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The iconography of Avalokiteśvara in Java

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Chapter 3

Avalokiteśvara seated in *lalitāsana*: imported or locally produced?

Beyond the obvious facts that he has at some time done manual labour, that he takes snuff, that he is a Freemason, that he has been in China, and that he has done a considerable amount of writing lately, I can deduce nothing else.

The Red Headed League (Conan Doyle 1991: 32).

3.1 Introduction

Java has yielded a plethora of metal statuettes of Avalokiteśvara, in which he sits in *lalitāsana*, a pose described as the “posture of relaxation” (Liebert 1976: 151). I have found 44 Javanese bronze statuettes showing Avalokiteśvara in this pose (Cat. nos 40-84), a common way of representing Avalokiteśvara in both India and Sri Lanka.

The pose shows the Bodhisattva’s right leg pendant, with the foot resting on a lotus blossom emerging from the base.⁵³ The left leg is folded and rests on the seat. The primary hand gesture associated with this form in Java is the gift-giving gesture or the *varada-mudrā*. Avalokiteśvara displays this gesture with his right hand resting on the pendant leg, while the left hand holds a lotus. De Mallmann described the *lalitāsana* pose as a general pose for all *bodhisattvas* in India (1948a: 254). We see Avalokiteśvara in this stance in the later caves at Ellora and it is a frequent form for Khasarpaṇa Lokeśvara in Pāla-Sena art, in which he displays the *varada-mudrā* as well (de Mallmann 1948a: 254). However, the name Khasarpaṇa Lokeśvara is first found in the *Sādhana-mālā*, an eleventh century text, dating it to after the majority of the Javanese bronzes were produced. In this form Avalokiteśvara is accompanied by Tārā, Sudhanakumāra, Bhṛkuṭī and Hayagrīva. In Java, the *lalitāsana* pose is not associated with a specific iconographic combination illustrating one form of Avalokiteśvara but is used in various depictions of the Bodhisattva. I have created this group based solely on the sitting posture. However, other iconographic variables can be observed within this large group, for instance as concerns the number of arms and the types of attributes carried in the hands.

The Avalokiteśvara statuettes in *lalitāsana* studied in this chapter have been identified as originating from Northeast India, Central Java and East Java. This iconographic group of

⁵³ The form of *lalitāsana* in which the left leg is pendant and the right leg rests on the seat is rare in Javanese depictions, but it does occur occasionally in Indian art.

bronzes is the second largest among Avalokiteśvara images in Java.⁵⁴ I will specifically examine the features that have led scholars to identify certain *lalitāsana* Avalokiteśvara statuettes found in Java as ‘Indian’, and will attempt to determine whether these features are indeed Indian, or rather steps in the local artists’ method of developing a Javanese artistic language.

3.2 Javanese metal images of Avalokiteśvara seated in *lalitāsana*: iconography and style

Various stylistic groups emerge among the *lalitāsana* Avalokiteśvara statuettes discussed. These can be divided into four groups of images.⁵⁵ The iconography of these statuettes is consistent in that all Avalokiteśvara figures are seated in *lalitāsana*. The iconographic differences are limited to the number of arms and the attributes and hand gestures. Among the most common of these are the *varada-mudrā* displayed with the right hand and a lotus held in the left hand. The first group consists of statuettes showing Avalokiteśvara seated in *lalitāsana* but adorned with a sacred thread only and no jewellery. The images in this group have already been presented in Chapter 2. The second group shows a strong stylistic connection with Indian bronzes. The third group includes statuettes that depart from an Indian style and can be considered to belong to the Central Javanese period. The fourth and final group concerns statuettes that have also been made in a Javanese style but show a further stylistic development that suggests a later time period of production, i.e. the late Central Javanese to the early East Javanese period.

Group 1: Statuettes of Avalokiteśvara without jewellery (Cat. nos 40-42)

Together with a lack of jewellery, all three statuettes are similar in the way they are seated in *lalitāsana* and all display the *varada-mudrā*. We do, however, see different back pieces and bases. Such statuettes of the unadorned Avalokiteśvara in *lalitāsana* are much rarer than those of the adorned Avalokiteśvara in *lalitāsana* in the following groups. I have only been able to find three such statuettes from Java. There are no such statuettes from the rest of Southeast Asia, while there are several statuettes of Avalokiteśvara in *lalitāsana* from Sri Lanka with only a *yajñopavīta*, but no jewellery (von Schroeder 1990: Pls 79A-E).

The first of these Javanese statuettes shows Avalokiteśvara seated on a double lotus with a pointed solid back piece with a plain double rim (Cat. no. 40). This figure’s *jaṭāmukuta* is unusual for Avalokiteśvara, as the frontal piece is taller than the *jaṭāmukuta*, but there is evidence of the Buddha Amitābha in front. The second is a gilded statuette which is now at the Weltmuseum in Vienna (Cat. no. 41). The statuette’s gilding allows us to see the beautiful pattern that once adorned the lower garment; unfortunately, this detail is difficult to see from a photograph. The base has a ‘*ye dharma*’ inscription running around the

⁵⁴ The most popular iconographic form shows Avalokiteśvara seated in *sattvaparyāṅkāśana*. These statuettes will be discussed in Chapter 6.

⁵⁵ Another iconographic form which is occasionally seen seated in *lalitāsana* is the sorrowful/pensive Avalokiteśvara. When the Bodhisattva displays this iconographic stance in Javanese images, he is usually seated in *mahārājāḷāsana*. These objects will be discussed in Chapter 4.

plinth.⁵⁶ Avalokiteśvara displays the *varada-mudrā* with his right hand while holding out his left hand, which likely once held a lotus.

