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## The iconography of Avalokiteśvara in Java

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

All the hundred thousands of myriads of kolis of creatures... who in this world are suffering troubles will, if they hear the name of the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Avalokiteśvara, be released from that mass of troubles.

(*Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, Chapter 24, ed. Kern 1884: 406)

### 1.1 Avalokiteśvara in Java

The Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara has inspired Buddhists throughout Asia as the primary representation of compassion from ancient times onwards. Today, Java is a part of Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority country. However, it was once the origin of extraordinary Buddhist art, including a great number of Avalokiteśvara images, in stone, bronze and other metals. These representations of the Bodhisattva date from between the seventh and the thirteenth century CE. They form the subject of this study.

The earliest Avalokiteśvara images from Java are likely from Batujaya in West Java. These are found on clay tablets showing a triad with the Buddha seated in *bhadrāsana*, displaying the *vitarka-mudrā* with his right hand, and two *bodhisattvas* standing on either side. Considering Avalokiteśvara's role within Buddhist triads, it is probable that the clay tablets show the Bodhisattva as standing on the Buddha's right-hand side.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the figures are too small and worn with age to clearly identify them. Little is known about the Buddhism of the early Buddhist site of Batujaya, which appears to have been a large and active site. Based on the archaeological context and a comparison with similar tablets found in Thailand, Pierre-Yves Manguin and Agustijanto Indradjaya (2006: 250) date the Batujaya tablets to the seventh century CE. No further Avalokiteśvara images are known to have been found in West Java.<sup>2</sup>

Most of the Javanese Avalokiteśvara images are thought to come from Central Java and date from a slightly later period, between the eighth to the early tenth century. Among these are narrative reliefs carved in stone on Borobudur, stone sculptures at Candi Mendut and the Plaosan Lor complex and many small bronze statuettes. Central Java was the centre of power during this period with Hindu and Buddhist kings. The Buddhist Śailendra dynasty played an important role in the development of Buddhist art and culture. From around 900 CE the Central Javanese kings shifted their attention to East Java. As a result, the

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<sup>1</sup> These tablets were excavated at Batujaya during the National Research and Development Centre of Archaeology and the École française d'Extrême-Orient's excavations between 2002 and 2007.

<sup>2</sup> According to Véronique Degroot a shoulder and upper arm of a statue was found which has an armband, indicating that the statue represented a Bodhisattva (Personal correspondence 18-07-2015).

centre of power eventually moved to East Java in the first half of the tenth century CE.<sup>3</sup> Once this occurred, there appears to have been a sharp decline in the production of Avalokiteśvara images. The last depictions of Avalokiteśvara produced in Java are linked to Candi Jago, near Malang in East Java, a temple thought to date from the second half of the thirteenth century (Krom 1923, vol. II: 95).<sup>4</sup>

No comprehensive research has been carried out on these bronze and stone images so far. Taken as a whole, they show great iconographic and stylistic variety and also allow for contextual analysis, as a few of the stone images remain *in situ*. Moreover, a few of the bronze statuettes exist in the context of triads. Whenever relevant to the discussion of the Javanese images, I will refer to other Insular Southeast Asian images (found on the Thai-Malay Peninsula, Bali, Sulawesi and in Sumatra and West Kalimantan), to images from Mainland Southeast Asia, South Asia and at times also East Asia.

Depictions of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara can often be easily identified through the presence of the small figure of the Buddha Amitābha<sup>5</sup> seated in meditation at the front of his *jaṭāmukuta*. This characteristic can also be seen on Avalokiteśvara images found in Java and it is even mentioned in an inscription from Java.

Pay homage to that Lokeśa, the lord of the worlds, who  
illuminates all regions, who is Lokeśvara, daring to bear on  
(his) forehead<sup>6</sup> Amitābha, the ruler of the worlds!  
(Sarkar 1971-72, I: 44, verse 2)<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The last inscription from the Central Javanese period is dated to Śaka 850, viz. 928 CE (Sarkar 1971-72: 255). Different reasons have been suggested for the shift of the centre of power from Central Java to East Java. Among these are economic motives (Barrett Jones 1984: 6-7), as well as eruptions of the Merapi volcano (Newhall et al. 2000: 46).

<sup>4</sup> King Viṣṇuvardhana, to whom the temple was dedicated, died in 1268; Krom suggested that the building of the temple began slightly earlier and ended 12 years later in 1280, when a memorial ceremony was likely held (Krom 1923, vol. II: 95). However, there are no documents that describe such a ceremony.

<sup>5</sup> This Buddha figure has been identified through Buddhist texts as representing the Buddha Amitābha, Avalokiteśvara's spiritual father (Studholme 2002: 130).

<sup>6</sup> The original wording, *mūrdhan*, has a broader meaning than 'forehead' as used by Sarkar in the translation of this inscription (1971-72, I: 44, verse 2). It also means head or skull in general, as well as the top, thus the term head would be more accurate, especially considering the depictions available to us from Java.

<sup>7</sup> This is one of the few inscriptions from Java in stone that clearly refers to Avalokiteśvara, apart from the inscribed stone image of Amoghapāśa Lokeśvara at Candi Jago. The Nāgarī inscription on either side of the figure states "Bharāla Aryāmoghapāśa Lokeśvara" (Krom 1923 II: 122). Another inscription found at Ratu Boko most likely also refers to Avalokiteśvara, if we consider Kamalapāṇi as a synonym of Padmapāṇi, another name that has been used to describe Avalokiteśvara when he holds a lotus. Padmapāṇi stands for 'the one who holds the lotus in his hand', as in Lokesh Chandra's translation (1979: 3).

