

The Borobudur temple: the Buddhist architecture in Indonesia.

History, structure, symbolism and conservation.

Influence on the contemporary Indonesian culture.

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Abstract: The article presents the current state of knowledge about the Borobudur temple, a valuable representative of Buddhist architecture, located in Java, Indonesia. The author presents the genesis of the temple, the facts concerning its rediscovery after centuries of oblivion, and Buddhist cosmology embodied in the form of a three-dimensional mandala on which the architectural form of Borobudur is based. The author studies Buddhist symbolism of the architectural form, reliefs and sculptures created on the basis of regional patterns and local Javanese culture of everyday life. This temple is one of the most perfect examples of translation of Buddhist cosmology and symbolism into an architectural form. At the same time, it constitutes an intercultural and timeless masterpiece of architecture and sculpture which requires particular protection, also due to the influence it exerts on the life of local Buddhist religious minorities.

Keywords: Buddhist architecture, Borobudur Temple, Buddhist cosmology, Buddhist symbolism, three-dimensional mandala

1. Introduction

The present publication systematises today's knowledge about the history of the architecture of the Borobudur temple, a building of enormous historical, architectural and symbolic value.

As part of the Erasmus+ program, the author visited many Buddhist temples on the island of Java in September 2018 in order to make a photographic documentation¹ of architectural objects and to obtain data from the most up-to-date and direct sources.

As Buddhism in Asia is disappearing or transforming from a religion of experience into a religion of faith, especially in Islamic countries, once impressive Buddhist communities are turning into local religious minorities forgetting their roots, monuments and traditions.

It is all the more important to keep track of how much the symbolic value of architectural sacred objects affects the local Buddhist and non-Buddhist community, or whether it falls into oblivion, only being available to researchers of architectural history. The author investigates how far advanced the process of forgetting is in such traditionally

¹ Photographs taken by the author on 17/09/2018 with a Canon Digital IXUS 80 IS camera. 311 photos of the structure of the temple at all the levels of the building; details of the reliefs. The photos selected for the article are those that best present the objects described in the text. Normal technique, colour photos, horizontal resolution: 180 dpi, vertical resolution: 180 dpi, non-metric, without specifying the scale and size of objects, without flash.

Buddhist countries as Indonesia, and what aspects of this culture are still alive. The vitality of the Buddhist culture can be assessed on the basis of how often and how extensively this community uses the heritage and symbolism of their architecture, based on the existing tissue of Buddhist sacred monuments, or whether they create new sacred objects with an original symbolic layer.

The universality of the symbolism of Buddhist architectural objects clearly emerges from the history of Buddhist architecture in the East, together with their ease in adapting to local culture in their form of expression, which is close to contextualism, basing on local patterns of aesthetics [1]. This publication also aims to analyse the layout of the Buddhist temple in a non-European cultural circle of Southeast Asia.

There are huge numbers of Buddhist monuments in Java [2]. Many of them are devastated [3]. After regaining independence after World War II (1950), Indonesia invested a lot of energy and financial resources in the renovation of "pusaka", as special architectural objects of worship are called in Indonesia - buildings whose history dates back to ancestors' most distant memories [4]. Another name for temples or places of worship from pre-Islamic times is "chandi." Their origins are often unknown, but the memory of their significance is passed down from generation to generation [5].

Since 1970, over 200 "pusaka" have been restored. The most famous of them, restored and well-preserved, is the Borobudur Temple. It is the largest Buddhist temple in island Southeast Asia. Together with Angkor Wat in Cambodia and Pagan in Burma, they make up the pantheon of the most impressive Buddhist monuments in this region [6].

Borobudur has all the features of a stupa, but it significantly goes beyond and refines its symbolic structure of a three-dimensional mandala, depicting the Buddhist scheme of the structure of the universe [7]. It is an example of a purely Buddhist architectural order with specific elements of Javanese tradition [8]. Borobudur is important for many reasons: as a work of art, as an architectural miracle, as a significant place of religious worship, as a "pusaka" or heritage of the past, defining Indonesia's identity [10].