The third statuette combines gold and bronze (Cat. no. 42). Its throne shows *makara* figures on either side of Avalokiteśvara and at the base there are two lion figures. As the seated figure is clearly separate from the base, the latter may not have been originally intended for this figure. Avalokiteśvara's right foot does not reach its intended lotus support. Yet, the presence of a lotus foot rest indicates that the occupier of the throne was depicted in *lalitāsana*. This could have been Avalokiteśvara, but other *bodhisattvas* were also depicted in this pose. These three statuettes in Group 1 do not exhibit any Northeast Indian stylistic features, such as those discussed for the next group.

Group 2: Statuettes showing an affinity with Northeast Indian bronzes (Cat. nos 43-56)

Group 2 includes statuettes of Avalokiteśvara in *lalitāsana* and illustrates stylistic features seen among Buddhist bronzes from the northeastern part of the Indian subcontinent. These features in Indian bronzes include the lotus seat with a pearl rim decorating the pod, a parasol suspended directly over the *prabhāmaṇḍala*, flames, rather than foliage, along the rim of the back piece, Indian facial features⁵⁷ and feet supporting the bases.

The first three statuettes in Group 2 illustrate a back piece with the flames creating an interlocking pattern (Cat. nos 43-45). The first image in this group has a back piece similar to that of a Buddha statuette found at Jhewari, near Chittagong in Bangladesh (Bengal; Pl. 3A) with the solid circle surrounded by a plain, flat rim with flames along the outside. This particular style of back piece can be found in both Bengal and Bihar.⁵⁸ The second statuette also has a solid back piece, but the third has been given an open-worked back piece, which is more common among bronzes from the northeastern Indian subcontinent (Huntington 1994: 63).

Another bronze shows a Buddhist triad with Avalokiteśvara seated to the Buddha's right (Cat. no. 47). This statuette is currently on display at the Museum Nasional Indonesia in Jakarta. The Bodhisattva sits in *lalitāsana*, with his right foot supported by a lotus blossom that has emerged from under his double lotus seat. He displays the *varada-mudrā* with his

⁵⁶ A common inscription found on various Buddhist objects as well as on two gilded Avalokiteśvara statuettes in Java is the 'ye dharma' formula, referring to the Buddha's teachings (Skilling 2003-04: 273). This short text is considered to have been spoken by Aśvajit, one of the first five monks to have been converted by the Buddha, to the ascetic Śāriputra (Skilling 2003-04: 273).

The Tāthagata has declared the cause and also the cessation
Of the things (dhammā) that arise from causes:
Such is the teaching of the Great Samāṇa
(Skilling 2003-04: 273).

By hearing this text Śāriputra was able to reach the "first stage of realisation" (Skilling 2003-04: 273).

⁵⁷ Among these features are often included almond-shaped eyes and a beak-shaped nose. Unfortunately, the facial features are often worn, making these difficult to distinguish.

⁵⁸ For further examples, see Bhattacharyya 1979 and Mitra 1982: Pls 29, 57, 89 and 113.

right hand and in his left hand he holds a lotus. We can see the flower, with a book resting on top, by his head.

The back piece is oval with a pearl décor rim, similar to what we see around the lotus seat pod. This type of back piece is seen in several of the statuettes in this group. The top of the back piece has a parasol directly over it. The lotus seat of the Bodhisattva does not rest directly on the base, but is part of a larger plant, emerging from the base with the other two lotus seats. Two examples of this type of seat resting on a stem rather than directly on the base can be seen in Comparative plates 3C-3D.

The other statuettes in this group show a variety of back pieces, and it is primarily this feature which we can compare to bronzes found in Bihar and Bengal in Northeast India and Bangladesh (Pls 3A-G). Four of the last statuettes in this group (Cat. nos 51-54) have a solid back piece with a double-lined frame, which is edged by s-shaped flames.⁵⁹ Flames are the décor for back pieces in Northeast India.⁶⁰

Group 3: Statuettes showing a Central Javanese style (Cat. nos 57-80)

A statuette that perfectly exemplifies Central Javanese stylistic elements for the natural physical form can be seen at the Museum Nasional Indonesia in Jakarta (Cat. no. 57). This two-armed, bronze Avalokiteśvara wears a necklace, earrings in a bulbous form, armbands and simple bracelets. The *yajñopavīta* is tied with a loop at the left shoulder and crosses the body at the waist. The sacred thread has incised ridges along its edges. The lower garment carries a pattern of small circles with other circles of dots around them. An oval, double lotus functions as the Bodhisattva's seat. It rests on a stepped base with a flat top. Out of the bottom of the base emerges a lotus stem, on which the right foot (now missing) would rest. A hole at the back of the base could have served as a fixture for a back piece.

The Central Javanese stylistic elements exemplified by this statuette are the double lotus seat and the manner in which the physical form is portrayed. In general, other Central Javanese stylistic elements include an oval double lotus seat, a parasol that extends out over the figure, and a limited amount of jewellery, which includes a necklace, one set of armbands and bracelets. Many of the statuettes in this group lack back pieces. In those cases, the statuette has been included in this group based on Avalokiteśvara's physical form. There is a certain softness to the Central Javanese physical form. No attempt has been made by the bronze casters to sculpt muscles or illustrate any specific physical strength. Lunsingh Scheurleer described it as there being no "real attempt to evoke the image of a living being" (1994: 80). The bronze worker would include a navel and nipples by using slight indentations, but no further human physical features.

⁵⁹ Another statuette which will be discussed as part of Group 3, has a halo decorated with flames (Cat. no. 66).

