1. Introduction

Sutanaka by name, a devadāsi,
[is] loved by the lupadakhe Devadina,
noblest of the sculptors of Bāraṛāsi.
(Settar 2003: 36)[3]

The translation of this poem, the oldest known 'love letter' in India, engraved in stone at the Ramgarh hills (Chhattisgarh) around the 3rd century BCE not only immortalises the love of the sculptor Devadina for the *devadāsī* (dancer) Sutanaka,[4] but also documents the Indian artists' everlasting fascination with dance. The inscription is found in a rock cut resting chamber, the Jogīmārā cave, which is in the proximity of a rock cut theatre where the artist might have encountered the dancer (Settar 2003: 35). Despite the sculptor's attraction to the *devadāsī*, there are no relief carvings of her at this site, but only general dance scenes as mural paintings (Sharma 2003: 20). More than 1,000 years later, numerous anonymous artists further south in the Tamiḻ area started creating countless reliefs of dancing women, but these sculptors again did not portray any real dancer or performance. It appears that the dancing women served as symbols within the iconographic scheme of Hindu temples.

My book is thus dedicated to the study of relief carvings from the Tamiḻ region between Ceṉṉai (Chennai) and Maturai (Madurai) which visualise different categories of mostly female performers in imagined dance positions as part of the temples' iconographic programmes.

[3] The original inscription in Mauriyan Brāhmī script from the Jogīmārā cave is catalogued as ARASI: 1903-4 – 128.3 (Arole 1990: 137, Settar 2003: 35). The translation of this metrical poem follows the most accepted interpretation of the inscription. A different meaning is conveyed by the following translation by T. Bloch: "Sutanukā by name, a Devadāsī made this resting place for girls. Devadinnā by name, skilled in painting" (Arole 1990: 137).

[4] The dancer is called *devadāsī.* However, it is unsure whether this name already referred to the later *devadāsī* system. Generally, the term *devadāsī* can be translated as 'servant of god'. The name subsumes a community of women who were dedicated to a temple (for example by marriage to the deity) or associated with the royal court. The most talented amongst them were professional dancers (O'Shea 2009: 4).

Dance imagery is omnipresent in the visual arts of the Tamiḻ area – from colourful mural paintings to relief carvings, sculptures, and entire pillared halls, called *nṛttamaṇḍapa*s, created for dance performances and embellished with dance motifs. Not only human dancers, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, are captured dancing but most popular deities are sometimes visualised in dance positions as well. These representations are called *nṛtta mūrti*s with Naṭeśa, Śiva as the lord of dancers, being the most famous amongst them. My study is focused on the analysis of dance depictions in relief carvings and related sculptures. There exists a general distinction between artworks which refer to dance as a subsidiary subject, for example the *nṛtta mūrti*s for which the dance position is one amongst several iconographic elements, and reliefs or sculptures in which the dance theme is expressed via the body of human(-like) dancers or dancing deities and saints. The visualisation captures in some instances a virtuosic pose within a performance or freezes a posture within a movement in progress. Therefore, I decided to use the term 'dance position' which encompasses both frozen movements and poses. My study is predominantly concerned with the investigation of the second category.

The division into two groups, *nṛtta mūrti*s vs. general dancing figures (embodied dance) tallies with the existence of textual iconographic definitions for the *nṛtta mūrti*s within the *śilpa śāstra*s (manuals on the creation of images) on the one hand, and the lack of literary codifications for the representation of general dance positions on the other. Exceptions are the highly specialised relief series visualising the 108 *karaṇa*s; movement units which have been defined in the *Nāṭya Śāstra* (a manual for the performing arts).[5] However, these prescriptions describe a movement unit for performance purpose instead of explaining the representation of this movement in a single picture in visual arts. As analysed by George Michell, artistic knowledge was transmitted via two different strands. The written transmission encompasses manuals, as the above mentioned *Nāṭya Śāstra,* and various *śilpa śāstra*s on the creation of temple images. They were compiled by specialists well-versed in Sanskrit and therefore often inaccessible to the practising artists (Michell 2015: 83, 85). Practical knowledge for the

[5] The *Nāṭya Śāstra* is ascribed to the semi-mythological author Bharata and was compiled between 200 BCE and 100 CE, although this date is subject to ongoing scientific debate. The treatise provides an encompassing discussion of different facets of drama, including dance, music, literature, and architecture (Gosh 1951: LXXXI-LXXXVI). For a concise discussion of the *Nāṭya Śāstra* and its relevance for dance reliefs, see subchapter 4.3.

construction of temples and creation of images was transmitted within the professional communities of artists via oral and/or graphic instructions from one generation to the next (Michell 2015: 83).[6] The vast amount of material evidence within the field of dance imagery, displaying highly codified content and stylistic features, suggest that the practically transmitted knowledge exceeded the written transmission regarding the range of subjects covered and the details for the practical application.

The dance reliefs which are not codified in literature usually fall within the broader category of "bridge-images" (Bignami 2015: 626). They fill the slots within the iconographic programmes of temples "that can contain other sculpture than those prescribed by the *śilpa śāstra* tradition" (Bignami 2015: 626, 627). A unique feature of bridge-images such as dance reliefs, is their ability to cross geographical and temporal distances (Bignami 2015: 626). Therefore, the creation of dance imagery in the Tamiḻ region which started during Pallava reign around 700 CE is nowadays still vivid and relevant. Accordingly, the time-period studied in this survey encompasses more than 1,300 years. Bridge-images are furthermore characterised by iconographic features which are "outside of the norm and can turn into different meanings" (Bignami 2015: 626). Due to these characteristics, dance reliefs are not only subject to a gradual development of style, content and meaning, but they have also been re-used by later dynasties after ruptures in the architectural and sculptural creation to evoke a continuous tradition, while conveying updated symbolic meanings.[7] Due to these unique characteristics, the study of dance imagery within the iconographic programmes of temples is a complex and complicated subject, on account of the lack of detailed textual material.

Therefore, it is not surprising that previous research on dance reliefs and sculptures focused on specialised categories of dance imagery for which literary sources were available. One strand of research focused on the study of the above mentioned *nṛtta mūrti*s. Beginning with Ananda Coomaraswamy's essay *The Dance of Śiva* (1918), dance positions were analysed as an iconographic element described in *śilpa śāstra*s and interpreted

[6] Michell sees both ways of transmission as complementary (Michell 2015: 83).

