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Provenance report regarding Vajrasattva

Caroline Drieënhuizen

Photo: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (Inv.no. AK-RAK-1970-2)

Title	Vajrasattva (Vairocana)
Custodian	Rijksmuseum Amsterdam
Current possessor	Dutch State
Inventory number	AK-RAK-1970-2
Material/technique	Silver statue on a bronze pedestal. Made sometime between the end of the tenth century CE and the beginning of the eleventh century CE. East-Java, Indonesia.
Measurements	Height: 13.5 cm Wide: 7.7 cm Deep: 6.5 cm

Summary of findings

According to Dutch archaeologist N.J. Krom (1883-1945), this vajrasattva (tenth-eleventh centuries CE) from Java was collected by Alexander Loudon (1822-1868) at a still undetermined moment (but before 1868) and place (*probably* in Java, Indonesia).[1] Although Loudon had been a collector of Hindu and Buddhist statues and other artefacts around 1860, we don't know yet if, where, and when he collected the vajrasattva. We can assume he collected in the manner many collected in this period: partly by buying objects that were found by farmers or labourers in the area, by receiving or buying objects from other collectors (perhaps Van Kinsbergen or Loudon's uncle, collector Frans Valck [1839-1842]) and/or by finding those objects themselves by visiting acclaimed heritage sites.

[1] N.J. Krom, "'Hindoe-Javaanse bronzen: de collectie Loudon," *Nederlandsch-Indië Oud en Nieuw* 3 (1919): 383-395, 393-394.

With certainty we can trace the vajrasattva back to 1919, when it was in the possession of Hugo Loudon (1860-1941), a nephew of Alexander Loudon. Perhaps Hugo Loudon inherited the object through his parents, James and Louise Loudon-de Stuers. In 1953 this collection was auctioned. This particular artefact was bought by Dutch collector C.G. Rieff (1900-1982), who sold the statue in 1970 to the Rijksmuseum.

Reconstruction provenance

Possibly sometime around 1850 – 1868

Alexander Loudon, Jr. (1822-1868)

[N.J. Krom, "Hindoe-Javaansche bronzen: de collectie-Loudon," Nederlandsch-Indië Oud en Nieuw *3 (1919): 383-395, 383].***1868-1915**

PossiblyJames Loudon (1824-1900) and Louise de Stuers (1835-1915)

[Gonne Smit, 'De collectie Loudon', Elseviers Geïllustreerd Maandschrift *26 (April 1916) 1-20; Noord-Hollandsarchief, Haarlem. 476. Rijksmuseum en rechtsvoorgangers te Amsterdam. Inv.nr. 1082. Een verzameling ceramiek door de erven van mw. A.J.M. Loudon-de Stuers, 1915-1916].*

Before 1919-1941

Hugo Loudon (1860-1941) Wassenaar, the Netherlands.

N.J. Krom, "Hindoe-Javaansche bronzen: de collectie-Loudon," Nederlandsch-Indië Oud en Nieuw *3 (1919): 383-395, 383, 383; A.J. Bernet Kempers, "Alexander Loudon en zijn collectie Oudjavaanse metaalkunst,"* Mededelingenblad van de Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst *15 no. 5 (1985): 6-15, 8-9.*

6 September 1941 – 23 June 1953

Mrs Anna (Petronella Alida) van Marken (1874-1953), widow of Hugo Loudon, in Wassenaar, the Netherlands

A.J. Bernet Kempers, "Alexander Loudon en zijn collectie Oudjavaanse metaalkunst," Mededelingenblad van de Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst *15 no. 5 (1985): 6-15, 8.*

23 June 1953

Mak van Waay, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

['Veiling Mak van Waay', Algemeen Handelsblad, *June, 25, 1953].*

23 June 1953-1970

In the collection of Cornelis Gerardus Rieff (1900-1982), De Bilt, Utrecht, the Netherlands

[Inventory card Rijksmuseum Amsterdam AK-RAK-1970-2].

