTRAL JAVA

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# INTRODUCTION

- Before talking about written tradition and books, one has to know how they possibly looked like in ancient Java.
- The best way is reading Old Javanese literature and inscriptions.

# WRITING MATERIAL

- Prepared leaf (ron) of the tal palm-tree (*Borassus flabellifer*), hence rontal, leaf of the tal, or lontar
- Prepared leaf of the nipah palm-tree (*Nypa fructans*/*Nipa fruticans*)
- Thin leaf for short notes, suwala, siwala, wuletan, wiletan, lambang
- Writing tablet or board, made of wood for short notes (karas, papan, wuletan, wiletan); the karas was kept in a cloth case
- Writing tablet made of metal or thin leaf (pattra)
- Ripta, only found in 9 inscriptions between 1120 and 1486 AD, non stone, not copper, no karas, probably palmleaf
- Inscription Kwak I, 879, C. Java, is the only one mentioning leaf, ron, as writing material

# WRITING UTENSIL

- Tanah, we do not know how it looks like, probably a stylus
- Used in combination with karas, writing tablet on which (love) poems were written
- There is a term for paint brush, panuli (from Skt tuli), and panulis (from OJ tulis)

# WHAT IS A BOOK?

- Text written on a bundle of writing material, named ron (leaf, OJ) and pattra (thin leaf or plate of metal, Skt).
- A collection of leaves is called a book, pustaka (Skt), sastra (Skt), lepihan (collection of leaves to write on, OJ).

# OLDEST MANUSCRIPTS

- It is not impossible that originally the manuscripts on inscribed with ink and that in a later period they were engraved with a metal knife
- No 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> cy manuscripts on perishable material found in Java, so we have no examples
- Early Javanese mss on palm-leaf on nipah leaf are inscribed with ink and date from the 17<sup>th</sup> century; mss on lontar palm-leaf are engraved and the letters are blackened with soot

# HOW TO RECOGNIZE A BOOK?

- Lontar palm-leaves, Bali, prepared, half cut



# LONTAR PALM-LEAVES



Bali, half-cut, prepared lontar palm-leaf for notes



Bali, cut and prepared lontar palm-leaves for a manuscript



# MANUSCRIPTS, BALI



manuscript without covers, 1926 AD, 51 x 3.2 cm



Sarasamuscaya, with wooden covers, 1737 AD, 51 x 3.1 cm



Putrasasana, with bamboo covers, 18 x 3.5 cm; red-gold painted sides

# MANUSCRIPTS, MADURA



Lontar palm-leaf, wooden covers, 35.5 x 3.4 cm

# MANUSCRIPT, LOMBOK



Yusup, wooden covers, 37 x 3.7 cm,  
1928 AD

WRAPPING BOOKS IN CLOTH, INDIAN & TIBETAN  
CUSTOM?  
MAINLY BUDDHIST MSS?