[7] My approach follows Julia A. B. Hegewald's definition of re-use: "Re-use is a conscious and selective process in which existing elements are borrowed or salvaged and taken out of their former environment in order to be applied to a new context, or they are left within their old milieu but filled with new meanings, or they get manipulated and react to new external influences." (Hegewald 2012: 48). This theoretical concept is further discussed in subsection 6.2.2.2.

in the light of a mythological or philosophical background derived from further literary sources. Similarly, the text-image relationship of the *karaṇa* reliefs was studied, starting from the combination of text and illustrations of the reliefs from the Naṭarāja Temple, Citamparam, in the *Tāṇḍava Lakṣaṇaṃ* (1936) and culminating in the practical reconstruction of these movement units (Subrahmanyam 2003b). Most approaches neglected art historical aspects as stylistic features and a discussion of the symbolic meanings within the iconographic programme of the temple(s) and often ignored the concurrent existence of different types of dance relief series. Further types of dance imagery, which do not fall into the categories of *nṛtta mūrti*s or *karaṇa* reliefs, have largely been omitted. If they were mentioned at all, they were regarded as a visual documentation of dance forms during the time of creation, but never analysed regarding stylistic features and deeper meaning.[8]

My book aims at filling this research gap by providing the first comprehensive study of all types of dance reliefs (general dance positions and *karaṇa* reliefs under consideration of selected early *nṛtta murti* sculptures) in the region between Ceṉṉai and Maturai. The analysis of the visual material collected during my fieldwork from 2015 to 2020 (covering 34 locations) resulted in the formulation of my typology for dance reliefs based on content and form. This typology has been used as a primary classification device for the systematic study of the dance reliefs. It has proved its value as an analytic tool which enables a concise description of dance reliefs and supports subsequent art historical analysis and comparison to other (dance) imagery.

Another aim of my study is a detailed investigation of the so far neglected stylistic conventions for the creations of dance imagery which fall within the range of the orally transmitted practical knowledge mentioned above. This study shall prove that certain stylistic features served as visual markers for dance and that dancing figures were represented following artistic conventions rather than displayed as a capture of a particular dance performance. Connected to the investigation of the art historical dimension of dance reliefs is the deduction of the symbolic meaning behind the dance motif within a particular temple and in gen-

[8] Two exceptional approaches which are discussed later are Bindu Shankar's dissertation *Dance Imagery in South Indian Temples: Study of the 108-Karana Sculptures* (2004) and Yuko Fukuroi's article *Dancing Images in the Gōpuras: A New Perspective on Dance Sculptures in South Indian Temples* (2008).

eral. Departing from the interpretation of researchers who studied dance imagery from a choreological point of view, I do not interpret them merely as a documentation of dance forms and dance techniques, but am rather interested in the symbolic meaning of the dance motif.[9] The function of the dance reliefs depends on the regional and temporal framework and the architectural context of the relief series. These factors shall be considered in my chronological investigation of the relief series. Special attention will be paid to firstly, the discussion of the formation and development of different types of dance reliefs, secondly, a detailed description of content, and thirdly, the form and stylistic features and their symbolic function. Before starting my analysis, the following three subchapters shall provide concise information on previous research and publications on related subjects and my own data collected during fieldwork (subchapter 1.1), followed by an explanation of my art historical approach towards the study of dance reliefs series (subchapter 1.2) and an outline of the content of this book (subchapter 1.3).

1.1 Literature and Fieldwork

As mentioned above, most of the previous research and publications on the dance imagery of the Tamiḻ area are either concerned with dance as part of the iconography of *nṛtta mūrti*s or with the investigation of the 108 *karaṇa*s motif. This chapter will initially discuss the available literature on the study of dance as an iconographic feature of *nṛtta mūrti*s. It will then move on to an investigation of available publications on the 108 *karaṇa*s motif as well as a few additional articles which have been published on other dance relief series. The second part of this chapter shall provide concise information regarding the fieldwork conducted for this investigation. Within this framework, the compilation of the temples surveyed, and the respective research focus of my successive fieldwork periods shall be discussed.

Ananda Coomaraswamy's essay *The Dance of Śiva* (1918) was not only one of the first art historical studies on South Asian art, but also the first academic study of South-Indian dance imagery. The essay provided a detailed description of the iconographic features of Naṭarāja including the typical dance position of these icons based on literary sources and dif-

[9] I assume that dance reliefs and dance performances which were created within the same ideological / religious / philosophical framework share this symbolic meaning to a certain extent. This point will be discussed in detail in subchapter 9.2 of the conclusions.

ferent bronze sculptures. Furthermore, this study was already analysing the symbolic meaning of Naṭarāja sculptures. To this purpose, Coomaraswamy cited various literary sources without consideration of the historical and philosophical / religious context of the works and the temporal distance to the creation of the bronzes. His main argument was the identification of the visualisation of Śiva's five activities, *pañcakṛtya* (namely creation, protection, destruction, removing of illusion and release of the devotee's soul) within the iconography. This interpretation was most likely several centuries younger than the formation of the Naṭarāja icon. Furthermore, he completely ignored the possibility of changing symbolic meanings of an icon (compare Kaimal 1999: 391).[10] Coomaraswamy focused on the iconography of Naṭarāja based on a radial composition, while C. Sivaramamurti studied different sculptural representations of Śiva's dance characterised by variable dance positions under the term Naṭarāja.[11] His encompassing study *Nataraja in Art, Thought and Literature* was first published in 1968. Chapter 13 "Nataraja Form in Sculpture and Painting" is his most relevant contribution to the study of *nṛtta mūrti*s and consists of a description of Naṭeśa sculptures created under the patronage of successive dynasties such as the Vākāṭaka, Pallava and early Western Chāḷukya. Sivaramamurti provided a detailed description of the iconography of each sculpture, often applying terminology derived from the *Nāṭya Śāstra* to the constitutive elements of the dance positions (Sivaramamurti 1994: 160-252). However, he did not analyse general stylistic features of Naṭeśa sculptures or their symbolic meanings except to illustrate mythological stories.

The research subject was remarkably extended by Kapila Vatsyayan's multidisciplinary study *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts* which was released in its first edition in 1977. Based on selected examples, Vatsyayan discussed the representation of dance throughout the art history of India. "Chapter IV – Sculpture and Dancing" provided an overview of dance imagery in chronological order, covering major dynasties of all regions and ranging from dancing deities to visualisations of narrative scenes including dancing figures. The subchapter "*nṛttamūrtis*" consisted of a general discussion of the representation of dancing deities. How-

[10] For a critical discussion of Coomaraswamy's essay, see Kaimal (1999: 393, 394).

