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Indonesia's World Heritage

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Introduction

The Republic of Indonesia counts around 17,000 islands and a rich cultural heritage that bears clear traces from a long history of trade and exchange across the archipelago and with the wider Indian Ocean region. Until 2012, the country's cultural world heritage sites – Borobudur Temple Compounds (1991), Prambanan Temple Compounds (1991), and Sangiran Early Man Site (1996) – were all located in Central Java. Another 19 sites, more spread across the main islands, are on UNESCO's Tentative List.

Historical Background

Most of Indonesia's cultural world heritage sites so far are located in the central part of Java, the fifth largest and most populated island of the archipelago (including the capital, Jakarta). The earliest signs of habitation in this fertile volcanic area are prehistoric. In the 1930s, the German paleoanthropologist Gustav von Koenigswald started a systematic geological survey of Java. At Sangiran, nearby the city of Solo (Surakarta), this led to the discovery of over 50 fossils of *Meganthropus paleo* and *Pithecanthropus erectus* ("Java man," now reclassified as part of the species *Homo erectus*). The outstanding hominid fossils and artifacts found nicely illustrate the development of *Homo sapiens sapiens* from the Lower Pleistocene to the present. For this reason alone, Sangiran has become one of the world's key sites for the understanding of human evolution.

From the seventh century CE, Central Java was dominated by Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms. This led, in the mid-eighth century, to the construction of Borobudur, the lower terraces of

which have the typical trademarks of Javanese Hindu architecture. While the basic plan was kept, during the construction phase builders changed it from either a prehistoric Indonesian or Hindu monument into a Buddhist shrine, with 2,672 relief panels, 504 Buddha statues, and a central dome on top. Seen from the air, the structure looks like a giant Buddhist mandala. Not far from Borobudur, near the village of Prambanan, a large group of Hindu temples was erected. The complex, one of the largest in Southeast Asia, was consecrated in the mid-ninth century, after a construction period of around 25 years. One century later, the Hindu court and most of the population moved to east Java, and the 224 temples were left behind. The structures themselves collapsed during an earthquake in the sixteenth century. Borobudur was abandoned around the same time, too, probably after a series of eruptions from nearby Mt. Merapi, and lay buried for centuries under layers of volcanic ashes.

Islam, coming mainly via India, gained ground in the inner areas of Java during the sixteenth century. The Dutch began to colonize the archipelago in the early seventeenth century. Cornelis A. Lons, an officer of the Dutch East India Company who made an excursion to Prambanan in 1733, reported about the damaged statues he found among the piles of stone blocks. During the brief British presence on the island under Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles (1811–1816), a full survey of the ruins was commissioned. Raffles, who had a personal interest in Javanese antiquities, also ordered the excavation of Borobudur. The work was started by the Dutch engineer Hermann Cornelius and continued for many decades by the Dutch East Indies government. The public appreciation of Borobudur and Prambanan, however, developed rather slowly. For a long time, colonial residents carried off sculptures for garden ornaments or “souvenirs,” while local villagers used foundation stones for construction material, and “trophy hunters” and thieves tried to make a profit out of what they could take away from the monuments.

Indonesia's legal framework for cultural heritage preservation and management goes back to

the colonial period (Kagami 1997). In 1901, the Committee for Archaeological Research on Java and Madura was set up by the then Dutch East Indies government. In 1931, an ordinance on monuments (*Monumenten Ordonnantie* S. No. 238: 1931) was established, with the aim of preserving historical monuments (mainly within the colonial domain). Even though the intentions were different, these policies were taken over by the Indonesian government after independence in 1949. While the colonial government had adopted such policies to demonstrate and justify its presence as the preserver of Indonesian cultural heritage, the Indonesian government does it mainly to assert its sole sovereignty over its “national patrimony.” Indonesia signed the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention in 1989. Shortly afterwards (in 1992), a new law concerning items of cultural property was enacted to replace the former ordinance (Ministry of Culture and Tourism 2003).