⁶⁰ Huntington 1984: figs 164-169, 174-176.

These elements can be seen in most of the statuettes in this group that have two, four, six or eight arms. Although the majority of these images lack back pieces, one of the few bronzes with a back piece is Cat. no. 64. This back piece has a petal shape with foliage along the rim. It is the type of back piece that is specific to Central Java. It is specifically found with the images that are seated in *sattvaparyāṅkāśana*. These images form a group that can be defined as purely Javanese in style. This type of back piece will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

One statuette in Group 3 also shows a strong similarity with an *in situ* stone image of Avalokiteśvara at Candi Mendut, where Avalokiteśvara is depicted seated in *lalitāsana* (Cat. no. 66). This statuette, now on display at the British Museum, sits on a royal throne (Bautze-Picron 1992: 22). This type of throne features *vyālakas* standing on elephants, as does the stone throne at Candi Mendut.⁶¹ The statuette's back piece slots into the base. The halo is different from the one depicted in stone. The bronze halo has a rim with flames framing it, on the basis of which this image could have been included in Group 2. However, it is included in Group 3 because of the physical form of Avalokiteśvara and its close resemblance to the statue at Candi Mendut, as well as the presence of an oval lotus seat. It could also be that bronze images, such as this one, inspired the design of Avalokiteśvara inside Candi Mendut.

Group 4: Statuettes showing a late Central Javanese or early East Javanese style (Cat. nos 81-83)

An image that clearly illustrates Group 4 with its late Central Javanese or early East Javanese style is a bronze triad, now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Cat. no. 83). In this triad, Avalokiteśvara sits to the Buddha's right in *lalitāsana* on an oval, double lotus base with three smaller petals between each larger, frontal petal. Here we see the elongation of the limbs that characterises the late Central Javanese and early East Javanese style, next to an increase in the amount of jewellery worn (Lunsingh Scheurleer and Klokke 1988: 33). The Bodhisattva is adorned with two necklaces, two armbands, bracelets and a waist belt. Further characteristics of this later style include the ornate foliage border and the spiky elements on the throne.

The number of statuettes that can be considered to reveal a late Central Javanese or East Javanese style is limited. One is a gilded bronze, which is found at the Museum Nasional Indonesia in Jakarta (Cat. no. 82), similar in both body form and seat to a statuette in Group 3 (Cat. 81). The Jakarta statuette illustrates the elongated limbs arms that are

⁶¹ According to de Mallmann, this type of back piece originates from the Pāla period in South Asia (1948a: Pls XII c,d). However, the throne's origins go further back than the Pāla period (Auboyer 1949: 112-168, Chutiwongs 1984: 136, Revire 2016). The royal throne developed from having a lion figure standing on a *makara* at Nalanda to a lion standing on an elephant (Grünwedel 1901: 53). Grünwedel links the depiction of a lion figure on an elephant to the *Sabbadāṭha-Jātaka* (1901: 54). "On the backs of two elephants stood a lion, and on the lion's back sat Sabbadāṭha, the jackal king, along with his consort the she-jackal, and great honour was paid to them" (Grünwedel 1901: 54-55). Even though Grünwedel refers to a lion as part of the throne a closer examination shows it is a horned-lion or *vyālaka*.

characteristic for the East Javanese style and the same style of limbs are present in the triad (Cat. no. 83). The Jakarta statuette was found in East Java, in Puger Wetan (Map 4, p. 167), supporting its inclusion within Group 4, the latest style group.

The last statuette in this chapter (Cat. no. 84) does not fit into any of the four groups. There are a few Indian features indicating it belongs to Group 2, but the supple limbs and general body shape speaks for Group 3.

3.3 Possible cultural origin of iconography and comparison with Southeast Asian and Indian images

In Chapter 2, I was able to find the source of the artistic inspiration for ascetic Avalokiteśvara images in the caves of Maharashtra. I suggested a cultural connection between Maharashtra and the production of early Buddhist art in Insular Southeast Asia. Therefore, the Buddhist cave complexes in western India would also be an appropriate place to look for artistic stimulus for Avalokiteśvara images showing him seated in *lalitāsana*. Rather surprisingly, Avalokiteśvara was rarely depicted in this sitting pose in these Buddhist caves, where he is instead often depicted as standing. One exception is at Ellora's Cave 12 (Pl. 3H), which is dated to the first half of the eighth century and as such represents one of the later caves at Ellora (Malandra 1993: 25). In this cave Avalokiteśvara is shown seated in *lalitāsana* with his right hand displaying the *varada-mudrā*; the left hand rests on his knee, holding a lotus. He is accompanied by two female deities, usually identified as Tārā and Bhṛkuṭī (Malandra 1993: 42). In contrast, the Javanese images in *lalitāsana* are not found in a triad with two female images.

Images of Avalokiteśvara seated in *lalitāsana* have been found at various Buddhist sites across the Indian subcontinent, making it difficult to determine an exact geographical origin of the iconography seen in these Javanese statuettes. The areas where we find this iconography, apart from Maharashtra, include Odisha, Bihar, Bengal and Bangladesh.

In Odisha, various stone and bronze Avalokiteśvaras have been found seated in *lalitāsana*. One example is located in the Baneśvara Temple in Balasore, which houses a stone relief showing a two-armed Avalokiteśvara seated in *lalitāsana* (Donaldson 2001 II: fig. 205).⁶² He displays the *varada-mudrā* with his right hand and holds a lotus in his left hand. Several bronzes showing Avalokiteśvara with this particular iconography have been found at Nalanda near Patna and Kurkihar close to Bodhgaya in Bihar as well as Jhewari near Chittagong in Bangladesh (Raya, Khandalavala and Gorakshar 1986: Pls 41, 83, 124). These bronze statuettes have bases with feet and back pieces in a number of different styles. Among the most common are back pieces with an oval shape, a pearl frame and comma-shaped flames along the rim next to *prabhāmaṇḍalas* with a plain frame and flames interspersed along the edge (Pl. 3G). These metal statuettes have a broad range of attributed dates, starting in the ninth century and continuing to the twelfth century CE.