Tibetan block print, cloth covers, Van Manen col., Inst. Kern,  
2740M-122



Tibetan imitation block print,  
Mongolia, 20 x 5 cm, 2005

BOOKS NEVER IN CONTACT WITH FLOOR OR  
SITTING TABLE

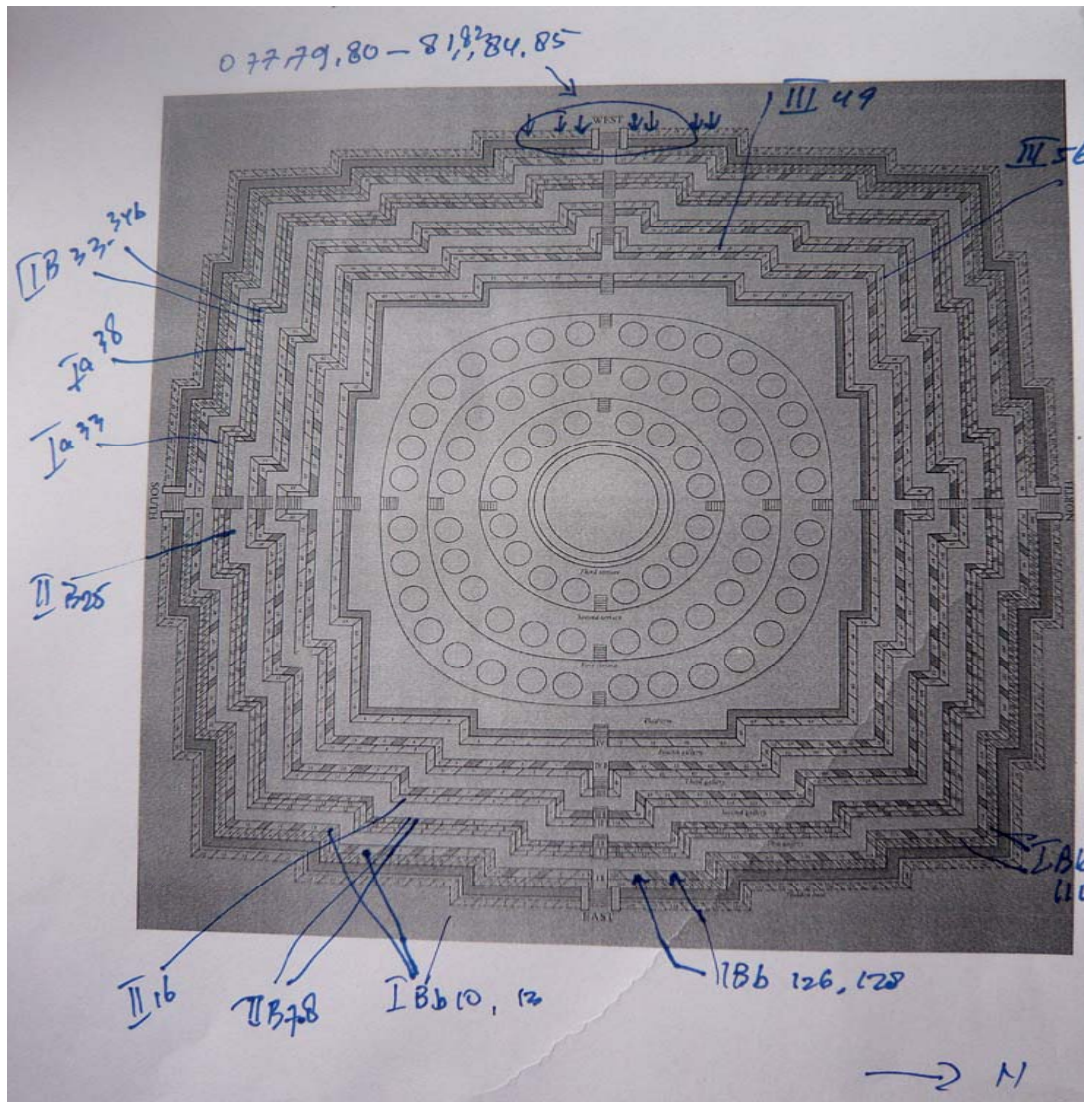
# BOOKS ON BOROBUDUR RELIEFS

25 out of 1458 reliefs depict books, 66 or 68 books in  
total

10x book on a tray, vessel, or stool, 1x on lotus  
16/17x book with covers; 10 or 11x held in hand, 6x on  
tray, or vessel, 1x on lotus

