

THE RESTORATION OF BOROBODUR

By Vijaya Samarawickrama

Borobodur! Borobodur! The Temple with 504 Buddha Images! Stupendous, monumental, breath-taking and awe-inspiring. That's what it is – this Buddhist architectural wonder.

Vijaya is the Vice-President of the Sasana Abhiwurdhi Wardhana Society. He has whetted the imagination of the reader by supplying some vital statistics about this monument.

Ed.

In March this year, the Buddhist world had great cause for celebration because one of the greatest Buddhist monuments (and an architectural wonder of the world!) was finally reopened by the President of the Republic of Indonesia.

It took 650 men, 10 years, at the cost of US\$ 24 million to complete this gigantic task. The fact that this monument has been restored in a country that is not even predominantly Buddhist is a tribute to the goodwill of mankind. Many governments and agencies cooperated to give back to mankind the breath-taking beauty of the stone statues which were moulded by so many devout sculptors more than twelve centuries ago.

The Borobodur temple today rises majestically above the paddy fields of central Java, looking as clean and as awe-inspiring as it was when it was first built by the Sailendra Dynasty in 800 A.D. It seems to have been a monastery for Buddhist monks and pilgrims and it stands with the pyramids of Egypt and the dagabas of Anuradhapura as a silent testimony of man's ability to transform rough stone into a deep religious monument.

The base of Borobodur is no less than 160,000 square feet in area and there are 504 massive Buddha images, including 72 seated Buddhas housed inside bell-shaped, latticed stupas which are unique to this monument.

However, barely 150 years after it was built, Borobodur was mysteriously abandoned, just like Angkor Wat in Kampuchea, and for another millennium remained silent and hidden under a gigantic tropical jungle. During all these years of neglect, volcanic lava flows and the dense undergrowth covered and protected Borobodur. Sir Stamford Raffles rediscovered it in 1814, but

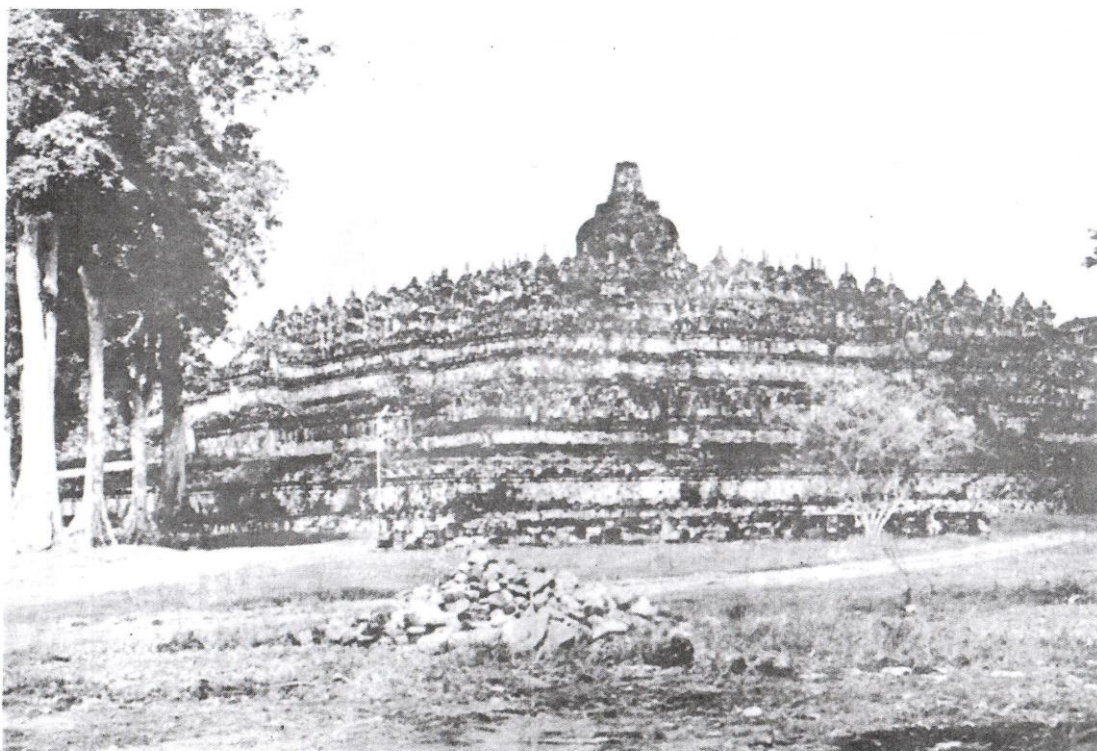
although some half-hearted efforts were made at restoration, the vast edifice was again neglected and left to the mercy of wind and rain.

That Borobodur stands proudly again in its ancient splendour is testimony to modern man's concern and generosity when it comes to restoring great works of the past. Just as man recovered the timeless treasures of Abu Simbel, so again did he preserve and protect Borobodur.

