

The cultural evidence of the Buddha at the Borobudur

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Abstract: Buddhism had arrived in the Indonesian archipelago from the India subcontinent and began with trading along the sea routes during the second century. Around the 9th century, the rulers of the Sailendra Dynasty built the Buddhist temple in Java. The Chandi Borobudur had unique connotations of Buddha statues with mudras, stupas, sculptural reliefs, and ornamental motifs, these were combined successfully. And the temple was decorated brilliantly with traditional Javanese arts with the influence of Hindu elements.

This paper will approach the creation of Borobudur as the acts of Gautama Buddha in his life until he attains Nivana and focus on the Borobudur's crowning stupa. Did Borobudur's central dome contain the relics as a concept of the Buddhist stupa? If it did, what's inside the inner chambers of the central stupa? If it didn't, the inner chambers of the main stupa are supposed to be empty. Many Buddhist stupas, pagodas and temples contain relics such as the hair relics of Buddha, statues and the Buddhist credos enshrined in the chamber. The Borobudur's main stupa had two empty chambers, one above the other, and now there is nothing inside it. Nevertheless, at the present time, Borobudur has become the biggest Buddhist temple, an extraordinary quality of architecture and stone sculptural achievement of traditional Javanese arts in the world.

Keywords: cultural evidence of the Buddha, the creation of the Borobudur, crowning stupa, relics, enshrine

For the background of this paper ~

The ancient Austronesian maritime trade routes were well established in the Indian Ocean and linked with Indian, China, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and many parts of the Asian continent for an exchange of material culture during the first A.D. They sailed to reach as far as Africa and Arabian Peninsula. These trade networks which were later used by the Chinese Song Dynasty's merchants' fleets and now known as Maritime Silk Road. The Javanese are descended from seafarers who crossed the Indian Ocean, and some sailed to the Pacific islands. Around the first century, Graeco – Roman traders in the Indian Ocean were impressed by large Indonesian ships from ports in Java and Sumatra because they were trading with East Africa and bringing cargoes of spices.



Photo, own work, 2019 – View from the Borobudur



Photo, credit – The Borobudur ship

How has the Buddhist religious culture shifted from ancient India to Java over the centuries?

Pre-Islamic religion of Buddhism had arrived in the Indonesian archipelago from the India subcontinent and began trading along the sea routes during the second century. Buddhism is the second oldest religion in Indonesia after Hinduism, and because of that Java had obtained the earliest written version of the Hindu Ramayana, 300 B.C., along with the Mahabharata epics and the Jiwa temple of the oldest Buddhist relic in Karawang, West Java, the evidence of votive and clay tablets with inscriptions and Buddha's pictures which was used in worship prayers, had been found in the Jiwa temple at the Hindu-Buddhist compound at Batujaya.

In the Indonesia archipelago, Theravada Buddhism was developed before Hinayana and Maharana. Some scholars believe that Buddhism reached in these areas by the early centuries of the 1st millennium that the King Ashoka missionaries sent to the region of the Malay Peninsula and Indonesian archipelago for the expansion of religion in Southeast Asia. With the help of the monk Gunavarman from Kashmir and other Indian missionaries, Buddhism arrived in Java and Sumatra before the 5th century. Monk Gunavarman was a master of the Lotus Sutra, the Ten Stages Sutra and other Sutras and translated the Buddhist scriptures into Chinese. When the Chinese traveller Yijing visited this area, he noted that Hinayana was also developed at that time.

Who is Buddha?

The Gautama Buddha, who is 'the Awakened One' to the true nature of reality and founded Buddhism; his original name was Siddhartha Gautama. He was born in Lumbini, now in modern-day Nepal around 480 BCE; his father is King Śuddhodana of Shakya Republic, and mother is Queen Maya Devi. Buddha attained enlightenment as he sat in a state of the deepest and most profound meditation beneath a fig tree, in Bodh Gaya. Gautama Buddha gained the highest wisdom and said that "the immortal life has been found by me, I will preach the dharma, I will go to Banaras and beat the drums that will awaken mankind."