1970-present

Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Object information

This is a statue of Vajrasattva, a bodhisattva (a person seeking 'bodhi' — awakening), sitting on a lotus throne. The Rijksmuseum considers the sculpture to be from East-Java. Before the Second World War the provenance was traced to Central Java.[2] It was made around the end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh centuries CE. The throne is made of bronze with very dark, perhaps coated, surface. According to the Rijksmuseum restoration department, the sculpture is "a dark copper alloy plated with silver."[3]

The figure is wearing a loincloth and several jewels around the arms, ankles, and neck, and in both ears. A tiara is placed on the figure's head and its hair is tied up. Traditionally vajrasattva holds in its right hand, close to his heart, a *vajra* (thunderbolt) and a *ghanta* (upturned bell) in its left. Although the position of the arms of the vajrasattva in the Rijksmuseum corresponds to the traditional iconographic depiction of vajrasattva (right hand close to his heart and left hand beside his left hip), the attributes of a *vajra* and *ghanta* are missing. According to the Dutch archaeologist A.J. Bernet Kempers (1906-1992), in the case of this particular statue these attributes have not been lost over time, but were never part of this particular representation of vajrasattva.[4]

According to the restoration department of the Rijksmuseum, the sculpture and its base are cast separately. The figure has a pin at the back that attaches the sculpture to the base. There used to be a similar pin in one knee (and probably also in the other knee since there are two corresponding holes), but this one has disappeared. Consequently, the sculpture is not very strongly secured to its base. The pins are probably latter additions.[5] The knees are secured to the base by wax (removed and over time newly applied, as in 2008). Because of the pin, the sculpture is not placed in the centre of the base. The plated silver (with a blue tint) is worn away at some (high) points of the sculpture.[6]

Since this statue's appearance in the Western academic literature on Asian art in 1919, the statue's original provenance evolved from Central Java (from 1919 until around 1970) to East-Java (since at least 1970, when the Rijksmuseum acquired the statue). This determination of provenance from Central to East Java should not be understood as a reference to its actual geographic origin, but rather as a reference to the period of creation, based on style characteristics.[7] Around 1919 (until ca. 1970), the date of its creation was determined as ca. eighth CE. After 1970, the date was set at eighth-fifteenth CE. After 1985, the tenth-eleventh CE became common. Since 1919, the statue has been celebrated for its artistic quality.

[2] At the exhibitions "Indische Beeldhouwkunst" (The Hague 1922) and "Aziatische Kunst" (Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam 1936) the statue is claimed to be from Central Java.
[3] Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Conditierapport AK-RAK-1970-2, d.d. 9-1-2008.
[4] A.J. Bernet Kempers, '"Alexander Loudon en zijn collectie Oudjavaanse metaalkunst," *Mededelingenblad van de Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst* 15, no. 5 (1985): 6-15, 8-9.
[5] Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Behandelingsrapport AK-RAK-1970-2, d.d. 6-2-2008.
[6] Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Conditierapport AK-RAK-1970-2, d.d. 9-1-2008.
[7] R. Soekmono, "Indonesische architectuur van de Klassieke Periode: een kort overzicht," in *Het goddelijk gezicht van Indonesië. Meesterwerken der beeldhouwkunst 700-1600,* ed. Jan Fontein (Zwolle: Waanders, 1992), 76-95, 80.

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The first time we know with certainty that this particular sculpture was mentioned is in 1919. At that moment, Dutch archaeologist N.J. Krom (1883-1945) described in an article the silver statue as a "statue sculpted with greatest care" and praised its base as much finer than the rest.[8] He also added a photograph and stated that "of the provenance of the individual pieces nothing is known."[9] In this period, the sculpture was part of the Javanese antique collection of Hugo Loudon (1860-1941) in Wassenaar, the Netherlands. Krom indicated that Hugo Loudon received his collection from his uncle Alexander Loudon, Jr. (1822-1868) and that the collection probably was assembled around 1855.[10] We can assume Hugo Loudon personally provided this information to Krom.

