

The Barabudur

A Synopsis of Buddhism

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Academic dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History of Religions at the Stockholm University, to be publicly defended on 28 September, 2021 at 13.00 hours in the Lecture hall 11, Södra Husen, Universitetsvägen 10.

Abstract

The aim of this PhD-dissertation is - on the one hand - to present in a critical and comprehensive manner an update of recent findings among Western scholars regarding the Barabudur monument and its illustrations of various Buddhist traditions, and - on the other hand - to throw some light on some of the outstanding issues regarding this monument. Focus has been laid on the religious aspects with a view of ascertaining which forms of Buddhism are most prominently represented on the monument.

The Barabudur is the largest Buddhist monument in the world - being built on Central Java during the late eighth century CE. The Barabudur is constructed in four successively higher galleries with an area on top with three round terraces. The terraces encompass 72 latticed *stūpas*, each containing Buddha Vairocana in *dharmacakramudrā*. A large *stūpa* is in the center. Each side of the squarely built monument is at the ground level around 123 meters. The height of the monument is believed to originally have been 41.81 meters. The walls and the balustrades of the galleries encompass 1,460 bas-reliefs representing various *sūtras*, such as the *Mahākarmavibhaṅga Sūtra*, the *Lalitavistara*, the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*, the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* and the *Bhadracarī*. In addition, the Barabudur seems also to have been influenced by ideas from the ensuing Indonesian *esoteric* text the *Sang Hyang Kamahāyānikan*, as well as by the *esoteric* Buddhist texts of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, the *Tattvasaṃgraha* and the *Prajñāpāramitā in 150 verses*. The Barabudur thus presents aspects from the main three Buddhist traditions - the *Śrāvakayāna*, the *Mahāyāna* and an early *esoteric* form of the *Vajrayāna*.

The main problem in studying the Barabudur is the lack of historical information. No dedicatory inscription has yet been found. The Barabudur was built during the Śailendra interregnum on Java. Their contacts with the *Abhayagirivihāra* on Śrī Lanḱā and with the Pāla dynasty in Bengal, indicate that some early form of *Vajrayāna* Buddhism existed on Java during the eighth century CE. In addition, some concepts from the *esoteric* Buddhism developed by the Three Monks in China during this period could well also have been introduced on Java.

The Barabudur, together with the *Caṇḍi Mendut*, are supposed to represent the *Twin-maṇḍala* - thus representing the "non-duality" between "Truth" and "Wisdom". *Dharmakāya* Mahāvairocana is in the center of both these *Twin-maṇḍalas* symbolizing the *amala vijñāna*.

In conclusion, the Barabudur may be regarded as a holy monument, where the Buddha is present, and where the devotee may be taught directly by the Buddha.

Keywords: *Abhayagirivihāra, Advayasādhana, bas-relief, Bhaṭṭāra Hyang Buddha, Buddha, Huayan, latticed stūpa, maṇḍala, Mantranaya, Sang Hyang Kamahāyānikan, Shingon, śūnyatā, tathāgathagarbha.*

Stockholm, September 2021

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:su:diva-194311>

ISBN 978-91-7911-540-1

ISBN 978-91-7911-541-8

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