

The Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in the Thai-Malay Peninsula and Western Indonesia: The Early Development of Buddhist Imagery in Insular Southeast Asia¹

Sofia Sundstrom²

Abstract

Various scholars, including Nadine Dalsheimer and Pierre-Yves Manguin, have discussed the possible presence of a pan-Southeast Asian influence that took place before a local artistic language developed in relation to Hindu and Buddhist art. The focus of these various scholars have primarily been on mainland Southeast Asia or on Viśnu images, thus early images of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara have not met with the same scrutiny.

The Thai-Malay peninsula, as well as western Indonesia, has yielded a number of Avalokiteśvara images in stone, metal and clay. The earliest form of Avalokiteśvara in Southeast Asia is a standing form that is spread along the coast in the western part of Southeast Asia (Thai-Malay Peninsula and Sumatra), with the Thai Isthmus playing a crucial role in the spread of an iconographic type. This article examines whether there is a

¹ I am grateful for the comments by my PhD supervisor, Prof. Marijke Klokke, on a preliminary version of this article, which is part of a larger PhD project examining imagery of Avalokiteśvara in insular Southeast Asia and was partly funded by the Empowering Network for International Thai Studies (ENITS), Institute of Thai Studies, Chulalongkorn University.

² PhD Candidate, University of Leiden.

second group of early Avalokiteśvara images that connects peninsular Thailand with the Dvaravati region, as well as with Java. Through my work I hope to determine whether there are any iconographic or stylistic features that are specific to early Avalokiteśvara images from peninsular Thailand. Dr Chutiwongs and Dr Chirapravati have both touched on this subject in their respective PhD dissertations; however, by comparing the images found in peninsular Thailand to those from the rest of insular Southeast Asia, I hope to be able to establish a time-line for how the production of Avalokiteśvara images developed in this area.

Introduction

The Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara is often referred to as the most popular bodhisattva within the Mahāyāna pantheon. The earliest bronze images of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in insular Southeast Asia are believed to have been transported there by Buddhist monks from South Asia, as well as by sailors and merchants who had Avalokiteśvara as their protector. Eventually local artists began producing images of the Bodhisattva, as Avalokiteśvara became more popular in the region. According to this idea, early Avalokiteśvara images could be thought to bare a strong similarity initially to the images from South Asia and eventually a local artistic style developed.³

I will identify an early group of images of Avalokiteśvara that show a similarity in form, iconography and style that could have been produced in Southeast Asia. I will also attempt to find correlating images from South Asia that likely influenced these early

³ There are only a few bronze images that appear to be copies of South Asian work. Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Divine bronze*, Plates 18, 19. Instead we see iconographic or stylistic features being reproduced, but the images are not copies of South Asian works.

Avalokiteśvara depictions in order to ascertain the origin of the inspiration, both geographically and religiously. This cultural connection between South Asia and Southeast Asia can aid in the dating of the images and will be a part of the research into the character of the early Avalokiteśvaras.

I will also attempt to discover whether these early Avalokiteśvara images fit into the theory of a pan-Southeast Asian reaction to South Asian influence.⁴ The theory was further developed by Manguin in 2008 and 2010, showing that the Southeast Asian response to South Asian input followed earlier trading patterns in the region. Several families of images, as Manguin termed it, illustrate this response, including ‘mitred’ Viṣṇus, Amaravati Buddhas, ‘mitred’ Avalokiteśvaras and clay tablets.⁵ Local styles did not develop until later, such as the Dvaravati or the Central Javanese style.

Ascetic Avalokiteśvara Images

When examining the available images of Avalokiteśvara from Southeast Asia it soon becomes apparent that there are a limited number of depictions of the Bodhisattva in his ascetic form, i.e. lacking jewellery and a sacred thread or *yajñopavīta*.⁶ The ascetic Avalokiteśvara images that do exist seem to be early and to have spread over Southeast Asia. However, only in mainland Southeast Asia do we find these images depicted in stone. Plates of these stone images were included in Chutiwongs’ 1984 thesis, Plates 116, 126, 144A, 167, 168A.⁷

Viewing the ascetic Avalokiteśvara images from Southeast Asia together, two groups emerge among the metal images owing to the style of dress depicted. All these images depict the Bodhisattva as standing and wearing a long lower garment or *dhoti*. In the two groups, one has a long lower garment with a herringbone pattern and

⁴ Dalsheimer, “Visnu mitres et réseaux marchands en Asie du Sud-Est”.

⁵ Manguin “Pan-regional responses to South Asian inputs in early Southeast Asia”, 172-174.

⁶ Mallmann de, *Introduction à l'étude d'Avalokiteçvara*, 146.

⁷ These images were found in modern day Cambodia and Vietnam. Chutiwongs, *The iconography of Avalokiteśvara in mainland Southeast Asia*, 516, 517, 519, 521.

another with a plain long garment (Plates 1-13). These images were found in Java, Sumatra, peninsular Thailand and further inland in Thailand near the modern Thai-Cambodian border, placing the majority of these images in insular Southeast Asia (see maps 1 and 2).

The Ascetic Avalokiteśvara in South Asia

The initial images of Avalokiteśvara from South Asia show him in princely attire, but eventually the depiction of the Bodhisattva turned towards an ascetic form without jewellery or a *yajñopavīta*. This form is specifically seen in the Buddhist caves in Mahārāṣṭra, such as at the caves at Aurangabad, where he is seen as an attendant to the Buddha, along with a second Bodhisattva⁸ (Plate 14). The ascetic form is also seen at cave 6 at Ajanta, as well as in the Ellora caves (Kern no. P-039971). At Ellora the ascetic form of Avalokiteśvara is not seen in all the caves, but at caves 3, 5, 8, 8A, 9 and 10.⁹ The Buddhist caves at Ellora have a general dating of 600-730 CE.¹⁰ However, the caves where we find the ascetic Avalokiteśvara without jewellery are dated from 600-700.¹¹

The ascetic form was not the only one in use in these caves. In the same cave the princely form of Avalokiteśvara could be seen, alongside the ascetic form.¹² After this time period, we see Avalokiteśvara once again wearing jewellery in South Asian images. Thus, we have a limited duration for the popularity of the ascetic form of the Bodhisattva in South Asia. As images of Avalokiteśvara in Southeast Asia developed towards a more decorated form, it is likely that this time span of ascetic imagery influenced this group of Avalokiteśvara images without jewellery or a sacred thread in insular Southeast Asia.