Alexander Loudon (1822-1868) and the collecting of antique artefacts in Java around 1855

Alexander Loudon, Jr. was partly raised in colonial Indonesia. In 1847 he became a colonial civil servant and rose through the ranks to become vice-president of the Raad van Nederlandsch-Indië.[11] He was also member of the Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen. In its museum was housed the famous collection of Hindu- and Buddhist-Javanese artefacts of his uncle Frans Valck (1839-1842) (see also the family tree below), resident of Yogyakarta between 1831 and 1841. Between circa 1826 and 1840, Valck collected objects like sculptures, bracelets, and temple bells from the area around Kedu, Prambanan, in the vicinity of Yogyakarta and Surakarta and on the Dieng plateau.[12] After his death, his collection was bought by the museum of the Bataviaasch Genootschap.[13] When he was a child, Alexander Loudon must have seen that particular collection at Valck's house –- we know that at least his brothers spent a lot of time at their uncle's house.[14] We do not know for sure if Loudon's collecting was inspired by his uncle Valck or if he inherited some objects.

Bernet Kempers, and in following him also former Rijksmuseum curator Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer, suggest that perhaps photographer Isidore van Kinsbergen (1821-1905) collected for Alexander Loudon, Jr.[15] Van Kinsbergen collected antiquities and ethnographic objects.[16] For instance, when he travelled to the Dieng plateau in Central-Java in 1864 to make pictures of the antiquities, Van Kinsbergen and his

[8] Krom, "Hindoe-Javaanse bronzen," 393-394.
[9] Ibidem, 383.
[10] Ibidem.
[11] Nationaal Archief, 's-Gravenhage. Toegangsnummer 2.10.36.22. Inventaris van het archief van het Ministerie van Koloniën: Stamboeken Burgerlijke Ambtenaren, 1836-1936. Inv.nr. 901. Part H, folio 412.
[12] Frans Valck, 'Gedachten over de ruïnen van de Hindoesche godsdienst, welke op Java gevonden worden,' *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indië* 3 (1840): 177-203. In 1840, Valck claimed to have assembled his collection in ten years, so from 1830 on. As there are objects from Kedu in his collection, it is also possible he already started collecting when he was resident in Kedu (from 1826-1831).
[13] Hans Groot, *Van Batavia naar Weltevreden. Het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1778-1867* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), 311-312.
[14] James Loudon, *Eer en fortuin: leven in Nederlands-Indië, 1824-1900. Autobiografie van gouverneur-generaal James Loudon* (H. Boels and J. de Jong eds.) (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 2003).
[15] Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer, "Oudheidkundige vondsten op Java,'" *Aziatische Kunst* 35, no. 4 (2005): 4-13, 13 n.3.
[16] See for instance: *Notulen van de Algemeene en Bestuurs-vergaderingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* 3 (Batavia 1866), Minutes meeting 7-7-1865, 120; *Notulen van de Algemeene en Bestuurs-vergaderingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* 5 (Batavia 1868) Minutes meeting 26-3-1867, 33; *Notulen van de Algemeene en Bestuurs-vergaderingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* 17 (Batavia 1880) Minutes meeting 4-11-1879, 164.

anonymous Indonesian labourers not only uncovered buildings, but also found many artefacts.[17] Alexander Loudon and Van Kinsbergen got along very well personally,[18] but there is no evidence yet that Van Kinsbergen helped Loudon in collecting Javanese antiquities. We know for sure that Loudon was a collector of Javanese antiquities around the middle of the nineteenth century: between 1861 and 1863 he donated five stone "Hindu-statues" to the museum of the Bataviaasch Genootschap.[19] The fact that he collected in this period corresponds with the colonial social-political circumstances of that time.

In this period, the Dutch colonial government stimulated the European reclaiming and cultivation of grounds in Java. There was also population growth. Commercial agriculture became more prevalent.[20] Because of the expansion of agricultural land, and the expansion of infrastructure, more and more land was brought under cultivation.[21] 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 search and dig for antiquities.[22] Some of these object became part of the collection of the Bataviaasch Genootschap, but many objects also stayed in private hands.

