

Archaeological Research in Indonesia:

A HISTORICAL SURVEY

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INTRODUCTION

AFTER the fall of the last Hindu kingdoms and the supremacy of Islamic rulers in Indonesia, the cultural monuments that had witnessed the glories of the foregoing centuries did not receive the slightest attention, and gradually those monuments became lost from people's memories. Only in a few cases have some remained alive, but then only as holy places connected with certain legends.

A written record relating to the existing monuments in the fourteenth century *Majapahit* was not available until the *Nagarakertagama* was discovered in 1898. This manuscript, however, being contemporaneous to the period described, does not reveal the necessary details for our archaeological needs.

Thus the remains of Indonesia's past had to be rediscovered one by one, even in cases where the monuments are still erect, though in a ruinous condition.

THE PRAMBANAN TEMPLES REDISCOVERED

In 1733, while paying a courtesy call on Mataram's court at Kartasura, a Dutch official from Semarang, C. A. Lons, took the trouble to see more of Java's inland. It is from his diary that we are informed for the first time of the existence of the ruins of a group of "Brahmin temples" at the village of Prambanan. Several other visitors followed him, and toward the end of the eighteenth century the Prambanan temples were described in detail by F. von Boekholz.

The rediscovered temple-complex drew the attention of N. Engelhard, Dutch administrator of Java's northeast coast. He ordered an exploration of them to be carried out by J. H. Cornelius, who at that time (1805) was in charge of the establishment of a fortification at Klaten.

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THE BEGINNING OF MORE SERIOUS RECORDINGS

The lieutenant governor general of the British interregnum in Java, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, was the first person to make a serious attempt to reveal Java's past. A staff of collaborators was sent throughout Java to collect as complete information as possible, through personal visits and descriptions, concerning existing historical monuments. Raffles also personally took the trouble to acquaint himself with the situations and conditions of the reported monuments by several visits.

All the information was later published in his two-volume work, *History of Java*. A special *Account of the Antiquities of Java* was also prepared, but has never been published. Even so, *History of Java*, which has a special chapter on the antiquities, was the first publication to reveal Java's existing monuments.

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY AFTER RAFFLES

Raffles's pioneer work in bringing to light Java's historical monuments was apparently considered exhaustive by the reestablished Dutch Administration. Officially, a Commission for the Exploration and Conservation of Antiquities was founded in 1822, but not the slightest activity was perceivable.

Still there were personally interested administrators, traveling artists and missionaries, some in collaboration with the Batavia Society of Arts and Sciences, who continued the flow of information and discoveries. Owing to their contributions, by about the middle of the nineteenth century the greater part of Java's existing antiquities had been unveiled and further rescued from oblivion.

Fortunately, in the last two decades of the nineteenth century there was a real scientific interest in Java's antiquities. In 1885 an archaeological society was founded at Jogjakarta. Its chairman was J. W. Ijzerman, who in that same year made the remarkable discovery of the hidden foot of Borobudur. In 1887 this society made a thorough excavation of the Prambanan temples, and Ijzerman's reports (published in 1891) are still of great value.

A catalog of the archaeological collection in the Djakarta Museum was published by W. P. Groeneveldt in 1887. The catalog was noteworthy in that it provided detailed descriptions of the various types of objects as well as of their religious backgrounds.

In Holland, a similar catalog was published two years earlier by C. Leemans. It concerned the Javanese antiquities preserved in the Leiden Museum.

Another very important publication was issued by R. D. M. Verbeek in 1891, consisting of a list of descriptions of Java's antiquities in the field. It is surprising that the author was able to list 671 items known to him by personal visits.

Owing to these catalogs, the nineteenth century closed with a complete registration of Java's ancient monuments, and from them a firm foundation was laid for the actual archaeological studies.

THE COMMISSION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

By taking part in the International Colonial Exhibition, held in Paris in 1900, the Dutch government was forced to take note of Indonesia's richness in exhibition material, including the exceptional beauty of the ancient monuments. Prodded by Ijzerman's archaeological

results, by Groeneveldt's wish for a systematic archaeological exploration, and by G. P. Rouffaer's report on the British-Indian Archaeological Survey, the Dutch government decided to establish the Commission in the Netherlands Indies for Archaeological Research in Java and Madura (1901).