⁸ Mallmann de, *Introduction à l'étude d'Avalokiteçvara*, 146; Bautze-Picron, "Nasik", 1202.

⁹ Malandra, *Unfolding a maṇḍala*: Figures 40, 43, 69, 72, 93, 99, 114, 120.

¹⁰ Malandra *Unfolding a maṇḍala*, 6.

¹¹ Malandra *Unfolding a maṇḍala*, 25.

¹² Brancaccio, *Buddhist caves*, 283.

Southeast Asian Ascetic Avalokiteśvaras with the Lower Garment Draped in Such a Manner that the Folds Form a Herringbone Pattern

In the *Divine Bronze* catalogue, Lunsingh Scheurleer identified a group of bronzes that were influenced by the art of South India as being among the earliest of the images from Indonesia. In this group, the shoulders are a great deal broader than the torso and the figures are long and slender.¹³ The figures wear a cloth with the end pulled up over the waist creating a herringbone pattern in the fabric or pulled up on either side.¹⁴ Within this group a smaller, more specialised group of Avalokiteśvara images can be identified.

This group consists of standing Avalokiteśvara metal statuettes where part of the sarong is pulled up under the waist band and hangs over the centre or at the side in a flap (Plates 1-8). Neither of the images in this group wears a *yajñopavīta*, nor any jewellery. Many of these statuettes have damaged arms making it difficult to ascertain a great deal of iconographic information, but the well-known figure of the Buddha Amitābha can be seen in the headdress allowing us to identify the statuettes as Avalokiteśvara.

Thus, the group consists of standing Avalokiteśvara images with no jewellery or *yajñopavīta*, and that wear a lower garment with a flap of fabric pulled up to create a pattern. A few of these images were included by Lunsingh Scheurleer in the *Divine Bronze* catalogue (Plates 1-3). These images and the others within the group have been found in Sumatra and Thailand (see map 1).

Style of Dress

As mentioned above, Lunsingh Scheurleer connects this form of tying the dress by pulling up a piece of the fabric over the waist to South India. Unfortunately, there are not many images illustrating this form from around the 7th to the 8th century CE.¹⁵ In South India, there is a style of wearing a cloth garment called *kachahha* where a fabric

¹³ Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Divine Bronze*, 25.

¹⁴ Lunsingh Scheurleer and Klokke, *Divine Bronze*, 26.

¹⁵ Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Divine Bronze*, 106.

piece is pulled up and over to the right of the girdle.¹⁶ In bronze images from Sri Lanka, there is a similar style of wearing a cloth garment where the end piece is pulled up and to the side.¹⁷ However, this type does not create a herringbone pattern in the fabric, but rather diagonal lines.

We also see a comparable style of dress with a herringbone pattern in images from the 6th century CE in western India, therefore this style is not exclusive to South India.¹⁸ There, a swallowtail flap is seen near the waist, but there is no clear evidence of the fold being tucked up under a belt as in the South Indian examples. From South India, we see images where the fabric flap is pulled up and to the side, whereas the images from the Maharashtra region show a central flap. Therefore, the influence of this style does not necessarily originate from South India as noted by Lunsingh Scheurleer, but possibly from Maharashtra in western India.

The group of Avalokiteśvaras from insular Southeast Asia mentioned above show both a side flap, as well as a central flap of fabric, but the central flap is the most common in the group. As the majority of the images in this group have a central fabric flap, it is possible that the side flap was first adopted by local artists to create a fashion style and with time this developed to a more prominent flap that was placed in the centre. Plate 1, thus, shows one of the earliest images of Avalokiteśvara in the group and likely one of the earliest metal Avalokiteśvara images from insular Southeast Asia.

Headdress Style

The statuettes in this group have comparable types of headdress, created by the hair being pulled up on top of the head to create a pyramidal base with a rounded top (Plate 9). The exception to this is the image that is now at the National Museum in Bangkok (Plate 5). The similarity of the headdress silhouette of these images further strengthens the definition of this group. The headdresses, just as the statuettes as a whole, are in different levels of wear, but the general

¹⁶ Craven, "Early 'Pallava type' Vishnu icon", 262.

¹⁷ Woodward, *Sacred sculpture of Thailand*, figs. 55 and 56.

¹⁸ Schastok, *Śāmalājī sculptures*, Plates 1 and 5.

structure is the same. A similar silhouette can be seen on a bronze found in the Kistna River delta in South India where the hair is pulled up and then fans out at the top (Victoria and Albert Museum M. 300-1914). There is also a bronze from Sri Lanka that has the same silhouette as the image shown in Plate 7 with its domed top, which Chutiwongs dated to the 8th century (1984: 506, Plate 21). These two separate bronzes support the origin of an inspirational style from South India as was indicated by Lunsingh Scheurleer (1988: 25), especially as the headdress style of the Avalokiteśvara images in the Buddhist caves in western India have a silhouette similar to a large beehive.

Thus, this group of images show the combination of two sources of inspiration; one iconographic from the Maharashtra area and one stylistic, in terms of the headdress, from southern India. As the dress style can be found in both regions, it cannot be used to differentiate the origin of the possible influence for this group of images.

Southeast Asian Ascetic Avalokiteśvara Images with a Plain Lower Garment

As mentioned above, there is a similar group of Avalokiteśvara images that have been found across Southeast Asia that also lack jewellery and a *yajñopavīta* (Plates 11-15, map 2). What differentiates these images from the previous group is that their dress lacks the fabric flap and the herringbone pattern. Instead, the lower garment is plain and sometimes tied at the waist with a simple ribbon (Plates 11-12). In this group, as well as the previous one, many of the statuettes have partially missing arms making it difficult to gather any further iconographic information. The images in Plates 11 and 13 have at least one intact arm, the left one, which carries a water bottle, an ascetic symbol. The water vessels have a round bottom, but no pouring spout.