In 1868, Alexander passed away at a rather early age. We do not known yet what he left behind and if the sculpture in the Rijksmuseum was part of his legacy.[23]

Following the trace from Alexander Loudon (1822-1868) to Hugo Loudon (1860-1941)

Until now we have no clear information on the acquisition of Alexander Loudon's artefacts in the middle of the nineteenth century. And how did the collection of Alexander Loudon, Jr. eventually end up in Hugo Loudon's collection around 1919? Among the vajrasattva in the collection of Hugo Loudon, there was also a so-called "temple bell" or "priest's bell," a *ghanta.*[24] This object may give us some leads.

In 1915, Hugo's mother, Louise Loudon-de Stuers (1835-1915), passed away. Hugo's father, former gouvernor-generaal James Loudon (1824-1900), had already died fifteen years earlier. After the death of Louise Loudon-de Stuers the estate had to be settled: an inventory was made of all movable property in the house in the Hague.[25] In this inventory the important and large collection of Delftware of James' brother, and Hugo's uncle, John Francis Loudon (1821-1895) is included: James had inherited this

[17] *Notulen van de Algemeene en Bestuurs-vergaderingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* 3 (Batavia 1866), Minutes meeting 10-2-1865, 25.
[18] At that time they both were members of the Bataviaasch Genootschap (Loudon was even president and Van Kinsberg member) and part of the Dutch trade mission to Thailand (then Siam) in February 1862 and together even pulled off some practical jokes during the trip. Alexander Loudon was the Dutch colonial general secretary and Van Kinsbergen was assigned to make photographs. 'I. van Kinsbergen,' *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 30 August 1901; Groot, *Van Batavia*, 454.
[19] *Notulen van de Algemeene en Bestuurs-vergaderingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* 1 (Batavia 1864) Report on the society's activities between the meeting of 16 November 1861 and the meeting of 27 March 1863: 163.
[20] John Miksic, *Old Javanese Gold* (Singapore: Ideaton, 1989).
[21] Lunsingh Scheurleer, "Oudheidkundige vondsten," 5.
[22] We know that individuals like Godert H.M. Harloff (1834-?) and his father 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 1927): 62; N.J. Krom, "De bronsvondst van Ngandjoek", *Rapporten van den Oudheidkundigen Dienst in Nederlandsch-Indië* (Batavia / 's-Gravenhage 1913): 59-72, 59.
[23] I was not able to find Alexander Loudon's will or note of succession. Perhaps these notarial deeds are still in the archives in Indonesia.
[24] Collection Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, inv.nr. AK-MAK-314.
[25] Noord-Hollandsarchief, Haarlem. 476. Rijksmuseum en rechtsvoorgangers te Amsterdam. Inv.nr. 1082. Een verzameling ceramiek door de erven van mw. A.J.M. Loudon-de Stuers, 1915-1916.

collection when John Francis Loudon died in 1895.[26] The inventory also mentions the presence of "twenty-six hindou statuettes" (with an estimated value of 130 guilders) and an "Indisch bell" (valued at 5 guilders) in the upper salon of the house.[27] In 1916, a journalist who visited the house described these objects as "a complete collection of Buddha-statuettes in bronze, gold, and silver."[28] The bell mentioned could be the *ghanta,* which we know was part of Alexander Loudon's and later also of Hugo Loudon's collection and which today is in the Rijksmuseum collection. Bernet Kempers considered the bell "from an aesthetic point of view" as being "absolutely beyond compare."[29] Perhaps the Hinduist and Buddhist figures and the bell all formed part of one collection, that of *another* brother of James Loudon, to be precise of Alexander Loudon — and was the vajrasattva amongst those twenty-six statues?