After the enlightenment Gautama Buddha sets off for Varanasi (Benares) to preach his first sermon called the Dharmachakrapravartana Sūtra, meaning 'the Setting in Motion of the Wheel of the Dharma', to the five monks at the Deer Park, Sarnath. The topic of the text is the four noble truths and eightfold path that are the main pillars of Buddhism, and it reveals the Buddhist concepts of the middle way, impermanence, and dependent origination. He taught the true nature of the world which means Buddha nature that is real, wise, and perfect. Buddha's nature is quite different from the ordinary nature of unpleasant mental traits of greed, desire, anger, and stupidity.

Finally, Gautama Buddha passed away while surrounded by many of his disciples in Kushinagar, northern India in 400 BCE at the age of eighty. Before he entered the nirvana, his last message was ~ "Vayadhamma sankhara, appamadena sampadetha" "All things are perishable, strive diligently with earnestness." Although he has left the human world, the spirit of his sympathy, empathy and loving kindness remains and his teaching of Buddhism and philosophy that spreads from India to other parts of the world.

Only one founder of Buddhism ~ Lord Buddha is the founder of Buddhism and taught around 45 years in his life. As a term of classification of Buddhist philosophies, discipline and practices, the main branches of Buddhism are Theravada, 'the Teachings of the Elders', Mahayana, 'the Greater Vehicle' and Vajrayana, 'the Vehicle of the Thunderbolt'. These Buddhist major traditions emphasize on the emptiness and practice to attain the final goal of nirvana, which is neither suffering nor desire.

However, they have only one founder who is Gautama Buddha and his followers believe in different paths on the way to reach freedom from suffering, freedom through understanding, freedom of mind and freedom from the circle of death and rebirth. Although the various doctrines and texts are described, Buddhist believers are applied to the major text of 'Tripitaka' in teaching, spiritual practising for meditation such as inside and concentration and using mala beads and mantra chanting to keep the mind focused on it for worship.

The evidence of the oldest Buddhist text and temple

One of the inscriptions of the oldest Buddhist text which is engraved on a set of eleven rectangular gold plates is existing in the Jakarta National Museum, Indonesia; it is not sure where they were discovered; it is written in Sanskrit and two of the gold plates are inscribed with Buddhist credos. The set of eleven plates was probably intended to be enshrined as a relic in a Buddhist stupa. The other one is the silver plates with engraved on one-line inscriptions.

The oldest Buddhist temple of Jiwa in Batujaya, and a number of archaeological Buddhist sites were found in Jambi, Palembang, and Riau provinces in Sumatra, as well as in Central and East Java. The archaeologists estimated that the Jiwa temple was built during the time of the oldest Buddhist and Hindu kingdom of Tarumanegara, 5th century ruler. According to Dr Tony Djubiantono, the head of Bandung Archeology Agency, 'two structures are found in the form of temples, and these are made of bricks composed of mixtures of clay and rice husks, one of which known as Jiwa temple, it was built in the 2nd century.'

The structure of Borobudur

During the eighth and ninth centuries, Buddhist people in central Java had high esteem and vision for the future and they enjoyed the philosophy, theory and method that developed from the teaching of the Buddha. At that time, their extraordinary perceptions shaped the temple of Borobudur within the structure of metaphysical, material, and astral settings nearby volcano Mt. Merapi.

Around the 9th century, the rulers of *the Sailendra Dynasty* built the Buddhist temple in central Java. The structure of Borobudur has its own design and is based on the Buddhist mandala. Chandi Borobudur had unique connotations of Buddha statues with mudras, stupas, sculptural reliefs, and ornamental motifs, these were combined successfully. And the temple was decorated brilliantly with traditional Javanese arts with the influence of Hindu elements. Borobudur displayed a lot of motifs in many locations that were Hindu influenced. The two religions, Buddhist and Hindu shared symbolic meanings, much of which comes from India. These visual arts include waterspouts in the form of a makara, kala head, serpent and conch

shell, etc. The unique cultural significance of Borobudur, which is the only surviving structural design temple, and others are designed to house icons in Java.

