Nationalism and Cultural Heritage in Indonesia: A Local Study of Borobudur Temple

Undergraduate Research Thesis

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by

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Abstract

This study was born from an attempt to explain why Borobudur, the largest Buddhist temple in the world, located in Central Java, Indonesia, is a national icon of a country that is predominantly Muslim, and has been for centuries. By reconciling the concepts of nationalism, tourism, and heritage, I argue that, in a country where diversity has long been a source of conflict and fragmentation, Borobudur's development into a tourist-oriented heritage site during the New Order regime was part of a larger strategy to establish an "official" culture. To investigate this, I carried out on-site ethnographic fieldwork for four weeks around Borobudur; this involved interviews with locals as well as officials from UNESCO and the Indonesian Government, and participant observation through a visit and guided tour of the temple. My research indicated that through the construction of Borobudur Tourist Park, the temple's value was deliberately shifted from a source of local cultural heritage to a secularized national icon. I determined that Borobudur Park has been constructed to reflect its value as national heritage; due to the changes involved in the site's development, local livelihoods were upturned, which resulted in locals' feelings of detachment from their heritage, and a shift in the way they characterize their relationship with the temple—namely, from cultural inspiration and belonging to a source of employment and national prestige. Through an exploration of the counter-narratives locals attached to Borobudur, I found that the lack of religious affiliation between the temple and the surrounding community was irrelevant to understanding Borobudur's local significance, which instead was derived from its ongoing interaction with residents and its role as the center of community life for

centuries. These findings not only support my original claim, but also suggest

further implications for the politicization of heritage in the construction of heritage

tourist sites, and the marginalization of local cultural values that occurs as a result.

Acknowledgments

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I am also grateful to the many friends I made during my time in Borobudur; it was due to their generosity and willingness to share their stories and insights that my research found its direction and spirit.

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Introduction

Lonely Planet, perhaps the most ubiquitous resource for travellers looking to explore and learn about any nation, published a guide to Indonesia in 2015 that featured Borobudur, the largest Buddhist temple in the world and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, on the cover. In doing so, it essentially presented Borobudur as a symbol of the country—one which, paradoxically, is both predominantly Muslim and has the world's largest Muslim population. I found this inconsistency to be reinforced through further investigation: Borobudur is one of the country's most popular tourist attractions, nearly all Javanese students take a school trip to visit the Temple, and its image even serves as the logo of several taxi companies I came across in Jakarta. For all intents and purposes, Borobudur is a "must see" destination for its significant display of Indonesia's cultural heritage. What could explain the popularity and national pride for a temple that doesn't represent the country's predominant faith, and hasn't for many centuries? This question is the springboard from which my study originated, and cannot be resolved without reconciling the concepts of nationalism, cultural heritage, and heritage tourism.

Making the Nation

In investigating this question, there are several inconsistencies that arise, all which can be traced back to the concept of the nation. So it is with a definition of the nation that I begin. Two particular explanations are relevant here. Benedict Anderson (1991) regards the nation as a socially constructed "imagined political community"; it is imagined because many of its members will never come face to face with each other, yet they carry with them an unspoken sense of camaraderie.

This bond is reinforced through the mechanisms of language, the printing press, education, museums, and the establishment of tradition, all of which lend a sense of historical continuity and linearity to the idea of the nation. As Anderson states, "If nation-states are widely conceded to be 'new' and 'historical,' the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past, and, still more important, glide into a limitless future" (p. 11-12). Further, the nation transcends the people within it.

Here, the second key definition comes into play, in which Thongchai Winichakul (1994) identifies the nation as a "geo-body," where territoriality creates nationhood spatially. The creation of maps has led to a new geographical discourse, in which arbitrary yet divisive and defining boundaries shape the "we-self" of a nation, which acts to contrast the "other," or any group of people who live beyond the defined boundaries of that nation. This distinction essentially has come to allow a nation to shape and construct its identity by defining not only what it is, but also, and perhaps more importantly, what it is *not*; in this way, the characterization of a nation reflects a critical power struggle for the hegemonic interpretation of an "official" national culture, often using history as a source of legitimacy—in this case, for what constitutes "Indonesian-ness."