The Commission was presided over by J. L. A. Brandes, a keen research worker, who, unfortunately, could fulfill his task only until 1905. In this short time, however, he was able to do a great deal. Several monuments were thoroughly studied, and a flow of publications threw light on the most varied archaeological topics. A special monograph on Tjandi Djago was published in 1904, and another one on Tjandi Singosari was published after his death (1909).

After Brandes's death the Commission was practically paralyzed. Only the registration of antiquities and the restoration of Borobudur (which was carried out by T. van Erp in an excellent way) were continued.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE

In 1910 N. J. Krom was appointed president of the Commission for Archaeological Research. In continuing Brandes's endeavors to rescue Java's antiquities from further decay and oblivion, he soon came to the conclusion that without a guarantee of continuous work archaeological research could not possibly be carried out satisfactorily. After studying the organization of the archaeological surveys in India and Farther India, he reorganized his commission. The result was that in 1913 the Archaeological Service in the Netherlands Indies was established and provided with a permanent staff and a permanent task.

With the establishment of the Archaeological Service, archaeology in Indonesia began a new period of serious and continuous work in the frame of government activities.

When Krom retired in 1915, F. D. K. Bosch became head of the Archaeological Service. For more than twenty years he had the privilege of supervising the archaeological research in Indonesia. During Bosch's leadership the Archaeological Service became an institution whose scope covered the whole of Indonesia's past that could be revealed. Explorations in the field of Islamic archaeology were carried out by R. de Vink in Aceh. Prehistory as a special branch of the Archaeological Service was established, owing to the great interest of P. V. van Stein Callenfels. Bosch introduced a new view in the archaeological research by fully taking into account the role that indigenous elements played in Hindu-Javanese art. He met with great opposition, however, when he pioneered the anastylosis of architectural monuments. Convinced that the archaeological remains still played an important role in the life and mental development of the Indonesians, he was of the opinion that as far as it was possible within strict scientific boundaries, an anastylosis was required. Krom, however, was essentially against this last viewpoint and upheld the principle that a reconstruction should be limited to a drawing on paper. With a reconstruction on paper, archaeology as a science had to stop! This conflict led to the establishment of a special commission that after many years of thorough study finally agreed with Bosch.

The reconstruction of the main *chandi* of the Prambanan complex, which was started in 1918, became a permanent branch of the Archaeological Service's activities and led to the establishment of a special architectural division at Prambanan.

Another important event that occurred during Bosch's leadership was the passage of a

Monuments Act (1931) which ensured the protection and conservation of archaeological objects.

In 1936 Bosch retired. He was succeeded by Willem Friederich Stutterheim, a brilliant scholar whose fruitful pen soon started a continuous flow of new ideas and theories on archaeological topics. In many treatises he once again laid stress on Bosch's idea of the importance of the indigenous elements for the better understanding of the Hinduized Indonesian culture. His discovery of the eight-folded top of the Penanggungan mountain as the Indonesian replica of the Indian Mahameru gave much more support to this point of view.

Bosch's other opinion concerning the anastylosis was also shared by Stutterheim. So in 1937, when detailed investigation of the reconstruction of the main temple of the Prambanan complex led to the certain conclusion that an anastylosis was both possible and desirable, the huge work of rebuilding the structure was started.

Another branch of archaeology also attracted Stutterheim—chemical archaeology. It is a pity that this branch could not have been established at that time.

Finally, it should be noted that because of the rapid increase in the number of antiquities that had been revealed by explorations and excavations, Stutterheim became convinced of the necessity for a new inventory. He started it in 1938 by training special officials and sending them throughout Java and Bali.

DECLINE AND RESURRECTION OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE

Stutterheim did not witness the results of his efforts. He died in a Japanese concentration camp in 1942.

Not much, however, could be done during the Japanese occupation. The Dutch officials—being the leading staff—were kept prisoners of war, while the trained Indonesian personnel had to limit their activities because of lack of funds. The only activity was the anastylosis of the Prambanan main temple, which went on slowly. The head office of the Archaeological Service at Djakarta, where the archives and all the material for the actual archaeological research were kept, was practically paralyzed, and actual fieldwork also had to be stopped.

When the Dutch came back to Indonesia after World War II and found that the Archaeological Service had become an institution of the Republic of Indonesia, they established another archaeological service that was staffed with the expert personnel of the prewar period, but it lacked the needed resources.

It was not until 1950 that the Archaeological Service became united again with its branches at Prambanan and Bali. Since then it has functioned normally under the direction of Professor Bernet Kempers. The addition of newly trained younger Indonesians on the scientific staff has added new spirit to its work.