42 x loose leaf or leaves, 38x held in hand, 6x on dish,  
tray or stool

# Location reliefs



Hidden Foot O, 7x  
77,79,80,81,82,84,85

Balustrade, 1<sup>st</sup> Gallery, below  
5x  
IBb,10, 13, 110, 126, 128

Main Wall, 1<sup>st</sup> Gallery, top, 2x  
Ia, 33,38

Balustrade 2<sup>nd</sup> Gallery, 5x  
IIB, 7,8,25,33,34b

Main Wall 2<sup>nd</sup> Gallery,  
1x, II,16

Main Wall, 3<sup>rd</sup> Gallery, 2x  
III, 49, 56

# Hidden Foot

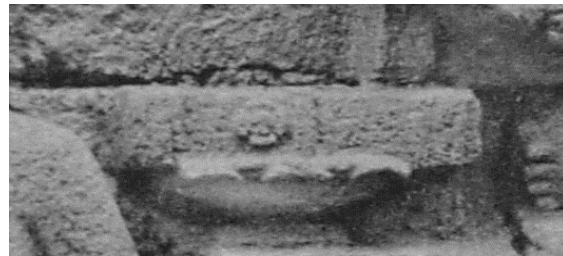
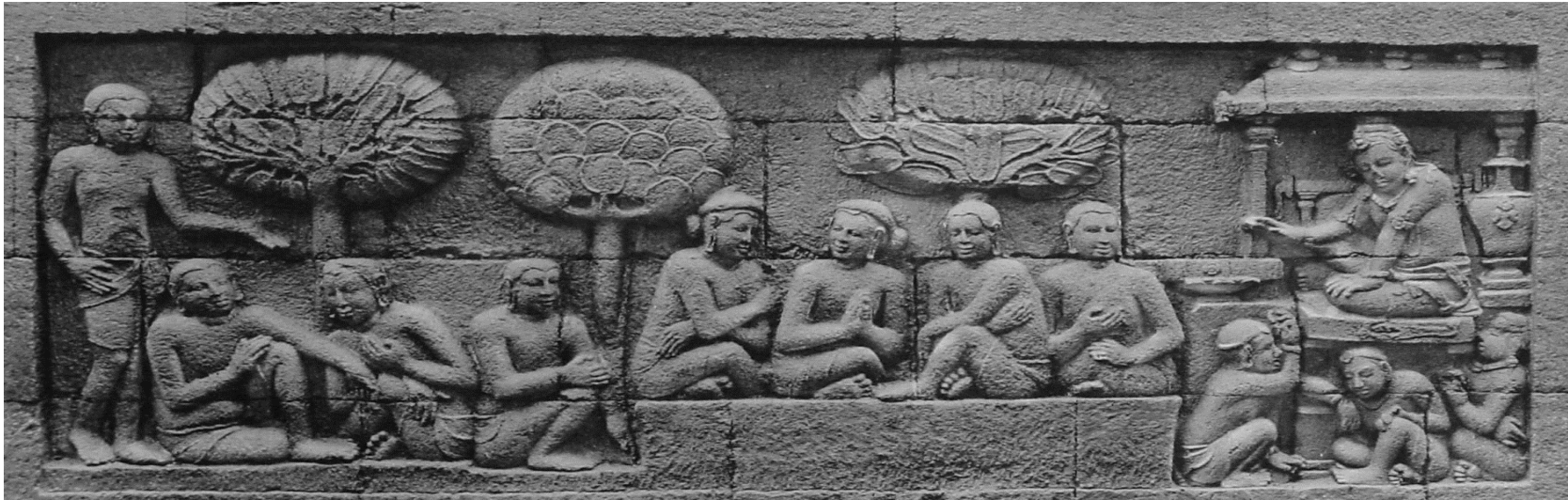
## 7 out of 160 reliefs

Close to each other, on either side of the Western steps to the 1<sup>st</sup> Gallery

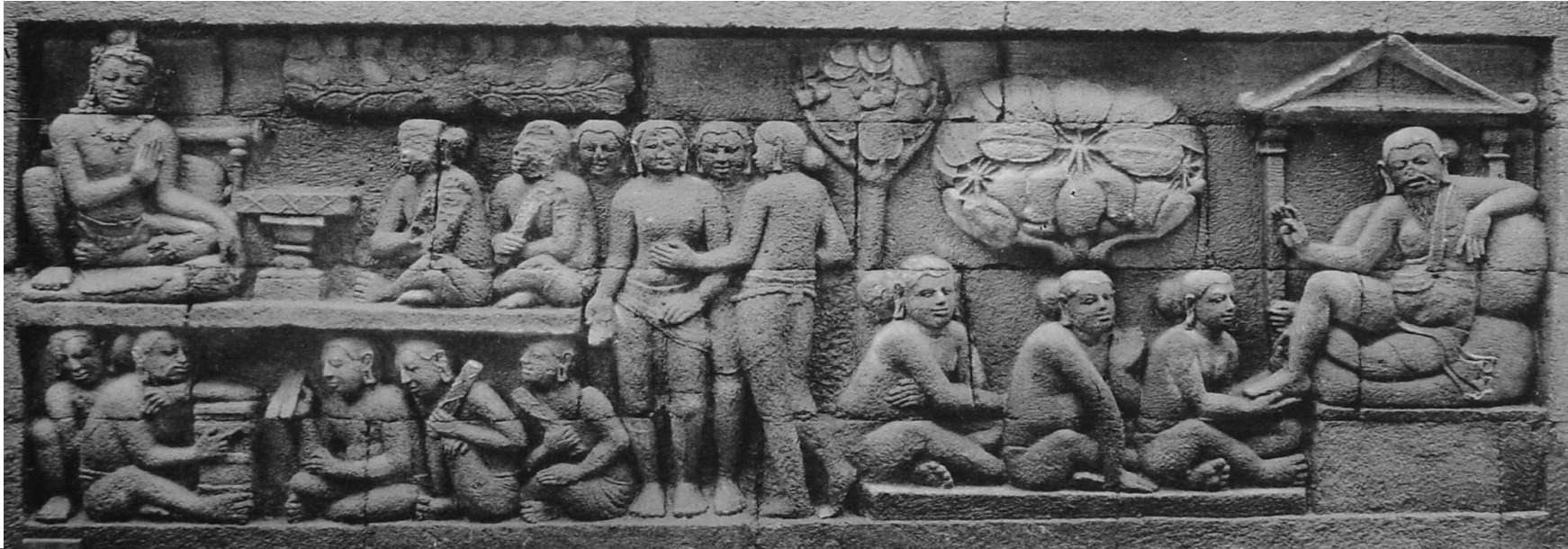
Section on causes of behaviour leading to intelligence, prajñā