Although many actions have already been taken to protect and popularise the pre-Islamic (Hindu and Buddhist) period of Indonesian culture, the radicalisation of the political scene raises questions about the future of monuments of non-Islamic origins.

2. The history of Borobudur

Indonesia was a strong Buddhist cultural centre from the 7th to the 15th century AD. In the areas of present-day Indonesia and Malaysia, the Srivijaya kingdom flourished from the 7th century AD, combining Hindu and Buddhist cultural traditions without conflict [11]. This culture originated on the island of Java, from where it spread to Sumatra and other surrounding islands. In the 12th century, the Srivijaya kingdom began to decline, and in 1377 it was conquered by another Buddhist dynasty, Majapahit. From the beginning of the 15th century, Islamisation of the region led to the disappearance of the Buddhist culture [10].

On the basis of comparisons with the surrounding archaeological sites and their documentation, the Borobudur temple is dated to 870-920 AD, to the period of the rule of the Sailendra dynasty [12], although new theories about more accurate dating are emerging [13]. To this day, the architects of this building are unknown, although the great expert on the history of Southeast Asian architecture, Hiram Woodward Jr., published an article in 2009 which presented an interesting hypothesis saying that the Javanese monk Bian-hong, who studied Tantric Buddhism in China in the 8th century, returned to Java and played a significant role in the Borobudur project [14]. The interpretation of the short inscriptions carved on the hidden foot of Borobudur - the Karmawibhangga relief - also provided a certain lead. The inscriptions have a similar lettering style to the Karang Tengah inscription, dated

to 824 AD, and the Cri Kahulunan inscription, dated to 842 AD. According to Casparis [15], basing on the interpretation of Karang Tengah and Cri Kahulunan, the founder of the Borobudur Temple was Samaratungga, who ruled in 782-812 AD during the reign of the Sailendra dynasty. The Borobudur temple was built to worship Mahayana Buddha [10], whose cult was adopted at that time. In addition to the lettering and language used, these two inscriptions evoke words that are considered to refer to the Borobudur temple [10].

The name Borobudur has not been fully explained and there are many interpretations; according to some, it means "the hill of Buddha", according to others - ancient Boro (a village nearby), or "a high place", or is a shortened version of the word *Bhumisambhara*, which means: "merit and wisdom achieved gradually" [16]. These stages are symbolically achieved by climbing higher and higher levels of the temple.

Borobudur was first discovered by Western civilization in 1814, when General Thomas Stamford Raffles – the British Lieutenant-Governor of Java - heard information about it from the local community during meetings in Semarang. Residents said that in the Kedu region, near the village of Bumisegoro, there was a carved stone structure overgrown with trees and thickets. Raffles delegated engineer H.C. Cornelius (a Danish officer) to explore the area and to order the site to be cleaned up. For two months, Cornelius with 200 men cut down trees and jungle thickets, burned grass and unearthed the hidden monument from under volcanic ashes from the explosion of Mount Merapi volcano [10], but the excavation of all galleries could not be continued for fear of the structure collapsing. Reports on his work were also provided in the form of drawings. The works were then continued by the governor of the Kedu region, Hartmann, until 1835, when they were completed. According to Hartmann, the main stupa at the top of the building was empty after opening. Due to the fact that Hartmann did not write any reports of his work, there were suspicions that he had found there, without telling anyone, a great Buddha statue. In spite of the fact that in 1842 Hartmann conducted an official investigation into the contents of the main stupa, it was not documented, and the stupa remains empty [10]. The excavation site served for some time as a source of artefacts for "souvenir hunters" and income for thieves [17]. As there were no written reports on the reconstruction of the temple, most of the monument's structure was still shrouded in mystery. And when Isaac Groneman, the first president of the Archaeological Union, accidentally discovered the hidden structure of carvings under the base of the temple in 1885 (Fig. 7), new unanswered questions emerged [10]. The *Karmavibhangga* relief had been hidden for over 1000 years at the bottom of the temple base (its open platform). It consists of 160 bas-reliefs and was covered by over 12,000 stone blocks [10]. The reason why the carvings had been hidden is still a mystery. Some suggest that this was due to the technical instability of the temple during the construction phase, or a faulty design of the reliefs; others believe it was for religious reasons [8]. The reliefs were studied thanks to photographs taken by Kassian Cephas, an Indonesian photographer, when they were temporarily uncovered in 1888-1891. After the documentation was prepared, some panels were left visible and uncovered in the south-east corner, thanks to which we can see today fragments of reliefs [17].

