

## On the Groups of Buddhist Statues Outside the Temples in Candi Plaosan, Central Java

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### Introduction

Candi Plaosan is located northeast of the Buddhist and Hindu heritage complex, in Sorogedug Plain in Central Java, Indonesia. It is divided into Candi Plaosan Lor (hereafter called North Plaosan) and Candi Plaosan Kidur (hereafter called South Plaosan). No statues are left at South Plaosan except for one small temple. On the other hand, North Plaosan consists of two main temples, walled by a group of small buildings of 174 *stūpa* and many small temples.<sup>1)</sup>

There are various opinions on the date of construction.<sup>2)</sup> However, evidence from 60 inscriptions on the surrounding wall of North Plaosan, another five inscriptions found in other places, and other inscriptions at The National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia in Jakarta suggests that Candi Plaosan was constructed in 9th century CE. It is believed that the construction was led by Rakai Pikatan of the Matarām dynasty, who constructed Candi Lara Jonggang, and Paramodavardhanī, who was the queen of Rakai Pikatan and daughter of King Samaratuṅga of the Śailendra dynasty, who was said to have built Candi Borobudur.<sup>3)</sup>

Each temple is divided into three rooms. The inner half of each room contains a slightly raised platform on which there are three pedestals to support statues (nine pedestals in total). In addition, there are traces of indentions on the wooden beams of the upper part of the building, which could have supported boards 15 cm thick to make an upper floor. Soeharsono suggested that these upper floors were either a living space for priests or a storage area for ritual instruments.<sup>4)</sup> However, Casparis argued that the buildings were used as a state sanctuary by nobles for meditation rather than as ordinary temples, and that the upper floor was used to store ritual instruments. His analysis was concluded from such factors as follows: This heritage, Candi Plaosan had a strong connection with the King Pikatan and

his six relatives. The statues of three Buddha and six Bodhisattva are enshrined. A small golden plate on which *dhāraṇī* was written was discovered. Such creatures as kinnara (a celestial musician of half-human and half-bird) are curved on the reliefs on the walls of the room which evoke the image of heaven. The ceiling is not very high due to raised platform. As it is difficult to imagine that priests used to walk on the upper floor, i.e., above religious statues, I also agree that the buildings were used in a way as Casparis suggested.<sup>5)</sup>

Today, there remain 89 statues in total: 12 statues in two buildings of North Plaosan (six in the South Temple, and six in the North Temple); 21 statues in the terrace adjacent to the north side of North Plaosan (Buddha, Bodhisattva, and Kubera); 31 statues in a storehouse collected from areas surrounding Plaosan (Buddha, Bodhisattva, goddess, Gaṇeśa and so on); 12 statues around the storehouse (Buddha, Bodhisattva [one Avalokiteśvara among them], goddess); nine statues in other museums (Mañjuśrī, Maitreya, Buddha, Monk, Kubera, Amitābha and so on); and four guardian statues, called Dvārapāla (two in front of each temple). The rest of this paper focuses on the 21 statues of the North Terrace, because there is very few prior research on them.<sup>6)</sup> In particular a detailed observation and analysis will be presented in order to identify the name of every Bodhisattva.

### Analysis of Bodhisattva in the South and North Temples of North Plaosan

The statues of the North Terrace are all stone sitting figures. Nine have been identified as that of Buddha, eleven of Bodhisattva, and one of Kubera. We will examine the Bodhisattva in greater depth. To begin with, we can specify the names of the Bodhisattva in the South and North Temples. Both Temples are separated into three rooms, where three pedestals are placed, and all of the statues on the central pedestal are missing. There are therefore six Bodhisattva statues in each temple. They are all seated in a position of sitting on a chair with the right leg down and the left leg resting across the right thigh (*fumisage-za*) and appear to hold the same objects as shown in Figure 2. The height of the statues is between 139 and 143 cm, with ship-shaped aureole of between 130 and 134 cm. As for the face of Avalokiteśvara statue in the South Temple, the distance between the hairline and the chin is 27 cm, and the distance between the ears is 24 cm. The objects held by each Bodhisattva in the South and North Temples are shown in Figure 1.

