

A Study of Prajñāpāramitā in Indonesia

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1. Introduction Indonesian Statues of Prajñāpāramitā, which are presently known, consist of two bronze statues, two pairs of bronze statues, and three stone statues of Prajñāpāramitā and Vairocanas, which form *bodhyagrī-mudrā*, *jñānamuṣṭi*. The figures of Prajñāpāramitā all have one head and two arms, forming *dharmacakra-mudrā*, which is a symbolic or ritual gesture with the fingers. The characteristics of this type of statue are that a lotus stalk arises from the left of the pedestal, *padma* (the full-bloomed lotus flower) at the left shoulder, and *pustaka* (*sūtra*) rests on the flower.¹⁾

Prajñāpāramitā is a deity, an idolization or personification of *Prajñāpāramitā* of the *Mahāyāna sūtra*, which was established in the earliest stage of Buddhism. This deity is female, based on the original term of the wisdom of *prajñā* being a feminine noun.²⁾ The color of the body is gold and a crown is worn on the top of the head, identical to scriptures such as *Tuoluoni ji jing* 陀羅尼集經,³⁾ *Renang bore niansong fa* 仁王般若念誦經,⁴⁾ *Fomu bore boluomiduo daming guanxiang yigui* 仏母般若波羅蜜多大明觀想儀軌.⁵⁾ The *mudrā* is *vyākhyāna-mudrā* (the exposition of the *dharmacakra-mudrā*) in the latter two scriptures. In addition, *Sādhana-mālā* has descriptions in Nos. 152–159.⁶⁾ In Nos. 152, 155, 157, and 158, one head and two arms are described, and *vyākhyāna-mudrā* (the exposition of the *dharmacakra-mudrā*) is also described. No. 156 describes *dharmacakra-mudrā* (Turning the Wheel of Law). Along with these *mudrās*, *abhaya-mudrā* is observed in No. 156. Nos. 152 and 156, confirm that the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* is placed on the lotus flower. In the present study, it is confirmed that *vyākhyāna-mudrā* and *dharmacakra-mudrā* are interchangeable terms.

The present study introduces and depicts works of Indonesian Prajñāpāramitā with these characteristics.

2. Casting statue Two bodies are confirmed as a single bronze statue.⁷⁾ The statues in Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde (the National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden) in **Figure 1**

(collection number: 1403–1697 and 1865) show specified characteristics.⁸⁾ The bronze statue with the total height of 12.9 cm is considered to be created in the first half of the tenth century. Prajñāpāramitā wears, on her upper forehead, a Buddhist crown that consists of three upstanding ornaments. A celestial crown (an ornamental headdress) is on a tall topknot, and her hair is tied behind and hanging down. She is decorated with ear ornament, breast ornament, upper arm bracelet or armlet, and bracelet. A sarong with round patterns, covers her lower body and a sash or a belt is tied over the sarong. Some of the sash trails down over both legs with the shape of the letter U. The sash is knotted on both sides on her back at her waist. She forms *dharmacakra-mudrā* in front of her breast. Her left hand is intertwined with the stalk of the lotus. The *padma* at the position of her left shoulder and a *pustaka*, rests on the flower. She is seated in the form of *hanka-fuza* (sitting with one foot placed on the opposite thigh) on the lotus pedestal on the square base. The back panel is divided into upper and lower parts with a cross-section just behind her shoulders. Both ends of the bar are decorated with Makara. The upper part of a halo is partially missing and sanngai, an umbrella cover, has not been identified. This deity has a halo, the color of which is similar to that of Vairocana in the same museum. It is possible that this Prajñāpāramitā might have been paired with that Vairocana, which was acquired as a single deity.⁹⁾