[11] Following the distinction in recent research, I am going to use the term Naṭarāja exclusively for sculptures featuring the radial composition which is derived from the icon at the Naṭarāja Temple in Citamparam. Further representations of Śiva's dance characterised by differing dance positions will be called Naṭeśa (compare Wessels-Mevissen 2012: 311).

ever, this summary encompassed seven pages only which is rather brief and generalised considering the vast amount of *nṛtta mūrti* sculptures in India (Vatsyayan 1997: 321-328). An important analytical approach of this study was the deconstruction of dance positions displayed in *karaṇa* reliefs which will be discussed in more detail in subchapter 4.2, but Vatsyayan did not apply it systematically to her investigation of *nṛtta murti*s. In contrast, Anne-Marie Gaston analysed within her 1982 publication *Śiva in Dance, Myth and Iconography* predominantly Naṭeśa sculptures with a brief comparison of them to other dance motifs within the final chapter "VII Decorative Dancing Figures". Following Sivaramamurti's approach, Gaston used the name Naṭarāja for all sculptures which visualise Śiva's dance. An innovative feature which her study shared with Vatsyayan's approach was the fragmentation of dance positions. However, she mostly derived her classification system from contemporary (20th century) dance technique, while treating the dance positions as static poses.

A shift in the focus of iconographic studies of *nṛtta mūrti*s can be observed in the articles published by Padma Kaimal and Corinna Wessels-Mevissen respectively. In *Shiva Nataraja: Shifting Meaning of an Icon* published in 1999, Kaimal analysed the successive and partially overlaying symbolic functions of the Naṭarāja icon. Special emphasis was put on the socio-political meanings of the icon and the relationship to the Naṭarāja Temple in Citamparam. Another restudy of the Naṭarāja icon was conducted by Wessels-Mevissen in *The Early Image of Śiva Naṭarāja: Aspects of Time and Space* published in 2012. As clearly stated by the title, she explored the symbolism of Śiva as mastering and transcending both time and space and the visualisation of these concepts within the Naṭarāja iconography. Both articles provided complementary explanations of the symbolic meanings of the Naṭarāja icon, however the applicability to other *nṛtta murti*s or general dance reliefs is rather limited. Nevertheless, both studies proved that the symbolic meaning of dance imagery is not stable but continuously evolving.

The first publication which systematically addressed the *karaṇa* reliefs was, as already mentioned, *Tāṇḍava Lakṣaṇam or the Fundamentals of Ancient Hindu Dancing* published by B. V. Narayaswami Naidu, P. Srinivasulu Naidu and O. V. Rangayya Naidu in 1936. The scholars assigned woodcut-prints of the relief panels from the Naṭarāja Temple to the definitions of the *karaṇa*s derived from the fourth chapter of the *Nāṭya Śāstra*. However, this compilation was not accompanied by a critical analysis. The discovery of further *karaṇa* relief series at the Rājarājeśvara Temple

in Tañcāvūr (Thanjavur) and the Śāraṅgapāni Temple in Kuṁbhakōnam (Kumbakonam) became addressed in research by the above-mentioned publication *Nataraja in Art, Thought and Literature* by Sivaramamurti.[12] He dedicated one chapter to the study of each *karaṇa* relief series respectively. Chapter 4 "Karanas Presented in Siva's Tandava" analysed the relief panels at the Rājarājeśvara Temple. Following a brief introduction on conception and location, selected reliefs were discussed in comparison to the definitions of the *Nāṭya Śāstra*. Photos of the relief panels were provided along with the text (Sivaramamurti 1994: 39-55). The subsequent chapter 5 "Karanas presented by Vishnu as Krishna" applied the same methodology to the study of the relief series at the Śāraṅgapāni Temple in Kuṁbhakōnam (Sivaramamurti 1994: 56-65). However, Sivaramamurti did not observe that the *karaṇa*s were originally of *śaiva* affiliation and that they had been relocated from their initial location to the *gopura* (entry tower of the temple). Therefore, he erroneously identified the dancer as Kṛṣṇa (Sivaramamurti 1994: 56).[13] The investigations of both relief series did not analyse stylistic features of the dance images and did not address their symbolic function within each temple.

An innovative approach towards the study of the most famous *karaṇa* relief series at the Naṭarāja Temple was followed by Vatsyayan in *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts* (first edition 1968). Within the subchapter "*Karaṇa*: detailed analysis and comparison with Cidambaram sculptures" she analysed the constitutive elements of the frozen dance movements which generate the dance positions of the female dancers. Furthermore, she regrouped them according to characteristic features of the movements (Vatsyayan 1977: 98-136). However, she still relied exclusively on the definitions of the *Nāṭya Śāstra* as an analytical framework. This analytical approach was further developed in her subsequent book *Dance Sculpture in Sarangapani Temple* published in 1982.[14] The analysis of the dance reliefs at the Śāraṅgapāni Temple consisted of a deconstruction of all dance positions and regrouping of the dance images based on the char-

[12] For a commentated list of short articles and book chapters published between 1953 and 1968 which mention some of the *karaṇa* relief series, see Subrahmanyam (2003a: V-VII).

[13] The controversial origin and symbolic implications of the re-use of these *karaṇa* reliefs are discussed in subsection 6.2.2.2.

[14] Another valuable contribution to the study of South Asian dance iconography is Vatsyayan's book *The Square and the Circle of the Indian Arts*, published in 1983. The theoretical approach of this book will be discussed in subchapter 3.3.

acteristic features of their leg positions. The study of these dance reliefs is generally hindered by the shuffled arrangement of the *karaṇa* panels during the relocation of the series mentioned above. Addressing this issue, Vatsyayan provided an identification of each visualised *karaṇa*.[15] Another concise discussion of the *karaṇa* relief series at the Rājarājeśvara Temple was enclosed in *Rājarājeśvaram, The Pinnacle of Chola Art*, published by B. Venkataraman in 1985. Within the chapter "Dance Panels", Venkataraman described the location of the dance reliefs and provided a contextualisation in comparison to other dance reliefs known to the author.[16] Furthermore, he related selected relief panels to the definitions of the *Nāṭya Śāstra* and discussed to what extent the images conform to the text. This analysis was also accompanied by photos (Venkataraman 1985: 131-147).