In the years 1907-1911, the first professional conservation works took place, carried out by Theodor van Erp from the government of the Dutch East Indies. Their object was the Arupadhatu level (the highest level of the temple), which contains perforated stupas on circular terraces and the highest stupa on the top. Basing on van Erp's photos from the first conservation and photos taken 10 years later, it was assessed that mechanical damage by vandalism and the process of stone degradation by natural factors were progressing again [10]. In the years 1973-1983, a second conservation was carried out by the Indonesian government in cooperation with UNESCO. Because Arupadhatu was still in good condition, only the lower levels were renovated, cleaned and rearranged to reflect their original set-up [10].

Many famous researchers studied the building; among them Wilhelm von Humboldt, who wrote about it in his linguistic study *On the Kai Language* published in 1836 [18], as well as Paul Mus, who wrote about Borobudur in 1935 [19].

3. The structure and symbolism of Borobudur

The monument resembles a miniature Mount Meru². The Borobudur Temple was built at the top of a hill. Since a pile of stones was laid on a mound of soil as a base, it is not a structure entirely made of stone. It is built of andesites, volcanic rocks, with a total volume of 55,000 m³ and made of two million stone blocks. The building has no internal rooms (except for the top stupa) [20]; it is intended for kora (a Buddhist meditation performed by ritual clockwise circling) [10].

This structure is a harmonious combination of the ideas of a stupa, a temple and a sacred mountain; a masterpiece of Buddhist architecture and monumental art (Fig. 1). From the outside, the structure of the temple looks like a stupa, but from the inside it imitates the form of *prasada*, an archetypal form consisting of a stepped pyramid, such as Lohapasada in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, [6].



Fig. 1. Borobudur Temple, Indonesia; a photo taken from the level of the base encasement of the temple, source: author's archive, 2018

In Buddhist cosmology it is believed that the universe is divided into three spheres: Kamadhatu, Rupadhatu, and Arupadhatu [8]. These three spheres are reflected in the multi-level (3 parts, 10 levels) design of the temple itself [9], which is a physical reflection of the Buddhist view on the stages of achieving enlightenment, symbolised by the terraced mandala (Fig. 6) [10].

The Borobudur Temple, 121.38 m wide, 121.66 m long and 35.4 m high, has four symmetrical flights of stairs. The stepped, uncovered pyramid consists of ten superimposing

² A mythical mountain in the middle of the universe according to Buddhist and Hindu traditions [6]

platforms, crowned with the main stupa (a large, bell-like dome) on the top, referring to the ten steps that a bodhisattva must reach to attain Buddhahood. The levels I-VII have a square shape, while the levels VIII-X have the shape of circular platforms [10].

Kamadhatu (the base) consists of an open platform and stairways. The Rupadhatu (the body) consists of five galleries, which are formed by four terraces crossed by four flights of stairs. Arupadhatu (the top) consists of three rows of stupas, of which there are 72 in total, surrounding the main stupa at the top (Fig. 3). Stairways point to the four cardinal directions, with the eastern stairway at the main entrance [21]. Pradaksina begins in the east. It is associated with reading the reliefs, which also begin from the east. On the five four-sided lower terraces there are reliefs depicting scenes from the life of Buddha and the Jatakas (stories of Buddha's previous incarnations) with a total length of about 6 km (Fig. 2). There are over 2,000 reliefs (Fig. 2). The reliefs cover 2,500 m² of gallery walls [10].