This second group consists of metal statuettes as well, however, a number of clay tablets have been found in the area that show a bodhisattva in ascetic form with a simple lower garment. Several of these tablets are currently on display at the Bangkok National

Museum as well as at the Phuket National Museum. During an archaeological investigation at Batujaya in west Java two of the same type of clay tablets were found there as well. The find sites of these clay tablets are included in map 2.¹⁹

These clay tablets show a triad topped by three seated Buddha figures. The triad consists of the Buddha in *bhadrāsana* in the centre and a bodhisattva figure on either side in *tribhanga*. The iconographic form of the triad in this group of clay tablets is similar to that seen in the Buddhist caves in Maharashtra. At the Ellora caves there are triads with the Buddha in *bhadrāsana* in the centre and flanked by Avalokiteśvara and another bodhisattva.²⁰ In these Ellora triads, Avalokiteśvara is depicted in his ascetic form with no jewellery or a *yajñopavīta*, similar to that seen on the clay tablets. However, the wear of the tablets, makes it difficult to determine details of either jewellery or headdresses. Nevertheless, at least one headdress silhouette can still be determined and is included in the headdress drawings in Plate 10. These are in a tower shape, analogous to that seen in the metal statuettes of Group 1 (Plates 9 and 10).²¹ Consequently we have a connection between the clay tablets and the iconography at the Buddhist caves in western India.

Style of Dress

The initial two images in this second group (Plates 11-12) show the end of the lower garment finishing between the legs creating a similar central line as in the dress of the Bodhisattva in the first group. The figure in Plate 13 does not show the end of the lower garment in

¹⁹ Manguin included these clay tablets in his 2010 article as an example of pan-Southeast Asian response to South Asian influence. Manguin, “Pan-regional responses to South Asian inputs in early Southeast Asia”, 174.

²⁰ Malandra, *Unfolding a maṇḍala*, Figures 40, 43, 69, 72, 93, 99, 114, 120.

²¹ The shape of the tablet is that of a rectangle with an arched top, a form which Chirapravati identifies as having originated from peninsular Malaya. Chirapravati, *The cult of votive tablets in Thailand*, 193 Three of these tablets are now on display at the National Museum in Bangkok and there is also a tablet on display at the National Museum in Phuket.

the centre, but appears to be wearing a piece of fabric that has been sown together to make a garment. There is even a slight outward curve at the bottom of the dress. The dress style depicted in the clay tablets is reminiscent of the figures in Plates 11-12. There appears to be a central fold in the fabric between the legs, but no herringbone pattern is observed. This is closer to the style of dress seen on the stone ascetic Avalokiteśvara images from the Buddhist caves in western India, such as at Aurangabad. The long *dhotis* in these images do not have a herringbone pattern, but a central line in the dress such as that seen in the images in Plates 11-12.

Headdress Style

This second set of images does not exhibit a singular headdress silhouette such as that seen in the first group in this article. The headdress of the Avalokiteśvara on the clay tablets have a tall shape, similar to the headdresses seen in the figures in Plates 4 and 6. The headdresses of the metal statuettes in this second group all have different silhouettes (see Plate 11). This second group's style and iconography appears to have been inspired by the Buddhist caves, unlike in the previous group that appeared only to have been influenced iconographically. The headdress of Avalokiteśvara in the Buddhist caves has a tall beehive shape in the majority of the ascetic form carvings. The headdress style of the image in Plate 11 occurs in a few other Avalokiteśvara metal statuettes in insular Southeast Asia, but is not one of the most popular forms.²² The headdress of the image in Plate 13 appears to be a simpler form of the bun shaped headdress, the most popular form of headdress for Avalokiteśvara in metal images from insular Southeast Asia.

²² A gold Avalokiteśvara found at Sambas on Borneo has a similar headdress where the seated Buddha figure is so prominent that it covers most of the hair behind it (British Museum, reg. no. 1956, 0725.6).

A Pan-Regional Style in Southeast Asia

Influence from South Asia in Southeast Asia is an accepted idea, however, the form it took and its agents is still a topic being discussed. Dalsheimer and Manguin identified a family of images, the ‘mitred’ Viṣṇus, which have been found across the region, along the coast of Malaya, on the island of Bangka in western Java, as well as inland in the Mekong delta.²³ In a lecture in 2008, Manguin expanded on the notion of a pan-regional influence and also mentioned the standing Buddhas that have been found across the region that have minor differences between them, but belong to the same family.²⁴ He also identified another family of Avalokiteśvara images that he included in the pan-regional influence period. These are stone images where Avalokiteśvara also wears a mitre, with this type of image being found in both mainland and insular Southeast Asia.²⁵

Manguin has further included a variety of images in his study of the pan-regional response to South Asian influence, including the Amaravati Buddhas and the clay tablets showing the Buddhist triad with three Buddhas seated noted above. I propose that the two groups of images of Avalokiteśvara that I have identified in this article can be added to the list of images that show a pan-regional connection. Many of the spots of Avalokiteśvara images that have been found (maps 1 and 2) correspond to the sites where ‘mitred’ Viṣṇus and standing Buddhas have also been found, such as the Bangka island of Sumatra and in West Java. The time period for this pan-regional period was given generally as the first millennium C.E., but the religious influence, including images, was from the 5th century CE.²⁶ Eventually this pan-regional influence began to fade as a more local style was developed in the 8th century.²⁷

²³ Dalsheimer, “Visnu mitres et réseaux marchands en Asie du Sud-Est”, 88.

²⁴ Manguin, “Pan-regional responses to Indian inputs in early Southeast Asia”, Podcast.

²⁵ Manguin, “Pan-regional responses to Indian inputs in early Southeast Asia”, 174. Nik Hassan Shuhaimi has previously studied the mitred Avalokiteśvara in Indonesia. Nik Hassan, “Buddhist sculpture from Sumatra”, 45-56.

²⁶ Manguin, “Pan-regional responses to Indian inputs in early Southeast Asia”.

²⁷ Manguin, “Pan-regional responses in early Southeast Asia”, 172.

Dating of Images

Some of the images in either group have been dated by various scholars. Lunsingh Scheurleer gave a general date for the statuette in the Museon in The Hague seen in Plate 1 from the 7th-8th century CE.²⁸ Nik Hassan Shuhaimi dated the figures in Plates 1, 4 and 8 to the 7th or the 8th century CE.²⁹ Nandana Chutiwongs dated the bronze image found at Khu Bua in Ratchaburi to approximately the first half of the 8th century, whereas Betty Gosling gave a broader time line for the entire Khu Bua site of 7th-8th century.³⁰ Chutiwongs also gave a date of the first half of the 8th century to the image in Plate 3.³¹ As a result, the general dating for this group of images would be the 7th to the 8th century CE. Yet, with some further study, it may be possible to narrow down this time period, especially as the images are similar in style.

