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Violence and serenity; Late Buddhist sculpture from Indonesia by Natasha Reichle
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Natasha Reichle, *Violence and serenity; Late Buddhist sculpture from Indonesia*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007, xii + 292 pp. ISBN 9780824829247. Price: USD 57.00 (hardcover).

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This is a thoroughly researched new study of some of the most celebrated pieces of Indonesian Buddhist sculpture – and a wealth of lesser-known sculptures for comparison. It amply demonstrates that however much ink may have been spilled in the reproduction and discussion of these pieces, there is still a lot that we do not know, and perhaps even more received wisdom about them that must be critically reconsidered and, quite often, relegated to the dustbin of ancient Indonesian art history. After a brief introductory chapter on the history of Buddhism in Indonesia, the book devotes a chapter each to the enormous 'Joko Dolok' Akṣobhya statue in Surabaya, the famous Prajñāpāramitā statue formerly kept in the Netherlands but returned to Indonesia in 1978, the various stone and bronze images of Amoghapāśa and his retinue from Sumatra and Java, the rather less famous fragmentary Heruka from Padang Lawas, and finally the National Museum's monumental (Buddhist) Bhairava.

There are a number of imperfections, some of which it may be useful to draw attention to, despite our appreciation for the work in general. Our reading of the art historical discussion was hindered by the fact that virtually none of the non-Indonesian sculptural *comparanda* mentioned in the text are illustrated (for example, the Kurkihar Amoghapāśas: pp. 104, 106). The interface between illustration and iconographic description is not always ideal: iconographic elements mentioned in the text are sometimes not visibly illustrated (for example, p. 96: tiger skin, p. 174: sun on Bhairava), while some visible elements remain unmentioned in the descriptions (for example the sun and moon on the bronze and Sumatran Amoghapāśas: p. 122, compare p. 174 and figures 6.12+17). Visible elements are also sometimes wrongly identified, as is the case, in our opinion, with the identification of a long, thin pearled necklace as the 'caste-cord', or *upavīta*, in figures 4.6-8, p. 94 (details in figures 4.10-13, p. 96). The iconographic descriptions and descriptive terminology are sometimes incorrect or outdated. For example, "Śyāmatārā" (p. 100) cannot be used as the name of Tārā as Prajñā of a Tathāgata/Jina (see

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M.-Th. de Mallmann, *Introduction à l'iconographie du tantrisme bouddhique*, pp. 374-6, 1975): Tārā can have various colours when acting as Prajñā, but she cannot be *śyāmā* (which is rightly her colour when attending Avalokiteśvara). Śiva's mount the bull is still wrongly called Nandi in this work (pp. 87, 229), thirty years after G. Bhattacharya's seminal article – a must-read for all students in the field – showing how the anthropomorphic attendant Nandin/Nandīśvara and the unnamed theriomorphic conveyance of Śiva came to be confused in very late sources. The flower called *utpala* is still glossed as 'blue lotus', although this is a non-existent botanical 'entity' (J. Hanneder, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 152, pp. 295-308, 2002).

References to published information on primary material cited in the text tend to be lacking (for example, p. 26: short inscriptions of Candi Plaosan Lor; p. 75: South Indian portrait sculpture; p. 110: Cambodian Avalokiteśvaras; p. 189: interpretations of Pārvatī and retinue, figure 6.20). A few important publications have moreover been overlooked; for example, on the iconography of the Amoghapāśas and their inscriptions, M.-Th. de Mallmann, 'Un point d'iconographie indo-javanaise; Khasarpaṇa et Amoghapāśa', *Artibus Asiae* 11 (1948), pp. 176-88 and V. Moeller, *Javanische Bronzen*, Berlin 1985, pp. 22-5 and 59. On this same topic, note that the eight-armed Amoghapāśa Lokeśvara, together with the jewels of the *cakravartin* displayed below him, is depicted in several ancient manuscripts of Chinese origin (H. Chapin, 'A long roll of Buddhist images, IV', *Artibus Asiae*, vol. 33, 1/2, pp. 75-140, no. 94 pp. 80-1 and illustration 94).

The regrettable consequences of the fact that South and Southeast Asian art historians nowadays no longer receive thorough language training are felt when a potential handbook such as this consistently misspells the name of the deity Māmakī, from Amoghapāśa's retinue, as 'Māmakhī' (pp. 100-2, 278, index), and Arapacana Mañjuśrī is consistently called 'Arapancana'; when a fundamental religious act such as *pratiṣṭhā* 'installation (of an image)' gives rise to repeated and rather misguided discussion (pp. 77, 114); and when the important political term *mahārājādhirāja* figures in multiple variants (pp. 195, 252, 255) but is never correctly represented. One wonders whether competent philologists willing to lend a proofreading eye are really so hard to come by. It is sometimes evident, though perhaps more easily pardonable, that Dutch sources have not been correctly understood (for example, the meaningless 'in the light half of the sixth day' as a translation for Kern's 'in de lichte helft de zesde dag', p. 203).

Reichle's arguments are occasionally unconvincing and inconsistent, for example when (p. 67) she attributes the Eastern Javanese manufacture of Prajñāpāramitā sculptures in stone to 'an influx of new ideas' (from outside Indonesia), whereas her figure 3.4 (p. 59) shows a highly similar image in bronze from the Central Javanese period, with all the basic iconographic ele-

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ments already in place. By contrast, on page 109 she contends that 'in general there is little evidence of a new influx of artistic influences from the Pāla kingdom in the thirteenth century', but forgets the remarkable label inscriptions from Candi Jago, that she had discussed on pp. 89, where the elements *bharāla/ bharālī* to our mind very likely indicate some kind of North Indian influence. Her discussion of Kṛtanagara's patronage of Buddhist sculpture insists on local features of ancestor worship (pp. 110-20), but all of the evidence she cites, for example from Shopen's important work, rather points to the cosmopolitan (as opposed to localized) character of Kṛtanagara's motivations.

None of the above imperfections detracts from our conviction that Reichle's work will be the standard reference on the selected sculptures for years to come. Its nearly exhaustive bibliography covers colonial-era Dutch publications, post-independence Indonesian publications, and a wealth of others. Epigraphical and literary data (whenever available in translation) are consistently integrated into her discussion, and to good effect. The book, which is well-structured and a real pleasure to read, provides direct access to the existing information about and interpretations of these important sculptures and many minor works which furnish the background for their study.

Beyond the documentation of a vast corpus of major and minor pieces of sculpture, the book's most significant contribution is to remove virtually all support for the unbelievably persistent idea of portrait sculpture that has haunted the interpretation of these (and other) ancient Indonesian sculptures for so long. We actually feel that Reichle is still too reserved in accepting the full implications of her consistent and convincing arguments against the 'portrait theory'. She still leaves open the possibility that the monumental Bhairava is a portrait of Ādityavarman (p. 204). And she insists (p. 117) that the Amoghapāśa of Candi Jago commissioned by Kṛtanagara, although it is not a portrait, functioned to commemorate his father: none of the inscriptions engraved on Kṛtanagara's other Amoghapāśas identify the sculptures as having a commemorative function, so it seems safest not to insist on interpreting the Candi Jago image in that way either. The final word on these matters has certainly not yet been spoken, but Reichle's comprehensive book provides a very stimulating starting point for a fresh approach to ancient Indonesian (art) history, now released from some of its heaviest shackles.

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