The architectural inspiration -- Borobudur has geometric diagrams to conform to mandala principles that contain a natural hill, a central pole around circles and squares, four elements of fire, earth, water and wind, and cosmology. The temple is based on Buddhist and Hindu of Gupta architecture like square shape and four entry points with a circular point. The pilgrims and visitors can make circumambulations in a clockwise direction to pray and to view the reliefs from beginning to an end and they can perform ceremonies at various stages to the temple.

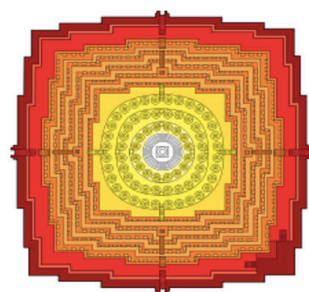
Some scholars observed that the Borobudur design is similar to the Kesariya stupa, dated 3rd century BCE in Bihar, India. The Kesariya has five terraces above 400 feet (120 m) circumference and contains a configuration of brick chambers on each terrace at regular intervals with a life-size Buddha statue positioned in them. Now the stupa was ruined and most of the Buddha statues were destroyed by attackers.

Historically, the ancient Greek architecture stretches from 900 B.C. to the first century; its architecture orders and tenets of design have influenced ancient Roman architecture. Such that, the Gupta architecture was influenced by the Hindu and Buddhist temples in India. King Chandragupta founded the Gupta empire and ruled in the North of Central India between 4th and 6th centuries. The Gupta style was the first architects of Hindu and Buddhist temples that emerged from the earlier tradition of rock cut caves such as Udayagiri, Ajanta and Elephanta in India. Under the golden age of the Gupta dynasty, the Nalanda University was established in 5th century. Although Nalanda was ransacked and destroyed by an army of the Mamluk Dynasty of the Delhi Sultanate in 12th century, the cultural inheritance of the Gupta style still exists today.

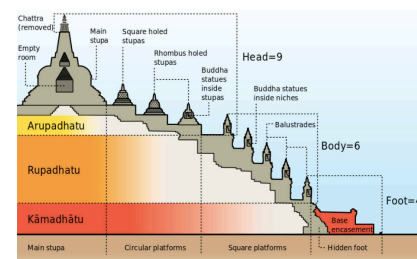
The architectural inspirations are adopted in many elements into its own practice and cooperated in the way of their culture, concept, and spiritual beliefs in which the influence of architecture is not limited; it is the development of the style of earlier structure; likewise, the Persian's design plan has influenced the type of Indo Islamic architect in Indian subcontinent that creates a new typology of Mughal architecture such as the Taj Mahal, combination of Persian and Indian elements.



Photo, Pan Htwa – Temple of Borobudur



File: Borobudur Mandala.svg
 ■ Kāmadhātu ■ Rūpadhātu ■ Arūpadhātu



Images - Structure of Borobudur

Who built the beautiful temple of Borobudur?

Buddhism in Indonesia was closely linked to a powerful dynasty known as the Silendran, 'Lord of the Mountain.' Conflicts between the Buddha devotees of Silendra dynasty and the Hinduism devotees of Sanjara Dynasty became a rival of politics, though, they had no problem on the religious practices and no effect on the beautiful temples of the Borobudur and the Hindu Prambanan which was located 19 km (12 miles) to the west of Borobudur.

Around A.D. 830, the Sailendra Queen Sri Kahulunnan, a daughter of Sailendran King Samaratungga married a Sanjaya King Rakai Pikatan, who devoted charity to Buddhist sanctuaries and gave an inspiration to construction of the Hindu temple Prambanan. Their marriage was considered as the political reconciliation between two dynasties. The truth is two branches of Hindu and Buddhism merged as one through marriage and the king and queen built together the Chandi Borobudur in the Prambanan plain in central Java.

The evidence of the name of Queen Sri Kahulunnan ~ Archaeologists and historians had discovered inscriptions which had been written about the Borobudur during that time. Queen Sri Kahulunnan, her name, was mentioned in several inscriptions such as Tri Tepusan inscription dated 842 CE and Rukam inscription dated 829 Saka (907 CE).