The dating of the clay tablets in the second group has undergone some changes as more work has been done by scholars. Chirapravati divided the tablets found in the Malay Peninsula into four broad categories, and the tablets in our group would belong to Chirapravati's second group in which the tablets are influenced by the art of the central plains of Thailand central plains, as well as post-Gupta and Pala style.³² She named this group IB and dates it to the 8th century; however, she did note that Piriya dated the same type of tablet to the

²⁸ Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Divine Bronze*, 106.

²⁹ Nik Hassan, "Art, archaeology and the early kingdoms", 304.

³⁰ Chutiwongs, *Iconography of Avalokiteśvara*, 257; Gosling, *Origins of Thai art*, 91.

³¹ When examining South Asian images in her 1984 thesis, Chutiwongs dated the development of the ascetic form a bit earlier to the 5th century CE in South Asia as the princely elements in the Avalokiteśvara images were reduced. These images began to have ascetic features such as an animal skin or a rosary. Chutiwongs, *The iconography of Avalokiteśvara in mainland Southeast Asia*, 39, 511. However, the focus in this article is on the ascetic form as defined by de Mallmann as not wearing a *yajñopavīta* or jewellery. Chutiwongs, *The iconography of Avalokiteśvara in mainland Southeast Asia*, 146.

³² Chirapravati, *Cult of votive tablets*, 194.

second half of the 7th century.³³ Manguin and Agustijanto dated the clay tablets found at Batujaya, West Java, to the 7th century based on comparisons with tablets from Thailand as well as the position within the archaeological levels (2006: 250). As these ascetic statuettes lack both jewellery and a *yajñopavīta* it is probable that they were made during the same time period as the first group.

Revised Dating of the Two Groups of Ascetic Avalokiteśvara Images

A detail that can aid in the dating of the images in these two groups is the presence of the water bottle in the principal left hand. The majority of metal and stone images of Avalokiteśvara from insular Southeast Asia show him with a lotus in the left hand when the Bodhisattva is depicted with two arms. It is when he is depicted with multiple arms, such as eight, that the water-bottle appears in one of the left hands. The same pattern is seen in South Asia. De Mallmann identified that the water vessel is always seen in Avalokiteśvara's left hand, but that it was rare in the human form of the Bodhisattva.³⁴ The known exceptions are at Bagh cave II and at the Ajanta caves number XVII and XXVI.³⁵

The full ascetic form of Avalokiteśvara in South Asia is specific to the Maharashtra region³⁶ and these images were produced during a limited time period of the 6th-7th century CE.³⁷ It follows that the groups of Southeast Asian ascetic Avalokiteśvara statuettes discussed in this article were also produced over a limited time period.

While the earlier depictions of the ascetic Avalokiteśvara in Ajanta for example, this cave complex was mostly abandoned by the time that Ellora was being constructed. It is likely that active Buddhist

³³ Chirapravati, *Cult of votive tablets*, 203, 210. Unfortunately, Piriya Krairiksh's text is in Thai, hence I have had to rely on Chirapravati's interpretation. Piriya, "Art history of Phattalung", 83-116. However, in a more recent text, Piriya dates the clay tablets to the mid-7th century to the mid-8th century CE. Piriya, *The roots of Thai art*, 84.

³⁴ Mallmann, *Introduction à l'étude d'Avalokiteçvara*, 267.

³⁵ Mallmann, *Introduction à l'étude d'Avalokiteçvara*, 267.

³⁶ Mallmann, *Introduction à l'étude d'Avalokiteçvara*, 146.

³⁷ Malandra, *Unfolding a maṇḍala*, 25.

caves influenced the image production in Southeast Asia, rather than caves that were no longer supported.³⁸ If this information is considered alongside Manguin's work on the pan-Southeast Asian regional cultural response we can date these two groups of images to the second half of the 7th century.

The development of the style of portraying the cloth garment with a fabric flap pulled up over the waist to create a herringbone pattern may have developed from a side flap to a centred flap, as there are more images with a central flap. There are also statuettes of Avalokiteśvara showing him with the centre flap, but then he wears jewellery and/or a *yajñopavīta*.³⁹ This theory can help us place the images within this group in chronological order. Thus, the figures with the side flap could be the earliest (Plate 1) and the images with a less prominent central flap would have been the next stage in the development. Therefore, the images found at Khu Bua would be next in the chronological order.⁴⁰

Discussion

As the statuettes in these two groups of ascetic Avalokitesvara statuettes were portable, it is possible that they were produced at a limited number of sites and were shipped to the various locations, where they were found. This theory could be tested by analysing the metal of the images to see if the statuettes have any impurities in common, indicating that the metal had a common source or that the same tools were used in the production. Unfortunately, this is not an option at the moment, but the various styles of the images do not indicate a common workshop or smithy. The images were most likely produced in various workshops and not in a central one from which they would have been moved to other locations.

³⁸ However, the imagery in the earlier cave systems had become part of the local artistic language in Maharashtra, thus influencing later imagery.

³⁹ Chutiwongs, *Iconography of Avalokiteśvara*, Plates 66, 73; Woodward, *Art and architecture of Thailand*, Plate 18.

⁴⁰ Chutiwongs, *Iconography of Avalokiteśvara*, Plates 62, 65.

A later development of these images could be Avalokiteśvara statues, in both stone and metal, that have a long lower garment, no *yajñopavīta*, but some form of jewellery such as earrings.⁴¹ These types of images have been found in Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. There is also the continued use of the herringbone style dress in peninsular Thailand, but with a *yajñopavīta* and some jewellery. These images would be a continuation of the ascetic form in Southeast Asia and thus be dated after the time period when ascetic Avalokiteśvaras were produced in insular Southeast Asia.

The majority of these ascetic Avalokiteśvara images in the two groups were found in modern day Thailand, especially near or on the peninsula (Maps 1 and 2). The limited number of images may be an indication of the level of activity in this area during the 7th century within Mahāyāna Buddhism.