Key Issues/Current Debates

UNESCO Involvement

Barely 2 years after independence (in 1951), a UNESCO Office was established in Jakarta. Although serving the wider Southeast Asia region, the office helped in bringing Indonesia's magnificent cultural heritage under global attention. In 1972, UNESCO launched a 25 million USD safeguarding campaign to restore Borobudur (the second action of its kind after the 1960s operation in Egypt to relocate Abu Simbel). Concurrent with the elevation of Borobudur and Prambanan to world heritage sites in 1991, UNESCO collaborated with UNDP and the former Indonesian Directorate General of Tourism in the ambitious Cultural Tourism Development Central Java-Yogyakarta Project (1991–1994). The intergovernmental organization has also been involved in the rehabilitation of the structurally damaged Prambanan Temple complex after the 2006 earthquake and the recent cleaning up of volcanic ashes at Borobudur caused by multiple eruptions of nearby Mt. Merapi.

UNESCO's involvement has not always been perceived positively at the local level, mainly because people feel left out in the conservation of the sites, leading to conflicts as "classical"/high culture is preserved over vernacular/low culture (Wall & Black 2004). At Prambanan, for example, there is an ongoing conflict with the local community regarding the name of the complex. While it was inscribed on the world heritage list as "Prambanan Temple Compounds" (No. 642), the people of Prambanan village have always referred to it as *Candi Rara* (or *Loro Jonggrang* (Javanese for "temple of the slender maiden"). This refers back to a popular legend relating that the statue in the north chamber of the central Shiva shrine does not represent the Hindu goddess Durga but the Javanese princess Loro Jonggrang. The tensions recently intensified when, in accordance with Article 268 of UNESCO's Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO 2008: 69), the text "Candi Rara Jonggrang" on a newly placed signboard was replaced by "Candi Prambanan." Through initiatives such as the 2008 Prambanan Camp for World Heritage Volunteers, which enabled to increase the heritage awareness of local youth, the negative perception of UNESCO was somewhat adjusted.

Tourism

Tourism is not much of an issue at the archaeological site of Sangiran (and its nomination as world heritage has not really brought any substantial change in that respect). At Borobudur (the single most visited tourism attraction in Indonesia) and Prambanan, in contrast, the challenges related to tourism are ongoing. Much has to do with the ways in which both sites are managed. The park surrounding the monuments and the related infrastructure (ticket booths, interpretative services, and parking lots) is administered by PT Taman Wisata, a state-owned enterprise. Souvenir stands, food stalls, and other tourism-related structures outside the main grounds fall under the control of the Provincial Tourism Office of the province in which they are located (Borobudur is located in Central Java,

while Prambanan is in Yogyakarta). The actual monuments, however, resort under the responsibility of the National Archaeology Department of Indonesia (and, with the ongoing process of regional autonomy, increasingly the provincial archaeology departments). Not surprisingly, this fragmented distribution of authority leads to multiple problems, including the development of ill-planned tourism infrastructure (Salazar 2010a). As there is no limit on visitor numbers, vandalism is a serious issue at both Prambanan and Borobudur. There is little if any on-site interpretation available, and the general disrespect for the site is a major problem among domestic tourists, who comprise around 80 % of all visitors. In addition, local tour guides have a hard time handling the increasingly diverse group of international tourists (Salazar 2008, 2010b). Tourism development at both sites has been severely criticized for not including the local community (Hampton 2005).

Environment

Indonesia's cultural world heritage sites are located in an environmentally fragile area, known as the Pacific Ring of Fire, where a large number of volcanic eruptions and earthquakes occur. In fact, Mount Merapi (25 km from Prambanan and 28 km from Borobudur) is one of the most active volcanoes in the world. In 2010, Borobudur was heavily affected by a 2.5-cm layer of acidic volcanic ash falling on the complex. In addition to the numerous earthquakes, causing stones to fall down and arches to crumble, the soft soil and heavy rains have led to the destabilization of the structure. The main complex at Prambanan was badly damaged during the 2006 earthquake, with large pieces of debris, including carvings, scattered over the ground and the structural damage being more extensive than originally thought. Only in 2010, the main temples were reopened to the public.