Fig. 2. Examples of reliefs in Borobudur in galleries on 5 lower square terraces, Indonesia; source: author's archive, 2018

Originally, the temple contained 504 Buddha statues, hidden in the gallery niches (Rupadhatu) or in bell-shaped openwork stupas arranged in circles (Fig. 3 and 4) on the higher terraces (Arupadhatu). Today, there are only 475 statues, 247 of which are damaged (mainly without heads), but 228 statues are intact, 29 statues are missing in the temple structure.

The Buddha statues in the Borobudur temple depict five "dhyani-buddhas." The location of the statues also presents five directions of the world according to the Mahayana school; they are placed on platforms III to VI, counting from the base [10].



Fig. 3. Transparent stupas in Borobudur on circular terraces of the Arupadhatu level, Indonesia; source: author's archive, 2018

The body of the temple (Rupadhatu - the middle part) has five levels of square terraces. On the first level, there are 104 Buddha statues, on the second - 104 statues, on the third - 88 statues, on the fourth - 72 statues; the fifth level has 64 statues (Fig. 5).

At the first, second, third and fourth level, all Buddhas on each side of the world have their hands in the same mudra. However, at the highest, fifth square level, Buddhas have different hand gestures (mudras) from analogous Buddhas on the terraces below; they all have the same mudras in each of the parts of the world [10]. Each hand gesture (mudra) has a specific meaning.

On the eastern side of the terraces I, II, III, IV, there are statues of Dhyani Buddha Akshobhya with a hand gesture called the Bhumisparsha mudra, which means calling the Earth to witness. On the southern side of terraces I, II, III, IV, there are Dhyani Buddhas Ratnasambhava with a gesture of the Vara mudra, which means giving a blessing. On the western side of terraces I, II, III, IV, there are statues of sitting figures of Dhyani Buddhas of Amitabha, with a gesture of the Dhyana mudra, which means calmness, meditation. From the north, terraces I, II, III, IV are decorated with statues of Dhyani Buddha Amoghasiddhi with the Abhaya mudra gesture, which means fearlessness in the face of danger. On terrace V, there are statues of Dhyani Buddha Vairocana with a gesture of the Vitarka mudra, i.e. teaching or speaking.

In Arupadhatu (circular terraces VI, VII, VIII), there are 72 Buddhas inside the openwork stupas:

- Terrace VI: 32 Buddha statues,
- Terrace VII: 24 Buddha statues,
- Terrace VIII: 16 Buddha statues.

All statues are images of Dhyani Buddha Vajrasattva with a gesture of the Dharmachakra mudra, which means turning of the wheel of dharma [6]. In the Borobudur museum, there is a Buddha statue described as "the statue that was not finished" and has many imperfections (an ugly face, one arm shorter than the other). It was found buried under a walnut tree in the temple's garden. According to most experts, the statue comes from the inside of the stupa at the top of the temple and is a proper representation of the Adi-Buddha, or the Most Perfect Buddha, whose perfection lies beyond all imagination; hence the representation of his imperfections [10].



Fig. 4. The exposed Buddha statue from the perforated stupa in Borobudur, Indonesia; source: author's archive, 2018

The location of hidden panels with Karmawibhangga carvings (Fig. 6 and 7) below the base of the temple represents the sphere of desire (Kamadhatu) of the Buddhist cosmology, the lowest level on the way to Nirvana. Rupadhatu (the sphere in which we reject our desires, but we are still attached to names and forms) is represented by the body of the temple in the form of five square platforms (Fig. 6).