Two pairs are recognized where a Prajñāpāramitā casting statue is seated next to Vairocana, sharing a base.¹⁰⁾ The observed Prajñāpāramitā in Jakarta National Museum (collection number No. 602a II) in **Figure 2** is a bronze statue with the total height of 14.2 cm, which was excavated in Kalibening (Central Java) and is considered to be created around the eighth to tenth century. Vairocana is a figure of a Tathāgata. A *ratna* shape is placed on the *uṣṇisha*. Vairocana has *ūrṇā* and forms *bodhyagrī-mudrā* in front of the breast, and is seated on the lotus pedestal with *padmāsana* (sitting with legs crossed and feet placed on opposing thighs). From both knees, the end of a robe droops over the lotus pedestal with a shape of an inverted triangle. The shape of the halo is a sharp-pointed circle and it is attached to the center of the back of head, and shoulders. Next, to the left, this Vairocana, Prajñāpāramitā with the size of approximately one cm is seated as a small deity. She wears a three-sided crown on her upper forehead. A celestial crown (an ornamental headdress) is on a tall topknot. Similar to the Vairocana, a *ratna* shape is placed on it. A three-sided crown is on her upper forehead, and her hair hangs down

slightly. She wears ear ornament, breast ornament, upper arm bracelet or armlet, and waist ornament, decorated with flowers of four petals. She wears a sarong, an ancient skirt, with design pattern, under her waist. A sash is tied over it, trailing down over both knees with a shape of the letter U. A large bowknot is tied like a ribbon at the left and right back of her hips and the edge of the cloth trails down to the back of the lotus pedestal. She forms *dharmacakra-mudrā* in front of her breast. A lotus stalk arises from the back of a square base and some parts are missing. The left elbow of the statue is also missing. Contrarily, on a Prajñāpāramitā in another pair of the National Jakarta Museum, a lotus stalk entwines the left hand (collection number No. 602a. I) in **Figure 3**. A *pustaka* rests on an unopened blue lotus. Therefore, it is highly likely for the previously described Prajñāpāramitā to be set in the same manner. She is seated on the lotus pedestal with a square base in a lotus position. Similar to the Vairocana, the shape of the halo is a sharp-pointed circle and it is attached to the center of the back of the head, and shoulders. Two square mortises for the back of the rectangle base, on which lotus pedestals are placed, can be observed and thus, it is suggested that a large halo would have existed. Considering the possibility that the previously described Prajñāpāramitā figure as a single type would have been paired with Vairocana, Prajñāpāramitā of a bronze statue would have been treated as a consort of a king, for Vairocana in Indonesia. As for this type of a single body of bronze statue of Vairocana, 78 figures of Tathāgata and 23 figures of Bodhisattva with the total of 101 bodies have been confirmed in Indonesia.¹¹⁾ Contrarily, only a few bronze statues of Prajñāpāramitā have been found until the present. Therefore, it is considered that this combination is rare and it is strongly implied that Prajñāpāramitā would be a queen for Vairocana. It is characteristic that in the case of a pair, Vairocana is expressed as a figure of a Tathāgata without exceptions.

With consideration of the reasons that Vairocana accompanied a queen deity, an Indonesian document, *Sang hyang Kamahāyānikan* written in ancient Javanese, which was a language established after the tenth century, would be an important document, although time went by in comparison to the bronze statute. This was introduced by J. Kats in the Netherlands in 1910 and J. S. Speyer revised the Sanskrit scripture and translated it into German. It is recognized that this was descended from the *Tattvasaṃgraha-sūtra*. It was written in a style that a monk preached or explained to disciples. It was described that “Auspicious Bajradhātvisvarī, had profound wisdom and was beautiful. She devoted

herself to her husband, Vairocana and her true nature was the six perfections (*pāramitā*).¹²⁾ Therefore, it was suggested that at least in the tenth century in Indonesia, there was a perception that Vairocana had a wife. As well as Vairocana, many cases of pairing in bronze and stone statues such as Siva and Pārvaṭī¹³⁾ have been observed in Indonesia from the early stage when Hinduism propagated. Furthermore, similarities of grounds are suggested with Vairocana, as *Sādhanamālā*, No. 152 described that Prajñāpāramitā wore a celestial crown of the five Tathāgatas.¹⁴⁾