Economy

Indonesia's world heritage generates both benefits and costs (Hampton 2005). Over time, there have been remarkable shifts in the (economic) value attached to the country's patrimony (Salazar

2011). In preparation for Prambanan to become recognized as world heritage, the Indonesian authorities removed the market that had sprung up near the temple and transformed the surrounding hamlet and rice paddies into an archaeological park. Villagers, however, benefit economically from the souvenir stalls at the entry of the park, by their work inside the complex (as guides, watchmen, cleaning personnel, etc.) and by participating in the Ramayana Ballet, which is performed every night at the open-air and indoor stages on the west side of the complex. Borobudur has a similar history of challenges and opportunities. In 2003, for instance, the local community heavily protested against a provincial government plan to build a three-story art mall, known as “Java World,” next to the protected monument because this would take away even more from their scarce benefits. The values of tourism for economic development, preservation of a cultural icon, and social justice for hundreds of poor hawkers brutally clashed in the controversy over Java World (Silver 2007). At both Prambanan and Borobudur, there is a continuous problem with vendors harassing visitors inside the park to buy their trinkets. Unregulated, predatory commercialization forms a serious threat to the cultural assets of the sites.

Religion

Indonesia is the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. Islam stands as a religion quite different from the religions of the Javanese people during the pre-Islamic period. The fact that Prambanan and Borobudur are located in what is now a predominantly Muslim area adds to the complexity of managing, maintaining, and interpreting the temple compounds. In 1985, Muslim fundamentalists who viewed Borobudur as a symbol of Indonesia's pre-Islamic pagan past bombed nine stupas on the upper terrace. The militants perceived the government's renovations of the site (largely for purposes of tourism) as emblematic of the state's refusal to embrace Islamic law. They therefore selected Borobudur as a target and, in response, the government made it clear that all temples on Java were to be considered as heritage monuments, not religious or

sacred sites where ritual activities are held (or, according to the ICOMOS description, as “religious complexes”). Recent Islamic terrorism attacks have mainly targeted tourism infrastructure (e.g., Bali bombings), not heritage sites.

In order to accommodate the religious needs of the many Muslims working at and visiting the sites, a *musholla* (small building where Muslims perform their religious duties) was built right next to the entry gates. It is odd that, while visiting either Prambanan or Borobudur around prayer time, one can hear the Islamic call to prayer far into the compound. In contrast, the restoration of Borobudur and Prambanan has led to a revival of both sites as places of worship and pilgrimage for Buddhists and Hindus, respectively. Indonesia's official state policy (known as *Pancasila*) remains one that promotes religious freedom. Ironically, the ongoing process of democratization, started after the fall of Suharto in 1998, has facilitated the spread of Muslim fundamentalism and increased the calls to have Muslim heritage such as the Great Mosque of Demak (since 1995 on the tentative list) included on the world heritage list. It remains to be seen which influence religious fundamentalism will have on the archaeological excavation site and museum of Sangiran.

Politics

It is no coincidence that most of Indonesia's cultural world heritage sites are situated on Java. After all, it is the central government in Jakarta that proposes candidates to UNESCO. During Major General Suharto's New Order era (1966–1998), the government (led by Javanese) strongly favored Central Java in their (re)invention of Indonesia, promoting it as the cultural heart of the nation (Dahles 2001). This serves as a reminder that, ultimately, a world heritage site is the product of agency at the national level. Besides, the Indonesian government has its own heritage politics and national list of heritage conservation. The politics of heritage and the tensions between local, national, and international stakeholders have been at play across the archipelago. The case of the Tana Toraja settlements in the highlands of Sulawesi, on UNESCO's Tentative List, painfully illustrates

that cultural heritage sites are often not the newly threatened landscapes of tradition they are imagined to be (Adams 2003). An even more problematic example is that of Pura Besakih, Bali's most celebrated temple complex, which underwent three failed attempts (mainly due to strong local protests) to establish it as world heritage (Hitchcock & Darma Putra 2005). More generally, the democratic reforms and the shifting of power from the central government to the local level during the last decade have fueled an intense new "localism" that has had direct (and often negative) implications on cultural preservation (Silver 2007).