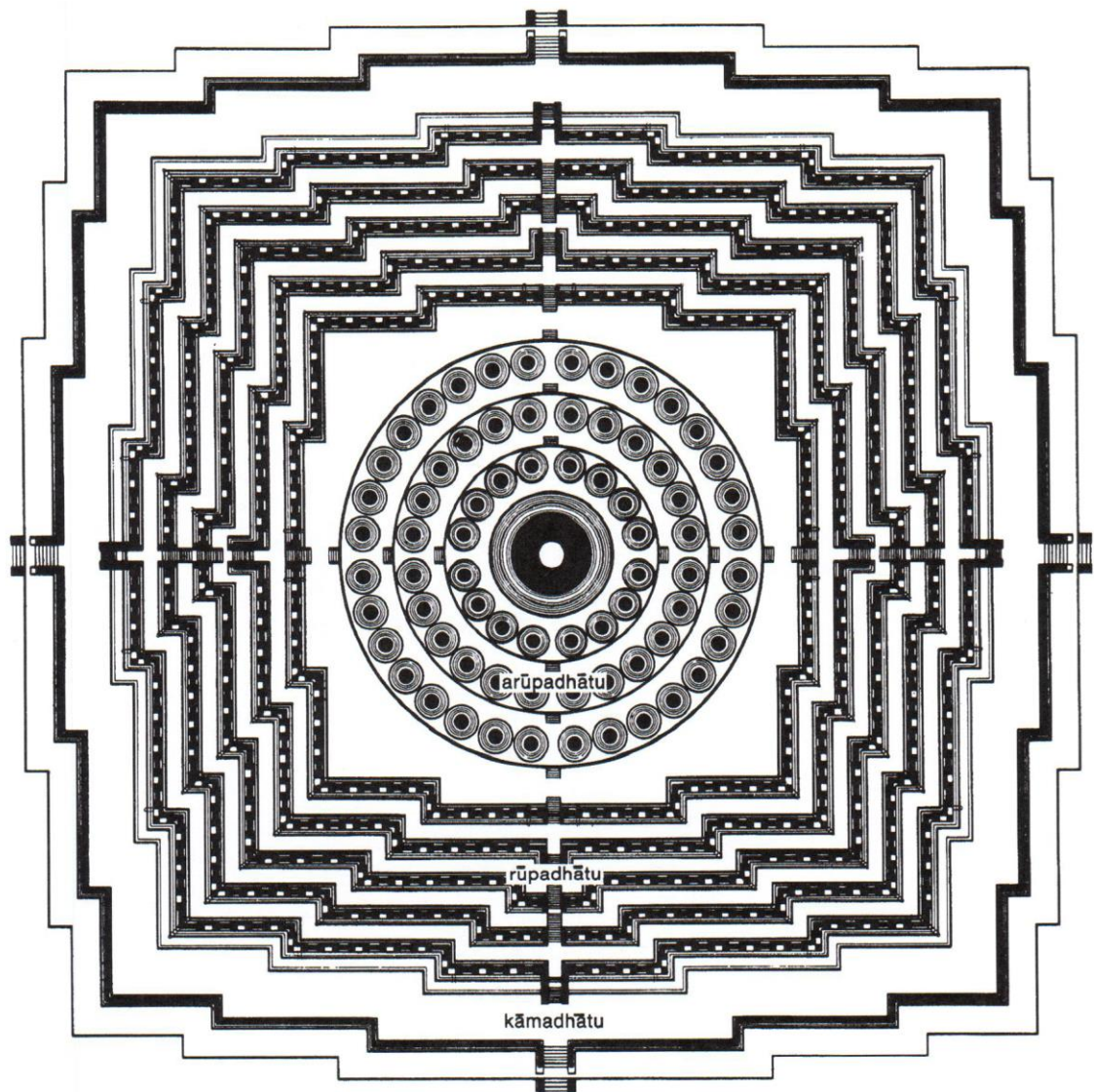
The restoration is also proof of how modern inventions like the computer can help not only to speed up the work, but also to cut cost enormously. Without the computer, it has been estimated that 10,000 workers would have needed a century to accomplish the same task.

As Buddhists we are deeply grateful to the Indonesian government and to all the agencies and individuals around the world who have cooperated in the rebuilding of this magnificent work of art. It will stand another 1,000 years as the symbol of that which is good and beautiful in the human race.