These definitions provide several critical insights into the Indonesian case. Indonesia is an archipelago consisting of over 17,500 islands, all culturally and ethnically unique with little in common but the shared experience of Dutch colonialism—thus, before independence in 1945, "Indonesia" as we know it did not exist. As Elizabeth Pisani (2014) insightfully articulated, "When the flamboyant

nationalist leader Sukarno proclaimed the independence of Indonesia, he was

liberating a nation that didn't really exist, imposing a notional unity on a ragbag of

islands that had only a veneer of shared history, and little common culture" (p. 9). It

was at this point that the vast spread of islands became one territory—*Indonesia*,

and the diverse people inhabiting them became "one" as well—*Indonesian*. In the

process, they inherited what would become a "shared history." Included in this is

Borobudur, located in Magelang Regency of Central java, Indonesia, heritage of the

short-lived Buddhist Sailendra Dynasty of the 8th-9th centuries; upon its restoration

and development into a tourist site, Borobudur was transformed into an icon of

cultural heritage of a new nation that experienced a major conversion to Islam in the

14th century, and has remained predominantly Muslim to this day. Anderson (1991)

offers some clarity into this phenomenon by describing one of the paradoxes of

nationalism, whereby he compares "the objective modernity of nations to the

historian's eyes vs. their subjective antiquity in eyes of nationalists" (p. 5).

Therefore, for the nationalist, Indonesia had always existed, but had yet to be

formally recognized as such. It was upon independence, both politically and

geographically, that Indonesia became both an "imagined community" and a "geo-

body" (Anderson, 1991; Winichakul, 1994).

Shaping the Nation

"A political community seeks to educate its public, whether citizens or subjects, in

its own cosmology of space and time" (Errington, 1998, p. 228)

It is one thing to declare a nation as such, but another for that declaration to

be accepted, internalized, and performed. For example, "Unity in Diversity" has been

Indonesia's national motto since independence, and yet the country's tumultuous

political history is evident in long-standing ethnic conflict and fragmentation that

persist to this day (Dahles, 2008). This point brings to light the need to differentiate

between two essential processes—that of defining a nation, and that of shaping it; a

critical technology employed towards the latter is tourism. Travel and tourism have

quickly become one of the world's largest industries and sources of employment in

the past century (Lyon & Wells, 2012); however, the implications of the expansion

of the tourism industry are more far-reaching than one would think.

The Oxford English Dictionary (n.d.) defines tourism as "the commercial

organization and operation of holidays and visits to places of interest." Without

further consideration, "tourism" appears to be a static process whereby a person

visits a place of interest for a specified period of time, during which they appreciate

and engage with the place, then leave. The destination remains unchanged during

and after the tourist's visit. However, in order to understand tourism's role in the

interplay between cultural heritage and nationalism, I refer to John Urry's more

dynamic and complex explanation. Urry (1990) describes tourism as a social

phenomenon, whereby we, the tourist, go away and "gaze" at whatever we

encounter—by reflecting, appreciating, and internalizing what we see. This "gaze" is

not static, but rather, particular and dynamic, constructed and developed by experts

in order to shape the "tourist experience." Signs are of critical importance here, for

they attempt to reinforce and reproduce that carefully constructed gaze through

pictures, media, and postcards, often with a specific purpose. Urry recognizes the

importance of travel guides here, such as Lonely Planet, which, upon their

emergence in the 19th century, facilitated a new way of seeing—by reinforcing the tourist gaze through visualization of the travel experience. Which images fill travel guides and what attractions grace the lists of a country's "must-see destinations" are not arbitrary decisions—rather, they reflect a deliberate and selective construction of the tourist gaze, and an attempt to influence the perception of a place in a way that may not truly reflect local realities.

Heritage Tourism & The Built Environment

The United Nations World Tourism Organization estimates that roughly 35-40% of today's tourism represents cultural or heritage tourism (Lyon & Wells, 2012, p. 6). For further clarification, at its most basic level, heritage can be defined as "property that is or may be inherited; an inheritance" (Heritage, n.d.). Noel Salazar (2012) emphasizes that heritage, which is characterized by "ever-changing plurality," has sociocultural value attached to it, which contributes to identity-building, as well as economic value (p 24). Value, here, is considered a "model of human meaning-making" (Lyon & Wells, 2012, p. 24). Thus, heritage, in its diverse subjectivity, can be instrumental—making heritage tourism, and particularly, the construction of the "tourist gaze," inevitably political and contested.

Tourism, as a dynamic and interactive process, is characterized by "place-based engagement" and often involves learning (Lyon & Wells, 2012). This is important to note when considering the contexts in which heritage sites become tourist destinations—a process that is often less transparent than expected and can reflect a broader political agenda. For example, although tourism was touted as simply part of a strategy for economic development in Indonesia under the New

Order regime of the late twentieth century, a closer look reveals other motives for fostering the growth of the country's tourism industry; by marketing itself on the basis of its cultural diversity to international tourists, Indonesia was able to present itself as a unified, unique, and importantly, politically stable nation that would be recognized as such by the international community. It also hoped to do the same with domestic tourists, who would, hopefully, accept and internalize the ideology of a unified nation with a shared past and culture that the regime was promoting at such tourist sites (Dahles, 2008). Further, Nezar AlSayyad (2001) depicts how "many nations…are resorting to heritage preservation, the invention of tradition, and the rewriting of history as forms of self-definition" (p. 2). He further argues how such an agenda manifests itself at the tourist site, and goes on to describe several typologies of built environments that are particularly relevant to my study and the case of Borobudur.