Fig. 5. Buddha statues from the levels of square terraces of Rupadhatu and circular terraces of Arupadhatu in Borobudur, Indonesia; source: author's archive, 2018

Arupadhatu (the formless sphere) is represented by the "super structure", consisting of three round platforms and a large stupa crowning it [10].

The design and significance of the Borobudur temple were influenced by the Mahayana and Tantrayana Buddhism [6]. Tantrayana developed in Bengal, India in the 8th century AD. This type of Buddhism emphasises the importance of living life as if one was already enlightened (the so-called Bodhisattva way).

Mahayana Buddhists live through the idea of Upaya (skill in means), a doctrine that emphasises the possibility of release from suffering and the cycle of rebirth, called Samsara.

Good karma born from good "karmic seeds" shapes the path to enlightenment and the escape from the suffering of rebirth [6]. Borobudur is richly decorated with reliefs with images and descriptions to explain the law of karma, or the law of cause and effect, which governs the cycle of rebirth.

Kamadhatu is represented by hidden reliefs in the foot of the temple (Fig. 6 and 7). Some of the images have short descriptions that probably contain instructions concerning the meaning of the carved scenes. Karmawibhanga, a bas-relief hidden for hundreds of years, illustrates the Buddhist belief in the law of cause and effect, otherwise known as karma. The panels present examples of good and bad actions, and karma that results from them. The relief also offers fascinating insights into history, religious ceremonies, social structures, fashion, tools used, local flora and fauna. One panel usually consists of two or three scenes, which are graphically separated by a bas-relief with the image of a tree, the symbol of the law of cause and effect: what seeds will be sown, such a tree will grow out of them. This first group of bas-reliefs presents examples of the law of cause and effect in specific life situations. Good actions will lead to good results, bad actions to bad results. Impersonal compassion, loving kindness and wisdom towards others will bring good karma.

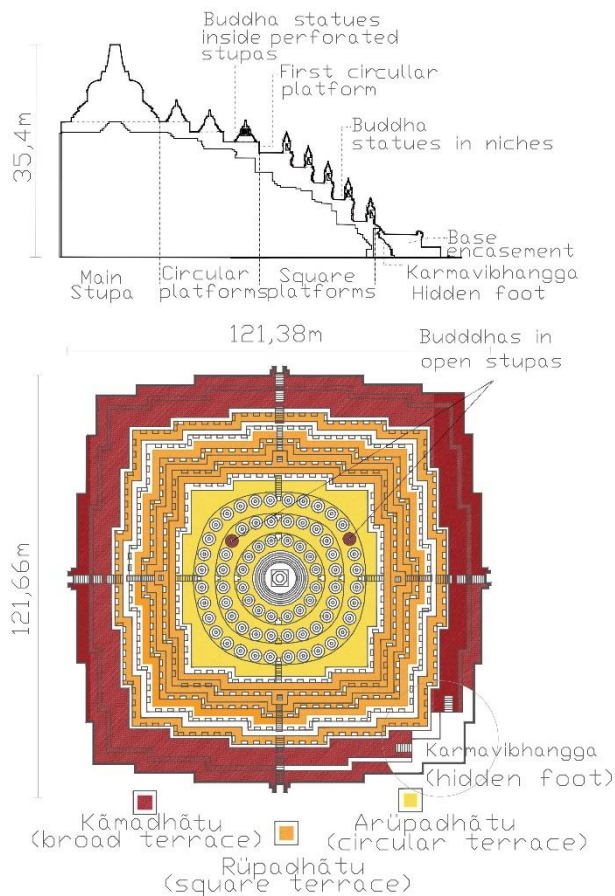


Fig. 6. Cross section and plan of the building, Borobudur, Indonesia; based on: Gunawan artapanrata, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File: Borobudur_Cross_Section_en.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Borobudur_Cross_Section_en.svg), accessed 14.10.2018



Fig. 7. A part of Karmawibhangga reliefs, hidden under the base of the Borobudur temple, Indonesia; source: author's archive, 2018

The relief illustrates how the Buddhist teachings were adapted in the Javanese cultural context. The way of reading the Karmawibhangga bas-relief is consists in walking around the temple, starting from the eastern side of the southern stairs and finishing at the eastern side of the northern stairs.