Matsunaga (1999) provided crucial insights into the identification of the statues in the South and North Temples, presenting his own analysis as well as other's views. According-

## South temple



Maitreya

Samantabhadra

Avalokiteśvara

Vajrapāṇi  
(questionable)

Kṣitigarbha

Mañjuśrī

## North temple



Figure 1 Candi Plaosan Lor

ly, it is possible to identify one of the statues in the south room as Mañjuśrī. As for the other one in the south room, some suggest it could be Ākāśagarbha while other suggest Sarvaviṇaśakambhīn. The statues in the central room can be identified as Vajrapāṇi (though questionable) and Avalokiteśvara. One of the statues in the north room appears to be Maitreya. As for the other one in the north room, some suggest it could be Kṣitigarbha while other suggest Samanta bhadra.<sup>7)</sup> With reference to these prior studies, I would like to suggest that the statues in the south room can be identified as Mañjuśrī and Kṣitigarbha, the ones in the central room as Vajrapāṇi and Avalokiteśvara, and the ones in the north room as Samanta bhadra and Maitreya.

Mañjuśrī is identifiable because of the crescent moon-shaped aureole behind the head and there is a *pustaka* (*sūtra*) on a blue lotus (a stem of lotus beginning to bloom). Avalokiteśvara holds *Padma* (a stem of lotus in bloom seemingly with a *pustaka* above it), with a tiger skin wrapped around his left thigh. Maitreya can be identified with a *stūpa* over the head, holding *Puṇnāga* (with leaves). In contrast to these statues, it is difficult to identify Kṣitigarbha, Vajrapāṇi and Samantabhadra.



Figure 2 Kṣitigarbha



Figure 3 Vajrapāṇi (questionable)



Figure 4 Avalokiteśvara



Figure 5 Maitreya

It is surmised that Kṣitigarbha in the south room holds an object identical to the one held by the Eight Bodhisattva on the panel on the ground floor of Cave 12 in Ellora as well as on the statues in Udayagir, both in India.<sup>8)</sup> In Indonesia, the same object is found on the north wall of the main entrance of Candi Mendut: a flaming *Ratna*. Some of the primary studies argue that this statue in the south room is Ākāśagarbha or Sarvavivaraṇaṣkambhin.<sup>9)</sup> However, in line with the examples of the Eight Mahābodhisattva of the panel on the ground floor of Cave 12 in Ellora and the statue in Udayagir, Ākāśagarbha is assumed to hold a sword, so I would conclude that the statue in the south room is Kṣitigarbha.

The second analysis is on the statue in the central room. I would like to identify it as Vajrapāṇi, because the crown on its head resembles that of Vajrapāṇi of the Cave 12 of Ellora, and the statue resembles that of Vajrapāṇi, which stands on the left at the main cathedral of Candi Mendut.<sup>10)</sup> This also resembles a bronze statue of Vajrapāṇi, one of the 10 bronze statues I have surveyed in Indonesia, in terms of the right hand missing almost in front of the chest and the left hand on the back holding a stem of lotus.<sup>11)</sup>

The Samantabhadra in the north room holds an object of a blue lotus (a stem of lotus beginning to bloom with three buds). It is the same object in the statue believed to be Samantabhadra in the Eight Bodhisattva panel on the ground floor of Cave 12 in Ellora and the statues in Udayagir. This deduction is also supported by the relief in the third gallery of the Candi Borobudur: It represents the scene from the *Gandavyūha Sūtra* of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* in which *Sudhanakumāra* (a man seeking for enlightenment) was endowed with spiritual power from Samantabhadra, who holds a lotus stem with egg-shaped buds in his left hand. On the east wall of Candi Mendut, there is a relief of figure with a stem of object with three buds, which is also associated with Samantabhadra.

