

## Identification of Avalokitevara in the Buddha Triad at Muhudu Maha Viharaya

07 Nov.

SSH76

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This study aims at identifying the life-size statues of lay attire found in Muhudu Maha Viharaya on the Pothuwil beach of the eastern coast of Sri Lanka as Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in the Buddha-Triad. We broadly understand the influence of Mahayana on the eastern coast of the island and thereby how Muhudu Maha Vihara was established as a Mahayana center and consequently how the statues were sculptured as Bodhisattvas. We studied the inscription of the sites, archeological remains in the light of the history of Sri Lankan Buddhism. In addition, the research shows how the legend of Vihāramahā Devī and Kāvantissa is important in identifying the historical ties between Muhudu Maha Vihara and Magul Maha Viharaya. The study also links to later Buddhist Art of India. Using the descriptions written for the general public provided in websites and articles, two life-size human statues facing a Buddha statue at the site are recognized as those of gods or kings. There is at least one scholar identifying the statues to be of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in both ascetic and princely form. While I am unanimous with his proposition, I extend my study to link the thesis to art proposing the statues to signify the concept of the Buddha Triad of later Indian Buddhist Iconography. It can be concluded that the statues with lay garments of Muhudu Maha Viharaya escorting the Buddha are a form of representation of the Buddha in the Triad.

**Keywords:** Bodhisattva, Buddha-Triad, Avalokitevara, Muhudu Maha Viharaya