Sarkar translates this part of the Ratu Boko inscription as

Oh Thou! Having lotus-like palm, deign that the roots of sorrows that exist  
in the (three) worlds may be destroyed. Oh Thou with lotus-palms, do away  
with all sufferings of beings and save us from all attachment. (1971-72,  
I: 48v)

Chandra's identification of Kamalapāṇi as Avalokiteśvara is a strong possibility. However, we need to remember that the Buddhist temples in Central Java often have standing figures depicted on the outside that

This inscription was found in the village of Klurak in Central Java and dates to the Śaka year 704, viz., 782 CE (Bosch 1928: 2 and 23, Sarkar 1971-72, I: 41). It refers to the installation of an image of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī for the benefit of the world, and in this context Avalokiteśvara, under the names of Lokeśa and Lokeśvara (Lord of the World), is also invoked for protection (Sarkar 1971-72, I: 44, verses 2-3; verses 8-13).

## 1.2 Textual references to the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara

One of the earliest references to Avalokiteśvara is in the larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha*, a text first translated into Chinese in 252 CE<sup>8</sup> by Saṅghavarman (*Sukhāvatīvyūha*, ed. Müller 1894: xxiv), which mentions him together with the Bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta. In that text, the Buddha explains the idea of Pure Land Buddhism<sup>9</sup> and how all *bodhisattvas* in the Buddha Amitābha’s land of Sukhāvatī will ultimately attain Buddhahood, all except two *bodhisattvas*:

who are preaching with the voice of lions, who are girded with the noble armor of the Dharma, and who are devoted to the work of helping all people to attain *parinirvāṇa*. (*Sukhāvatīvyūha*, ed. Müller 1894: 51-52)

Ānanda then asks who these *bodhisattvas* are and the Buddha answers: Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta (*Sukhāvatīvyūha*, ed. Müller 1894: 52). Hence Avalokiteśvara is known for having chosen not to attain Buddhahood until all sentient beings have attained *parinirvāṇa* (*Sukhāvatīvyūha*, ed. Müller 1894: 52).

The popular Mahāyāna text, *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* (Lotus Sūtra), was translated into Chinese slightly later, in 286 CE. It associates Avalokiteśvara with compassion and rescuing his worshippers from great peril. In its Chapter 25, Akṣayamati asks the Buddha why the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara bears the name Avalokiteśvara.<sup>10</sup> The Buddha then explains how this particular name can be used.

If there is one who keeps the name of this bodhisattva He Who Observes the Sounds of the World [Avalokiteśvara],<sup>11</sup> even if

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appear to be *bodhisattvas* and hold a lotus. Yet, these figures are not depicted with the Buddha Amitābha in the *jaṭāmukuta*, making it difficult to identify them as Avalokiteśvara. We should therefore, in a Javanese context, be aware of the possibility of lotus-bearing figures (*kamalapāṇi* or *padmapāṇi*) who are not Avalokiteśvara.

<sup>8</sup> Although there is often no information as to when a *sūtra* was first written down, we do, however, have dates for when they were first translated into Chinese, giving us a general timeline.

<sup>9</sup> Pure Land Buddhism is a form of teaching where the practitioner is taught to focus his meditation on the Buddha in a Pure Land of the Buddhas, such as Buddha Amitābha’s kingdom of Sukhāvatī, in order to visit such a land (Williams 2009: 40).

<sup>10</sup> This text is in Chapter 24 of Kern’s translation (1884).

<sup>11</sup> In the translation by Hurvitz he utilizes the English translation of the name Guanshiyin, “He Who Observes the Sounds of the World”, however, I have included the name Avalokiteśvara within square brackets to avoid any confusion for the reader.

he should fall into a great fire, the fire would be unable to burn him, thanks to the imposing supernatural power of this bodhisattva.

If he should be carried off by a great river and call upon this bodhisattva's name, then straightway he would find a shallow place. (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, ed. Hurvitz 2009: 311)

The follower may, so the text continues, be rescued from shipwrecks, murderers, bandits and more (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, ed. Hurvitz 2009: 311-312). Additionally, a woman desiring a son, or a daughter, can make offerings to Avalokiteśvara and she will give birth to a child of the desired gender (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, ed. Hurvitz 2009: 313).

In the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, the Buddha is questioned as to the manner in which Avalokiteśvara preaches the Dharma and what devices the Bodhisattva uses. The Buddha then continues to list the various forms that Avalokiteśvara can assume in order to teach the Dharma.

The bodhisattva He Who Observes the Sounds of the World [Avalokiteśvara], having achieved such merit as this and by resort to a variety of shapes, travels in the world, conveying the beings to salvation. For this reason you must all single-mindedly make offerings to the bodhisattva He Who Observes the Sounds of the World [Avalokiteśvara] (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, ed. Hurvitz 2009: 315).

We will see in Chapter 2, that one text that may have been known during the Hindu-Buddhist period in Java (7<sup>th</sup> century – 14<sup>th</sup> century CE) or at least in parts of Southeast Asia, is the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*.

The first Mahāyāna text giving a more physical description of Avalokiteśvara is the *Amitāyurbuddhānusmṛtisūtra*, in which Avalokiteśvara is described as wearing a turban.<sup>12</sup> This text was translated into Chinese by Kālayaśas in 424 CE (*Sukhāvatīvyūha*, ed. Müller 1894: vii). In this *sūtra* a shunned queen asks the Buddha for a pure place that she can meditate on and she then wishes to be reborn in Amitābha's realm, Sukhāvatī (*Amitāyurbuddhānusmṛtisūtra*, trans. Takakusu 1965: 166). The Buddha describes Avalokiteśvara as one of the figures to meditate on to reach this heavenly land.

Perceive that an image of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara is sitting on the left-hand flowery throne, shooting forth golden rays exactly like those of Buddha... (*Amitāyurbuddhānusmṛtisūtra*, trans. Takakusu 1965: 178-179)

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<sup>12</sup> Images of Avalokiteśvara wearing a turban have been found in Gandhara (De Mallmann 1948a: Pls II c-d, Divakaran 1989: 152, Fussman and Quagliotti 2012).

...Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, whose height is eight hundred thousands of *niyutas* of *yojanas*; the colour of his body is purple gold, his head has a turban (*ushnîshasiraskatâ*) at the back of which there is a halo...

On the top of his head is a heavenly crown with gems like those that are fastened (on Indra's head) in which crown there is a transformed Buddha standing, twenty-five *yojanas* high... (*Amitāyurbuddhānusmṛtisūtra*, trans. Takakusu 1965: 181-183).

The *sūtra* that focuses especially on Avalokiteśvara is the *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* (*Avalokiteśvara-guṇa-kāraṇḍa-vyūha-sūtra*, The Magnificent Array Casket of the Qualities of Avalokiteśvara), believed to have been composed at the end of the fourth century or the beginning of the fifth century in Kashmir (Studholme 2002: 17).<sup>13</sup> The name of the *sūtra* indicates that the text represents a basket or casket filled with information regarding Avalokiteśvara and his qualities (Studholme 2002: 10). In the *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra*, as in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, Avalokiteśvara's ability to protect his followers from dangers is emphasised. The importance of the Bodhisattva's name is also highlighted, as well as Avalokiteśvara's capacity to adopt different forms in order to teach the Dharma. This is also the text which gives the well-known and powerful mantra *Oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ*.

We may elicit some iconographic information from this *sūtra* as well, particularly in the speech of Bali, the king of the *asuras*, to Avalokiteśvara, who is described as holding a lotus and wearing the image of the Buddha Amitābha.

I bow my head to the one who has the image of Amitābha; you who wear a crown of a wish-fulfilling jewel in the middle of your matted locks; you who are adorned with the auspiciousness of a lotus; you who wear a crown of matted locks and you who teach the six perfections.  
(Studholme 2002: 130)

Another description of Avalokiteśvara, in the *sūtra*, highlights his connection with the lotus, an important iconographic attribute for the Bodhisattva in Java.

Then the deva Maheśvara went and bowed down to the feet of Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Avalokiteśvara and said, "I pay homage to Avalokiteśvara, great lord, who holds a lotus, who has a lotus face, who loves the lotus, who has a beautiful lotus in his hand, who has the splendour of lotuses, who travels around, who brings relief to beings, who completely illuminates

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<sup>13</sup> A full translation is now available online at <http://read.84000.co/browser/released/U...51-004.pdf> through the work of Peter Alan Roberts, with the consulting Lama Tulku Yeshe (Accessed 17 December 2019).

the world, and who brings comfort.” (*Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra*, trans. Roberts with Yeshe 2014: 66)

The *Gaṇḍavyūha* is another text in which we find further information on Avalokiteśvara. We can surmise that this text was known in Central Java, as we see it depicted on Borobudur. The *Gaṇḍavyūha* is known as part of the larger *Avataṃsakasūtra*, an important Mahāyāna Buddhist text (*Avataṃsakasūtra*, ed. Cleary 1993: 1). It is also known as a separate text with the *Bhadracarī* appended to it from the eighth century onwards, as in the third Chinese translation of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* and on Borobudur (*Bhadracarī*, ed. Osto 2010: 1). There are two previous Chinese translations, the first by Buddhahadra between 418-420 CE and the second by Amoghavajra (763-779 CE, *Bhadracarī*, ed. Osto 2010: 2). The *Gaṇḍavyūha* is a tale of pilgrimage in which its protagonist, Sudhana, goes on a journey after having been instructed by Mañjuśrī. Sudhana travels to various spiritual teachers, who each send him on to the next, one step closer to “supreme perfect enlightenment” (*Avataṃsakasūtra*, ed. Cleary 1993: 1276). At Borobudur, the visit of Sudhana to Avalokiteśvara is shown as happening twice, in one separate relief and then in a further three in the second gallery of Borobudur. In the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, Sudhana finds Avalokiteśvara seated on a “diamond boulder”,<sup>14</sup> the only iconographic information about Avalokiteśvara that can be gleaned from this text (*Avataṃsakasūtra*, ed. Cleary 1993: 1275). Avalokiteśvara greets Sudhana with the statement:

Welcome, you who have set out on the incomparable, lofty, inconceivable Great Vehicle, intending to save all beings who are oppressed by various firmly rooted miseries and have no refuge, seeking to directly experience all the teachings of the buddhas, which are beyond all worlds, incomparable, and immeasurable... (*Avataṃsakasūtra*, ed. Cleary 1993: 1275-76)

Avalokiteśvara continues to tell Sudhana of the practise of “undertaking great compassion without delay” (*Avataṃsakasūtra*, ed. Cleary 1993: 1276). In a similar manner to the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, the reader of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* is told of all the dangers that Avalokiteśvara can rescue his followers from through his practice of “unhesitating compassion” (*Avataṃsakasūtra*, ed. Cleary 1993: 1276-78). The *Gaṇḍavyūha* and its appended text, the *Bhadracarī*, will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 5.

Various *dhāraṇīs* focusing on Avalokiteśvara also exist, including the *Amoghapāśa-dhāraṇī-sūtra*, which will be discussed further in Chapter 8. It was translated into Chinese in 587 CE by Jñānagupta. A second *dhāraṇī* is the *Mahākaruṇa Dhāraṇīsūtra*, which was translated into Chinese during the Tang period.<sup>15</sup> This *dhāraṇī* is part of a larger text, in

<sup>14</sup> “On a diamond slope, adorned with jewels,  
Sitting on a lion seat in a lotus calyx (pod), the Steadfast,  
Surrounded by various creatures and enlightened beings,  
Expounds the Teaching to them.” (*Avataṃsakasūtra*, ed. Cleary 1993: 1277)

<sup>15</sup><https://huntingtonarchive.org/resources/downloads/sutras/05bodhisattvaYana/Great%20Compassion%20Dharani%20Sutra.doc.pdf>

which Avalokiteśvara explains the benefits of reciting the *dhāraṇī*.<sup>16</sup> This type of text is considered to have protective properties and can also allow for the elimination of bad deeds.

