

Borobudur: one thousand years old and a miracle

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Surrounded by rice fields on the island of Java, a mysterious ancient temple resides.

It is “vihara Buddha uhr,” Sanskrit for “Buddhist monastery on a hill.” It is popularly known as Borobudur. This archaic structure looms over its visitors, but the mountains surrounding it are taller still. Its splendor has not diminished, even though it is over one thousand years old. Borobudur is an intriguing Buddhist pilgrimage site because it is breathtaking in size, it is the result of decades of labor, and it is still viewed by busloads of tourists each day. First, Borobudur is a truly immense relic of a past era.

Its square base is 123 meters on a side, and it consists of about 55,000 cubic meters of volcanic stone. A five kilometer walk is required to traverse the entire monument. Borobudur consists of three tiers. On the bottom, a pyramid-like base supports three smaller circular platforms. Atop it all sits an enormous stupa, or dome. This beautiful behemoth is the largest Buddhist monument in the world.

Along all the walls are endless detailed reliefs, intricate carvings into the stone. In its prime, these reliefs were covered in a durable white plaster, and painted brilliant colors. Its breadth could have been seen for miles. Even though these colors have faded with time, Borobudur is still a colossal tribute to a long-vanished empire. Secondly, gifted artists and a vast army of workers were required to build Borobudur. It was built during the Sailendra dynasty, between 778 and 842 A.

D. The construction was most likely undertaken during the reign of Samaratungga, a great ruler of this time period. Amazingly, despite seventy
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years of toil, the monument fell out of use after just 200 years. Though the reason for its desertion is uncertain, scientists and historians theorize that its visitors left due to a drought brought on by an eruption of Mount Merapi, which is nearby. “ When people once again inhabited this area, the glory of Borobudur was buried by ash from Mount Merapi.

” (Sacred Destinations) Considering that Borobudur includes approximately 1, 400 panels, it is no surprise that many different sculptors participated in its creation. Throughout its many open-air passages, several styles of work are immediately evident. Sue Cordek, recent visitor to the site, remarks “ There are literally hundreds of Buddha carvings. Each one is a little bit different.” The reliefs are a wonderful depiction of Buddhist beliefs and stories, people and animals, and other aspects of everyday life. It is said that the Buddha was re-born hundreds of times, as “ animals such as lion, deer, monkey, swan, big turtle, quail, horse, bird and many others.

” (Sacred Destinations.) Numerous images carved into Borobudur have shed light on the technology of ancient times. One carving in particular has attracted the attention of people studying Borobudur: a many-masted ship, tossing and turning on a stone-carved sea. This specific relief is remarkable because of the ship’s design. It reveals that vessels with a complex combination of sails and rigging were in use over a thousand years ago. It puts us in awe of historic civilizations and their accomplishments.

In short, a momentous empire and a multitude of talented, powerful workers built Borobudur. Lastly, Borobudur is a very popular tourist attraction in spite of, or perhaps because of, its old age. A millennium ago, Buddhist pilgrims

from all over Asia would travel to Borobudur. Though some Buddhists still do visit Borobudur for religious reasons, it now attracts tourists from all over the world. In fact, Borobudur is Indonesia's most popular tourist attraction.

After its rediscovery in 1914 by a Dutch engineer named H. C. Cornelius, many tourists began visiting a now quickly deteriorating Borobudur. It was falling apart at an alarming rate. In 1968, Professor Soekomono realized this and started a " Save Borobudur" campaign.

Seven years later, in 1975, a restoration began. It was undertaken by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organizations, or UNESCO. By the time it was completed in 1983, twenty-seven countries had participated, twenty-five million dollars had been spent, and over a million pieces of stone had been moved. Unfortunately, after all this investment, Borobudur was bombed by terrorists in 1985 and sustained minor damage. A 2005 earthquake also damaged it, and parts of it are still being pieced back together.

Despite this, all of Borobudur except the top layer is open for visitors at this time. In conclusion, Borobudur is an awe-inspiring place of reverence because of its sheer enormity, its representation of an empire's cleverest artists and laborers, and its millennium old attraction to tourists and locals alike. It is a time-capsule, a carved in stone rendering of the beliefs and lives of long ago. It is mesmerizing, regal, and humbling. It is Borobudur, a thousand years old and a miracle. Works Cited " Borobudur: Pathway to Enlightenment.

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