The most comprehensive research on *karaṇa*s in literature and visual arts (with emphasis on the Cōḻa period) was published by Padma Subrahmanyam in three volumes titled *Karaṇas, Common Dance Codes of India and Indonesia* in 2003. Subrahmanyam had been conducting research and publishing articles on the *karaṇa* topic since 1964 and these volumes were based on her doctoral dissertation (compare Subrahmanyam 2003a: VI). Chapter VI "The Archaeological Sources – Thanjavur, Kumbakonam, Chidambaram, Tiruvannamalai and Vriddhachalam" in Volume 1 *A Historic and Archaeological Perspective* discussed the setting and content of the *karaṇa* relief series at the five temples named in the title.[17] Furthermore, brief remarks on the sculptural representation of all *karaṇa*s at the Rājarājeśvara Temple, Śārangapāni Temple and Naṭarāja Temple were included in Volume 2 *A Dancer's Perspective* which was primarily dedicated to the documentation of her practical reconstruction of the movement units. The

[15] These assignments do not always tally with later identifications of Padma Subrahmanyam. The horizontal relief series at the Śāraṅgapāni Temple is discussed in detail in subsection 6.2.2.2.

[16] His reference points are the famous relief series at the Naṭarāja Temple in Citamparam, another vertical series at the Somanātha Temple in Paḻayārai (which he calls Sōmalingaswāmi Temple), as well as the horizontal relief series of the Śāraṅgapāni Temple and the Śivakāmasundari Temple at the Naṭarāja Temple in Citamparam (Venkataraman 1985: 131).

[17] Furthermore, chapter VII of her publication discussed a horizontal series of dance reliefs at the Caṇḍi Loro Jonggrang in Central Java as another *karaṇa* series. I do not agree with the identification of the dance reliefs as *karaṇa* depictions (see subsection 5.2.3). Additionally, Subrahmanyam also described the conception and creation process of her own *karaṇa* series which was originally conceptualised for the Uttara Cidambaram Naṭarāj Mandir in Sātārā (Mahārāṣṭra) (see subchapter 8.2).

publication additionally featured a complementary volume with photos of all relief panels from the Rājarājeśvara Temple, Śārangapāni Temple, Naṭarāja Temple, Caṇḍi Loro Jonggrang in Central Java and Subrahmanyam's relief series conceptualised for the Uttara Cidambaram Naṭarāj Mandir in Sātārā (Mahārāṣṭra). This is to date the most complete documentation of *karaṇa* reliefs, although the late Cōḻa period *karaṇa* relief series at the Vṛddhagirīśvara Temple in Vṛddhācalam (Virudhachalam or Vriddhachalam) and the pseudo-*karaṇa* series at the Aruṇacaleśvara Temple in Tiruvaṇṇāmalai (Tiruvannamalai) have been omitted in the illustrated book, Volume 3.[18] Furthermore, Subrahmanyam considered the dance reliefs foremost as illustrations of the dance technique described in the *Nāṭya Śāstra.* She neglected the impact of stylistic conventions on art works such as these relief panels and did not consider their symbolic functions within the overall iconographic programme of the temples. Although Subrahmanyam mentioned further dance reliefs at the Naṭarāja Temple and at Airāvateśvara Temple in Tārāsuram (Darasuram), she only treated them as general visualisations of dance forms or choreographies which were, in her opinion, maybe even subordinate to the *karaṇa* reliefs.

An art historical approach towards the study of *karaṇa* reliefs was published by Bindu S. Shankar in 2004. *Dance Imagery in South Indian Temples: Study of the 108 Karana Sculptures* was Shankar's dissertation, submitted at Ohio State University and available online. Shankar focused on five *karaṇa* series at the same temples as studied previously by Subrahmanyam; the Rājarājeśvara Temple, the Śārangapāni Temple, the Naṭarāja Temple, the Aruṇacaleśvara Temple, and the Vṛddhagirīśvara Temple. This was the first study of the *karaṇa* series with an art historical focus. Shankar discussed the stylistic developments of the relief series and analysed the symbolic meanings by taking into consideration the iconographic programmes of the temples. Her thesis featured selected photos of the temples and relief series, but in contrast to Subrahmanyam's publication, the relief panels were not completely documented. In addition, the Appendix included concise information on the 34 temples she had visited during her fieldwork including notes on further non-*karaṇa* dance reliefs in some of these temples (Shankar 2004: 291). However, these other dance reliefs were

[18] Subrahmanyam erroneously attributes all four *karaṇa* relief series at the Vṛddhagirīśvara Temple to the post-Cōḻa period. However, the first series can be dated beyond doubt to the late Cōḻa period as later discussed in subsections 6.3.4 and 7.1.2.2.

not considered within the main argument of her thesis. The omission of further dance reliefs promoted some incorrect conclusions concerning the development of the *karaṇa* relief series.

Besides this literature on the *karaṇa* reliefs, two articles focused on vertically arranged relief series consisting of non-*karaṇa* dance motifs. *Dancing Images in the Gōpuras: A New Perspective on Dance Sculptures in South Indian Temples* published by Yuko Fukoroi in 2008 investigated the vertical relief series of three late Cōḻa period temples.[19] Fukuroi analysed the symbolic meaning by considering the location of the series and other motifs featured along side the dance panels. The most innovative approach in this article was the splitting of the dance positions into a limited number of reoccurring positions of upper body and legs. However, Fukuroi did not succeed in achieving a complete deconstruction of the dance positions into their smallest constitutive elements.[20] Additionally, the online article *Shiva's Karanas in the temples of Tamil Nadu: the Natya Shastra in stone*, joint research by Liesbeth Pankaja Bennik, Kandhan Raja Deekshitar, Jayakumar Raja Deekshitar and Sankar Raja Deekshitar published in 2013, analysed the vertical relief series of the Vīraṭṭāṉēsvarar Temple near Paṇruṭṭi (Panruti). The authors studied the post-Cōḻa period relief panels in comparison to earlier *karaṇa* relief series. However, this study was again centred around the investigation of how far the relief panels visualised the dance technique of the *Nāṭya Śāstra* or reflected contemporary interpretations.

As evident from the previous discussion, there exists hardly any research on non-*karaṇa* dance reliefs besides two articles on vertical relief series. Some relevant information on other types of dance reliefs or sculptures is included in studies on other art historical subjects and the most relevant publications shall be briefly mentioned. Different articles on *maṇḍapa*s, pillared temple halls, by Gerd J. R. Mevissen contained descriptions of horizontally arranged dance relief series. *The Suggestion of Movement: a Contribution to the Study of Chariot-shaped Structures in Indian Temple-Architecture* published in 1996 mentioned dance relief series as a typical iconographic element on temple structures conceived as a stone chariot (*ratha*). Mevissen's article *Chidambaram – Nṛttasabhā, Architektur,*

[19] These relief series belong to the Somanātha Temple in Paḻayārai, the Kaṁpahareśvarar Temple in Tirupuvaṇam and the Nāgēśvarasvāmi Temple in Kuṁbhakōṇam (Fukuroi 2008: 257).