Bhagavan, if humans or gods recite and hold the phrases of the Great Compassion *Dhāraṇī*, when they are about to die, all the Buddhas of the ten directions will come to receive them with their hands, and they will be reborn in whichever Buddha-World according to their wishes.<sup>17</sup>

Among other benefits of reciting this *dhāraṇī* is a good death, contrasted with a list of fifteen examples of a bad death. These include dying of starvation or poverty, as well as in battle or of madness. The *dhāraṇī* can also lead to a good birth and a list of fifteen is given for this as well. A few examples of good birth are that the person would always be born in a good country under a good king, he or she would always “meet virtuous friends” and “their possessions will not be plundered”.<sup>18</sup> This *dhāraṇī* is part of the *sūtra* connected to Avalokiteśvara’s thousand-armed manifestation, a form not seen in Java.

Only a few *dhāraṇīs* connected to Avalokiteśvara have been found in or near Java, and there may be more that have not yet been identified. One such *dhāraṇī* was found on gold foil in the Cirebon-shipwreck.<sup>19</sup> After paying homage to the three jewels, the text continues with paying homage to the noble Avalokiteśvara (*āryyāva(lo)kīteśvarāya*), who is called “the Bodhisattva, the great being, of great compassion” (Griffiths 2014b: 157). The exact origin of the *dhāraṇī* has not been identified, but as the text mentions wind and was found on a ship, Griffiths suspects that the *dhāraṇī* may have been used to ward off the dangers of a sea voyage (Griffiths 2014b: 158).<sup>20</sup> Another inscribed text on a piece of metal foil found at the Plaosan Lor temple complex does not actually mention Avalokiteśvara by name, but can be linked to a *dhāraṇī* that references Avalokiteśvara (Griffiths 2014b: 160). Griffiths identified the inscribed *dhāraṇī* as being a combination of two separate *dhāraṇīs*,

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(Accessed 17 December 2019). The full title of this *dhāraṇī* is *Thousand-Handed and Thousand-Eyed Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva’s Vast, Perfect, Unimpeded, Great Compassionate Heart Dhāraṇī Sūtra*.

<sup>16</sup> A *dhāraṇī* functions as a protective text that can be both spoken as a prayer or used in written form (Liebert 1976: 74; Crujsen, Griffiths and Klokke 2012: 73).

<sup>17</sup> <https://huntingtonarchive.org/resources/downloads/sutras/05bodhisattvaYana/Great%20Compassion%20Dharani%20Sutra.doc.pdf> p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> <https://huntingtonarchive.org/resources/downloads/sutras/05bodhisattvaYana/Great%20Compassion%20Dharani%20Sutra.doc.pdf> p. 6. (Accessed 17 December 2019)

<sup>19</sup> Even though this Avalokiteśvara *dhāraṇī* was not found in Java, I am including it, as it was found on a ship that probably frequented local ports. The wreck was discovered approximately 90 nautical miles outside of Cirebon in the Java Sea. The position in which the wreck was found, and its cargo, indicate that it was bound for Java (Liebner 2014: 6). The cargo from the ship is now at the Musée Royal de Mariemont in Belgium and included glassware from the Middle East and trade ceramics from China, as well as other items (Liebner 2014: 6-7).

<sup>20</sup> “Sūtra of the Great *Dhāraṇī* for Extinguishing the Five Heinous Sins” (Griffiths 2014b: 160).

one unknown and the other the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanadhāraṇī* (2014b: 160).<sup>21</sup> While there are few examples of *dhāraṇīs* that can be directly linked to Avalokiteśvara in Java, Griffiths' work evidences that *dhāraṇīs* were in use in Java, from approximately the sixth century until the ninth or tenth century (2014b: 156, 159).

A later text, the *Sādhanamālā*, from the eleventh century CE, gives iconographic information for various manifestations of Avalokiteśvara in the context of the visualization of deities. It describes the iconography of Avalokiteśvara, but also that of various Buddhas and *bodhisattvas*. Among the Avalokiteśvara manifestations is Khasarpaṇa joined by Tārā, Sudhanakumāra, Bhṛkuṭī and Hayagrīva (Bhattacharyya 1958:128), which will be discussed further in Chapter 8. However, the *Sādhanamālā*, in its entirety, is too late to apply to the majority of the Javanese Avalokiteśvara images.<sup>22</sup> Its earlier elements may still apply. A second text with iconographic descriptions, the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, gives a list of *maṇḍalas*. It was originally written by Mahāpaṇḍita Abhayākaragupta at approximately the same time as the *Sādhanamālā* and describes Avalokiteśvara as the ninth Bodhisattva (*Niṣpannayogāvalī*, ed. Bhattacharyya 1949: 26). Avalokiteśvara is described as displaying the *varada-mudrā* with his right hand and holding a lotus in his left hand (*Niṣpannayogāvalī*, ed. Bhattacharyya 1949: 26).