The journalist claimed John Loudon had brought the bell and statues "back from his travels."[30] This is possible. It is also possible that after John's death in 1865, younger brother Alexander Loudon had inherited these objects. But unlike Alexander there is no trace of evidence of John being a collector of antique Javanese artefacts. It is also possible that Alexander Loudon was the only collector of this artefacts, and that perhaps Hugo, as James' and Louise's oldest son, had inherited this particular collection of Alexander Loudon through his mother. The presence of an "Indisch bell" (we know Alexander Loudon had a beautiful bell in his collection) in the inventory reinforces this assumption, but conclusive evidence is lacking. Adding to the confusion is the statement of Dutch connoisseur H.F.E. Visser (1890-1965) in 1947 that James Loudon had collected those objects.[31] However, there is no indication at all James Loudon had been an art collector.

As previously stated, the vajrasattva was mentioned in a Dutch article for the first time in 1919. Quickly the statue became part of the Dutch canon of Hindu and Buddhist-Javanese art: in 1926 it appeared on a photograph in Stutterheim's *Cultuurgeschiedenis van Java in beeld*.[32] Before the Second World War, the statue was showed in an exhibition of "Indisch" sculptures in The Hague in 1922 and in 1936 in Amsterdam, at the Stedelijk Museum.

From Loudon to Rieff to the Rijksmuseum, 1941-present

In 1941, Hugo Loudon passed away. In the hands of his widow, Mrs Anna (Petronella Alida) van Marken (1874-1953), his collection of Asian antiques remained intact. In 1947, the vajarsattva, and the *Avalokitesvara* from the collection, were considered by Visser as "the most beautiful and important silver 'Hindu-Javanese' figures in Western collections."[33]

When Anna Loudon-van Marken died in 1953, the collection was auctioned at Mak van Waay. At that moment, the Rijksmuseum bought some objects, like the famous *ghanta*. The Royal Asian Art Society in

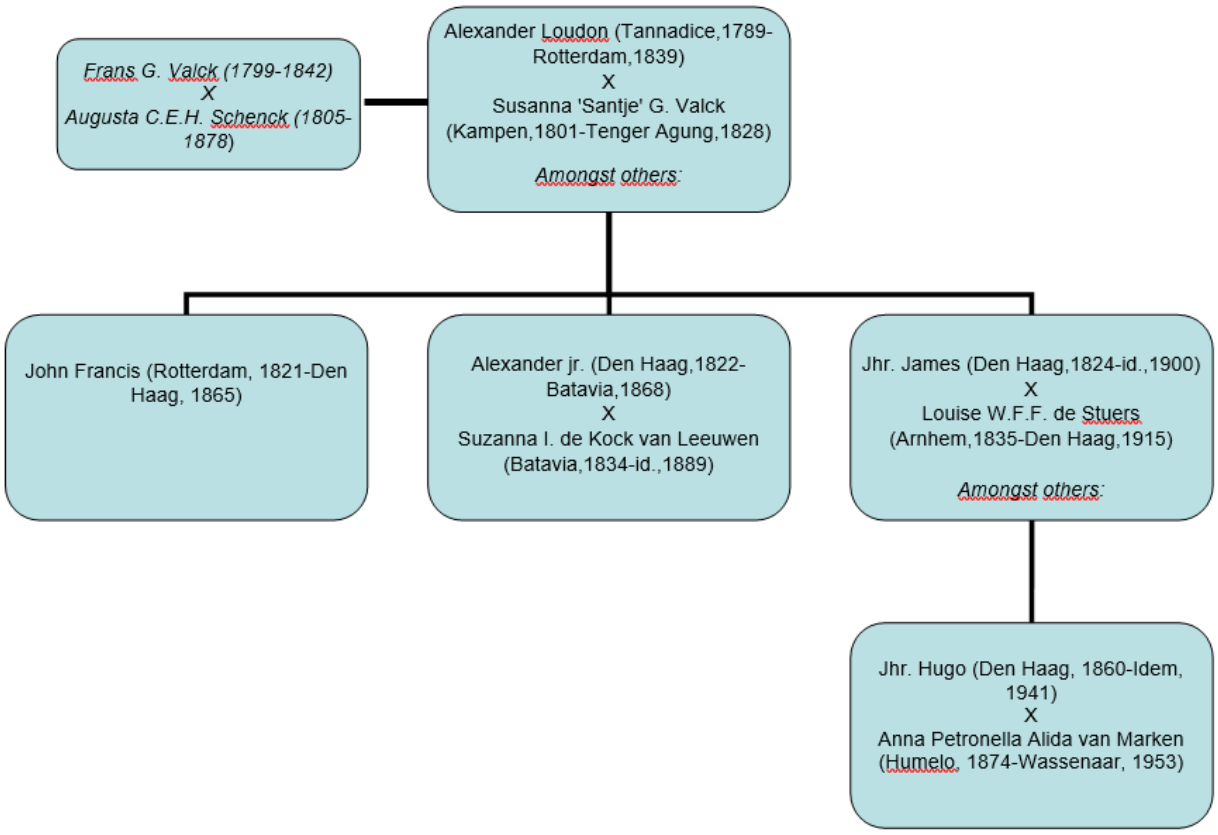
[26] This famous collection was donated to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam in 1916.
[27] Noord-Hollandsarchief, Haarlem. 476. Rijksmuseum en rechtsvoorgangers te Amsterdam. Inv.nr. 1082. Een verzameling ceramiek door de erven van mw. A.J.M. Loudon-de Stuers, 1915-1916.
[28] Gonne Smit, "De collectie Loudon," *Elseviers Geïllustreerd Maandschrift* 26 (April 1916): 1-20, 13.
[29] Collection Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, inv.nr. AK-MAK-314; A.J. Bernet Kempers in: Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer, A.J. Bernet Kempers and Patricia Wardle eds., *Asiatic art in the Rijkmuseum, Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff/Landshoff 1985), 182.
[30] Smit, '"De collectie," 13, note.
[31] H.F.E. Visser, *Asiatic art in private collections of Holland and Belgium* (Amsterdam: De Spieghel, 1947), 23.
[32] W.F. Stutterheim, *Cultuurgeschiedenis van Java in beeld* (Amsterdam / Batavia: Java-Instituut/Kolff, 1926), 38, fig. 48.
[33] Visser, *Asiatic art,* 79.