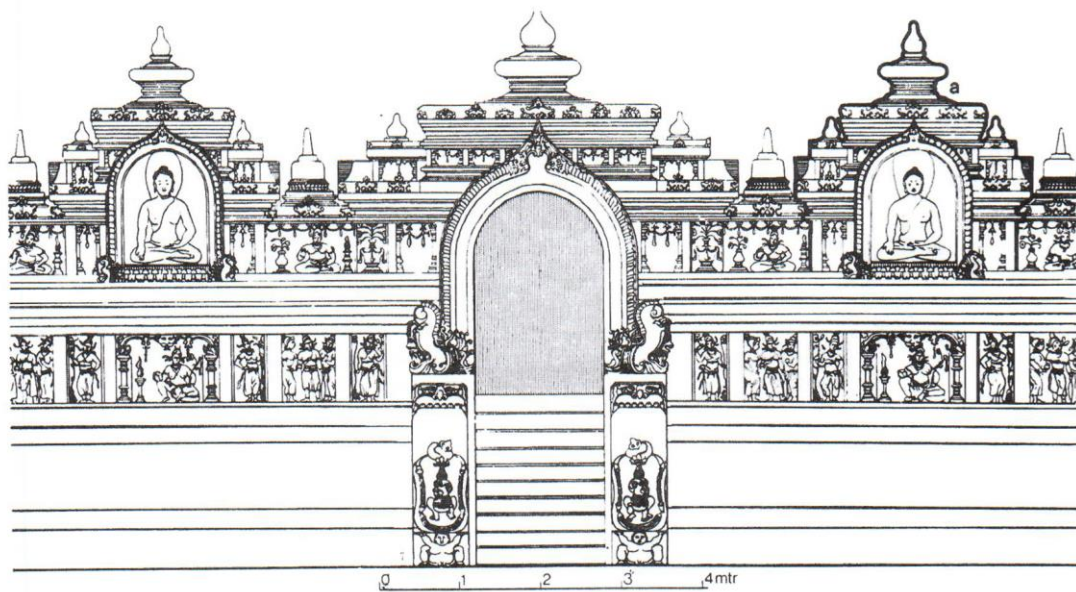
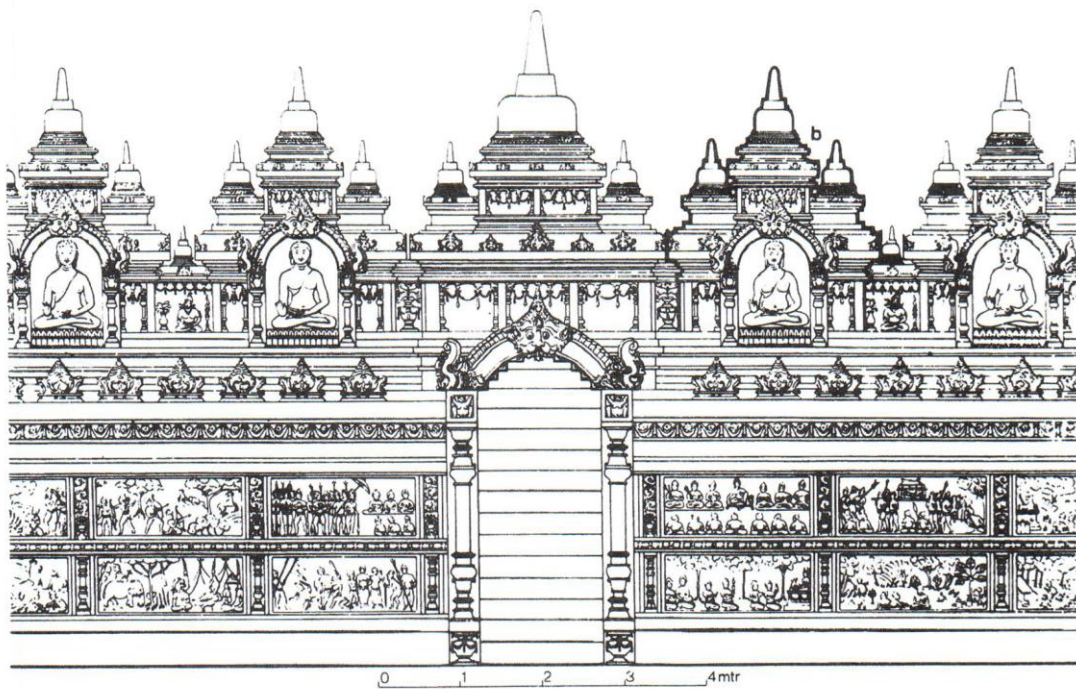
Finally, let us pray and hope that other Buddhist monuments like those in Lumbini will be as fortunate as those in Borobodur – that they will be restored to all their former glory and splendour through man's generosity.



A Wonder of Buddhist Architect — The Borobodur Monument (By Courtesy of Penerbit Djambatan).



The Plan of Borobodur (By Courtesy of Penerbit Djambatan).



*The Elevation of the Gateway and Facade of the 1st Gallery (bottom picture) and that of the 2nd Gallery (top picture)
(By Courtesy of Penerbit Djambatan).*