The presence of the ascetic form of Avalokiteśvara alongside the princely form in the Buddhist caves of Maharashtra suggests that the

⁴¹ Nandana Chutiwongs has identified an almost 50 cm tall image that is now in the Bangkok National Museum as the earliest bronze icon of Avalokiteśvara from maritime Southeast Asia. She dates this image to the early 7th century. Chutiwongs, “The closing chapter on Avalokiteśvara”, 19. Chutiwongs bases the dating on comparison with the style of that of Gupta period art. Chutiwongs, “The closing chapter on Avalokiteśvara”, 10. The icon appears to have an unusual headdress silhouette among the known Avalokiteśvara statuettes from insular Southeast Asia where the hair is gathered at the top of the head and then fans out. However, viewing the excellent image in Piriya’s *The roots of Thai art*, it becomes clear that the headdress is actually a shorter form of those seen in group one of this article. Piriya, *The roots of Thai art*, Plate 1.62. The Bodhisattva’s headdress from the Gupta and post-Gupta period in South Asia that Chutiwongs compares the image to tends to be of a tall and broad shape, similar to a beehive. The nearest headdress silhouette in time from South Asia comes from Bihar. Pal, *The ideal image*, Figure 67. While there is a similarity in the headdress silhouette, the stone statue from Bihar wears jewellery and a *yajñopavīta*. While the statuette appears to be an ascetic form of Avalokiteśvara, the statue has earrings and could, therefore, be a development away from the full ascetic form. The headdress is similar to the silhouette of the headdresses in the first group in this article. Therefore, the headdress does not link the statue to the general art style of the Gupta period, but rather to having been made after the first group of ascetic Avalokiteśvaras due to presence of the earrings. Thus Chutiwongs’ claim that the icon is dated to the early 7th century because of a link with Gupta art needs to be reassessed.

separate forms were in use at the same time in western India. In the Buddhist caves, the ascetic form of Avalokiteśvara is often depicted as part of the Litany of Avalokiteśvara⁴² or Aṣṭamahābhaya Avalokiteśvara (“Saviour from Eight Great Perils”), a relief illustrating part of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* (Lotus Sutra). It is possible that the ascetic form had a similar meaning in insular Southeast Asia. The connection between Southeast Asia and Maharashtra in the 7th century may have been enough to connect the ascetic Bodhisattva to the Litany of Avalokiteśvara. Consequently, the metal statuettes in the two groups studied could be a way of representing the miracles performed by the Bodhisattva and how this idea of Avalokiteśvara was venerated. However, there are no other depictions of the Litany in the region to support this.

Conclusion

The first group studied in this article consists of metal images of Avalokiteśvara from Sumatra and modern day Thailand, with no *yajñopavīta*, jewellery and wearing a long garment that has a herringbone pattern caused by pulling up the fabric at the waist to a flap that lies over the waistband. These images show an influence from the Buddhist cave systems in Maharashtra and the style of dress can be connected to both southern and western India. The depiction of the dress style indicates a chronological order of the images within the group, the earliest possibly being those with the fabric flap laid to the side over the waist.

The second group of images consists of both metal and clay images that have been found in modern day Thailand, Cambodia, Sumatra and Java. This group also shows the same connection to the ascetic form of Avalokiteśvara at Maharashtra, but in this group the style of dress can also be related to the Buddhist caves. These ascetic Avalokiteśvara images have been dated to the second half of the 7th century, which makes these among the earliest locally produced Avalokiteśvara images in the area.

⁴² An example of this iconography can be seen in Plate 15.

The number of these statuettes that have survived to the present day implies that the ascetic Avalokiteśvara had some form of cultural impact in Southeast Asia, which may have been connected to the Litany of Avalokiteśvara. The general size of the images indicates that they were used in more personal worship. Identifying the earliest images of Avalokiteśvara that were produced within Southeast Asia can aid in further research into the cultural significance of this bodhisattva. It gives us a starting point for identifying the development of image production and possibly how the worship of Avalokiteśvara changed over time in the region.

References

- Bautze-Picron, Claudine. "Nasik: The late Mahāyāna caves 2, 15, 20 & 23-24." *Fourteenth International Conference of the European Association of South Asian Archaeologists 1997*, Rome, Italie, 2000.
- Bonheur le, Albert. *La sculpture Indonésienne au Musée Guimet. Catalogue et etude iconographique*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1971.
- Brancaccio, Pia. *The Buddhist caves at Aurangabad: Transformation in art and religion*. Leiden: Brill, 2011.
- Bronson, Bennet. "The archaeology of Sumatra and the problem of Srivijaya." *Early South East Asia: Essays in Archaeology, History and Historical Geography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Bunker, Emma and Douglas Latchford. *Khmer bronzes: New interpretations of the past*. Chicago: Art Media Resources, 2011.
- Chirapravati, Pattatorn. *The cult of votive tablets in Thailand (sixth to thirteenth centuries)*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1994.
- Chutiwongs, Nandana. *The iconography of Avalokiteśvara in mainland Southeast Asia*. Leiden, 1984.

- Chutiwongs, Nandana. "The closing chapter on Avalokiteśvara – Srivijaya and Maritime Southeast Asia." *Abhinandanamālā*. Ed. L. Prematilleke. Bangkok: SPAFA Regional Centre of Archaeology and Fine Arts, 2010.
- Craven, Roy C. "An early 'Pallava type' Vishnu icon." *Oriental Art*, Vol XVI (1970): 262-264.
- Dalsheimer, Nadine and Pierre-Yves Manguin. "Visnu mitres et réseaux marchands en Asie du Sud-Est: nouvelles données archéologiques sur le I^{er} millénaire apr. J.-C." *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient*. 1998.
- Gosling, Betty. *Origins of Thai Art*. Bangkok: River Books, 2004.
- Jacq-Hergoualc'h, Michel. *The Malay Peninsula: Crossroads of the maritime Silk Road*. Leiden: Brill, 2002.
- Klokke, Marijke J. "The Buddhist temples of the Śailendra dynasty in Central Java." *Arts Asiatiques*, 2008.
- Le May, Reginald. *Buddhist art in South-East Asia. The Indian influence on the art of Thailand*. New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 2004 reprint.
- Lunsingh Scheurleer, Pauline and Marijke J. Klokke. *Divine bronze: Ancient Indonesian bronzes from A.D. 600 to 1600*. Leiden: Brill, 1988.
- Malandra, Geri. *Unfolding a maṇḍala: the Buddhist cave temples at Ellora*. Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1993.
- Mallmann de, Marie-Thérèse. *Introduction à l'étude d'Avalokiteçvara*. Paris: Musée Guimet, 1948.
- Manguin, Pierre-Yves and Agustijanto Indrajaya. "The archaeology of Batujaya (West Java, Indonesia). An interim report." *Uncovering Southeast Asia's past. Selected papers from the 10th international conference of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists*. Singapore: NUS Press, 2006.