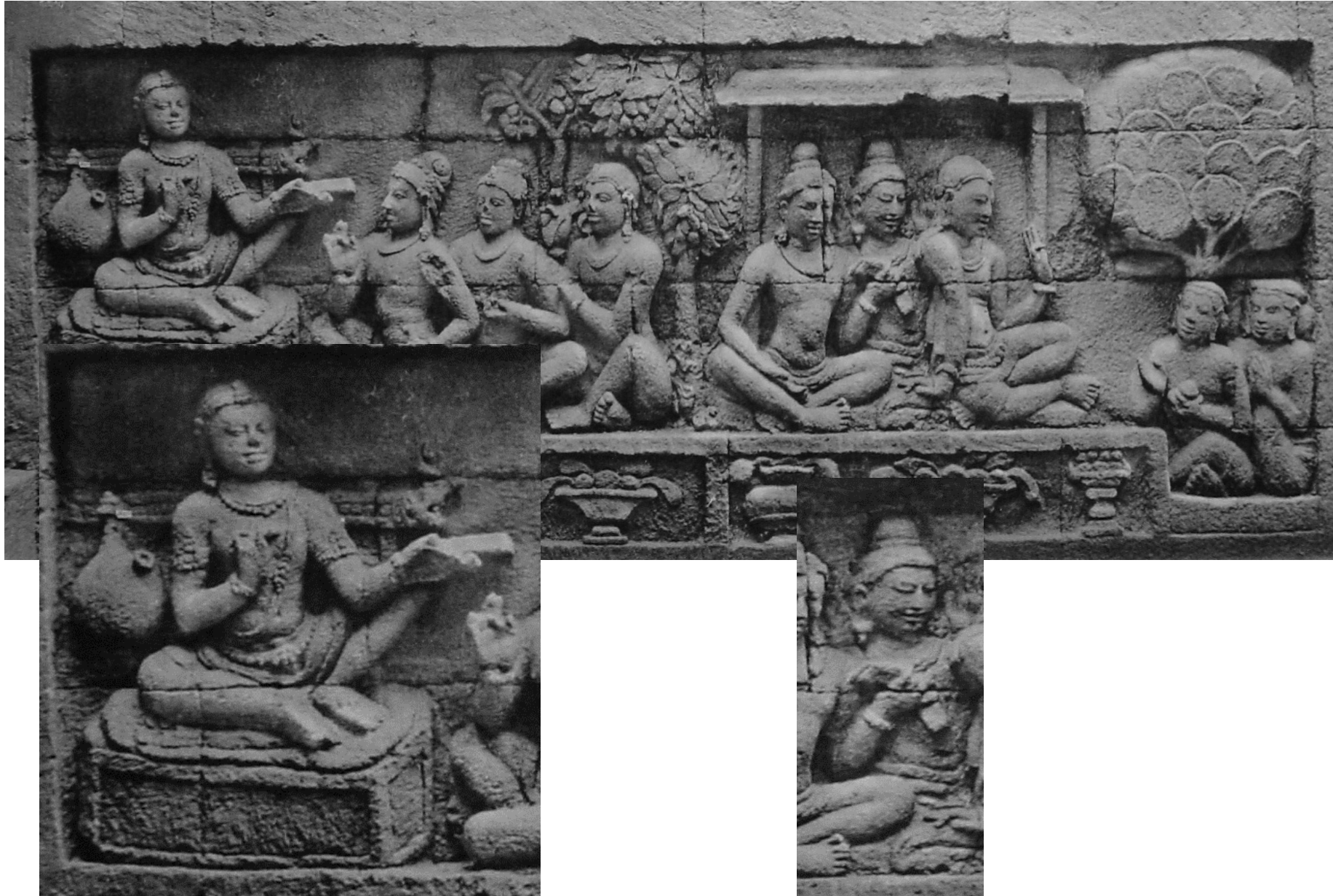
O 77



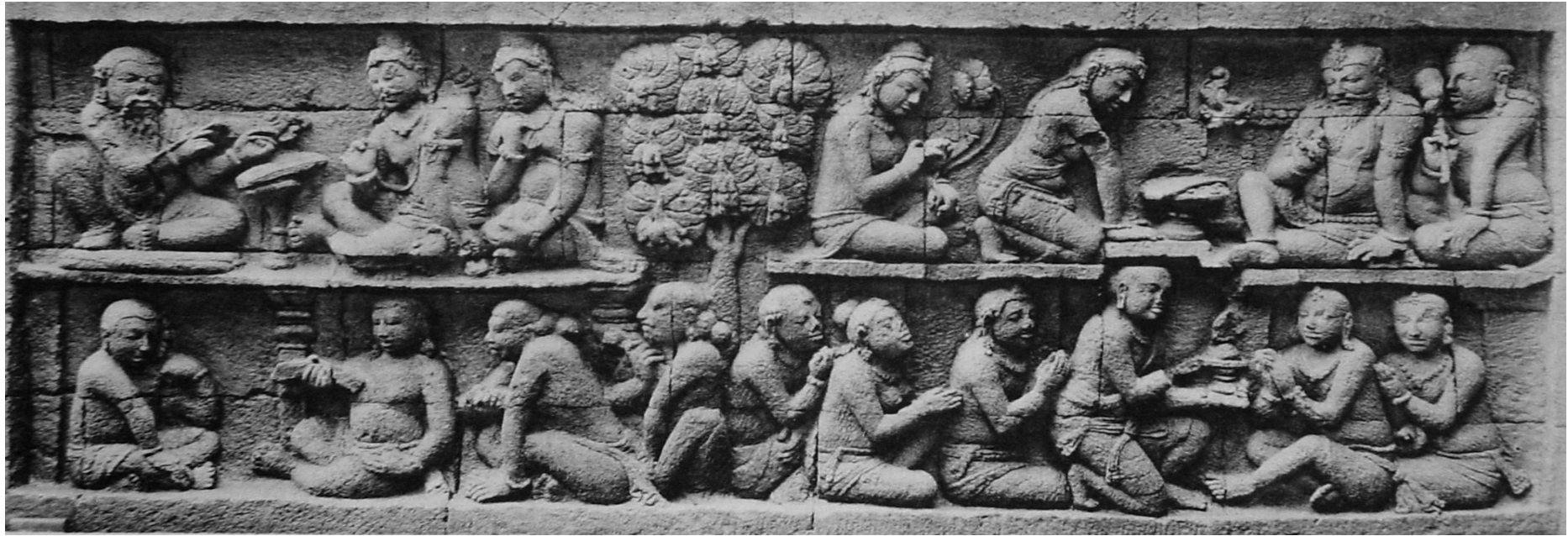