3. Stone statue Observing stone statues at present, three bodies are recognized¹⁵⁾ and patterns of clothing are described in detail by Lesley S. Pullen. As an eminent work, the statue in Jakarta National Museum collections (collection number No. 1403/ XI 1587) in **Figure 4** is examined. This statue is the most elaborate and exquisite work among the female deities in Indonesia. It was made from Andesite with the total height of 126.0 cm and the estimated date of creation was the 11th-13th century. She wears a three-sided crown on her upper forehead. A celestial crown (an ornamental headdress) is on a tall topknot and a disc-shaped ornament is placed on the top of the head. She wears a glorious breast ornament (double strand), armlet, bracelet (three-strand), and anklet, which have a flower motif. A sacred thread was worn from the left shoulder, through the center of the breast, to the right flank. A sarong with small patterns of circles covered her lower body. A sash is tied over it and the sash trails down over both knees with a shape of the letter U. A large bowknot is tied like a ribbon on the left and right at the back of her hips and its ends drooping down to the left and right of the lotus pedestal. She forms *dharmacakramudrā* in front of her breast. She wears rings on her thumbs and index fingers of both hands. The back of her left hand was turned down and the middle fingers of both hands touch each other. The stalk of the lotus from the pedestal entwines her left elbow and the lotus flower blooms at the height of her shoulders. A *pustaka* with slanted lines rests on the *padma*. She is seated on the lotus pedestal in the posture of kekkaфуza. Rings are worn on the big toes.

The back panel is divided into upper and lower parts at shoulder-height with a cross-section, the upper part is a sharp-pointed shape of gan, decorated with arabesque pattern, all around the rim. The shape of the halo is oval and no cover of umbrella is recognized.

According to legend, this statue could be the figure of Dedes, the consort of Ken Arok in the Singasari Dynasty. Some opinions link Rajapatni with Prajñāpāramitā. In

“*Negarakertagama* (*Nāgarakṛtāgama*),” which was written in 1365, Rājapatmī was the daughter of Kertanagara (*Kṛtanāgara*), who was a king of Singasari (r. 1268–1292). She was posthumously identified as Prajñāpāramitā.¹⁶⁾

With an observation of a statue, in Jambi Culture Museum collections in Sumatra (collection number No. 32) in **Figure 5**, this statue with the height of 80.0 cm was excavated in Jambi, and was made of sandstone. The part above a neck and the part below both elbows are missing. Although this statue is less exquisite regarding ornamentation and a sarong, which is a skirt-like garment covering the lower part, in comparison with the statue of Jakarta National Museum, this statue has similarities in many aspects. It is recognized that King Kṛtanagara sent an envoy to Malayu (Jambi), which is related to this statue.¹⁷⁾

Significant differences are as follows. It had no back panel when it was created. Seven curly hair bundles, *suihatsu* (long hair gathered into seven sections which hang down behind the ears) are on her back, radiating out (**Figure 6**). The sash on the sarong tied at positions of the center of her back, and left and right behind. A thick stalk of lotus arises from the left of lower body and entwines around an armlet of the left elbow.

4. Works at early stage in India Bronze and stone Prajñāpāramitā statues have been observed. Through works of India,¹⁸⁾ the statues observed in *stūpa* of Ratnagiri were created around the ninth century in eastern India. The statues wear a celestial crown (an ornamental headdress), breast ornament, upper arm bracelet, bracelet, and sacred thread. She is seated on the lotus pedestal in the posture of *hankafuza*. The stalk of the lotus from the pedestal entwines her left arm and a *pustaka* rests on *padma* at the position left of the head. Prajñāpāramitā statues form *dharmacakra-mudrā* or join hands in prayer. They have similarities to figures of Indonesian Prajñāpāramitā.¹⁹⁾

5. Conclusion We have examined casting statues and stone statues focusing on statues of *dharmacakra-mudrā* with descriptions of Buddhist Scripture. Bronze statues with the height of 20 cm or shorter were excavated around central and eastern Java and the period of creation is from the eighth to the eleventh century. The stone statues are large, with a standard size of approximately one meter. These statues were excavated in eastern Java and Sumatra. It is confirmed that they are related to the Singasari Dynasty. The number of statues is, however, few. Regardless of materials, characteristics of almost all figures are that they are female deities, a celestial crown (an ornamental headdress) is on a tall



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

Figure 3: Tokyo Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan 1981, No. 31.

