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2022

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Drieënhuizen, C. (2022). *Provenance report regarding Bodhisattva Amoghapasha Lokeshvara*. (PPROCE provenance reports; No. 39).

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Provenance report regarding Bodhisattva Amoghapasha Lokeshvara

Caroline Drieënhuizen

	Title	Bodhisattva Amoghapasha Lokeshvara (Central-Java, appr. 850-899 CE or, more recently suggested: 780-875 CE)
	Custodian	Rijksmuseum Amsterdam
	Current possessor	Dutch state
	Inventory number	AK-RAK-1992-3
	Material/technique	Bronze
	Measurements	Height: 13.7 cm Width: 7.8 cm Depth: 4.8 cm Weight: 309 gram
	<i>Photo: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (Inv.no. AK-RAK-1992-3)</i>	

Summary of findings

To date, the provenance of this figure (a Javanese standing Amoghapasha Lokeshvara) *before* 1988 cannot yet be traced. In 1988 the statue was promised to the Rijksmuseum by its collectors, Mr and Mrs C. Oorthuys-Lutjens. About this statue's provenance we can only fall back on the most common, general circumstances in which these figures were found by colonial collectors: perhaps just before, but mostly after the middle of the nineteenth century

when more and more grounds were developed for agriculture by Javanese farmers and workers in Central- and East Java.

Reconstruction provenance

Before 1957

Unknown provenance

1957 - 1992

Mrs and Mr C. Oorthuys-Lutjens

[P. Lunsingh Scheurleer, 'De schenking Oorthuys-Lutjens', Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum 40 (1992)].

1992-Present

Rijksmuseum Amsterdam

[P. Lunsingh Scheurleer, 'De schenking Oorthuys-Lutjens', Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum 40 (1992)].

Introduction and context

Object information

This is a rather small, bronze standing statue of a so-called Amoghapasha Lokeshvara from Central-Java: a manifestation of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. Amoghapasha Lokeshvara carries a pasa (a noose) to rope in souls and save those who are lost and suffering.

The statue has eight (damaged) arms. The hands of these arms hold different objects and positions: the top left hand holds a book, the hand beneath it grasps a (broken) stick with three prongs, and the third hand holds a water bottle. According to art historian Sofia Sundström, the lowest arm and hand once held a lotus that is no longer there. The top right hand holds a rosary, the hand beneath forms the gesture abhaya-mudra, the third hand holds a (damaged) noose, and the last hand makes the gesture varada-mudra.¹

According to Sundström there are four known Javanese standing bronze Amoghapasha Lokeshvara statues: in Paris, France (Musée Guimet), New York, USA (Metropolitan Museum of Art), Vienna, Austria (Weltmuseum), and this particular object in Amsterdam, the Netherlands (Rijksmuseum).² Her statement might be not entirely correct, however, since we can also find in the collection of the Dutch Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen a standing Amoghapasha Lokeshvara with ten arms (although

¹ I.S. Sundström, "The iconography of Avalokiteśvara in Java" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2020), 220. See: <https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/handle/1887/86069>.

² Collection Musée National Français d'Arts Asiatiques - Guimet, Paris, France, inv.nr. MG 3816; collection Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA, inv.nr. 1987.142.194; Weltmuseum, Vienna, Austria, inv.nr. 068755.

the statue is missing the Amoghapasha's most prominent feature: the noose)³ and one statue with eight arms.⁴ Furthermore, in the collection of the Museum Nasional Indonesia (the former museum of the colonial Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen) there are at least three standing Amoghapasha figures with six, eight, and ten arms.⁵

In 1992, the statue currently in the Rijksmuseum was estimated by curators to be made between 850-899 CE. More recently, however, Sundström dates the statuette "with some certainty" at 780-875 CE. She bases her view on specific stylistic features like the amount of jewellery on the figure.⁶

Historical context: the collecting of Buddhist (and Hindu) statuettes on Java in general

Many small Buddhist and Hinduist Javanese figures of metal (bronze, gold, silver) were found when grounds in Central- and East-Java were developed for agriculture during the colonial period. This already took place in the 1830s,⁷ but intensified after the middle of the nineteenth century. Especially in this period, the Dutch colonial government stimulated the European reclaiming and cultivation of grounds in Java. Commercial agriculture became more prevalent. Because of this expansion of agricultural land, and the expansion of infrastructure, more and more soil was broken up.⁸

In this process, many antiquities came to the surface and were found by Javanese labourers and farmers, and European collectors who sometimes also deliberately set out to look for antiquities and started digging at known heritage sites.⁹ Some of these objects became part of the collection of the Bataviaasch Genootschap, but many were also sold by its finders to private collectors. Perhaps the Amoghapasha Lokeshvara from the collection Oorthuys-Lutjens was, just as a similar figure of Amoghapasha Lokeshvara in the Musée Guimet in Paris, from such a private collection, but unfortunately we have not found that out yet.