Only a few Buddhist texts have survived from Java. One of these is the Old Javanese text, *Sang hyang Kamahāyānikan*, thought to have been written between 929–947 CE, just after the centre of power had been moved from Central to East Java. It is a Mahāyāna Buddhist text, but it also contains Vajrayāna Buddhist teachings. The text mentions Avalokiteśvara a few times and describes him as representing the Dharma within the *triratna* of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The Buddha is described as being in the middle with the Dharma (Avalokiteśvara) on his right side and the Sangha (Vajrapāṇi) on the left (*Sang hyang Kamahāyānikan*, ed. Kats 1910: a53, b56).<sup>23</sup>

Another Old Javanese text is the *Kuṇḍjarakarṇadharmakathana*, dating to the fourteenth or fifteenth century CE (Teeuw, Robson and Bernet Kempers 1981: 46). Max Nihom demonstrated that this text shows traces of older Buddhist materials, among which are three *maṇḍalas*: the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana-maṇḍala*, the *Jagadvinaya-maṇḍala* and the *Trailokyavijaya-maṇḍala*, but interestingly not the *Vajradhātu-maṇḍala* (Nihom 1994: 14). More importantly for a study of Avalokiteśvara in Java, Nihom determined that the first part of the *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* was known in the Indonesian Archipelago, based on a

<sup>21</sup> Part of the *Amoghapāśahṛdayadhāraṇī* was found inscribed on a gold foil from Pura Pagulingan in Bali (Griffiths 2014b: 184).

<sup>22</sup> The majority of the iconographic forms of Avalokiteśvara described in the *Sādhanamālā* have not been found in Java.

<sup>23</sup> “Er komt eene godheid uit de rechterzijde van het lichaam van den luisterrijken Bh. Sakyamuni, rood van kleur, met de dhyana-mudrā, ontstaande uit hrīh-kāra. Hij wordt de luisterrijken Bodhisattva Lokeśvara geheeten.” (*Sang hyang Kamahāyānikan*, ed. Kats 1910: 108)

“De heilige Śrī Sakyamuni heeft in waarheid den heiligen Buddha tot tatwa, Śrī Lokeśvara heeft den heiligen dharma tot tatwa, Śrī Vajrapāṇi heeft tot tatwa den edelen (eerbiedwaardigen) sanggha.” (*Sang hyang Kamahāyānikan*, ed. Kats 1910: 111)

comparison of the descriptions of hell in the *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* and the *Kuṇḍarakarṇadharmakathana* (1994: 136).

### *1.3 Previous research on Avalokiteśvara's iconography*

A number of monographs have been written about Avalokiteśvara in various parts of Asia, but no such study has been done for Java as of yet.

#### *Avalokiteśvara in South Asia*

The development of Avalokiteśvara's iconography in South Asia has been explored by Marie-Thérèse de Mallmann in her *Introduction à l'étude d'Avalokiteçvara* (1948a). She particularly examined images found in Gandhara, Sanchi, Maharashtra, Bihar and Bengal. This work continues to function as a reference source for any scholar wishing to study this Bodhisattva. She begins with an exposition of the Buddhist texts that refer to the Bodhisattva and includes extracts from translated texts.<sup>24</sup> The name of Avalokiteśvara has salvatory properties, which de Mallmann discusses in her examination of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* (1948a: 29). De Mallmann further examines the possible origins of Avalokiteśvara, a topic which has also been researched by Dayal (1932), Chandra (1988), Studholme (2002) and Boucher (2008), to name a few important scholars. In the fourth part of her book, de Mallmann carries out a chronological study of the Indian images of Avalokiteśvara, before moving on to discussing specific iconographic and stylistic features of the images, such as the *jaṭāmukuta* and the antelope skin (1948a: 219, 226). De Mallmann notes that a few of the features do not correspond to those described in available Buddhist texts. She also argues that the earliest images of the Bodhisattva do not show him with a Buddha figure in his *jaṭāmukuta*,<sup>25</sup> but that this becomes a fixed element by the Gupta period (de Mallmann 1948a: 311).

John C. Holt published a study of Avalokiteśvara in the Buddhist traditions of Sri Lanka in 1991. Holt's approach is not art historical; through the historical study of Sri Lankan Buddhism he focuses on the development and transformation of Avalokiteśvara into a local deity named Nātha, who then eventually morphed into the future Buddha, Maitreya (Holt 1991: 19). Images as well as epigraphical evidence show the presence of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in Sri Lanka from the seventh up to and including the tenth century (Holt 1991: 91). Within this context, Holt examines the earliest bronze depictions of Avalokiteśvara in Sri Lanka, which show the Bodhisattva as an independent figure (Holt 1991: 76). These Sri Lankan statuettes date to approximately the eighth century CE, the same time frame in which we begin to see a large number of Central Javanese bronze statuettes (Holt: 1991: Pls 1-7). The iconography began to change when Avalokiteśvara developed into Nātha. Although Avalokiteśvara's characteristic feature, the Amitābha

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<sup>24</sup> These texts include *Sukhāvatīvyūha* (de Mallmann 1948a: 21), *Amitāyurbuddhānusmṛti Sūtra* (1948a: 22), *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* (1948a: 28), *Lokeśvaraśataka* (1948a: 36), *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* (1948a: 39), *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* (1948a: 47) and *Sādhnamālā* (1948a: 48).

<sup>25</sup> These early images originate from the Gandhara region.

Buddha in the *jaṭāmukuta*, remains present in images of Nātha, a greater emphasis was placed on royal features (Holt 1991: 87).

### *Avalokiteśvara in Mainland Southeast Asia*

Nandana Chutiwongs made a PhD study of Avalokiteśvara in Mainland Southeast Asia in 1984, which was published in 2002. Her collection of images, along with her analysis, are of great support to anyone interested in the Bodhisattva's role in Mainland Southeast Asian culture. After a general introduction, Chutiwongs focuses on Burma,<sup>26</sup> and then moves to central Thailand (particularly the so-called Dvāravatī period), Cambodia<sup>27</sup> and eventually Campā.