⁶² For further examples see Donaldson 2001 Vol. 1: 195.

The back piece style with a pearl frame and comma-shaped flames can be seen on a statuette found in Java, which is now in the Nelson Atkins Museum (Cat. no. 48). A second example of the back piece is depicted in another Javanese Avalokiteśvara statuette, standing and with four arms (Cat. no. 260). Similar back pieces have been found in Acutrajpur in Odisha, dated to the eighth or ninth century CE, Mainamati in Bengal (ninth to the twelfth century CE) and at Nalanda (eighth to the tenth century CE).⁶³

I have focused primarily on the areas of Bihar and Bangladesh when trying to find comparative iconographic and stylistic material, as this is where most of the statuettes of Avalokiteśvara seated in *lalitāsana* were found. While specific stylistic features of the Javanese images may be connected to the northeastern Indian subcontinent, the iconographic feature of *lalitāsana* in itself cannot be traced to a specific geographical area in India. As de Mallmann noted, Avalokiteśvara is often depicted seated in *lalitāsana* and we see the Bodhisattva in this pose in Maharashtra and Pakistan as well. It should nevertheless be noted that this stance became more popular for the Bodhisattva from the eighth century onwards, corresponding with the earliest *lalitāsana* Avalokiteśvaras found in Java.

The manifestation of Avalokiteśvara seated in *lalitāsana* was clearly a popular form of the Bodhisattva in Java. The same, however, cannot be said for the rest of Southeast Asia. There are only a few such depictions in metal and clay and these have primarily been found in Thailand. On the clay tablets the Bodhisattva displays the *varada-mudrā* with his right hand, while the left hand appears to hold a lotus (Pls 3K and L). Unfortunately, due to their wear, these clay tablets give us limited stylistic information.

3.4 *The relationship between lalitāsana Avalokiteśvara in Java and South Asia*

The idea of an artistic inspiration from the northeastern Indian subcontinent on Javanese bronzes, and not the other way around, has been an accepted theory since 1933, when A.K. Bernet Kempers published *The bronzes of Nalanda and Hindu-Javanese art*. This chapter does not challenge this idea, but rather explores how this information was assimilated into the local artistic language in Java. One of the statuettes of Group 2 has been identified as originating from Northeast India (Van Lohuizen-de Leeuw 1984: Pl. 16). The other thirteen statuettes of this group exhibit stylistic features which have previously been associated with the bronze images from Bihar, West Bengal and Bangladesh. Knowing where the images were manufactured is important, as it can give us some insight into how the Javanese artists may have adapted artistic information from India and how they developed their own artistic language.

By analysing the various stylistic features exhibited by the metal statuettes in Group 2 and comparing these with characteristics associated with Javanese art, we can attempt to determine where they were produced. We may determine the likelihood of a specific

⁶³ Pl. 3G, Bernet Kempers 1933: figs 9 and 13, Raya, Khandalavala and Gorakshar 1986: figs 39 and 68, Imam 2000: 53, Donaldson 2001: fig. 243.

statuette in Group 2 as either having been made in South Asia and imported to Java, or originating in Java, by considering each statuette and its stylistic features separately. Through the comparison of stylistic features shared between statuettes found in Odisha, Bihar and West Bengal in northeastern India, or Bangladesh, I will argue that many of the images in Group 2 were produced in Java and that they were not exact copies of Indian images.

Buddhist bronze statuettes found in Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal and modern day Bangladesh, including those depicting Avalokiteśvara, allow us to isolate several different stylistic features and one iconographic feature that appear to have been quite commonplace during their production period.⁶⁴ These include: 1) a lotus seat with a pearl rim; 2) feet on the base;⁶⁵ 3) a small parasol suspended directly over the back piece; 4) a pearl border on the back piece; 5) flames along the back piece; 6) ribbons flowing out from behind the head; 7) a lotus plant split into three flowers; 8) a lower garment that ends just below the knee or mid-calf; 9) facial features that include almond eyes and a beaked nose; as well as 10) the number of arms (specifically four).

- 1) We find the pearl rim on the lotus seat on Cat. nos 43-44, 46-50 and 56, but not in every statuette in Group 2.
- 2) Feet supporting the base are quite rare in Group 2. We only see them in images catalogued as numbers 45 and 48. The majority of Javanese statuettes still have bases intact and without feet.⁶⁶ Thus, the lack of feet evident in Groups 3 and 4, originating from Java, is also evident in Group 2.
- 3) The parasol directly above the back piece can be seen in Cat. nos 47, 50 and 56 in Group 2. In Groups 3 and 4 the parasol is extended out, which is also the case in a few of Group 2's images (Cat. nos 44 and 52). The parasols of the other images did not survive.
- 4) The pearl rim around the back piece is a common stylistic feature in Group 2 and we see it in various forms in Cat. nos 44, 47-50 and 54. This style of pearl rim is not seen among the statuettes in Groups 3 and 4.
- 5) Flames along the outside of the back piece are depicted in various ways in the bronzes from Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal and Bangladesh (Pls 3B, 3F and 3G). In some cases, (Pl. 3G) the flames are small and depicted at intervals, while in other images they are close together, forming an interlinking pattern. A flame décor along

⁶⁴ A good source for these images is the Huntington Archive at <https://huntingtonarchive.org/> as well as Mitra 1978 and 1982, Huntington 1984.