O 79



O 80



# O 81 top



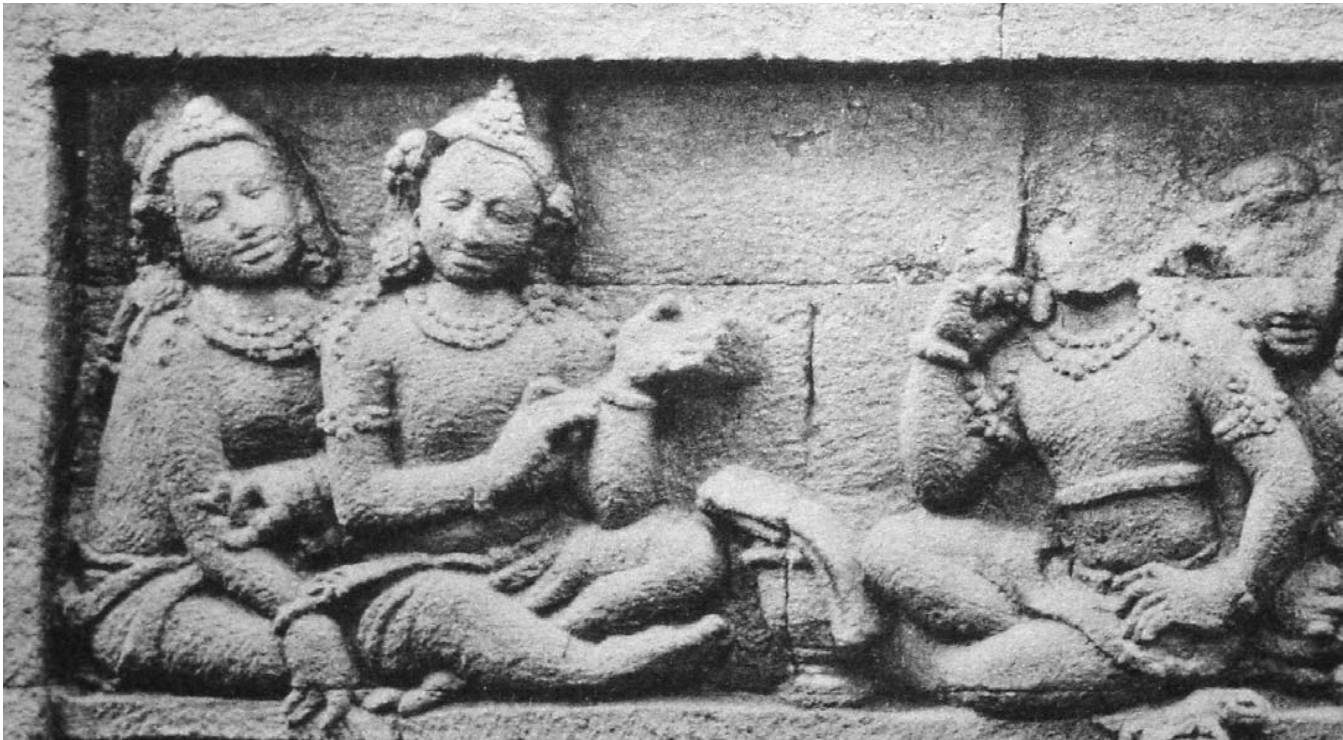
# O 81 bottom