The bas-reliefs of the Borobudur temple can be read like a book. They present a story that was supposed to inspire people to do the right thing and to be transferred into their own life experience.

The orientation of the gates of ancient Buddhist stupas usually follows the movement of the sun, from the east through the zenith, to the west and nadir. The path of the sun also symbolises how Buddha illuminates the relative reality of this world with his teaching. The eastern gate symbolises his birth (Buddha-jati), the southern - his enlightenment (Sambodhi), the western - his teaching doctrine (Dharmacakrapravarttana), and the northern - his ultimate liberation (Parinirvana) [10].

4. The significance of Borobudur for the contemporary culture of Indonesia

Borobudur is a masterpiece of Buddhist architecture and sculpture. It presents the in-depth knowledge and technical skills of the people who created the temple. More than 55,000 m³ of andesite were collected from nearby areas to build this masterpiece. Rocks were cut, transported to the construction site, and laid without mortar. When the building was completed, specialised craftsmen carved reliefs on the walls and galleries of the temple.

Every part of the Borobudur temple structure was built in accordance with a detailed and meticulous design, with an awareness of functionality, aesthetics and religious meanings, making this temple one of the greatest Buddhist monuments ever constructed [22].

All its walls are decorated with carvings depicting scenes from the well-known text of Mahayana, Gandavyuha Sutra, as well as the Jataka tales about previous incarnations and the life of the historical Shakyamuni Buddha (Fig. 2). Above five square terraces, there are three circular platforms with a single large stupa on top. These three elements: the square foundation, the circular central levels and the top stupa symbolise the universe with its

constituent elements of the earth, gods' worlds and the realm of pure lands, symbolising Sunyata. This figurative geography makes the whole structure a huge mandala, through which pilgrims symbolically travel.

Despite the fact that today Indonesia is a mostly Muslim country, Borobudur continues to be a major attraction as a cultural and historical tourist destination (on average 2.5 million visitors per year, but this number is still growing: 3.8 million tourists in 2016) [23]) and, increasingly, a place of Buddhist pilgrimage [24]. Minister Rizal Ramli (2015) believes that the Borobudur temple can become a Buddhist religious object comparable to Mecca for Muslims. However, local tourists still outnumber foreigners [25].

Borobudur is not only a unique example of Indonesian art and architecture; the temple is also the main venue for the celebration of Vesak, held every year in Indonesia. It commemorates the birth, enlightenment and death of Shakyamuni Buddha and is the most important holiday for Buddhists. The first national celebration of Vesak was a symbol of a renaissance of Buddhism in Indonesia and took place on May 23, 1953. The celebrations were organised by Anagarika The Boan An, later known as Ashin Jinarakkitha [25].

In Borobudur, Vesak is celebrated with the ritual of collecting holy water from the Jumprit spring (Temanggung) on the slope of Mt Sindoro [26] and the natural eternal flame of Mrapen, near the village of Manggarmas, created through the leaking of natural gas from the ground [27]. It does not go out even during tropical monsoon rains or winds. It is maintained at the nearby Mendut Temple to be carried around and used during the ceremony in Borobudur. Pilgrims go together from the Mendut monastery to Borobudur, carrying a flame of the eternal fire, holy water and Buddhist symbols that are presented to pilgrims in the courtyard in front of Borobudur.

Integral elements of the rituals are burning candles and chanting mantras while pilgrims meditate, followed by the blessings of Mahathavir Bhikshu and Mahetra Bhikkhu, Buddhist teachers, marking the end of the series of Vesak rituals. Over 1,000 offering lanterns are released into the sky, symbolising the wishes for enlightenment for all beings, the entire universe [28].