[20] Modular construction systems for symbolic dance motifs are discussed in detail in subchapter 4.2.

Ikonografie und Symbolik from 1996 featured a detailed discussion of the horizontal dance relief series at the Nṛtta Sabhā of the Naṭarāja Temple, along with other dance motifs at this late Cōḻa period *rathamaṇḍapa*. Moreover, Crispin Branfoot published several articles on composite column sculptures of the post-Cōḻa period. Some of these sculptures, which according to Branfoot depict characters from local literature or mythology, are shown in dance positions.[21] The article *'Expanding Form': The Architectural Sculpture of the South Indian Temple, ca. 1500-1700* published in 2002 contained a brief discussion of Kuṟatti (gypsy) characters visualised in dance position as composite column sculptures. The limited number of publications on dance reliefs, especially any series not related to the *karaṇa* theme and the even lower percentage of studies with an art historical approach, prove the existence of a research gap which shall be filled by my study. Furthermore, the lack of available literature illustrates the urgent need for further fieldwork to document different types of dance relief series within their architectural context.[22]

The first *in situ* study and documentation of dance reliefs in five temples was already conducted in April 2015 as part of the research for my M.A. thesis. The focus of this initial study was on royal temples of the middle and late Cōḻa period. These temples were all commissioned by Cōḻa kings and can therefore securely be ascribed to their reigns (Vasudevan 2003: 24).[23] The three royal temples which had been selected for a case study of dance reliefs were the Rājarājeśvara Temple in Tañcāvūr, the Gaṅgaikoṇḍa Cōḷiśvara Temple in Gaṅgaikoṇḍacōḷapuram (Gangaikonda Cholapuram)

[21] In my opinion, these sculptures represent characters from dance dramas since they are visualised in dance positions. For a detailed discussion, see subsection 7.1.4.

[22] Files with concise information on the dance relief series at each temple which were documented for this book are compiled in the complementary online material as Appendix V. They are sorted according to the order of their discussion within the text. Appendix VI features a map in which the temples studied within this survey are marked.

[23] According to Geeta Vasudevan, there exists a differentiation between *bhakti* temples and royal temples. *Bhakti* temples evolved over long time spans at places of religious significance, often already praised by Tamiḻ saints. In contrast, royal temples were commissioned by the king, for example within his capital. The entire temple complex is completed in short time within the reign of that king (Vasudevan 2003: 23, 24).

and the Airāvateśvara Temple in Tārāsuram.[24] Furthermore, different relief series at the Naṭarāja Temple in Citamparam were analysed in comparison to the reliefs of the royal temples, since this temple complex has the closest connection to the dance theme and its relief series are the best studied examples.[25] The material was completed with a consideration of the *karaṇa* relief series at the Śārangapāni Temple in Kuṁbhakōnam since this series might have originally belonged to the Gaṅgaikoṇḍa Cōḷiśvara Temple (or the Airāvateśvara Temple) and was relocated to the *gopura*[26] of the Śārangapāni Temple during post-Cōḻa period.[27] The advantages of this selection were firstly the unambiguous dating of most relief series which simplified the study of the chronological development of the reliefs and secondly, the comparably large amount of research published on these series. The results of my investigation of these dance reliefs constituted approximately 2/3 (80 pages) of my unpublished M.A. thesis *Tanzskulpturen der Cōḷa-Dynastie* which I submitted at the University of Bonn in September 2015.

Two fieldwork periods in 2016 were mainly dedicated to studying and documenting dance reliefs and sculptures created earlier than the examples of my M.A. thesis. The sites were selected after thorough study of publications on the Naṭeśa sculptures discussed above and newspaper coverage of temples with dance imagery, for example in *The Hindu*.

In March 2016, I visited Cave 7 near Auraṅgābād (Aurangabad) in Mahārāṣṭra (Maharashtra) which contains a relief carving showing a

[24] The documented relief series are a Type 2A series on the first floor inside the *vimāna* of the Rājarājeśvara Temple; some Type 1A reliefs at the Gaṅgaikoṇḍa Cōḷiśvara Temple; at the Airāvateśvara Temple the Type 3A series on the base of *ratha-maṇḍapa*, *vimāṇa*, *prākāra*-wall, Type 3C ornaments on pillars and ceiling and Type 3C ornaments on the *gopura* of the Airāvateśvara Temple. The typology used as labels for the relief series is described in detail in subchapter 4.1.

[25] The documented relief series at the Naṭarāja Temple are a Type 3A series on the base of the Nṛtta Sabhā, a Type 3A series on the *prākāra* of the Śivakāmasundari Temple, a Type 3A series on the base of *rathamaṇḍapa* and *vimāṇa* of the Pāṇṭyanāyaka Temple and the famous Type 2B series within all four *gopura*s. Furthermore, a Type 3A series on the 1st *prākāra* was also documented although it belongs to the late 19th century.

[26] *Gopura* is an old Sanskrit term which denotes the gateway or town-gate. In the field of temple architecture, it refers to gateways to temples surmounted by pyramidal towers, a special feature of *drāviḍa* temples (Harle 1963: 1). For a further discussion of the architectural elements of the *gopura* and the location of the *karaṇa* panels within the gateway, see subchapter 4.1.

[27] For a discussion of the Type 2A *karaṇa* series, its original location, and the implications of the re-use at the Śārangapāni Temple, see subsection 6.2.2.2.

female dancer surrounded by six female musicians. This panel is of major importance for the development of stylistic conventions for dance reliefs. Furthermore, I collected notes and photos on Naṭeśa sculptures which are located within the cave temples at Elōra (Ellora) and the rock cut Kailāsanātha Temple. These Naṭeśa sculptures continued the development of the Pallava period representations of *nṛtta mūrti*s at the Kailāsanātha Temple and Mruttiñjayēsvarar Temple in Kāñcīpuram (Kanchipuram) which I investigated during my fieldwork in August 2016. Additionally, I documented one of the earliest horizontal dance relief series within my survey which belongs to the Mūlanātha Svāmī Temple in Pākūr. During the 2016 visit to the Naṭarāja Temple in Citamparam I photographed the remaining types of dance imagery, and I was able to document some dance reliefs at the Aruṇacaleśvara Temple in Tiruvaṇṇāmalai which belong to the post-Cōḻa period. Unfortunately, most of the pseudo-*karaṇa* reliefs within the main *gopura* were concealed due to the ongoing renovation.[28]

