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## Identify the statues of Goddess Tāra in Sri Lanka

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The influence of the Mahāyāna encouraged the practice of worshipping Bōdhisattvas within the Sinhalese Buddhist ritual. Information with reference to this cult can be seen in the *Mahāvamsa* as early as the time of Jetthatissa II (328-337 C.E.). Mahayāna Buddhism believed that the Bōdhisattva Avalōkitesvara was venerated as a protector of mariners. He also protected people from the eight perils.

The objective of this research is to identify the statues of Goddess Tāra in Sri Lanka. In the year 1983, when the Department of Archaeology undertook an excavation at Tiriyaya, several Avalōkitesvara Buddha's and Tara statues were discovered. The fact that Tiriyaya is situated on the right bank of the Yān Oya, one of the main openings to the sea routes of the East, may have left souvenirs of mariners and merchants who were the frequent visitors to the Tiriyaya Buddhist shrine. The Avalōkitesvara Buddha's as well as the Goddess Tāra's statues can be founded in most of the ancient ports in Sri Lanka.

Tara is considered as Buddhist savior Goddess. She is also popular in Tibet, Nepal, Mongolia and India. Most widely known Tāras are Green Tāra, White Tāra, Red Tāra, Black Tāra, Yellow Tāra and Blue Tāra.

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