⁶⁵ The bronzes from Bihar and modern-day Bangladesh that still have their bases intact often have feet, however, groups of bronzes found in Bangladesh (Jhewari hoard) lack these feet.

⁶⁶ Many of the bronzes found at Jhewari, Bangladesh, do not have base feet either. This needs to be taken into consideration when considering the presence or lack of feet for the base in determining the original area of production.

the back piece can be seen in Cat. nos 43-45, 48, 51-54 and 56. Among the Northeast Indian bronzes I have not been able to identify flames in the style seen in Cat. nos 51-54. Considering that this flame style is not found in Northeast India, it is possible that these four statuettes all originate from Java, although the most common form of rim decoration of a Javanese *prabhāmaṇḍala* is foliage.⁶⁷ Other scenarios could be that these four statuettes were the only ones made in this particular style in Northeast India and Bangladesh, and they were all exported to Java, or they may have been produced elsewhere in Southeast Asia. However, considering how uncommon the *lalitāsana* pose was in Insular Southeast Asia, outside of Java, this appears unlikely.

Their Javanese origin is further supported by the design of the lotus seats, which lack pearl rims and feet on their bases. Another statuette (Cat. no. 66), showing this type of flames along a part of the back piece and along the halo behind the seated Bodhisattva's head, is similar in iconography to the stone *lalitāsana* Avalokiteśvara in Candi Mendut (although the stone image has a different halo décor). Both figures are seated in *lalitāsana*, have two arms and display the *varada-mudrā* with their right hand.

- 6) Only one bronze in Group 2 (Cat. no. 48) has ribbons flowing out from behind the *jaṭāmukuta*. In Odisha, we find bronzes with ribbons behind the head as well as fan-shaped protrusions behind the ears that resemble ribbons (Donaldson 2001: figs 115, 224). In Bihar as well as West Bengal and Bangladesh we find ribbons flowing upwards from behind the *jaṭāmukuta* in various stone sculptures.⁶⁸
- 7) A lotus plant emerging from the base can be traced to Buddhist art produced in Bangladesh. Two stone tablets with an emerging lotus were found at Mainamati in Bangladesh. Asher described the seat as “an elevated pedestal composed of the common rectangular base with a large central lotus stalk” (1980: 99). These two stone pieces have been dated to the seventh century CE and I will discuss one of these further in Chapter 4. In the Jhewari bronze hoard (Chittagong District, Bangladesh), at least three statuettes illustrate a similar, raised lotus seat; one of these is a triad as well (Pls 3C, 3D and 3E).⁶⁹ These Jhewari statuettes have been dated to the eleventh century CE. However, other bronzes within the hoard have an earlier date.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ The use of flames along the *prabhāmaṇḍala* occurs more often in stone and can be seen at both Borobudur and at the Plaosan Lor complex for various figures.

⁶⁸ Examples can be found at the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco (B60S77) and Boston Museum of Art (63.418).

⁶⁹ The Jhewari bronze hoard was found in 1927 and included 61 Buddhist statuettes (Huntington 1984: 190).

⁷⁰ Buddha bronzes in the Jhewari hoard have been dated to the mid-ninth century CE based on their similarity to other images (Huntington 1984: 191).

The lotus plant can be seen in the only triad in Group 2 (Cat. no. 47). It protrudes from the rectangular base and splits into three flowers that each form a seat for a figure in the triad. This type of base with an emerging plant for the lotus seats can be seen in relief at one of the smaller temples surrounding Candi Sewu in Central Java (Pl. 3I).

- 8) The lower garment has a shorter style, while the Javanese style of depicting the lower garment reaches the ankle. In the shorter style the lower garment goes above the knee, just below the knee or at most mid-calf. The majority of the Javanese *lalitāsana* Avalokiteśvaras with a number of Indian features show the lower garment going all the way to the ankle or at least the lower calf.
- 9) The facial features of the almond-shaped eyes and an aquiline nose can be seen in Cat. no. 55. Most of the statuettes in Group 2 show more Javanese facial features, epitomized by the Buddha faces on the statues of Borobudur, which are not as sharp as the Indian features.
- 10) Images of Avalokiteśvara found in Java show two, four, six or eight arms, while the Avalokiteśvara bronzes from Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha and Bangladesh rarely have more than two arms, especially when seated. One standing, four-armed Avalokiteśvara was depicted in Raya, Kandalavala and Gorakshar's *Eastern Indian Bronzes* (1986: Pl. 104a).

It should be noted that these nine stylistic features, and one iconographic, are those most commonly seen in Northeast Indian statuettes. Table 15 illustrates that not all of the statuettes in Group 2 show a combination of the nine stylistic features. The same can be said for Buddhist bronzes found in Bihar, West Bengal and Bangladesh. For example, the emerging lotus plant is limited to a few statuettes only (Pls 3C, 3D and 3E). This has been taken into consideration in this study and I have noted when there is uncertainty regarding the possible origin of a statuette. When taking into account all of the stylistic features associated with Northeast Indian metal images and comparing these with the statuettes in Group 2, we may try to deduce where these Avalokiteśvara statuette found in Java were produced.