The field trip during March 2018 was centred around the documentation and study of horizontal and vertical dance relief series of the late Cōḻa and post-Cōḻa period. The selected temples were chosen based on the temple list included as Appendix in Shankar (2004) and the relief series analysed by Fukuroi (2008). Temples of the late Cōḻa period which I visited in 2018 are the Somanātha Temple in Paḻayārai (Palayarai or Pazhaiyarai), the Nāgēśvarasvāmi Temple in Kuṁbhakōṇam (Kumbakonam) and the Kaṁpahareśvarar Temple in Tirupuvaṇam (Thirubuvanam). All three temples feature horizontal dance relief series (Type 3A) and vertical relief series within the gateways of the *gopura*s (Type 1B).[29] Furthermore, I documented four vertical relief series inside the gateways of the *gopura*s of the Vīraṭṭāṇēsvarar Temple in Paṇruṭṭi, as well as one series at the Arttanārīśvarar Temple in Ulakiyanallūr (Ulagiyanallur), the Bhu Varāha Svāmī Temple in Śrimuṣṇam (Srimushnam) and the Vṛddhagirīśvara

[28] The documented relief series at the Naṭarāja Temple are a Type 3A series on the base of the 1,000-pillar-*maṇḍapa* (which is closed to visitors and partially inaccessible) and ceiling paintings of the 108 *karaṇa*s performed by Śiva at the *maṇḍapa* near the east *gopura*. The documented relief series at the Aruṇacaleśvara Temple encompass a Type 3A series on the base of the *maṇḍapa*s and three vertical relief series inside the north, south and west *gopura* which range somewhere between Type 2B and 3B. For a detailed discussion, see subsection 7.1.2.2.

[29] The classifications "Type 3A" and "Type 1B" are based on my typology which is explained in detail in subchapter 4.1.

Temple in Vṛddhācalam respectively.[30] In addition to the Type 3B series, the Bhu Varāha Svāmī Temple also features horizontal dance reliefs (Type 3A). Further Type 3A series were documented at the Varadarāja Temple and the Ekāmbareśvara Temple in Kāñcipuram. These temples were included in this survey due to their reputation as the most famous temples in Kāñcipuram. The Varadarāja Temple also contains Type 3C ornaments, a feature which is shared by the Nadavavi Kinaru Stepwell in the nearby village Aiyankarkulam which is connected to the Varadarāja Temple via festival rituals.

During the collection of background information on early Cōḻa temples, I discovered photos of bracket figures fashioned as female dancers that had so far not been discussed in any study on dance imagery of the Tamiḻ area. Based on photos in different publications, most importantly in *Early Cola Architecture and Sculpture 866 – 1014 A.D.* published by Douglas Barett in 1974, I compiled a list of Cōḻa temples featuring these Type 1D (and Type 3D) reliefs. The field research in March 2019 was partially dedicated to the documentation of these bracket figures at the Nāgēśvarasvāmi Temple in Kuṁbhakōṇam, the Brahmāpuriśvara Temple in Puḷḷamaṅkai (Pullamangai) and the Tiruttoṇḍīśvaram Udaiyar Temple in Tirunāmanallūr (Tirunamanallur), as well as the Amṛtaghaṭēśvarar Temple in Mēlakaṭampūr (Melakadambur) which contains a late Cōḻa period Type 3D series. Further depictions of dancers in architectural sculpture are composite column sculptures. Branfoot's discussion of Kuṟatti sculptures and reliefs enlists three temples within the investigated research area which I also visited in March 2019. These temples with Type 3C and 3D sculptures are the Kūtal Aḻakar Temple (Type 3C) and Mīnākṣī Sundareśvarar Temple in Maturai (Type 3D),[31] and the Jambukeśvarar Temple on Śrīraṅgam (Srirangam) island (Type 3D). Further composite pillar sculptures of dancers were discovered at the adjunct Ranganatha Temple, the most famous temple at Śrīraṅgam island.

The last field research complemented the survey with the addition of late 20th century and early 21st century dance imagery. Online research of the coastal town Pūmpukar (Poompuhar) where the beginning of the

[30] Except for the Vṛddhagirīśvara Temple, all relief series belong to Type 3B. The Vṛddhagirīśvara Temple features a late Cōḻa period Type 2B series inside the main *gopura* which has been copied inside the remaining three *gopura*s which were built during post-Cōḻa period, see subsection 7.1.2.2.

[31] Unfortunately, it was impossible to take photos inside the Mīnākṣī Sundareśvarar Temple.

Cilappatikāram is set (a so-called Tamiḻ epic featuring a dancer as one of the main characters), revealed the existence of an art gallery. The relief panels at the Cilappatikāram Art Gallery display Type 1 dance motifs within a narrative context. Furthermore, the Bharatamuni Ilango Foundation for Asian Culture at Paṭṭipullam near Ceṉṉai where the *karaṇa* series conceptualised by Subrahmanyam is displayed, was finally open to the public so that I could access this second version of her relief series in person. In addition, the dance sculptures created after ancient dance reliefs at the VGP Golden Beach Resorts in Ceṉṉai caught my attention and were included as documented dance sculptures. Luckily, the renovations of the east *gopura* of the Aruṇacaleśvara Temple in Tiruvaṇṇāmalai were also completed and I was finally able to document this pseudo-*karaṇa* series.

These representative dance relief series enumerated above and related forms of dance imagery, ranging from the Pallava period to the present day, constitute with selected additions, the visual material which I used for the analysis of the different categories of dance relief series. My methodological approach is explained in the next subchapter.

1.2 Methodology

This investigation of the dance relief series enlisted above falls within the research area of dance iconography, a discipline which can be divided into both a choreological and art historical approach (Seebass 1991: 33).[32] As the above discussion of previous research carried out has demonstrated, the topic has mostly been addressed from the choreological perspective. My book, therefore, is going to follow the art historical approach to provide complementary insights into dance imagery. Correspondingly, all dance reliefs will be analysed as art works which are not only defined by the subject matter, dance, but also by stylistic features and the intended (symbolic) meanings of the motifs. Different art historical methods and theoretical frameworks are applied and, in some cases, developed further to aid in the investigation of the dance reliefs. A theoretical framework which is especially helpful in understanding the conception of the represented movement units; the *karaṇa* reliefs is the application of different types of narrative strategies which Vidya Dehejia had formulated with reference to narrative Buddhist reliefs (compare Dehejia 1990b and Dehejia 1998).[33]

[32] For a detailed discussion of the dance iconographical approach in the South Asian context, see subchapter 3.1.

[33] These narrative modes are further discussed in subchapter 3.2.