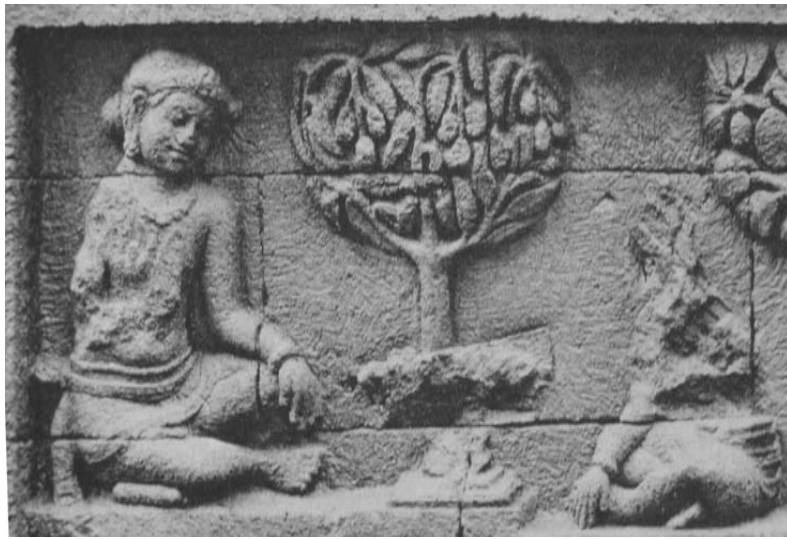
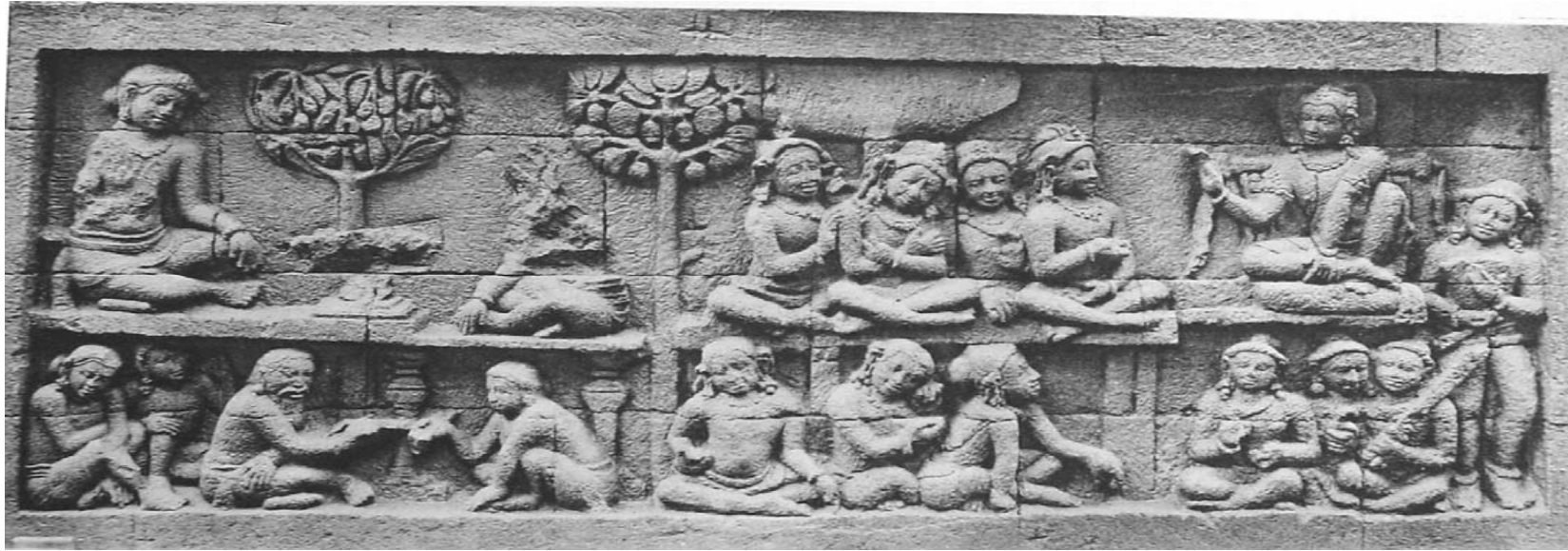
O 82