The statuette seen in Cat. no. 44 has a Javanese style parasol, but a back piece in a style that originates from Northeast India.⁷¹ Thus, one feature indicates a Javanese production, and one points at an Indian origin. Nevertheless, the parasol, in a form not found in India, would place this statuette's origin in Java. Additionally, this statuette displays a stylistic feature which only occurs in Javanese bronzes. An alternative scenario would be that it was produced in India for the Javanese market, but this does not seem very likely, as no evidence of such a production site has been discovered in India, i.e. no statuettes have been found in India that display this kind of combination of Indian and Javanese stylistic

⁷¹ A similar method for determining the origin of a bronze found in Java was used by Griffiths et al. (2013: 10).

features. Neither has any of the shipwrecks discovered between South Asia and Southeast Asia shown any evidence of this type of export trade goods.

Cat. no. 48, a four-armed Avalokiteśvara seated in *lalitāsana*, reveals a base with feet, although slightly broader than those usually seen in bronzes from Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal and Bangladesh. A pearl rim frames the pod emerging from the lotus seat. The back piece, although damaged, is similar to those found in Acutrajpur, Odisha and Nalanda, Bihar (Pl. 3F). In contrast to these Indian features, the lower garment reaches all the way to the ankle and the image has four arms. The face is slightly damaged, making it difficult to determine the facial features. Overall, this image appears to be more Javanese than Indian in style.

One final feature to be examined is the ribbons on either side of the neck. Ribbons are common in Indian statuettes. In our statuette, the ribbons are drooping, whereas in bronzes from northeastern Indian subcontinent they flow upwards. Perhaps, a Javanese bronze caster given instructions to include ribbons behind the head had not actually seen how this was done in India. In sum, a few stylistic features point to an Indian origin for the statuette, while a few others indicate a Javanese production site, making either production origin a possibility. However, I consider it more likely that this statuette was in fact made in Java.

A third bronze to combine Indian and Javanese features is a four-armed Avalokiteśvara seated in *lalitāsana* (Cat. no. 55). There is no pearl rim around the lotus seat, a feature nearly always present in the Indian bronzes. Yet, the lower garment ends half way down the Bodhisattva's right calf. The base does not have the Indian style feet, but the sharp nose is similar to the facial features seen in Indian bronzes. Once again, we have a four-armed depiction, which for this manifestation of Avalokiteśvara is more common in Java than in Northeast India. I would suggest a Javanese origin for this statuette, especially when the rendering of the *jaṭāmukuta*, the necklace and armbands is taken into consideration as well.

Even when an Avalokiteśvara bronze appears at first glance to have originated from India, this need not necessarily be the case. As many of these statuettes have not been published previously, they have not previously been identified as originating from the Indian subcontinent. The only exception, as noted above, is Cat. no. 56, which was identified by Van Lohuizen-de Leeuw as possibly being imported from India (1984: 52). This specific statuette illustrates several of Group 2's characteristic features (Table 4), including flames along the outside of the back piece and a lotus seat with a pearl-rimmed pod. Due to its wear, no clear facial features can be distinguished. The lack of feet on the base is not enough to classify this statuette as Javanese, and I would concur with Van Lohuizen-de Leeuw's assessment.

Many stylistic features of these statuettes in Group 2 point to a Northeast Indian origin, but three specific features call this into question: the style of the lower garment, the number of arms and the lack of feet on the base. Several of the figures in this group wear a long lower garment reaching to the ankles and most of the statuettes are not supported by feet. Thus, it

is likely that rather than being imports, these statuettes were actually produced in Java, even though they closely follow Northeast Indian style.

3.5 Questioning the timeline of development of style in Java

This Javanese group of statuettes showing Avalokiteśvara in *lalitāsana* likely post-dates the images that show a pan-Southeast Asian style based on Indian input as discussed in the previous chapter. The images share the iconographic feature of *lalitāsana*, a pose barely given to Avalokiteśvara in other parts of Southeast Asia. As this iconographic feature has not spread to the rest of Southeast Asia, it likely arrived after the end of the pan-Southeast Asian cultural response period, i.e. after the seventh century CE, when, in the words of Dalsheimer and Manguin, “national” arts developed (1998: 106). Southeast Asian art forms then became more distinguished from one another and eventually more localised in Southeast Asia, although relationships with the Indian subcontinent continued. One of these art forms showed specific relations to Pāla Northeast India and Bangladesh. The *lalitāsana* Avalokiteśvara bronzes are among this Pāla-related art.

Lunsingh Scheurleer suggested that there was a period of importing and copying statuettes from Northeast India and Bangladesh in Java, from the eighth to the first half of the ninth century CE (Lunsingh Scheurleer and Klokke 1988: 27-30). In a later publication she also posited that importation of bronzes from Northeast India continued into her next period, alongside the production of a new purely Javanese style of bronzes, i.e. to the third quarter of the tenth century CE (Lunsingh Scheurleer 1994: 79). I agree with the idea that importation was not limited to a specific period, which is supported by the triad in Group 2 (Cat. no. 47). While it is heavily affected by a Northeast Indian style and could even be an import, it may have a later date than 850 CE since it was found in East Java.

This triad has a base closely linking it to Mainamati and three bronzes found in the Jhewari hoard in Bangladesh (see Section 3.4). Unfortunately, none of these three bronzes carries a date and other pieces in the hoard have been dated to the mid-ninth century (Huntington 1984: 191).⁷² Yet, even if the design of the lotus growing into three stalks dates to the mid-ninth century, the Javanese Museum Nasional Indonesia bronze triad could date to the middle of the Central Javanese period (840 CE), thus, near the end of Lunsingh Scheurleer’s period of copying.