- Manguin, Pierre-Yves. “Pan-regional responses to Indian inputs in early Southeast Asia.” ARI Seminar Series, Podcast 22 Jan 2008 29. May 2013 <[www.ari.nus.edu.sg/ events_categorydetails.asp?categoryid=8&eventid=760](http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/events_categorydetails.asp?categoryid=8&eventid=760)>.
- Manguin, Pierre-Yves. “Pan-regional responses to South Asian inputs in early Southeast Asia.” *50 years of archaeology in Southeast Asia. Essays in honour of Ian Glover*. Bangkok: River Books, 2010.
- Nik Hassan, Shuhaimi. “Buddhist sculpture from Sumatra, Peninsular Malaysia and Peninsular Thailand during the Śrīvijayan period (7th – 14th century A.D.).” Unpublished M. Phil thesis from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1976.
- Nik Hassan, Shuhaimi. “Art, archaeology and the early kingdoms in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra, c. 400-1400 A.D.” Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of London, 1984.
- O’Connor, Stanley. “Hindu gods in peninsular Siam.” *Artibus Asiae, Supplementum*, 1972.
- Piriya, Krairiksh [พีริยะ ไกรฤกษ์]. “Prawarisat silpa Phattalung (rawang B.E. 1200-2310) (Art history of Phattalung between A.D. 757-1857).” *Rai ngan kan sammana prawatisart lae boran khadee Phattalung [Seminar reports on History and Archaeology of Phattalung]*. Phattalung: Phattalung Printing, Ltd., 1988. 83-116. [In Thai].
- Piriya, Krairiksh. *The roots of Thai art*. Bangkok: River Books, 2012.
- Pal, Pratapaditya. “Some interesting South Indian bronzes.” *Archives of Asian Art*, Vol XXIII, New York (1969-1970): 24-30.
- Pal, Pratapaditya. *The ideal image. The Gupta sculptural tradition and its influence*. New York: The Asia Society, 1978.
- Raffles, Stamford. *The history of Java*. Vol. 1-2 & Pl. London, 1830.
- Schastok, Sara. *The Śāmalājī sculptures and 6th century art in Western India*. Leiden: Brill, 1985.

- Spink, Walter. M. *Ajanta: History and development*. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- Woodward, Hiram. *The sacred sculpture of Thailand*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1997.
- Woodward, Hiram. *The art and architecture of Thailand*. Leiden: Brill, 2003.



Plate 1: Bronze statuette found at Palembang. 8.5 cm. Inv. No. 6677.
Image courtesy of Museon, the Hague.



Plate 2: Bronze statuette found at Khu Bua in peninsular Thailand. 10 cm.
Image courtesy of Chutiwongs, *The iconography of Avalokiteśvara in mainland Southeast Asia*, Plate 62.



Plate 3: Bronze statuette found at Wat Rājapūrna, Ayutthayā. 8.5 cm. Image courtesy of Chutiwongs, *The iconography of Avalokiteśvara in mainland Southeast Asia*, Plate 65.

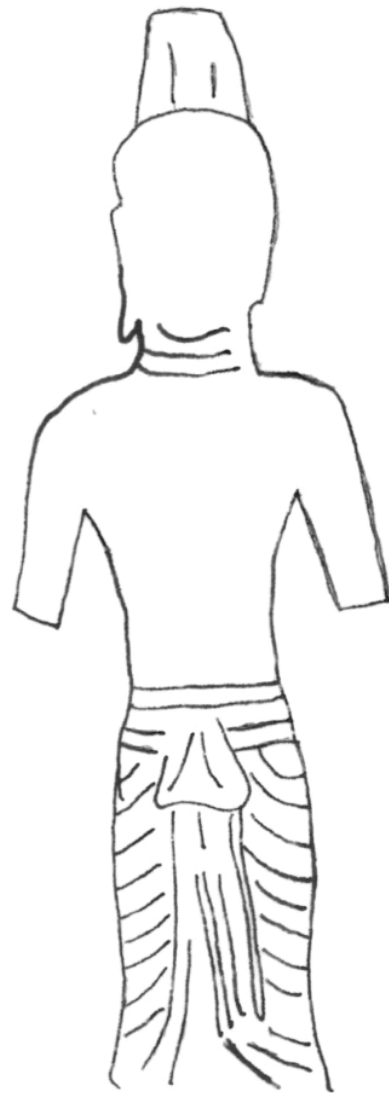


Plate 4: Bronze statuette found near Palembang. Height 9.5 cm. Drawing by author. Image available in Nik Hassan, *Buddhist sculpture from Sumatra, Peninsular Malaysia and Peninsular Thailand*, Plate 4.90



Plate 5: Bronze statuette from Thailand.
Drawing by Manisha Dayal.
Statuette is on display at the National Museum, Bangkok.



Plate 6: Bronze statuette found at Surat Thani. 28.7 cm.
Drawing by Manisha Dayal.
Image available in Jacq-Hergoualc'h, *The Malay Peninsula*, Figure 119.



Plate 7: Bronze statuette found at Nakhon Pathom. 17 cm.
Drawing by Manisha Dayal.
Image available in Jacq-Hergoualc'h,
The Malay Peninsula, Figure 132.