One of the stone tablet inscriptions, Tri Tepusan revealed about the sima lands awarded by Çrī Kahulunnan to ensure the funding and maintenance of a Kamūlān called 'Bhumisambharabhudhara, Mountain of virtues of ten stages of the Bodisattva'. The suffix of the phrase, -bhudhara means 'mountain' that the Borobudur's name might have related to 'Bharabhudhara'. Therefore, Queen Siri Kahulunnan was credited for the construction of Borobudur and the Sojiwan Buddhist temples in accordance with the Tri Tepusan and Rukam inscriptions.



Photo credit: The Javanese folktale story of Rara Jonggrang, which is inspired by the the Queen Kahulunnan and her image is the Durga statue in the Prambanan Hindu Temple compounds

There was importance of the people's way of life in the areas where the fertile volcanic soil and plentiful water of central Java had enabled to grow a prosperous rice farming population which produced enough surplus to support labourers in the workforce. The certain villages

were awarded tax free lands to contribute for a religious monument. The villagers from surrounding areas also offered food for charity to the monks who lived in Buddhist monasteries around the Borobudur sanctuary. Archaeological evidence found that the flourishing community of clergy living nearby Borobudur in Kedu plain.

Although the Sailendran Kingdom and their people erected the largest Buddhist temple in the world, there is no trace of evidence that a wall surrounded the palace until now. However, without the support of the Sailendran of Medang Kingdom, the beautiful Borobudur temple was not built on the Kedu plain in the shining age of Buddhism in Java and Sumatra.

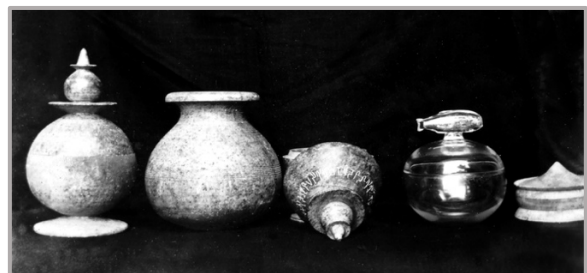
Evolving the Buddha's stupa

According to the Mahaparinibbana Sutta, after the death of the Buddha, his remains body was cremated, and his ashes distributed among his followers. After his cremation, the Mallas of Kushinara tried to process the procession of the Buddha's relics because he died in their capital, however, the seven clans from other regions arrived and demanded the Buddha's relics. To avoid the bloodshed war over the Buddha's relics, a monk shared the relics into eight portions among groups of Buddha's followers who had enshrined them under eight stupas in the countries of Rajagriha, Vaishali, Kapilavastu, Allakappa, Ramagrama, Pava, Kushinagar, and Vethapida. Over 200 years after the Buddha's death, King Ashoka built 84,000 stupas and redistributed the Buddha's relics among them all in northern India and the other territories.

In accordance with a request of the Lord Buddha who had asked at the end of his life, he answered that 'he be buried under the earth, heaped up as rice is heaped in an alms bowl.' We can see the stupa for Buddha's wish at *Piprahwa* which was discovered by Mr William Claxton Peppe in his estate in India in 1898. The Piprahwa stupa was erected by the Shakya clan over their shares of Lord Buddha's cremation pyre.



Photo credit (Anandajoti) - Stupa at Piprahwa



The five reliquaries discovered in Piprahwa 1898 photograph by WC P ppe

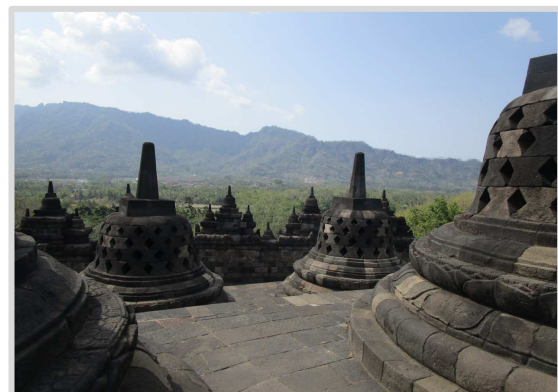
Another term of stupa may have similar architectural structure called chaitya in which śramaṇa was buried in a seated position or cremation that was originated as burial tumuli in pre-Buddhist India. The stupa also represents the Buddha's seated position in meditation

when he achieved enlightenment therefore, it means the base of the stupa as his crossed legs, the middle section as his body and the top of the stupa as his head.