the Netherlands (Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst) obtained an *Avalokitesvara* from the Loudon collection.[34] Collector Cornelis Gerardus Rieff (1900-1982) acquired several objects from this collection, amongst others the vajrasattva, for fl. 3.000,-.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Rieff had been an employee of the Netherlands Trading Society (Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij) and had lived in Kobe, Japan and in several cities in colonial Indonesia.[35] In 1941, he already possessed a collection of Asian antique art as objects from his collection were on display in an exhibition in Batavia in 1941.[36] After the war, Rieff apparently returned to the Netherlands.[37] In 1970, perhaps because of his age, he decided to sell objects, including the vajrasattva.

The Rijksmuseum bought the vajrasattva for fl 45.000,- :[38] this was an enormous increase in value in 17 years. The Royal Asian Art Society in the Netherlands bought several other objects from Rieff's collection, including a statue (a Chunda) that also originated from the Loudon collection.[39]

Figure 1. Genealogy Loudon family



[34] Collection Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, inv.nr. AK-MAK-312. The statues was bought for fl 2652,50.
[35] *Regeerings-almanak voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (Weltevreden): 1923, 1924, 1925, 1297, 1930, 1934.
[36] *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 28-1-1941.
[37] In 1948, he fled from Batavia onboard a 'Constellation.' *Het Dagblad*, 5 June 1948. In 1953 he buys artefacts at the Mak van Waay-auction.
[38] Archive Rijksmuseum Amsterdam. Bill.
[39] Several of the other artefacts that were acquired by the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam are: a Kuvera/Jambahala, inv.nr. AK-MAK-1201, a Padmapani, inv.nr AK-MAK-1203 and a Chunda inv.nr. AK-MAK-1202 (this object also was originally from the Loudon collection and bought by Rieff in 1953).