5. Borobudur conservation and protection

Borobudur Temple was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1991 [29]. It is one of eight World Heritage Sites in Indonesia [30], [31].

"The condition for a cultural site to be added to the World Heritage List is recognition of its exceptional universal value based on at least one of the five criteria listed below, with criterion VI only being used as a complementary criterion [32]."

Borobudur, joining this unique list, managed to meet the criteria of as many as four of the following points:

- I. to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;
- II. to exhibit an important interchange of values, over a span of time, or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning, or landscape design;
- III. (...)
- IV. to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural, or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates a significant stage(s) in human history;
- V. (...)
- VI. to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance (...)" [10].

Professor Dr Soekmono, the first Indonesian archaeologist, was involved in the first project of conservation of the temple under UNESCO auspices (1975-1982), being the

project manager as early as in 1971, up to 1983. During this time, Borobudur underwent various conservation treatments. The Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia carried out many important conservation activities to protect the site of the Borobudur temple. Through careful analysis, using all the most modern conservation techniques, the Borobudur Conservation Office cooperated with UNESCO and international experts, from e.g. Germany, Japan and Italy, to implement many modern methods and scientific discoveries to ensure the safety of the stone carvings for hundreds of years [10]. To support these efforts, since 2011 the German government has been providing a generous financial contribution through UNESCO to the research and implementation of conservation methods in protecting the Borobudur temple [10].

The UNESCO Committee has been involved in the protection of Borobudur since 1968. The second phase of Borobudur's conservation efforts began in 2003. It was possible thanks to the cooperation between UNESCO and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Indonesian Government, with the financial support of UNESCO and Japan. Currently, the project focuses mainly on discovering cultural significance and on building relationships. UNESCO and the Ministry work with the local community seeking opportunities to restore the value of Borobudur both in terms of understanding its cultural and religious heritage, and in terms of sources of income and entrepreneurship for the local community.

Conservation of Borobudur is a complicated undertaking: for over a thousand years, the monument had to resist earthquakes [33], volcanic eruptions, heavy rainfall during the wet season; was exposed to great temperature changes throughout the year and was covered several times with a thick layer of volcanic dust during volcanic eruptions. The Marapi volcano last exploded with great force in 2010, and the Kelud volcano in 2014 [10]. The temple was once again covered with a thin layer of ash during a small eruption of the Marapi volcano in 2018 [34].

The type of adequate technology selected for the conservation of a work of architecture depends on three conditions: the degree of advancement of the degradation of the building, the available archaeological documentation and the policy of the relevant government. The degradation of Borobudur was so advanced that it was difficult to find a clear diagnosis of the problem. However, careful analyses of the reasons for the destruction of the monument led to the conclusion that the primary reason is the leakage of rainwater into the core of the stone structure and into the soil hill below it, causing a series of destructive processes such as stone deterioration through physico-chemical and biological processes resulting from residual moisture in the deeper layer of soil, leading to soil particles being washed away from the layer under the stone structure and to high moisture content in these stone layers. Therefore, any solution must confront the conditions in the soil under the temple; it must also take into account possible earthquakes.

The conservation project aims to restore the proper walls of the building as well as the sliding elements of the structure to the vertical orientation, to level out the sloping floors of the platforms, and to provide foundations that guarantee permanent stability of the structure in the face of earthquakes and sliding of the building. The project must prevent the uncontrolled flow of rainwater by ensuring its drainage through a complicated drainage system and save time that works to the detriment of the building. In 1969, Netherlands Engineering Consultants (NEDECO) proposed a conservation programme that met these criteria. Conservation plan was divided into four subsequent phases, corresponding to the division of the building structure into four symmetrical parts. The project faced various adversities (inflation, political unrest caused by the activities of communist parties, lack of funds, lack of experts and modern equipment, extreme humidity and lack of air circulation). The proposed solutions were to implement the project in a minimum period of time using more employees; to intensify training for more experts; to introduce solutions from

international discussion panels faster and more efficiently. The project is still being carried out [10].