Figure 4: Tokyo Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan 1997, No. 30.

topknot, the statues are beautifully ornamented, wearing skirt-like clothing with design patterns, a ribbon-like sash trails down over knees and is knotted on her back. They form *dharmacakra-mudrā* in front of her breast with the back of left hand turned down. A lotus stalk arises from the left pedestal and is twined around left elbow. In figures of complete works, a *pustaka* rests on a lotus flower at the position of the left shoulder. This posture is observed in India, Ratnagiri in eastern India. As for types, a single body was recognized and that in a set where the statue is seated to the left of Vairocana. It is suggested that in Indonesia, there is a strong implication that Prajñāpāramitā is a queen in some cases.

Notes

- 1) Although it has not been confirmed by descriptions of scriptures, works, where a lotus stalk arises from the left of the pedestal and a *sūtra* is placed on the lotus flower at the position of the shoulder, are recognized in two bodies of bronze statues. *Dhyāna-mudrā* is formed and a jewel (?) is placed on both hands. (1) Rotterdam Museum, No. 3614, (2) National Jakarta Museum, Silver. Other than that, one body of statue which forms *varadamudrā* with right hand is observed (Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde, Nos. 1403–2467). Now we could not find Akṣobhya on the crown these statues. Bhattacharyya 1978, 51–67. 2) Yoritomi and Shimoizumi 1994, 200. 3) T 901, Taishōzō, top of the page 805, vol. 18. 4) T 995, Taishōzō, top of the page 521, vol. 19. 5) T 1152, Taishōzō, middle of the page 614, vol. 20. 6) Yoritomi and Shimoizumi 1994, 201, concise listing. I wish to express my deep appreciation to Professor Nemoto Hiroshi for instructing me in detailed translation. Bhattacharyya (ed.) 1968, 310–325. No. 152: *Kanakavarṇaprajñāpā-sādhana*, 312. No. 155: *Suklaprajñāpāramitāsādhana*, 315–316. No. 156: *Kanakavarṇaprajñāpāramitāsādhana*, 317–318. No. 157: *Prajñāpāramitāsādhana*, 319–320. No. 158: *Kanakavarṇaprajñāpāramitāsādhana*, 321. 7) Another body is in Museum Mpu Tantular (Surabaya). It was excavated in ponorgo (Eastern Java). It is possible that this might have been one of bodies forming a *maṇḍala*. 8) Lunsingh Scheurleer and Klokke (1988, 96), No. 44. 9) Lunsingh Scheurleer and Klokke (1988, 95), Nos. 43, 1403–2847, 1883. 10) Jakarta National Museum Collection No. 602a I, Pati (Central Java) excavated article, the total height 17.0 cm, bronze statue, the 8–9th century, Tokyō Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan 1988, No. 31. Other articles: Leiden National Museum collection, Nos. 1403–2862, 1883, the total height 16.0 cm, bronze statue, works around the tenth century. Lunsingh Scheurleer and Klokke (1988, 99), No. 47. A female deity in a pair with Daihinyorai is confirmed in the body text. The body of the text does not refer to this as *mudrā* it may be *chiken-in* although *rinpōrin-in* is written. Previous studies report that this deity is Prajñāpāramitā, Locanā, or Vajradhātviśvarī. 11) Ito 1997, 199–130. 12) Kats 1910, b39. Ishii (1988, 69), No. 80. 13) Lunsingh Scheurleer and Klokke (1988, 90), No. 38 and many others. 14) No. 152: *Kanakavarṇaprajñāpā-sādhana*, 312. 15) Pullen 2021. Candi Gayatri (Boyolangu, Tulungagung, Eastern Java) 1.05m, andesite stone. Similar characteristics to statue (Jakarta National museum collection) such as part of head and part under left elbow are missing, forms of breast ornament, a skirt-like garment with thin circular design and decorative string. Satues wear armlet and bracelet (three-strand) and are seated in *padmāsana*. 189, Figure 137. 16) Tokyō Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan (1997, 56), No. 30. 17) Balai

Pelestarian Cagar Budaya Jambi. Documents (Jambi Culture Museum). 18) Bhattacharyya 1978, 37–67. Mori 1990, 128–131. Works of Indian Prajñāpāramitā are described in detail. 19) Mitra (1981, 148), Pl. XC VII, B.

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