O 84



O 85





# IBb 10



IBb13



# Prambanan, Brahma temple, book



# IBb110, Lalitavistara



# IBb 110 detail



# IBb126, Lalitavistara



# IBb 128, Lalitavistara



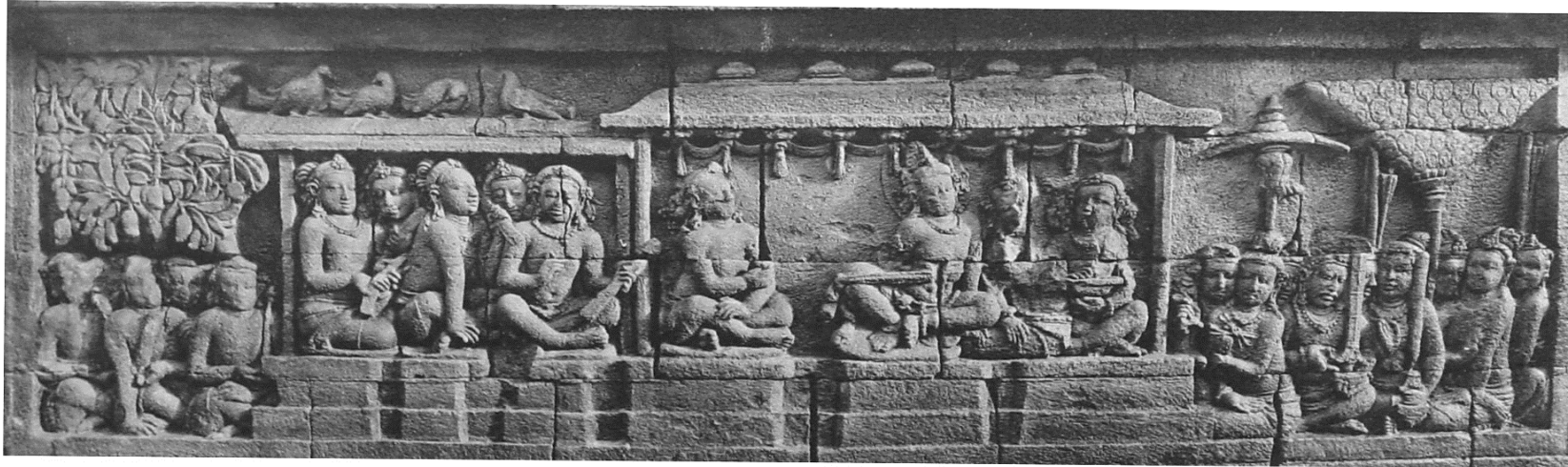
# Ia 33, Lalitavistara



III 56 right



# Ia 38, Lalitavistara



# IIB 7



# IIB 8



IIB 25, Sudhana story,  
Jayosmayatana, 10<sup>th</sup> master?