Each of Chutiwongs' chapters begin with an overview of the development of Buddhism in these geographical areas. Chutiwongs then explores the role of Avalokiteśvara within local Buddhism, how he was portrayed and what roles he fulfilled. In the conclusion of the thesis she notes that Avalokiteśvara's role in the Buddhism of Mainland Southeast Asia evolved over time and that he functioned as an assistant to the Buddha, an "anonymous divine worshipper" and an independent deity (Chutiwongs 1984: 489). She performs an iconographic and stylistic analysis of the images of Avalokiteśvara and attempts to place them in a chronological order (Chutiwongs 1984: 484). She traces the earliest Avalokiteśvara images in Mainland Southeast Asia to influence from northern India during the Gupta period. This stimulus did not penetrate to what is now modern Cambodia, but it was evident in Śrī Kṣetra (Burma), Dvāravatī (Thailand), Campā (Central Vietnam) and in the Thai-Malay Peninsula (1984: 485). According to Chutiwongs, the area of origin of influence then switched to Maharashtra during the late Gupta and post-Gupta period (1984: 484). In the Mainland Southeast Asian material, she frequently observes a combination of characteristics that can be associated with the Avalokiteśvara images from Maharashtra, the western Deccan and the eastern Deccan. Relationships with northeastern India can be seen from the eighth century CE, specifically in "Burma and the Malay archipelago" (Chutiwongs 1984: 485). The final effect of Buddhist knowledge from this region on Mainland Southeast Asia came at the end of the twelfth and the early thirteenth centuries CE, probably because monks were fleeing from Buddhist monasteries, for instance Nalanda, to various regions among which was Southeast Asia (Chutiwongs 1984: 485).

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<sup>26</sup> Burma is known for its Theravāda Buddhism, and even though Avalokiteśvara is a figure popular in Mahāyāna forms of Buddhism, the Bodhisattva found some popularity in the area (Chutiwongs 1984: 112). Votive tablets from the eighth century and later show the Bodhisattva in various attitudes (Chutiwongs 1984: Pls 34 - 38). Some of the tablets appear to originate from Northeast India and others were produced locally (1984: 112). These tablets along with metal images of the Bodhisattva indicate that there was a local cult of the Bodhisattva (1984: 112).

<sup>27</sup> In Khmer art Avalokiteśvara often takes on an accompanying role in a triad and is joined by Prajñāpāramitā. He is also present in a slightly more unusual group of four, which consists of Avalokiteśvara, the Buddha, Prajñāpāramitā and Vajrapāṇi (Chutiwongs 1984: 334). The worship of Avalokiteśvara increased during the early tenth century in Cambodia (Chutiwongs 1984: 318). The form of worship changed during the reign of Jayavarman VII, at which point the Bodhisattva had a role within the apotheosis pantheon, which led to Avalokiteśvara eventually being worshipped as a healer of the sick (Chutiwongs 1984: 319).

### *Avalokiteśvara in China*

Chün-Fang Yü's exhaustive work on *The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara* (2001) deals with the domestication of Avalokiteśvara in China.<sup>28</sup> Yü examines scriptures, miracle tales, iconography, ritual and pilgrimage. The Bodhisattva became domesticated in China through pilgrimage sites and was also absorbed into local legends such as that of the Princess Miao-shan (Yü 2001: 348). Yü's comprehensive method yields a thorough study of how the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara developed over time into a female deity in China. Such a broad approach would also be beneficial for the examination of the cultural significance of Avalokiteśvara in Java. Unfortunately, the lack of written materials and accounts referring to the Bodhisattva in Java makes this avenue unfeasible. An iconographic and stylistic analysis is the best way forward to provide insight into the worship of Avalokiteśvara in Java and is therefore the major focus of my research.

### *Avalokiteśvara in Insular Southeast Asia*

No separate, comprehensive study of Avalokiteśvara exists for Insular Southeast Asia. A number of Avalokiteśvara images have been found on Sumatra and these were included in Nik Hassan Shuhaimi's PhD thesis from 1984, *Art, archaeology and the early kingdoms in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra: c. 400-1400 A.D.* A group of Buddhist statuettes was also found at Sambas in western Kalimantan in the 1940s, which included four images of Avalokiteśvara (Quaritch Wales 1949: 23-32, Harrison 1949: 33-110).

A few articles focus on Avalokiteśvara in Java. In a 1994 article Nandana Chutiwongs discussed several of the 'pensive' Avalokiteśvara statuettes from Java. She compares them with other similar images elsewhere, including India and Mainland Southeast Asia. She notes that "the popularity of this type of Avalokiteśvara image seems to have been confined only to the sphere of Indonesian culture in Southeast Asia, and the Far East" (1994: 103). She suggests that these images may have a relationship with the Buddhist teachers Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra, who travelled from India to China via sea and stayed for a period of time in the Indonesian archipelago (Chutiwongs 1994: 103-104). In Chapter 4, I will elaborate on the Javanese images.

In a slightly longer article, Nancy Tingley (2006-07) studied the stone images of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara that have remained *in situ*. Tingley deduced that the artists who made the Avalokiteśvara reliefs on Borobudur must have had a wide-spread knowledge of Avalokiteśvara, as he was depicted in various iconographic forms (2006-07: 70). Tingley concludes that the Javanese sculptors tended to remain faithful to the Buddhist texts when illustrating these on monuments, such as Candi Mendut and Borobudur (2006-07: 77). The artists may have remained faithful to the narrative of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* and the *Bhadracarī*; however, there is little iconographic information about Avalokiteśvara available in these two texts, as will be discussed in Chapter 5. Texts

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<sup>28</sup> Yü commented that Avalokiteśvara is associated with royalty in Southeast Asia as well as in Sri Lanka, which Holt also noted for Sri Lanka (2001: 3).

that may have had an impact on the design of Candi Mendut or the Plaosan Lor complex, which have Avalokiteśvara images, are still being debated by scholars and I will return to this issue in Chapter 7.