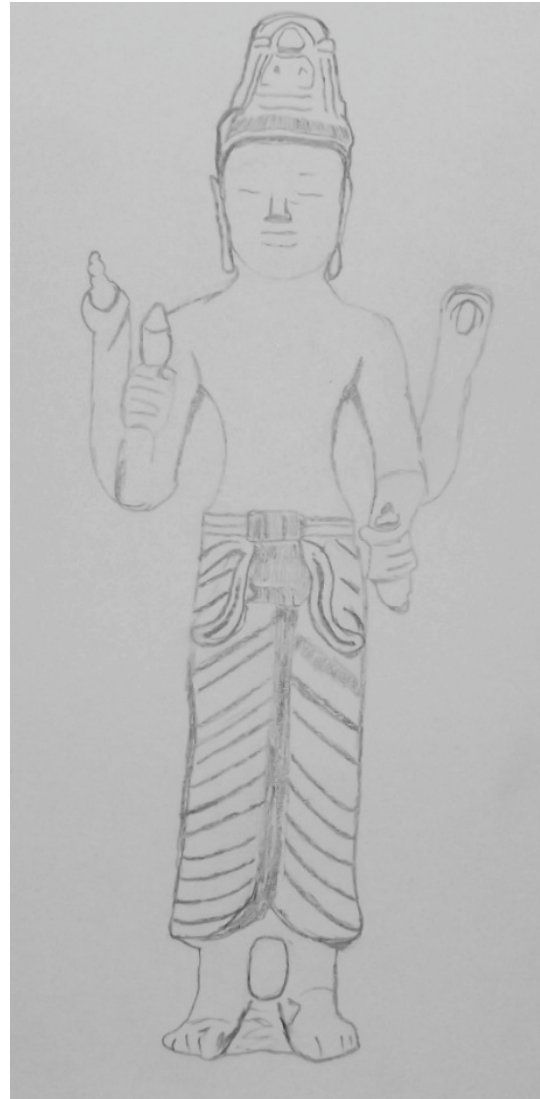


Plate 8: Bronze statuette found at Yai Yaem on the Khorat Plateau. 21.6 cm.
Drawing by author.
Image available at the Asian Art
Museum, San Francisco.



Plate 9: Outline of headdresses for Plates 1-9.
Drawing by author.



Plate 10: Outline of headdresses for Plates 11-13, along with two headdresses from the clay tablets illustrating the ascetic form.
Drawing by author.



Plate 11: Bronze statuette of standing Avalokiteśvara from Java, 18 cm.
Drawing by author.
Statuette is available at the Musée Guimet, Paris. No. 3620.



Plate 12: Bronze statuette from Sumatra, 13 cm.
Image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (www.metmuseum.org), 1987.142.223.

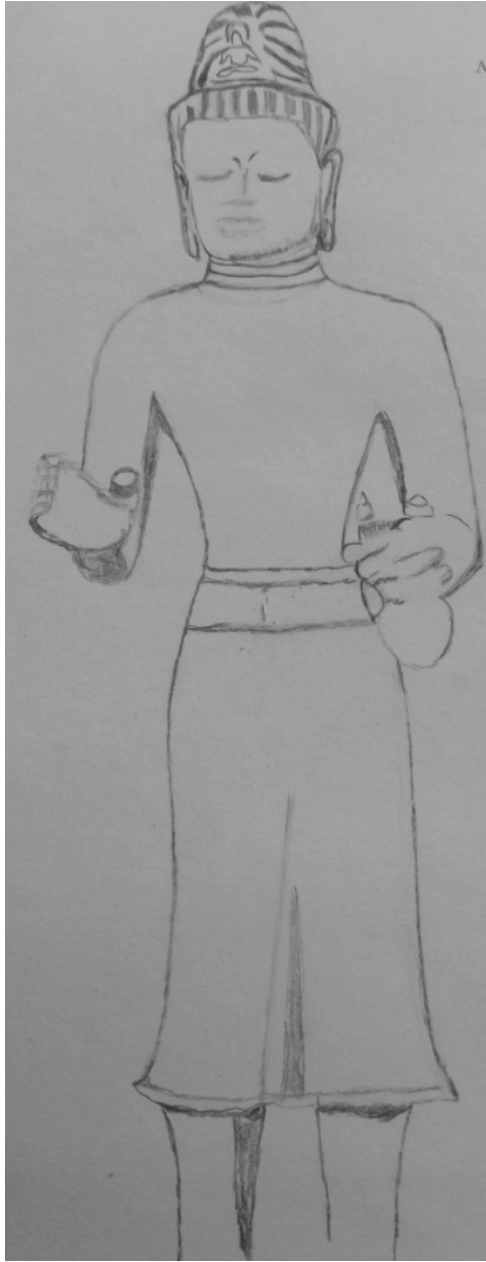


Plate 13: Bronze statuette found in Cambodia, 18 cm.

Drawing by author.

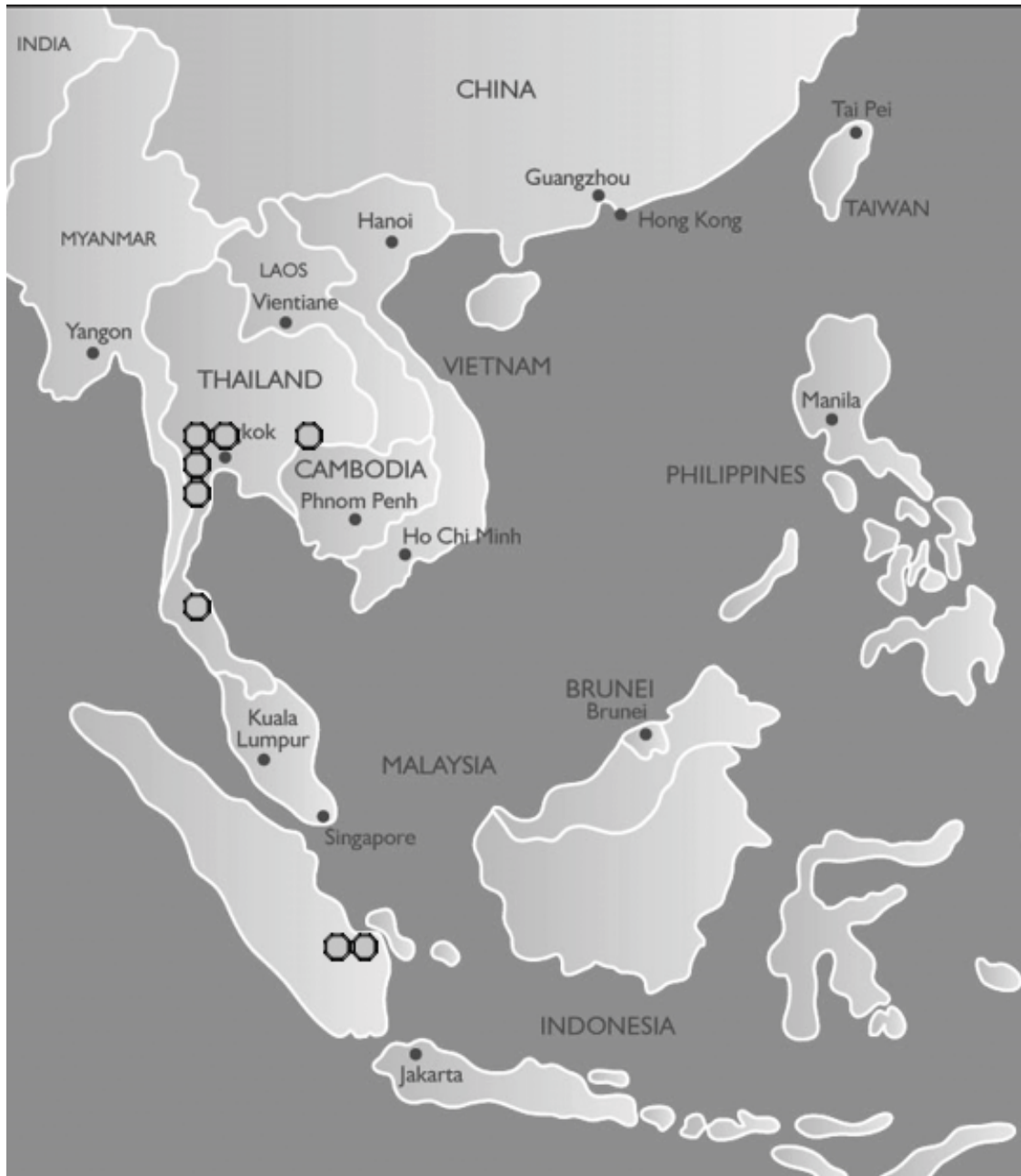
Image available in Bunker, *Khmer bronzes*, Figure 4.20a. Ga3453, National Museum of Cambodia.