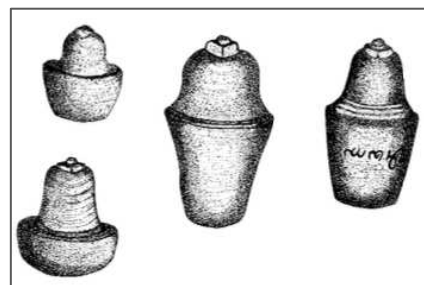
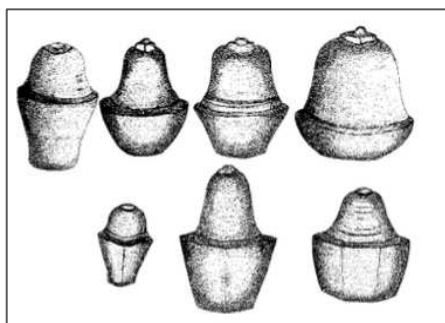
The stupa normally consists of a circular or square base, hemispherical or bell-shaped body, over a body there is a harmika cube in which relics are often kept but the Buddha's relic is sometimes placed beneath the Buddha statue or stupa. Occasionally, harmika is square on the lower level and octagonal on the highest level; the pinnacle of stupa is topped by a spire that is decorated with multi-tiered parasol. There are various types of stupas in which enshrine Buddha's cremated remains, his begging bowl or robe, Buddha's statue, Buddha's footprint, and pieces of material with important Buddha's scriptural quotation for worship.

Stupa is reminding the Buddhist practitioners of the acts of Gautama Buddha and his teaching after his death. Religious building of the stupa is used as a place of worship, meditation and circumambulation. It is the cultural tradition of Buddhism. So, how to pay homage to the stupa? The Buddha gave instructions about that - "And whoever lays wreaths or puts sweet perfumes and colours there with a devout heart, will reap benefits for a long time."

Many Buddhist stupas, pagodas and temples contained holy relics such as the hair relics of Buddha at the Botahtaung Pagoda, Yangon, Myanmar, a sacred tooth of the Buddha in Kandy, Sri Lanka and the relics of Buddha's disciples like Sariputta and Maugglayana, were also preserved as in Sanchi, India, etc.



Photos (own work, 2019) - Temple of Borobudur



Small stupas with bell shaped anda sloping underpart and small stupas with a more laced in anda
credit: Borobudur restoration, UNESCO

Sacred relics in the crowning stupa

This paper will focus on the central big stupa of Borobudur Temple. So that raises the question, did Borobudur's central dome contain relics? Many Buddhist stupas, pagodas and temples contain sacred relics in the chamber. If it did, the crowning stupa might be probably enshrined the main precious objects into the two hollow chambers as follows ~

- Buddha statue
- Holy Buddha's relics in reliquary and
- Buddhist credos inscribed on plaque

If it didn't, the inner chambers of the main stupa are supposed to be empty. The precious relics might be stolen or moved somewhere else probably. The Borobudur's main stupa had two empty chambers, one above the other, and now there is nothing inside it, according to UNESCO's publication of the Restoration of Borobudur.