Tingley did not incorporate the many Avalokiteśvara bronzes from Java in her study, stating that while the majority of available images are bronzes and as “...the context within which bronze images were worshipped [is absent], it is not possible to fully comprehend the individual object’s import” (2006-07: 65). She suggests that a focus on Javanese *in situ* stone images is “more useful in furthering our understanding of Javanese Buddhism as it was practised in ninth- through thirteenth century Java” (Tingley 2006-07: 65). Reviewing only one type of image, i.e. those on state temples, informs us about one type of context. While I agree that the full importance of an image without a context may be difficult to understand, we should, however, try and use all available information to get a better idea of Avalokiteśvara's meaning in various contexts in Java. The large number of Avalokiteśvara statuettes in bronze, silver or gold may partly compensate for the loss of their original context.

While Tingley’s article focuses only on Javanese images, Chutiwongs, in her 2010 article, gives a brief overview of Avalokiteśvara images from Java as well as other parts of Insular Southeast Asia, including ten illustrations of images from Java. Chutiwongs notes the many stylistic and iconographic varieties of these Avalokiteśvara images, which, according to her, indicate that the Bodhisattva played various roles in Insular Southeast Asia, such as the “personification of Universal Compassion” and as part of triads with Buddha in the centre (2010: 8). As for the origin of stylistic traits, she comments:

The amazing varieties in style of Avalokiteśvara images made during the period and in areas under Sailendra supremacy, reveal many different types of artistic influences which entered maritime Southeast Asia from various art and cultural centres abroad... (Chutiwongs 2010: 2).

Chutiwongs distinguishes five main sources of “influences” from India that affected the production of Avalokiteśvara images in Insular Southeast Asia (2010:10). These are the Gupta-style, the Buddhist caves at Maharashtra, the Amaravati style of Southeast India, Sri Lanka and medieval Northeast India<sup>29</sup> (2010: 10-11). She also offers an approximate chronology (2010: 3).

The dating of Buddhist temples in Java is by necessity broad. We also only have a few images of the Bodhisattva in bronze that have been excavated in a serious archaeological manner. Therefore, we have very limited chronological information for bronze Avalokiteśvaras. A few known find sites of bronzes exist, such as Klaten and the Prambanan area for two 'pensive' Avalokiteśvaras (Maps 3 and 4, Cat. nos 86 and 111). Further examples of find sites for the two-armed, standing Avalokiteśvara images in

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<sup>29</sup>The area concerned includes Bihar, Bengal and Odisha in Northeast India.

bronze, are two locations in Central Java, Sragen and Desa Karangjambe in Banjarnegara, Banyumas (Map 3, Cat. nos 232 and 248), along with three others that were found in East Java at Puger Wetan and Semarang (Map 4, Cat. nos 249-251). A four-armed, standing Avalokiteśvara in gold was found at Demak in Central Java (Map 3, Cat. no. 255), but this image was unfortunately destroyed in a fire at the Paris Colonial Exhibition in 1931 (Bosch and Le Roux 1931: 663-683). A large Avalokiteśvara image in silver-plated bronze was found at Tekaran, Wonogiri in Central Java and can now be seen in the Museum Nasional Indonesia in Jakarta (Map 3, Cat. no. 259). Finally, only one bronze image of the Bodhisattva found on Sumatra carries an inscribed date, Śaka year 961, 1039 CE (Cat. no. 278, Griffiths 2014a: 218). The majority of images made in bronze or other metals are now in various museums, having lost their original contextual information.

### *Research on Javanese Buddhist imagery*

While only a few studies have focused specifically on Avalokiteśvara, several scholars have discussed bronze statuettes of Avalokiteśvara within the context of larger groups of Buddhist and Hindu images found in Java, or elsewhere in Indonesia or Insular Southeast Asia. As part of the Gonda Lecture in 2012, Robert Brown discussed the importance of bronze statuettes in the spread and development of Buddhism in Southeast Asia. According to Brown, Buddhism could flourish outside of monastic institutions due to metal icons (2014: 31). During the sixth and seventh centuries CE, these icons introduced in Southeast Asia “a new source for expressing Buddhist sentiments” in a non-institutional context (Brown 2014: 33).

One of the most important studies, and one I will often refer to, is Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer’s attempt to identify stylistic developments among Javanese bronzes (Lunsingh Scheurleer in Lunsingh Scheurleer and Klokke 1988). Her study was, however, based on a limited number of images, from Dutch collections only. She included Avalokiteśvara images in all her groups, except for Group 5, which consists of images from the Nganjuk *maṇḍala* (Lunsingh Scheurleer and Klokke 1988: Pls 51-53).<sup>30</sup>

Lunsingh Scheurleer’s first four groups, with images from Java, are the most important for my research. She describes the first phase of Hindu and Buddhist bronze production in Java as reliant on bronze models imported from India and copied by local bronze casters (Groups 1 and 2; Lunsingh Scheurleer and Klokke 1988: 24-30). The next step in the development of bronze image production was eventually in what she calls a ‘pure Javanese style’ dated to the Central Javanese period (Group 3; Lunsingh Scheurleer and Klokke 1988: 80-90). In Group 4 she brings together later bronzes that show a third phase of development. These bronzes are believed to originate from both Central and East Java and date from the late Central Javanese to the early East Javanese period (Lunsingh Scheurleer and Klokke 1988: 91-102).

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<sup>30</sup> Avalokiteśvara is not among the surviving bronzes of the *maṇḍala* (Krom 1913a).

Work has also been done on identifying and discussing Avalokiteśvara's role in the context of iconographic programmes of specific temples (Krom 1927, Bosch 1930 and 1938, Singhal 1991, Bautze-Picron 1997, Long 2009). Krom tried to identify the group of eight *bodhisattvas* in the *Bhadracarī* reliefs on the fourth gallery of Borobudur as well as on the outside of Candi Mendut (1927). Other researchers, such as C. Bautze-Picron and M. Long, have also tried to identify this group of eight *bodhisattvas* (1997, 2009). Singhal (1991) discussed Avalokiteśvara at Candi Mendut in the context of the entire iconographic programme which she believed relates to the *Garbhādhātumaṇḍala*. These iconographic programmes will be discussed further in Chapters 5 and 7.

