

Borobudur as a Whole

There is much to be said for the opinion that the architectural construction of Borobudur reflects the three spheres of the Buddhist cosmos, i. e. the hidden base stands for the world of desires, the four galleries, for the world of pure forms and above them the sphere of formlessness (STUTTERHEIM; HEINE-GELDERN).¹⁶³

On the other hand, as L. R. LANCASTER maintains, most of the actions of the Bodhisattvas – therefore also those on the galleries – still belong to the world of desires. He assumes that the so-called *Dharmakāya*-Stupa mentioned in very old documents of the Chinese canon and enclosing the Fa or Dharma body as a relic of Buddha, could have been known on Java.¹⁶⁴ The idea of such a Stupa was preserved and extended by other sects such as the School of Recognizing and in the tantric texts of the 8th/9th century. Both sources mention such Stupas as a component of a Maṇḍala and use this term in subtly differentiated forms. Therefore the central Stupa symbolizes the Buddha himself in his highest manifestation, *Zixing*. As a previous manifestation, the Buddhas on the round terraces rest in the Body of Bliss, *Shouyong*, in deep meditation. In their transformational bodies, *Bianhua*, the teaching Bodhisattvas are represented, including the Buddha Śākyamuni, on the panels of the four galleries. And in the body of one's station, *Dengliu*, the beings shown on the base remain in the karmic round of transmigration.¹⁶⁵



In the Mahāyāna tradition a Bodhisattva has to travel through *10 stages* on his long way to the Buddhahood (see p. 28), and symbolically the pilgrim to Borobudur has to circumambulate it 10 times along the panel rows. The structure of the monument, though, cannot be exhaustively explained, particularly since no conclusive parallels can be made between the ten steps and the contents of the panels.

However, it seems probable that the king of the Sailendra dynasty, who built Borobudur and imagined himself to be the tenth of his dynasty, wanted to purchase not only religious merits for himself and his relations but also strove for the glorification of his dynasty (MOENS). Perhaps he even saw himself or one of his successors destined to become a universal Ruler (*Cakravartin*) or else a Buddha.¹⁶⁶

The symbolic agreement between the 4 times 92 Jinās (victors or conquerors which represent an essential attitude of mind of the inspired consciousness, in the niches of the balustrades in each of the four directions) most definitely exists. These transcendental Buddhas rest in Pure or Buddha countries which also possess a transcendental nature. The 432 niches at the outsides of the balustrades could symbolize such Buddha-fields,¹⁶⁷ *Buddha Kṣetra*.ⁿ

n/ At Borobudur there are no signs regarding the efforts to reach as a matter of priority, the "Land of Bliss" of Buddha Amitābha taught by the School of the Pure Land