The provenance of other Indonesian figures of Amoghapasha Lokeshvara

The provenance of the other known, similar, statuettes provides some clues, but not many. The figure in New York was collected by American mathematician Samuel Eilenberg (1913-1998), who collected Asian objects around the middle of the twentieth century.¹⁰ The statue in Vienna was collected by a certain "Robert Heidsieck," probably Theodoor Eduard Robert Heidsieck (Bielefeld, 1851-?), a rich German and

³ Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen (NMVW), inv.nr. RV-1403-1782.

⁴ NMVW, inv.nr. RV-1403-1874.

⁵ N.J. Krom, "De Buddhistische bronzen in het Museum te Batavia," *Rapporten van den Oudheidkundigen Dienst in Nederlandsch-Indië 1912* (Batavia / 's-Gravenhage: Albrecht & Co., 1913): 1-83, 32, plate 14.

⁶ Sundström, *The iconography*, 134.

⁷ H.J. Domis, collector of antiquities, described the intensification of cane sugar and coffee production in his regency Pasuruan after 1830. H.J. Domis, *De residentie Passoeroeang op het eiland Java* (Den Haag: De Groot, 1836), VI.

⁸ Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer, "Oudheidkundige vondsten op Java," *Aziatische Kunst* (2005): 4-13. 5.

⁹ We know that individuals like Godert H.M. Harloff (1834-?) and his father, to name just two, visited Borobudur, Prambanan, and Candi Sewu, dug deep holes and took away with them everything they found. See for instance: F.D.K. Bosch, "Oudheden in particulier bezit. De voormalige collectie Dieduksman," *Oudheidkundig Verslag 1926* (Weltevreden/'s-Gravenhage: Albrecht / Nijhoff, 1927): 62; N.J. Krom, "De bronsvondst van Ngandjoek," *Rapporten van den Oudheidkundigen Dienst in Nederlandsch-Indië 1912* (Batavia / 's-Gravenhage: Albrecht & Co., 1913): 59-72, 59.

¹⁰ Martin Lerner and Steven Kossak, *The Lotus transcendent: Indian and Southeast Asian Art from the Samuel Eilenberg collection* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991).

naturalised Dutchman who lived in Amsterdam between the 1870s and 1900s. In 1902 he decided to donate his large collection of Javanese antiquities to the ethnographic museum in Vienna.¹¹ The statue in Paris was part of a larger collection formed by an unknown “Indo-European family”¹² somewhere in the middle of the nineteenth century. Through the retired colonial servant Jan Jacob Meijer (1857-1926) the collection (some 35 objects) was given on loan in the 1910s and eventually donated in 1919 to the Musée Guimet in Paris.¹³

The two figures in the Netherlands and one in Indonesia have the oldest known provenance: RV-1403-1782 was collected between 1806 and 1834 by Hendrik J. Domis (1782-1842), a colonial servant with an interest in Javanese antiquities,¹⁴ and RV-1403-1874 was acquired between 1816 and 1825 by gouverneur-generaal Van der Capellen during his term of office. The Amoghapasha in Indonesia is from the collection of Andreas Emanuel Kläring (Yogya, 1802-1873), a former soldier and planter in the region around Prambanan.

In 1916, art historian N.J. Krom (1883-1945) discussed the collection of Musée Guimet, including the figure of Amoghapasha Lokeshvara, and remarked that this particular statue was “one of the biggest jewels in the collection.” He stated that its form, with ten arms, was “remarkably rare.”¹⁵ Only in Leiden could one find such a piece, Krom wrote. He did not mention the existence of other Amoghapasha Lokeshvara-figures, like the AK-RAK-1992-3, in the Netherlands. Did he consider them less remarkable? Or were they not known to him? This would perhaps mean Amoghapasha Lokeshvara (AK-RAK-1992-3) was still unknown to scholars.