The perceptions on Southeast Asia’s relationship with India have changed over the past century. Scholars saw early on Southeast Asia as having once been colonised by India (Krom 1923 I: 45). Later on, this relationship was classified as “Indianization” (Cœdès 1968, see also De Casparis 1983: 5, Kulke 1990: 11) but the emphasis on Indian cultural input was criticised and scholars began to speak of “localization” (Wolters 1982), of “networks of relationships” between the South and Southeast Asian regions

⁷² The dating of the statuettes in the Jhewari hoard is done by comparing them with dated images from Nalanda. According to Huntington the images within the hoard had a similar style, while “their greatest differences seeming to be quality of craftsmanship along with slight chronological change” (1984: 191).

(De Casparis 1983), of ‘cultural convergence’ on both sides of the Bay of Bengal (Kulke 1990) and of the ‘Sanskrit cosmopolis’ (Pollock 1996). The results of my study on Avalokiteśvara statuettes support this idea of “localization” for bronze images, as they show that the Javanese local artists never fully copied images, but always included local stylistic features.

In Chapter 2, I theorised that the earliest Avalokiteśvara depictions in Java and the rest of Insular Southeast Asia were of his ascetic form. Expanding on this theory, the three *lalitāsana* statuettes without jewellery in Group 1 could have been part of the next step in the development of Avalokiteśvara imagery in Java. Did the statuettes in Group 1 coincide with those in Group 2, which show stylistic affinities to Northeast India, or were they produced at separate points in time?

Possibly there was some time overlap between the manufacture of these two groups of images. After the seventh century CE, when the Buddhist caves were no longer active, the source of cultural information moved from Maharashtra to Bihar and Bengal. Yet, the statuettes in Group 2 also indicate that the Javanese bronze casters had at the time of production already developed local stylistic features, e.g. a specific type of lower garment depiction, with the lower border reaching the ankles.

Therefore, I suggest that there was a continuous artistic development with an overlap among the various groups described in Section 3.2. As the images in the catalogue show, the main iconographic features for this type of representation did not change much over time in Java. The *lalitāsana* pose, the *varada-mudrā* and the lotus continue to be present. What does occur is an increase in the number of arms (although the two-armed form continues to be produced), with more jewellery being incorporated. The back pieces also become more elaborate, with the foliage pressed closer together and side wings developing (Cat. no. 83).

With the *lalitāsana* Avalokiteśvaras we see an evolution away from the ascetic form and towards a royal form. There is an increase in the amount of jewellery and a few of the Avalokiteśvaras in *lalitāsana* are seated on lion thrones, with lions as either part of the base or the back piece (Cat. nos 42, 45, 66, 67 and 83).⁷³ This also occurs in stone images of Avalokiteśvara, which are still *in situ* and will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 7 (Cat. nos 121-123 and 181). In Javanese Buddhist art, the lion throne is used specifically for either the Buddha or Bodhisattvas, such as Avalokiteśvara. However, it is not associated with the ascetic Avalokiteśvaras.

⁷³ The connection between the lion throne and royalty was explored recently by N. Revire in his PhD thesis *The enthroned Buddha in majesty: an iconological study* (2016: 21-22, see also Auboyer 1949: 108-112).

3.6 Observations on the Javanese *lalitāsana* Avalokiteśvara bronzes

While there is iconographic similarity among the *lalitāsana* Avalokiteśvaras found in Java, we see a variety of stylistic choices. An examination of just the lotus flowers held by the Bodhisattva shows nine different types of styles, although many flowers are now missing from the bronzes, with only the stem remaining.

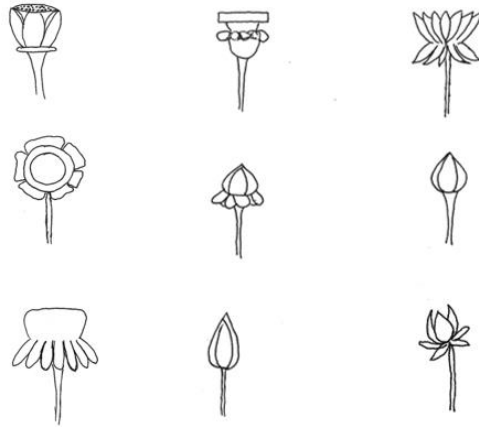


Plate 4. The nine different types of lotus flowers of Javanese *lalitāsana* Avalokiteśvaras

These flowers are shown from the early bud stage, to being in full bloom. At times the artist has focused on the pod inside the flower, and at other times it is absent. They are also placed at various angles, but the flowers are commonly viewed from the side. One of these also supports a book. The variety in style indicates that different bronze casters made the statuettes, although a number of them may have been made by the same workshop. There is no indication that there was one main workshop producing the required bronzes in Java. Instead, it is likely that the workshops were spread out over Central Java. This is supported by the known find sites of the bronze Avalokiteśvaras, which include Yogyakarta, Magelang and Surakarta (Map 3, p. 166).

Three specific statuettes (Cat. nos 52, 66 and 68) show a strong stylistic similarity in their hairdo and tiara, the angle in which the *yajñopavīta* crosses the chest, the laying and pattern of the lower garment, as well as the general physical form of the figures. It is not possible to identify a specific caster as having made each of the statuettes, however, the strong similarity points to a shared artistic language, such as may develop in a workshop. Therefore, I suggest that these three statuettes were produced in the same foundry. If so, the fact that the statuette now in the British Museum in London (Cat. no. 66) was acquired in the district of Kedu, while a second statuette was found in Surakarta (Cat. no. 52), would illustrate the spread of an individual workshop.