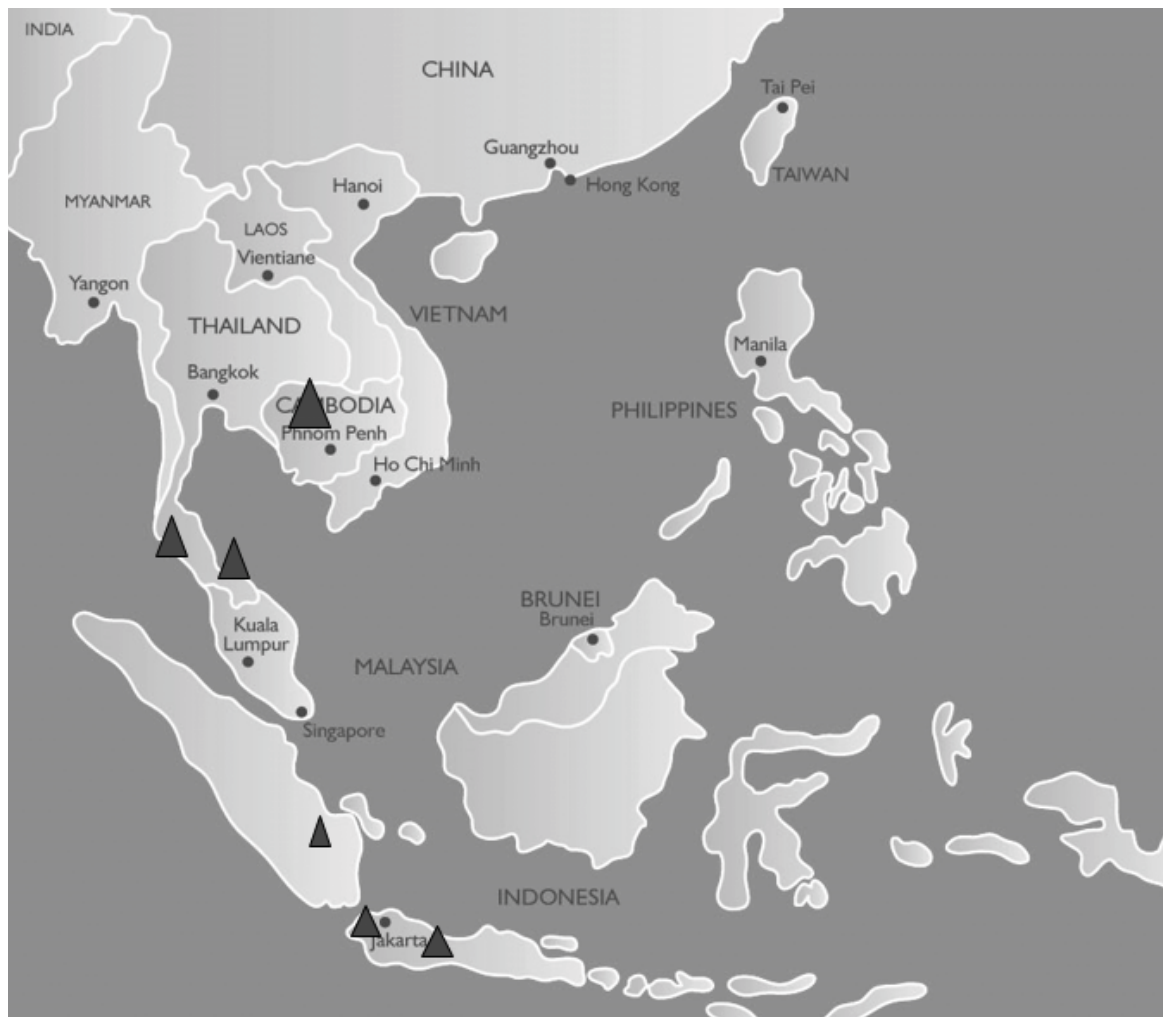
Plate 14: Ascetic Avalokiteśvara in attendance at Aurangabad.
Photograph by John C. Huntington Courtesy of The Huntington Photographic Archive
at The Ohio State University.



Plate 15: The Litany of Avalokiteśvara, Aurangabad.
Image courtesy of Natalie S.Y. Ong.



Map 1: Find sites of images in Plates 1-8.



Map 2: Find sites of images in Plates 11-13, along with the find site of a clay tablet with similar ascetic iconography.