Future Directions

The Indonesian government has successfully managed to use the most iconic historical monuments within the country for tourism development while at the same time trying to intervene in their management in the name of their preservation as part of the nation's patrimony. These processes do not take a single course, but, rather, proceed in parallel, mutually influencing each other. Short-term gains in both must be assessed against long-term consequences. The promotion of the development of national culture has been one of the most crucial tasks of the Indonesian government since independence, as is clearly stated in Article 32 of the Constitution: "the Government shall develop the National Culture of Indonesia." However, the ongoing process of political decentralization (started in 2001) is adding to the number of political stakeholders involved and, consequently, making the management of world heritage sites even more complex than it was before (Salazar 2010a).

With a view to enhancing the capacity of the Indonesian national and local authorities to improve the state of conservation (management) at Borobudur, the World Heritage Centre has recently developed a technical cooperation project under the Netherlands Funds-in-Trust with UNESCO. As long as such initiatives leave out the local communities as active stakeholders, they are doomed to fail. A reason for the lack of

sufficient safeguards to protect the cultural values of sites is to be found in an underdeveloped understanding and therefore lack of appreciation of the value of these cultural resources by both the local community and the tourist alike. The UNESCO "Community Empowerment Through Heritage Education" program at Indonesia's three world heritage sites is a good step in addressing this issue. Finally, increased attention will be needed to address the fact that Indonesian world heritage sites, despite their proclaimed universal value, have different meanings for different groups of visitors (Salazar 2008).

Cross-References

- [Archaeology and Anthropology](#)
- [Holographic Epistemology: Native Common Sense](#)
- [South and Southeast Asia: Historical Archaeology](#)
- [UNESCO's World Heritage List Process](#)
- [UNESCO World Heritage Convention \(1972\)](#)
- [World Heritage Objectives and Outcomes](#)

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Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association (IPPA)

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Basic Information

The Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association (IPPA) was founded in 1976 at a meeting of Indo-Pacific scholars held during the 9th Congress of the *Union Internationale des Sciences Préhistoriques et Protohistoriques* (UISPP) in Nice, southern France. The association, however, has much earlier antecedents and traces its origins back to a meeting organized in 1929 by P.V. van Stein Callenfels during the Fourth Congress of the Pacific Science Association in Batavia (now

Jakarta). Its immediate antecedent was founded, as the Far-Eastern Prehistory Association (FEPA), at a meeting in Manila in 1953.

Major Impact

With the creation of the current Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association in 1976, a number of goals were outlined:

1. To promote cooperation in the study of the prehistory and related subjects of eastern Asia and the Pacific and prehistorically related areas.
2. To help maintain direct communication among scholars working in the field of east Asian and Pacific prehistory through periodic congresses, regional meetings, colloquia, symposia, and the publication of the IPPA Bulletin. East Asia here includes Pakistan and north from there roughly along the line of 70° longitude and to the east.
3. To uphold and improve legal and scientific methods of prehistorical and related research in the field and in the laboratory and to help the countries in the IPPA area prevent illegal excavation and illegal trade in antiquities.

During the 35 years that have passed since that momentous gathering in Nice, IPPA has addressed itself without pause to the production of its annual Bulletin and its congresses (Pune, India, 1978; Dunedin, New Zealand, 1983; Peñablanca, Philippines, 1985; Tokyo and Guam 1987; Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 1990; Chiang Mai, Thailand, 1994; Melaka, Malaysia, 1998; Taipei, Taiwan, 2002; Manila, Philippines, 2006; Hanoi, Vietnam, 2009). The next conference will be at Angkor in Cambodia in 2014. Delegate enrolment at the most recent congress, in Hanoi, was over 600.

However, the second part of our third goal, that of preventing illegal activities, has never been developed until now, partly because the voluntary staff of IPPA have never had time or resources to invest in a problem that now threatens the survival, in some parts of the world, of any meaningful archaeological record at all. It is intended that this will become