The Borobudur Temple is exposed to other dangers. On May 21, 1985, nine stupas of the Borobudur temple were blown up. In 1991, a blind Muslim preacher, Husein Ali Al Habsyie, was sentenced to life imprisonment for masterminding the bombings and an attack on the temple in the mid-1980s, for which two more members of the Islamist terrorist group were sentenced to 20 years in prison in 1986, while another defendant received a 13-year prison sentence [35].

With the radicalisation of Islamic communities and the emergence of ISIS, extreme Wahhabi influence of politicians sponsored by Saudi Arabia began to penetrate into the so far moderate current of Indonesian Islam.

In August 2014, the Indonesian police and security forces strengthened security around Borobudur and the adjacent areas as a means of prevention in the face of threats posted on social media by the local ISIS cell, declaring that terrorists plan to destroy Borobudur and other statues of Buddhist art in Indonesia. This jihadist group follows a restrictive interpretation of Islam, which condemns any anthropomorphic representations, such as sculptures of the human body, seeing them as idolatry [35].

In the face of such threats, it is particularly important to promote the value of such a masterpiece of architecture and art as Borobudur in order to be able to protect and preserve this object for future generations thanks to the support of the international community [36]. There is a danger that it may share the fate of masterpieces of Buddhist culture in Afghanistan – (the Buddhas of Bamyán from the 4th century AD, 54.86 m high and 35 m high, the largest statues of Buddhas in the world) - blown up in 2001 [37]. In Swat Valley in Pakistan, the face, feet and fragments of the shoulders of the legendary Jehanabad Buddha were blown up [38].

6. Conclusions

The Borobudur temple is a unique work of art, an architectural miracle, a significant place of religious worship for Buddhists in a Muslim country, and a "pusaka" or heritage of the past, defining the identity of Indonesia, where nowadays very few remember its Hindu and Buddhist roots.

Borobudur is a masterpiece of Buddhist architecture and monumental art because it is an original, unique and harmonious combination of the ideas of a stupa, a temple and a sacred mountain. It symbolises the universe with its constituent elements of the earth, gods' worlds and the realm of pure lands, which makes this construction a huge mandala, through which pilgrims symbolically travel. Every part of the Borobudur temple structure was built over 1000 years ago in accordance with a detailed and meticulous design, with an awareness of functionality, aesthetics and religious meanings, making this temple one of the greatest Buddhist monuments ever constructed.

Borobudur continues to be a major attraction as a cultural and historical tourist destination despite the fact that today Indonesia is a country that is 87% Muslim. Although once impressive Buddhist communities have turned into local religious minorities losing the awareness of their cultural roots (Buddhists constitute only 0.7% of the population of Indonesia), the temple is the venue for the celebration of Vesak, the most important religious holiday for Buddhists.

Indonesia has allocated a lot of financial resources to protect and popularise the Borobudur temple. It is one of eight UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Indonesia. International experts, from e.g. Germany, Japan and Italy, together with the Borobudur Conservation Office and UNESCO, have invested a lot of work and effort to implement many

modern methods and scientific discoveries to ensure the safety of the valuable carvings as a heritage for future generations. Currently, UNESCO and the Indonesian Ministry of Culture and Tourism are seeking opportunities to restore the symbolic value of the Borobudur temple in the eyes of the local community both in terms of understanding its cultural and religious heritage and as a potential source of development of entrepreneurship for the local community.

However, the radicalisation of the political scene raises questions about the future of monuments of non-Islamic origins. It is particularly important to promote the value of such a masterpiece of architecture and art as Borobudur in order to protect and preserve this object for hundreds of years in the best condition possible thanks to the support of the international community.

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