As already mentioned, an important analytical approach for the study of dance reliefs is the deconstruction of the dance positions shown in the relief carvings. First attempts towards a deconstruction of South Indian temple imagery (in Jaina temples) were made by Klaus Bruhn in his slot-filler analysis (compare Bruhn 1960 and Bruhn 1995: 236). The deconstruction of dance imagery was also advanced by Vatsyayan and Fukuroi as discussed above (Vatsyayan 1977, 1982 and Fukuroi 2008). Fukuroi's "Formula for Dance Postures" (Fukuroi 2008: 257) was developed further into a modular construction system for symbolic dance images within my M.A. thesis (Schlage 2015: 170, 171)[34] and is further advanced within this study as discussed in subchapter 4.2.

Additionally, the development of the types of dance reliefs during the post-Cōḻa period alongside contemporary dance imagery will be analysed taking into consideration the re-use theory. The re-use term and concept was established by Julia A. B. Hegewald (2012), and specifications regarding the bridge-image category which can encompass dance motifs are adopted from Cristina Bignami (2015).[35] As the chronological discussion of the relief series will show, re-use of established types of dance reliefs has happened in several time periods. The description of all dance reliefs and trends in development makes use of my typology for dance reliefs. Content and form of the dance relief series have been selected as primary parameters for the categorisation of the relief series. This newly created typology is discussed in detail in subchapter 4.1 and is thereafter applied throughout the chronological analysis of the dance relief series.

The sample of selected sites for this survey encompasses 34 locations which comprised mostly temples or related religious sites. The locations of all sites which fall within the area between Ceṉṉai and Maturai are marked in the map which is enclosed as Appendix VI in the complementary online material. The information on the individual series is compiled on separate entries for every temple in Appendix V. The monuments were selected with the intention of creating a representative sample of all types of dance relief series from the Pallava reign to the present day. The survey is not an exhaustive study of any one of the existing types of dance reliefs, but the selected series were chosen to cover the most important aspects

[34] Appendix IV of my M.A. thesis featured sketches of the constitutive elements of symbolic dance images under the title "Elemente der Abbildungen früher Cōḻa-Tanzdarstellungen" (Schlage 2015: 170, 171).

[35] For a concise discussion of the re-use concept, see subsection 6.2.2.2.

of the development of dance reliefs. The focus of this book is on Śiva temples based on the assumption more dance reliefs are in existence in *śaiva* temples due to Śiva's close association with dance as Naṭeśa or Naṭaraja. Furthermore, the *Nāṭya Śāstra* which has functioned as a literary source for some *karaṇa* relief series is also of *śaiva* affiliation (Iyer 1993: 6). Due to relevant dance relief series being mentioned in scientific literature, six *vaiṣṇava* sites are included within this survey. They prove that comparable dance imagery existed in Viṣṇu temples as well, especially from the post-Cōḻa period. Except for two sites in Mahārāṣṭra (Auraṅgābād and Elōra) all temples are located within the region between Ceṉṉai and Maturai. This area encompasses the core regions of the Pallava and Cōḻa dynasties under whose reign the formation of the different types of dance reliefs occurred. Temples of other relevant dynasties such as the Pāṇṭya dynasty or the Vijayanagara dynasty, which are located outside the defined area, exceed the scope of this survey.

The development of the dance reliefs has been divided into four broad time segments based on the patronage of different dynasties (for example the Cōḻa period) and major shifts within the evolution of the types of dance reliefs. The first segment encompasses all dance reliefs and sculptures created prior to the Cōḻa period. The early Type 1A series, which are also discussed in the first time segment, were created during the transition to the early Cōḻa period and prior to the implementation of the early Cōḻa idiom in temple architecture. They form a link between the pre-Cōḻa and Cōḻa period. The Cōḻa period has been singled out as an independent time segment based on the coherent formation and differentiation of the types of dance relief series during the Cōḻa reign. Although the differentiation of the Cōḻa period into three segments (early, middle, and late) has been refuted in recent (historical) research,[36] this distinction tallies with the emergence of new categories of dance reliefs and has therefore been adopted for the creation of further subsections within the Cōḻa period. The subsequent development of dance relief series under the patronage of the Vijayanagara dynasty, the Nāyaka emperors and the Nāṭṭukkōṭṭai Ceṭṭiyār has been compiled under the post-Cōḻa period. The creation of dance imagery during this time segment is based on the re-use of different types of Cōḻa period dance imagery which was subsequently subject to continuous further development. Since the Cōḻa period functions as a point of reference, the reliefs created under diverse patronage have been subsumed

[36] Compare for example Karashima (2014: 131f.).

under the label 'post-Cōḻa period'. The last time segment encompasses contemporary dance relief series which were created from the end of the 20th century onwards. They again re-use selected features (regarding style and content) from Cōḻa period dance reliefs, although these series are the first examples which are located at the threshold between secular and religious domains. It is therefore reasonable to discuss them in an independent time segment.

1.3 Structure

This book consists of two parts, part A) which encompasses the theoretical framework, consisting of chapters 2 to 4, and part B) which consists of the analysis of the development of dance reliefs within chapters 5 to 8. The theoretical framework starts with a concise summary of the history of the Tamiḻ region in chapter 2. The description emphasises developments concerning architecture and art which will be important as background information for the contextualisation of the dance reliefs discussed within the subsequent chapters. After this introduction to the historical framework, chapter 3 will introduce the discourse on dance iconography. Subchapter 3.1 summarises the academic debate on dance iconography especially regarding the extension of this discourse to the dance imagery of (South-) Asia. This theoretical framework is complemented by a discussion of the relationship between dance and visual media within the framework of dance iconography in subchapter 3.2. Of special relevance is a discussion of the challenges arising in presenting movement in mostly two-dimensional images. This chapter also addresses a theoretical framework consisting of narrative modes which can be applied for the investigation of selected types of dance reliefs.

Chapter 4 "Categories of Dance Reliefs" describes my own typology of dance relief series. The first subchapter 4.1 discusses the classification system and demonstrates how this typology can be applied to the study of the development of dance relief series. The next two subchapters delineate inherent art historical aspects of specific types of dance reliefs and introduce further analytic devices for their study. Subchapter 4.2 addresses the deconstruction of symbolic depictions of classical dance and introduces a modular construction system as an analytic tool for these general dance motifs. Furthermore, the selection or creation process of virtuosic dance positions for relief series is explained. The most specialised content visualised in dance relief series are the 108 *karaṇa*s (movement units) which are

related to their definitions in the *Nāṭya Śāstra*. Besides a summary of the topics covered within the *Nāṭya Śāstra* and a discussion of the authorship and dating, this subchapter addresses the relationship between textual descriptions and dance reliefs and the correspondence between both.