The first involves using history to create a dream landscape, in which cultural conflicts are resolved, and icons of culture are reduced to their basic representation (AlSayyad, 2001, p. 9). In the case of Borobudur, this refers to a simplification of heritage; when tourists visit Borobudur, their "gaze" doesn't encounter the persistent conflicts over heritage ownership, property rights, and political shifts that have surrounded the Temple for decades (Urry, 1990). Instead, when one visits, one is presented with the magnificence that is the "Biggest Buddhist Temple in the World", in doing so, it becomes a source of pride—and in turn, a means of expressing the "we-self" (Winichakul, 1994). This is consistent with AlSayyad's (2001) argument that this phenomenon is common in nationalist regimes; in this

effort, heritage space is built to prescribe and represent an "official" heritage, thereby attempting to construct a "gaze" that erases conflict. In doing so, Indonesia's national motto, "Unity in Diversity," could be internalized through the eyes of the tourists—particularly domestic ones. Essentially, harnessing cultural heritage in such a way allows for the creation of a new narrative that replaces the ones that may be more localized and do not fit into the country's new "official" culture.

The second typology that is relevant here is one that involves the commodification of culture to establish a "true claim to history" (AlSayyad, 2001, p. 9). Here, revitalizing previously marginalized sites not only brings economic benefits, but also acts as a means of tapping into a "historical reserve," and effectively arousing national pride and unification around a shared history. For Indonesia, this meant glorifying its Buddhist past through Borobudur, and in doing so, evoking memories of a time, pre-colonization, when the region was unified under the ruling Sailendra dynasty. Doing so emphasizes a shared, yet constructed, past. In nationalist regimes, the rekindling of heritage legitimizes this narrative, lending the "history" that Winichakul (1994) argues is so critical to the successful hegemony of the dominant discourse. However, in glorifying and embracing nostalgia for the past, the present often becomes marginalized—as do local cultures and communities.

Finally, an elaboration on how I interpret cultural heritage is essential to understanding how my study took shape in an effort to answer my original question. I consider "heritage" to be more than an objective inheritance, intangible or tangible; instead, heritage gains its value from its cultural context. In this way, Borobudur's true value as cultural heritage comes from its ongoing interaction with

the surrounding community. To support this idea, I draw on Nelson Graburn's

(2001) analysis of heritage as a "symbolic estate," which encompasses not only "the

physical," but also the myths, rights, ownership, traditions and stories that are

passed on through identity groups surrounding it. Just like the inheritance of an

estate through the death of a family, heritage transcends death and instead lends a

sense of intergenerational cultural continuity; additionally, it serves as a means of

cultural transmission across groups. This idea offers some clarity to the relationship

that the surrounding local community, which is predominantly Muslim, shares with

Borobudur as their heritage. Even more, heritage, Graburn argues, has meaning and

range comparable to the notion of culture itself. As such, he focuses on the micro-

level, experiential, and personal narratives that surround heritage and tradition in

order to understand the dialectic between the personal construction of heritage

through ownership and genealogy and the political construction of the concept of

heritage. Ultimately, this idea reinforces the questions I asked in my investigation of

Borobudur.

The focus of my research concerns the instrumentality of cultural heritage to

nationalism, a relationship I investigated by examining the growth of Borobudur as

a tourist-oriented heritage site during the New Order regime from 1967 to 1998

under President Suharto. I chose to focus on this period because of the intense

nationalist sentiments that characterized Suharto's presidency which are

particularly evident in the policies created aimed at fostering the growth of the

country's tourism industry and the simultaneous rekindling of heritage. It should be