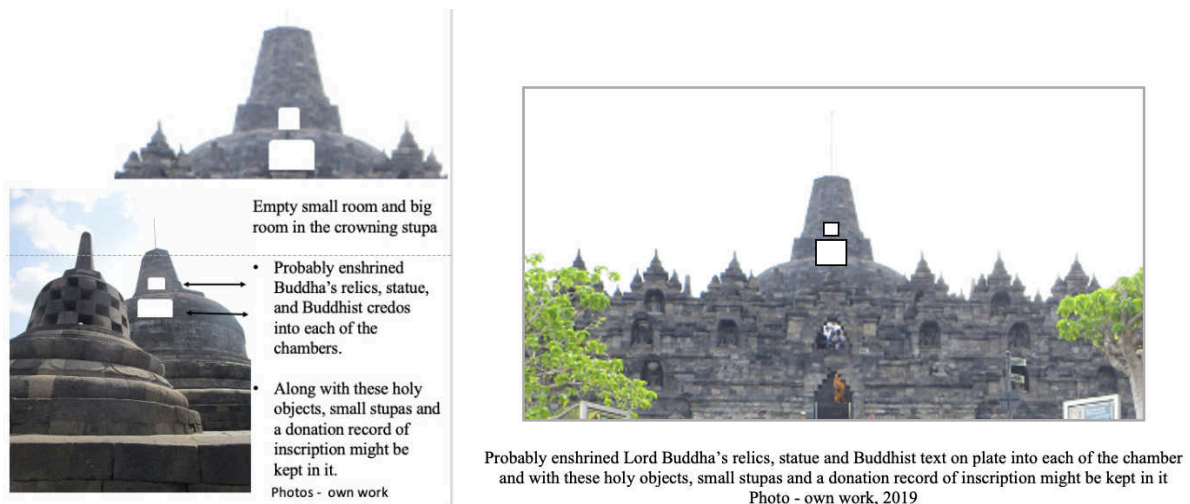


Figure 1: The precious relics probably enshrined in the chambers

Let's exit from the loop of 'If yes ..., If no ...then' on a matter of dispute and think out of it; there is an evidence of two holes, one above the other and there is nothing inside it; for this reason, a statue that was traditionally having the characteristics of a Buddha, probably enshrined into one of the two chambers to fill the emptiness. (Figure 1)

Holy Buddha's relics in reliquary - According to the Buddhist culture, the varieties of colours of Lord Buddha's relics inside their container was believed to be enshrined into one of the two hollow spaces in the crowning stupa of Borobudur. This tradition was shifted throughout Asia from India since King Asoka era 3rd BCE. This centuries old tradition is still standing in the majority Buddhist countries in which over 70% of populations are practicing Buddhism. For example, after the discovery of Buddhist relics in Piprahwa, the British government officials donated the relics of the Buddha's bones to the King of Siam to distribute to the other Buddhist countries to receive it.

Buddhist credos engraved on plaque - The crowning stupa of Borobudur might contain stone/clay tablets or gold plates with Buddha text. For example - the evidence of the oldest Buddhist text which is engraved on a set of eleven rectangular gold plates which was brought to notice in 1946 at the National Museum, Jakarta. Along with the main sacred things – Buddha’s relics, statue, and credos, the small stupas and clay tablets might be kept in the hollow chamber of dome stupa at the Borobudur. A small stupa, known as ‘stupika’ is sometimes accompanied with clay tablets and these are engraved by Buddhist text and Buddhist images on the surface of these objects.

The National research centre for Archaeology had found a bronze mould which produced so many stupikas in Palembang; the various types of these small stupas were most commonly used at Borobudur. Such Borobudur stupikas have been found in several sites at Jongke near Yogyakarta, at Muncar and at Kilasan. Some Borobudur stupikas were inscribed with short Buddhist theory in old Javanese script.

Recorded stone inscription - In addition to these holy things, a donation record of stone inscription after completion on the temple may be kept in the hollow space in the dome of the stupa. The stone inscription was recorded by donors of the name, their charities to monasteries, to the people and finishing time of the temple. For example - Tri Tepusan inscription dated 842 Saka.

But they were unable to examine inside the chambers of crowning stupa to carry out pollen tests, paleoenvironmental analysis because the place was walled off. Over a silence period of many years, Borobudur had been gradually declined with lost and broken precious artifacts before evacuation.

When I was at Borobudur and its nearest city of Yogyakarta, I interviewed local people to get the cultural records for my research. They told me stories of finding artifacts such as clay tablets, small stupas, coins, and swords, etc. The relics were kept not only in the main stupa and under the statues in the perforated stupas. One of the stories was the resident of Kedu, stole a gold image from the chamber of the main stupa. But I don’t want to accuse or blame anyone. They told me about true stories because, museum had displayed most of the artifacts that they had found. Many artifacts and precious objects from the Borobudur were lost and diminished because of irresponsible people, who took and sold them to antique collectors. Though, many parts from the temple were brought back to the museum safely.