### Analysis of the Statues of the North Terrace

Let us examine the 11 statues of Bodhisattva on the North Terrace, taking into consideration the above factors. The statues are between 102 and 118 cm high, with the maximal breadth between 60 and 74 cm (from the left to the right knee), and the depth of the pedestals between 61 and 70 cm. I will examine five statues out of 11 which are relatively less damaged. First of all, a statue with the crescent-shaped lighting on the back of the head is believed to be Mañjuśrī. The next statue (Figure 2) is thought to be Kṣitigarbha because it holds a flaming *Ratna*. Another statue (Figure 3) appears to be Vajrapāṇi because it resem-

bles the statues of Vajrapāṇi in the South and North Temples, with the same pose in the upper body and wearing the same adornments. The statue shown in Figure 4 appears to be Avalokiteśvara because it is holding *Padma* (a stem of lotus in bloom, seemingly a *pustaka* above it). The statue shown in Figure 5 is inferred to be Maitreya, with a *stūpa* on the head and holding *pumṇāga* (with leaves). In addition to these, there is a statue which is possible to be identified as Avalokiteśvara.

Furthermore, we know that there is a Maitreya statue at the Jakarta National Museum (no. 248c) in the same style as at Plaosan, and a Mañjuśrī statue at Archaeological Institute, Prambanan Branch Office (no.518/475). In other words, it is possible to find Mañjuśrī, Kṣitigarbha, Vajrapāṇi (questionable), Avalokiteśvara, Maitreya on the North Terrace, just as found in the South and North Temples. Under the current circumstance, we are unable to find the statue of Samantabhadra. Taking all these factors into account, however, it is assumed, with a high degree of probability, that the statues of the North Terrace formed some kind of a group, just like those of the South and North Temples.

Nevertheless, it is also clear that all statues of the North Terrace are different from those of the South and North Temples. For example, unlike the statues in the South and North Temples, they sit in a position known as half lotus position (with their legs crossed and the right leg is over the left, *hanka fuza* in Japanese). The difficulty in identifying is further increased by the condition of the statues. The statues of the North Terrace were more damaged and missing because of being exposed to wind and rain, and of robbery.

As found on the wall of the Candi Mendut, it is believed that the Eight Mahābodhisattva were transferred to Indonesia from India around the ninth century CE. All but two of the statues (Sarvavivaraṇaviṣkambhin or Ākāśagarbha) of Candi Plaosan seem to have received some influence from India. The origin of these statues can be traced back to the Caves of Ellora in West India and Udayagir in East India and had an effect on the modeling of statues in Indonesia.

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#### Notes

1) See Krom (1923, 5); Soeharsono (1964, 13); Casparis (1958, No.4); Noguchi (1969, 339). Sawa (1973, 118, Figure 54).

2) Krom (1923, 3) claims it was around 915 CE, while Kempers (1959) suggests around 850 CE. Kempers (1959, 57); Casparis (1958, 20).

In 1891, an inscription of unknown source which was written by pre-Nagari script. Bosch pointed out that it belonged to Plaosan, and Casparis claimed that it was made in the early ninth century. See Noguchi (1969, 343).

3) Casparis (1958, No.4); Noguchi (1969, IV).

4) Soeharsono (1964, 13).

5) Noguchi (1969, 348).

6) In the time of the research by Ijzerman in 1885, in the North Terrace there were Buddha and Bodhisattva rested. See Koesnoen (1962, 75). Casparis referred it as 'MANDAPA' in his explanation of the figures. See Casparis (1958,36) Plate I.

7) Matsunaga (1999, 163).

8) Yoritomi (1990, 607); Park (2012, 49).

9) Matsunaga (1999, 102).

10) Ito (2008).

11) Ito (2007, 171).

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