3.7 Conclusion

These images of *lalitāsana* Avalokiteśvara are quite numerous, indicating that this was a preferred iconography. Instead of showing a relationship with the caves of Maharashtra, as the ascetic Avalokiteśvara did, these images are evidence of a cultural connection with Northeast India and Bangladesh. The *lalitāsana* Avalokiteśvara bronzes illustrate the development of a Javanese style of casting Buddhist bronze images and the same development can be seen in the bronzes discussed in Chapters 4 and 6.

Even though many of the Javanese bronzes of *lalitāsana* Avalokiteśvara at first glance appear to have originated in India, a close study of their stylistic features shows that many of these, in fact, must have been produced locally. We cannot state with any amount of certainty that any of these images were produced in India and then transported to Java to function as an inspiration for new Avalokiteśvara images.

When a culture is exposed to new artistic information, such as the style of religious icons, the culture may reject it, accept it fully, or adapt it to suit its own needs. In the case of the *lalitāsana* Avalokiteśvara images, we see the cultural stimulus of South Asia informing the development of the Javanese artistic language for *bodhisattva* imagery, but there was no direct copying. We need to move away from the term ‘copying’ when discussing this cultural interchange, as we have not come across any actual copies. A preferable characterisation would be inspired, as we see a strong cultural link between *lalitāsana* Avalokiteśvaras in bronze in Group 2 of this chapter, and imagery from Northeast India and Bangladesh. In Group 3 we see that the Javanese bronze workers moved away from producing statuettes following a Northeast Indian style. Instead, they incorporated the new information into their already existing artistic language, to develop a style that we can categorise as a Central Javanese style. By the end of the Central Javanese period, and the beginning of the East Javanese period, the style had further developed to incorporate elongated limbs and more jewellery.

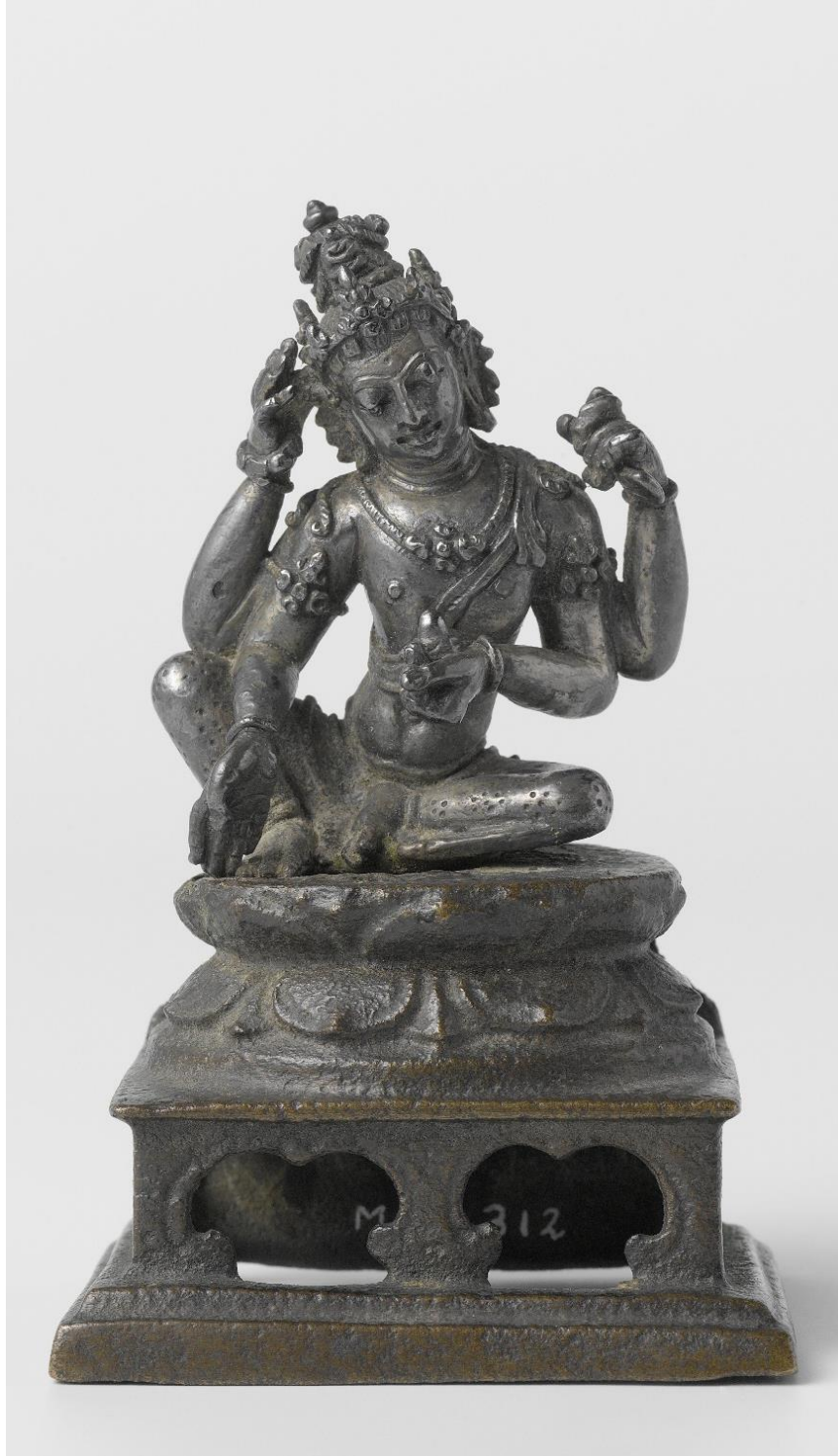


Plate 5. Four-armed Avalokiteśvara seated in *mahārājālīlāsana*, supporting his head with his upper right hand (Cat. no. 95)