Reliefs and stone statues from the Buddhist scriptures

As a messenger of Lord Buddha, the Borobudur represents on various *Buddhist canons*, which are illustrated with the Buddha statues and the reliefs’ arrays in the three zones of Kamadhatu, Rupadhatu, and Arupadhatu throughout the temple. Buddha gets through these three zones to achieve the ending of suffering and to gain the Vimutti (release from clinging and craving). This is Buddha’s career in which artists depicted with sharp images to engrave in stone for the pilgrims who can absorb moral educational stories of his life and teaching of dhamma till he passes away.

The Javanese stone sculptors engraved these events on the birth stories of Siddhartha Gautama, the life of a Buddha and a boy named Sudhana’s spiritual journey for searching for

enlightenment that was mirrored to the Buddha. The Javanese artists emphasised the metaphysical nature of the stories when they characterized the reliefs.

Reliefs of the birth stories of Buddha – The stone sculptors were beautifully depicted in abstract language at the hidden foot, on the main walls and galleries in the relief section of kamadhātu and Rupadhātu zones. The Buddha was the last incarnation of a being who previous birth stories, known as the *Jataka tales*, which have been illustrated in sculpture can be found among the bas reliefs.

Most of the stories illustrate the acts of self-sacrifice and heroic deeds performed by Buddha so that viewers can trace the Buddha's past lives to subsequent life events in hundreds of relief panels on the galleries. These are most of the story of Buddha's life, and few are the images of guardian deities. The relief sections are as follow –

Narrative Panels of Buddhist Literature			
Relief Section	Location	Story from Buddhist Text	Panels
Hidden foot	Wall	Karmavibhanga	160
First gallery	Main wall	Lalitavistara	120
		Jataka/Avadana	120
	Balustrade	Jataka/Avadana	372
		Jataka/Avadana	128
Second gallery	Balustrade	Jataka/Avadana	100
	Main wall	Gandavyuha	128
Third gallery	Main wall	Gandavyuha	88
	Balustrade	Gandavyuha	88
Fourth gallery	Main wall	Gandavyuha	84
	Balustrade	Gandavyuha	72
Total			1,460

- Karmavibbanga (the great exposition of actions) – can be seen at the hidden foot at the Kamadhātu. Served as a moral lesson to pilgrims both good and evil deeds/acts and then being rewarded and punished in hell or heaven for their actions. Perhaps suitable for achieving the doctrine of cause and effect before the pilgrims going to enter the upper terraces to view the scenes of other stories.
- Jataka (Buddha’s previous birth stories) and Avadana (noble deeds) – are found on the 1st and 2nd galleries. Manohara and Apadāna can be seen on the 1st gallery, lower main wall of Kamadhātu. The reliefs, depicting the Manohara and other Avadana; the first narratives tell the story of the prince Sudhana and the nymph Manohara can be seen in 20 panels; Manohara is the kinnari (half woman half bird) from one of the Jataka stories.
- Lalitavistara Sūtra (detailed narration of the sport or play of the Buddha) – at the 1st gallery, upper main wall at Rupadhātu. Begin with describing the future Buddha in the Heaven of Contentment, Tushita, and ends with the preaching of his first sermon in the Deer Park near Varanasi, India.
- Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra (the excellent manifestation Sūtra) – on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th main walls as well as balustrade galleries. The spiritual pilgrimage of a young man, named Sudhana from India in search of the highest wisdom to become bodhisattva – the artist illustrated from the literature text, called the Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra. They illustrated obviously feeling the greatest respect for the stories about a boy who travels far and visits many teachers or other spiritual instructors, called Kalyanamitra (Good Friends). Sudhana, whose name means ‘Good Wealth’, studies to be a Bodhisatta under instruction of good friends, those who direct one towards the way to enlightenment on his quest for the ultimate truth. He meets the spiritual masters of Bodhisattvas, the Mañjuśrī and final master is the Samantabhadra, who teaches him that wisdom only exists for the sake of putting it into practice and, he also reaches the heavenly palace of Maitereya, the future Buddha.