Part B) of the book comprises the analysis of the formation and development of dance reliefs series under consideration of content, form and stylistic features, and a discussion of their symbolic functions. The chronological study follows the time segments outlined in the previous subchapter. Chapter 5 discusses dance sculptures and reliefs created prior to the Cōḻa period. The first subchapter 5.1 deals with the emergence of stylistic conventions for dance imagery prior to the earliest preserved dance sculptures in the Tamiḻ area. The next subchapter 5.2 is centred around *nṛtta mūrti*s. These early examples of dance positions displayed by the dancing deities can be seen as an important source of inspiration for later dance reliefs. Within three subsections, Naṭeśa sculptures at the Pallava temples in Kāñcīpuram will be analysed followed by a comparative discussion of Naṭeśa sculptures of the Chāḷukya and Rāṣṭrakūṭa dynasties. The investigation of early Naṭeśa sculptures is concluded with the evaluation of their symbolic meanings in the third subsection. The last subchapter 5.3 of the pre-Cōḻa period analyses the emergence of the earliest relief series containing general representations of female dancers (Type 1A) along with other non-dance motifs. This subchapter is concluded with a contextualisation of these Type 1A relief series taking into consideration contemporary dance reliefs at the Caṇḍi Loro Jonggrang in Central Java[37] and ends with a detailed discussion of the symbolic functions of female human or human-like dancers.

Chapter 6 on the dance reliefs of the Cōḻa period is divided into early, middle, and late Cōḻa periods as described above. The bracket figures of the early Cōḻa period (subchapter 6.1) share many stylistic features and symbolism with the general dance reliefs discussed before. The middle Cōḻa period (subchapter 6.2) encompasses on the one hand, the further evolution of the general dance images discussed in subsection 6.2.1, and on the other hand, the emergence of the *karaṇa* reliefs as outlined in subsection 6.2.2. Each middle Cōḻa period *karaṇa* series is analysed in a separate subsection taking into consideration the range of depicted movements, stylistic features, and symbolic meaning. Accordingly, subsection

[37] The discussion of this relief series shall also prove that these panels do not depict the 108 *karaṇa*s and cannot be assigned as the first *karaṇa* series as claimed by Subrahmanyam (2003a: 231).

6.2.2.1 discusses the *karaṇa* series at the Rājarājeśvara Temple and subsection 6.2.2.2 the *karaṇa* series at the Śārangapāni Temple.

The late Cōḻa period constitutes the temporal framework for subchapter 6.3. This period witnessed the emergence of the largest number of new types of dance relief series. Accordingly, subsection 6.3.1 will discuss the formation of horizontal relief series which depict different dance and drama forms. This subsection is split according to the location of these relief series, whether they are featured on temple structures conceived as a *ratha* (chariot) or not. Similar motifs were also enclosed within circular ornaments and this development during late Cōḻa period will be discussed in subsection 6.3.2. The most characteristic innovation concerning dance relief series is the arrangement of the relief panels on vertical pilasters within the gateways of the *gopura*s. Two subsections are dedicated to the discussion of this innovation during the late Cōḻa period. Subsection 6.3.3 analyses stylistic features and symbolism of general dance reliefs arranged vertically, while subsection 6.3.4 is centred around the vertically arranged *karaṇa* series at the Naṭaraja Temple and their functions within the iconographic programme of the temple.

Chapter 7 addresses the re-use of different types of dance relief series during the post-Cōḻa period, encompassing relief series which were created under Vijayanagara and Nāyaka (subchapter 7.1) or Ceṭṭiyār patronage (subchapter 7.2). As shown in subsection 7.1.1, horizontal series featuring different dance and drama forms were also created for Vijayanagara and Nāyaka structures. Within these reliefs, new modes of visualising dance became popular, along with some general modifications of content and form of the Type 3A series. Subsection 7.1.2 discusses the further development of the vertically arranged dance relief series. Like the vertical series of the late Cōḻa period, they can be further subdivided into non-*karaṇa* relief series which are usually featured on temples with a single *gopura* above the main entry (subsection 7.1.2.1) or series within temples following the *maṇḍala* configuration with four *gopura*s in the cardinal directions and which contain pseudo-*karaṇa* series (subsection 7.1.2.2). During the post-Cōḻa period, circular ornaments featuring dance and drama forms merged with large *śālabhañjikā* sculptures. This new format and its function within the temple complex are addressed in subsection 7.1.3. The next subsection, 7.1.4, analyses the only entirely new type of dance imagery to emerge during post-Cōḻa period. Conforming to the general popularity of composite column sculptures, some of them visualise characters of dance dramas. They seem to form a separate genre within composite column

sculptures and some small *maṇḍapa*s feature these Type 3D sculptures exclusively.

Another subchapter, 7.2, analyses the further development of the horizontal relief series under Ceṭṭiyār patronage in the late 19th century, characterised by the depiction of innovative dance positions and experimental approaches towards stylistic features such as perspective.

Chapter 8, the last chapter devoted to the analyses of the chronological development of dance relief series, pertains to contemporary dance reliefs which again re-use some elements of Cōḻa period dance reliefs. The first subchapter 8.1 discusses stylistic features and symbolism of non-*karaṇa* reliefs and sculptures created towards the end of the 20th century. These series are for the first time primarily featured within secular contexts, as for example at a museum or beach resort. In contrast, subchapter 8.2 discusses the re-use of the *karaṇa* motif which either remains within the temple context or can be found at the threshold between secular and religious domains. The symbolism of the *karaṇa* motif within both contexts will be analysed as well.

The conclusions in chapter 9 summarise the most important results of both parts of my book, the theoretical framework in part A), and the discussion of the development of the dance reliefs in part B). Subchapter 9.1 lists trends in the development of the different types of dance relief series and highlights both connections and differences which had been diluted within the detailed discussion of each type of dance imagery. The study of the dance reliefs is completed by a discussion of my typology which will address problems during the implementation and some limitations of these categories of dance reliefs (subchapter 9.2). Furthermore, the last paragraphs shall provide some inspiration for upcoming investigations of dance reliefs in the Tamiḻ area within the art historical approach which I hope will help contribute to the further study of dance iconography of South Asia.

To sum up, the previous subchapters introduced the present state of the discourse on dance iconography in the Tamiḻ region, including a discussion of available literature on this subject and identified the need for a comprehensive study of all types of dance reliefs. Following the introduction of my sample of selected temples featuring dance imagery and my research methodology in the subchapters above, the subsequent part A) of this book is dedicated to the formulation of the theoretical framework of my research on dance relief series.