# IIB 25 detail



# IIB 33



# IIB 33 detail



# IIB 34b





# Balustrade



# Balustrade



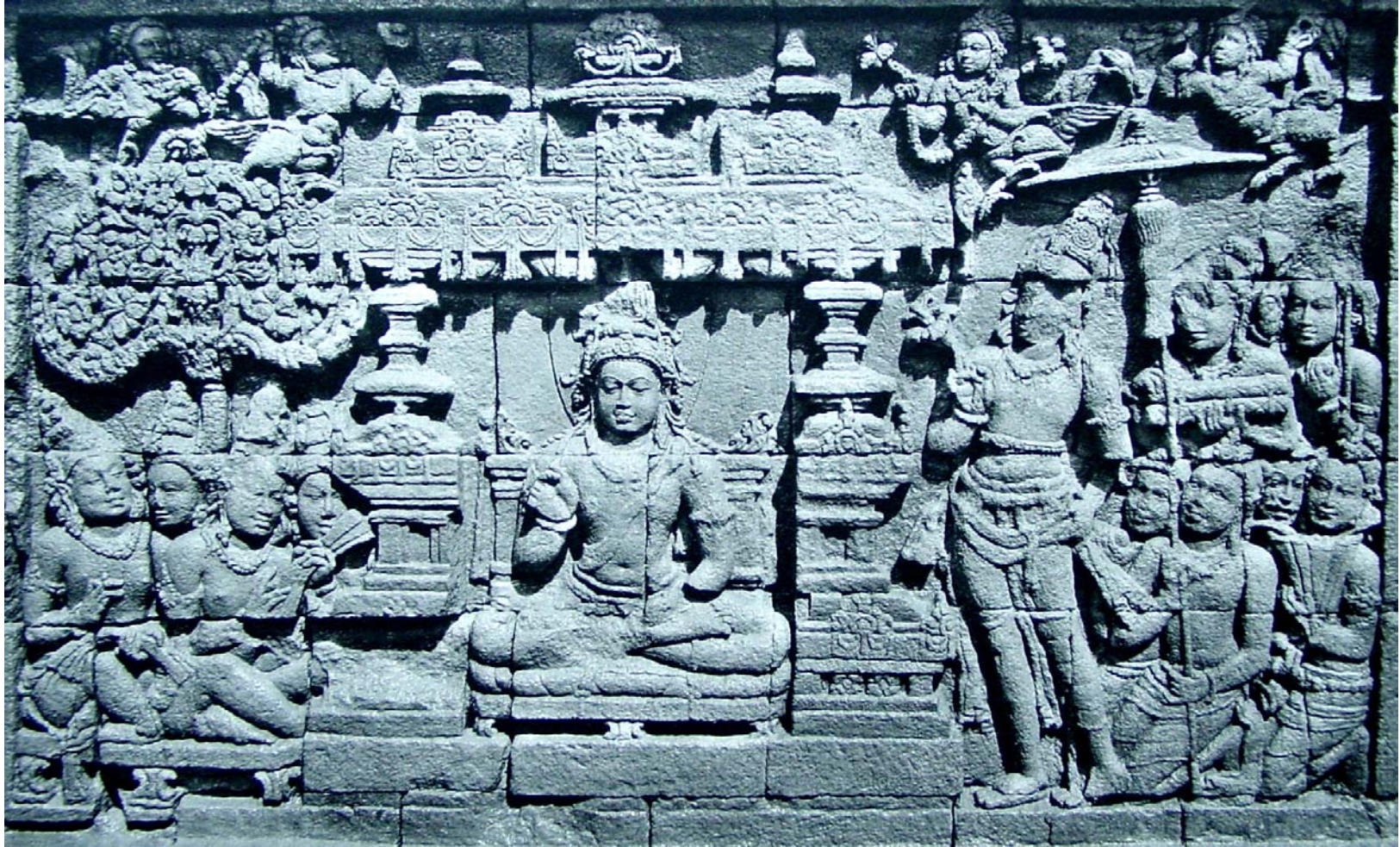
# Balustrade



## II 16 Gandavyuha, Manjusri



# III 49 Gandavyuha, Maitreya



# III 49 details



# III 56 Gandavyuha, Maitreya



# CONCLUSIONS

- 3 types of books depicted: loose leaves, single or a bundle; book with covers and threads/rope crossways wound around it
- Loose leaves held by pupils in situation of being taught
- Book, either with covers or loose leaves, from which is taught put on a bowl or stool; flowers in the bowl, referring to worship of the book
- book with covers almost always associated with masters, teachers and bodhisattva Manjusri and future Buddha Maitreya; 2x two wrapped books carried by servant; 2x book with covers held by a pupil
- Some books with covers contain a flower on the cover, not connected with the rope; reference to a particular text?
- Book is symbol of teaching in general
- Book may contain reference to a particular text
- Books associated with master, or teacher placed on a vessel, or stool



# BOOKS & BU STATUES IN JAVA

- Manjusri, dhyani bodhisattwa, associated with wisdom holds a wrapped book
- Maitreya, future Buddha, associated with a book
- Lokeswara/Lokanatha/Amoghapasa is associated with a book

Prajnapartamitya, mother of Buddha, in India  
personification of Manjusri's book

Cunda, emanation of Wairocana, holds a book

Sudhanakumara, assistant of Lokeswara, holds a  
wrapped book, Saddharmapundarika?

# Central Jawa

# Maitreya, Prambanan



Manjusri, Mendut, SW wall

# Manjusri, Plaosan

Manjusri, Sari

Cunda, Mendut

Hindu: Prambanan, Brahma  
temple



# East Java

Prajnaparamita, Singasari

Amoghapasa, Jago/Singasari

Sudhanakumara, assistant of  
Lokeswara, Jago

Panataran, love letters on a single  
leaf