Photos, own work 2019 – Reliefs from stories



Relief of Bodhisattvas



Reference photo – From the Manohara story, the Sudhana sits on the right in the palace of the kingdom of nymphs, Manohara's ring in a water jar, the other nymphs carrying the round and long neck of jars into the palace

Mudras from the Buddhist tradition – At the Borobudur, there are Buddha statues with mudras inside niches in Rupadhatu and Buddha statues with mudras inside perforated stupas in Arupadhatu. These mudras in hand positions symbolized the important moments in the life of Buddha. The total of 504 life-size Buddha statues in which displayed with six *Mudras of the Great Buddha* that is - Vitarka, Dharmacakra, Dhyani, Abhaya, Bhumisparsha and Vara are placed all around Borobudur; these mudras represent the Gautama Buddha (Sakyamuni) himself.



Photos, own work - Buddha statues with mudras inside niches

Significantly on the three upper terraces in Arupadhatu are 72 identical images whose hand position is the dhamacakra mudra pose, representing the ‘turning of the wheel of the doctrine’. This mudra symbolizes one of the most important moments in the life of Buddha after enlightenment, the event when he preached the first sermon to his companion at the Deer Park in Sarnath. The Buddha statues with dhamacakra mudra are in a suitable position at the open circular terraces, the realm of formlessness, Arupadhatu before reaching the summit of the temple. The symbolization of enlightenment in these stupas is the four noble truth and eightfold path to reach Nirvana which represents a crowning stupa in Borobudur. Relating to the concept of the middle way, Buddha expressed himself that he was not the only one, there have been many Buddhas before me and all sentient beings have the Buddha nature, and they can become Bodhisattvas.



Photos, Pan Htwa, 2019 - Buddha statues with mudras inside perforated stupas

Reliefs showing scenes from daily life

Reliefs depicting scenes from daily life that were derived from forms of women's dress, accessories and hairstyle during Borobudur were constructed. There are distinctive women in usual and unusual hairstyle such as a high coil on top, curly back pony hair, braided coil up, spiral curl and short fringe for royal attendants and dancing ceremonies. A woman carries a bowl, another brings lotus flowers, which are found in most reliefs on the Kamadhatu layer. It may be assumed these activities were in existence at that time.

Some of reliefs are revealing the making of pottery that is the women shaped and modelled the pottery while the men carried the clay, which is depicting scenes from daily life routine in ancient time. According to the collecting archaeological data as well as ethnographical data in Nglipoh village, three kilometres from Borobudur, where most families are still making pottery with paddle and anvil technique at present and the tradition has been passed down through the generations. Other evidence has shown that there were two or more sites of pottery making villages within a radius of five Kilometres from the temple. Potters are actively producing the same type of Borobudur jars and pots such as long, and round necks of water jars which are used by communities.



Photos (own work) – Reliefs showing women hairstyle



Photo credit, the Restoration of Borobudur, UNESCO – The making of pottery

Conclusion

The creation of Borobudur is the act of Gautama Buddha in his life until he enters Nirvana that is based on the law of karma from the hidden foot, his life stories at the middle levels and to the endless lifecycle of birth and death at the summit. Although people were trapped in a concept of a karmic cycle, Buddha was liberated from it, and awakened by practice of his mind through the noble eightfold path.

The Borobudur Temple, which was built by ancient Javanese, presented with immense power to give pleasure to the visitors. The Borobudur's builders had converted the tools of the Buddha's theories into reality. Their work of art is still active in the central tenets of a Buddhism.

At the present time, UNESCO World heritage Site of Borobudur has become the biggest Buddhist temple, an extraordinary quality of architecture and stone sculptural achievement of traditional Javanese arts in the world.

For current and future preservation effort for the temple, the visitors should not touch the reliefs, motifs, and statues because it can be damaged the stones. The growth of mosses on the stones caused by acidic ashes of volcanic eruption, UNESCO suggested that use water to clean mosses, and please don't use chemicals.

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