The provenance of the Amoghapasha Lokeshvara in the Oorthuys-Lutjens collection

Sometime after 1957 the ten armed Amoghapasha Lokeshvara discussed here was collected by Cornelis (‘Kees’) Oorthuys (1919-2012). Oorthuys had been an engineer, working at a technical trading company. Between May 1948 and May 1958 he lived and worked in Jakarta and frequently travelled for business. He worked with businessman Jan Jetso Boeles (1909-2002), who had lived in Bangkok since 1935 but often visited Jakarta. Besides being a businessman, Boeles was a scholar and specialist of Buddhism in Southeast Asia. In 1941, he wrote his first Dutch scholarly article on Buddhist iconography in North Thailand.¹⁶ He also traded in antique Javanese artefacts.¹⁷

Oorthuys, inspired by Boeles, probably started collecting in 1957. Around that time he bought two statues in a little antique store run by a Chinese-Indonesian man in Pasar Baru, Jakarta. Later he also

¹¹ Franz Steindachner, “Notizen. Jahresbericht für 1902,” *Annalen des K.K. naturhistorischen Hofmuseums* 1903 (Vienna: Hölder, 1903): 15.

¹² Mathilde Mechling, Brice Vincent, Pierre Baptiste and David Bourgarit, “The Indonesian bronze-casting tradition: technical investigations on thirty-nine Indonesian bronze statues (7th–11th c.) from the Musée National des Arts Asiatiques – Guimet, Paris,” *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient* 104 (2018): 63-139, 69.

¹³ Mathilde Mechling, Brice Vincent, Pierre Baptiste and David Bourgarit, “The Indonesian bronze-casting tradition: technical investigations on thirty-nine Indonesian bronze statues (7th–11th c.) from the Musée National des Arts Asiatiques – Guimet, Paris,” *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient* 104 (2018): 63-139; 67-70.

¹⁴ C. Leemans, *Beredeneerde beschrijving der Asiatische en Amerikaansche monumenten van het Museum van Oudheden te Leyden* (Leiden: H.W. Hazenberg, 1842): VX, 45; Hans Groot, *Van Batavia naar Weltevreden: het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1778-1867* (Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 2009), 239-243.

¹⁵ N.J. Krom, “Een Javaansche bronscollectie,” *Nederlandsch Indië Oud en Nieuw* 1, no. 9 (1916): 385-395, 394.

¹⁶ Biography of Jan Jetso Boeles: <https://www.dutchstudies-satsea.nl/deelnemers/jan-jetso-boeles/>; Alfred Monterie, “Mentaliteit en ijver sleutel tot succes. Thailand: geen stapjes maar reuzensprongen,” *De Telegraaf*, April 15, 1989.

¹⁷ Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer, “De schenking van Oorthuys-Lutjens,” *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 40 (1992): 270.

procured artefacts in the antique store across the street from the former Dutch society “De Harmonie” in Central-Jakarta. Oorthuys also bought directly from *tukang antik*, who came to his house to sell antiques. Back in the Netherlands he continued collecting and bought at Aalderink Art Gallery in Amsterdam and the gallery of the brothers Refuge in Diepenveen, Overijssel, among other places.¹⁸ Oorthuys’ wife, Gusta (‘Oda’) Lutjens (1920-2000), was born in Java and also brought objects in. The Amoghapasha Lokeshvara was one of the objects Oorthuys and his wife took the “most pleasure in” and which they considered one of the most important objects of their collection.¹⁹

Unfortunately, we do not know yet *where* or *how* Oorthuys acquired this particular figure. It is possible he collected the statue in the Netherlands (the former art dealer Refuge claims, however, that he did not sell this particular artefact²⁰ and Aalderink Oriental Art has not yet responded to our questions), but there is also the possibility that he had already acquired the statue in Indonesia.

In 1988, the Amoghapasha Lokeshvara was displayed in the exhibition *Divine Bronze: Ancient Indonesian Bronzes*-exhibition (30 April until 31 July 1988) at the Rijksmuseum. Oorthuys was inspired by the exhibition and decided later in life to donate most of his collection to the museum.²¹ In 1992, this Amoghapasha Lokeshvara figure was added to the collection of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁹ Archive Rijksmuseum. Letter from C. Oorthuys and G. Oorthuys-Lutjens to the director of the Rijksmuseum, H. van Os, Baak, 23 December 1992.

²⁰ Sidonie Mossink-Refuge, email to Caroline Drieënhuizen, 7 April 2021.

²¹ Idem, 271.