The research on Javanese images of Avalokiteśvara has thus far indicated a variety of iconographical forms, but no work has incorporated all available Avalokiteśvara images and tried to analyse them as a group of related objects. It seems fruitful to carry out a more comprehensive study that includes all Avalokiteśvara images from Java. Such a study needs to focus on all his aspects, not just one. This includes interpreting stone, bronze and other metal sculptures in relationship with each other and discussing not only contexts with important monastic and royal involvement, such as Borobudur, but also contexts in which more popular ideas on Avalokiteśvara functioned.

#### *1.4 Aims and organisation of the thesis*

The first aim of the thesis is to collect and make available a comprehensive collection of Javanese Avalokiteśvara images, dating from around the seventh century to the thirteenth century CE. These are now organised in the Catalogue and are ordered after the thesis chapters.<sup>31</sup> However, this collection should not be considered final as more archaeological discoveries may add to it in the future. Secondly, the intention is to analyse this material art historically through iconography and style by creating iconographic groups and discuss stylistic developments within these groups. A categorisation of iconographic and stylistic features can help us place the bronze Avalokiteśvara statuettes in time, establish workshops and developments, identify relationships with images from other Buddhist regions and give further insight into connections between Java and the rest of the Buddhist world. I also hope to gain more information on the function of the images, both in royal foundations and in more popular contexts.

The images of Avalokiteśvara that have been found in Java illustrate a broad stylistic diversity and several different iconographies. In order to organise these images for further study, I have developed groups that either centre on a specific iconographic feature, or on a combination of stylistic and iconographic features. The choice of these groups has been dictated by the images themselves or by their location on a particular temple. The groups are described in a loosely chronological order. Thus, in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 6, I will examine groups of Avalokiteśvara images that are based on specific iconographic features,

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<sup>31</sup> In order for the Catalogue to be as extensive as possible, I have included examples of Avalokiteśvara images despite their photographs being of poor quality.

sometimes in combination with stylistic characteristics, as in Chapter 6. If there are many images in a group, the group is further divided into stylistic subgroups.

The standing ascetic form of Avalokiteśvara, which is common in Peninsular Thailand, but rare in Java is focused on in Chapter 2. It may be one of the earliest forms of the Bodhisattva in Insular Southeast Asia. In Chapter 3, I examine images in which Avalokiteśvara sits in *lalitāsana*, a popular iconographic stance for these metal Avalokiteśvara images in Java. It is in this group that we may find evidence of images originating from South Asia as well as for the chronological development of a local artistic language. Another iconographic form is studied in Chapter 4, the ‘pensive’ Avalokiteśvara. I will discuss the history behind the naming of this iconographic form and examine how it may have reached Java and was adopted. It was not a common iconographic depiction in South Asia but became quite popular in China in the form of Cintāmaṇi-cakra Avalokiteśvara. In Chapter 6, I focus on an iconographic group of Avalokiteśvara images, unique to Java, seated in *sattvaparyāṅkāśana*. These images were most likely produced over a limited period of time, judging from their similarity in style.

Despite their variable iconography, I chose to group the *in situ* stone images, such as those at Borobudur, Candi Mendut and the Plaosan Lor complex, in order to discuss them as part of their shared art historical context in the same iconographic programme (Chapters 5 and 7). In Chapter 5, I examine the reliefs of Avalokiteśvara found on Borobudur, which gives me information I can then use in Chapter 6. In Chapter 7, the remaining *in situ* images in stone of the Bodhisattva in Central Java, at Candi Mendut and the Plaosan Lor complex, are examined and compared with the available, smaller metal Avalokiteśvara statuettes with a similar iconography. This type of comparison is continued in Chapter 8, in which I deal with both stone and bronze images of Amoghapāśa Lokeśvara from Java, the Avalokiteśvara form who carries a rope to rescue souls. In these chapters, the art historical context allows for the dating of a group of bronzes in Chapter 6 and a comparison between the types of iconographic forms depicted in stone and those in bronze. Chapter 9 is the conclusion, in which I try to pull together the information gathered in the other chapters to further understand the development of Avalokiteśvara imagery and Avalokiteśvara’s cult in Java.

The catalogue for this thesis is structured following the chapters and the final sections focus on the remaining standing Avalokiteśvara bronze images that could not be included with the ascetic Avalokiteśvara (Chapter 2) or the Amoghapāśa Lokeśvaras (Chapter 8). Among these, is a large number of standing bronze statuettes of the Bodhisattva (Cat. nos 225-278), referenced briefly in Chapter 7. A further group of Avalokiteśvaras, seated in *padmāsana*, will also be included despite not being discussed in the thesis (Cat. nos 279-282), along with a singular Avalokiteśvara head (Cat. no. 283). I have added these in order to be as comprehensive as possible. During my research I found more images, even up to the moment of finalizing this thesis. Those found at the last moment have been placed in an Addendum to the Catalogue (p. 321). Furthermore, I have included the numbers of the images in the National Museum of Indonesia in Jakarta that I did not have access to (p. 319), but which are briefly described by Krom (1913a). While I have attempted to make

the catalogue as comprehensive as possible, I realise I may still have missed images and as noted above, further publications or discoveries may add to the number of Avalokiteśvara images from Java.

After each group of images, I present iconographic features (hand gestures and attributes) in tables as part of the Catalogue. For further reference I have also listed the category numbers of the images that have specific features in common. These features are inscriptions, dot and circle patterns on the lower garment, the use of the tiger skin around the hips and those bronzes that I date to 825-850 CE (p.319).





Plate 2. Two-armed ascetic Avalokiteśvara in the Musée national des arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris (Cat. no. 1).