noted that the transition of power leading to Suharto's 31-year rule was not

peaceful; instead, it involved in a military coup in 1966 that overthrew the nation's first President, Sukarno, a strongly anti-imperialist, pro-communist leader who ruled autocratically yet espoused the idea of "guided democracy" to appeal to a fragmented nation. Upon taking office, President Suharto vowed to eradicate the Indonesian Communist Party (the PKI), which was deeply embedded into the nation's government, and led a massive anti-communist purge which involved a violent campaign to destroy the PKI and anyone who supported the communist ideology, ultimately leading to the deaths of over half a million people. His rule was highly militaristic, and reflected efforts to establish control over most areas of life in order to create one unified polity. Further, when President Suharto assumed office, he established a series of five-year plans aimed at a twofold goal of national unity and economic development; one of the central components of the first of these plans was the development of the country's cultural tourism industry. Through this, he attempted to market Indonesia to international tourists by promoting its diversity as a selling point—an exotic and culturally rich nation with a unique tourist experience. However, a major goal in developing the country's cultural tourism industry was also to reach domestic tourists, who would "gaze" at these sites and internalize the narrative they portrayed (Urry, 1990). By revitalizing pieces of the nation's past, Suharto sought to establish social control through the creation of an "official" culture, essentially defining the "we-self" of the nation and thereby creating a sense of historical linearity that would bring its citizens together (Sebastian, 2006; Winichakul, 1994). In a broader sense, the subsequent internalization of this nationalist narrative represents a willingness of people across the thousands of

islands recently named Indonesia to collectively unify around the values and principles of the New Order.

Further, five of Indonesia's eight UNESCO-designated World Heritage Sites gained their status under the New Order. Borobudur, which had been abandoned for centuries and was only rediscovered in the 1800s, necessitated one of the largest restoration projects UNESCO has undertaken to finally become a World Heritage Site in 1991—at the request of the Indonesian Government. Though no longer a contemporary site of Buddhist meditation and study, it was rebranded as a treasure of Indonesia's Buddhist heritage, and effectively established as a national monument. Along with Prambanan Temple, a Hindu temple-complex built around the same time as Borobudur and located in Jogjakarta, the two sites underwent large-scale restorations and were subsequently developed into Tourist-Parks, or *Taman Wisata Candi Borobudur dan Prambanan*, under one project that was, in 1980, taken over by a state-owned corporation called PT Taman (Errington, 1998). The process was highly political; it involved the creation of an archaeological park around Borobudur that forced locals out of their homes and permanently altered the landscape of the surrounding community as well as the livelihoods of those who lived there.

My research has led me to argue that the development of Borobudur into a tourist-oriented heritage site was part of a larger nationalist strategy during the New Order to unify the country by establishing an "official" national culture and identity. This resulted in Borobudur's secularization and the appropriation of its value as local cultural heritage, which has had significant implications for the

surrounding community, including the marginalization of locals from their heritage, a profound change in their livelihoods, and a shift in the nature of their relationship to the temple. Though relevant studies (Dahles, 2008; Tanudirjo et al., 2013) have discussed the impact of Borobudur's development into a tourist site on local livelihoods, they mostly approach Borobudur from the "tourist's" point of view. The goal of my investigation, therefore, was to explore the counter-narratives surrounding Borobudur's value as cultural heritage and its relationship to locals, and to obtain an emic perspective on its significance in the everyday lives of those in the surrounding community. In substantiating my claim, therefore, I sought to, like Graburn (2001), take a micro-level approach to investigate the more subjective value Borobudur possesses as cultural heritage by focusing my research around the following questions: What is the nationalist narrative portrayed at the site, and how has it been internalized by locals? What alternative significance does it possess— and how can its value as cultural heritage with respect to the surrounding community be characterized in the absence of religious affiliation? What are the implications of the politicization of Borobudur as a tourist-oriented heritage site on its value as local cultural heritage? In investigating these questions, I also hoped to shed light on the implications of the politicization of heritage on local communities, cultures, and livelihoods.

Methodology

The objective of my study was to reveal the ways in which nationalism has contributed to Borobudur's construction as a symbol of Indonesia's national cultural heritage. To do so, I first conducted literary research on previous studies about

Borobudur to begin to contextualize its transformation within the rise of Indonesia's heritage tourism industry during the New Order. I then carried out four weeks of ethnographic fieldwork around the temple area in Magelang Regency, Central Java, conducting interviews with locals, who I consider to be residents of the immediate area surrounding Borobudur, as well as with representatives from UNESCO and the Borobudur Conservation Office. I also participated in participant observation through an independent visit and a guided tour of the temple, and general observational research through a collection of photographs and documentation of anything relating to Borobudur and the notion of heritage. My goal was to gain an emic perspective on locals' relationships with Borobudur through interviews, and contrast them with the narratives told by the tour guide, my observations, and any miscellaneous data collected about the site. I also intended, through my interviews with the representatives from UNESCO and the Borobudur Conservation Office, to gather a sense of what the priorities were of the stakeholders involved in the Temple's management and planning to understand the dynamics of their relationship with local residents. All data, including my observations and interviews, were recorded using a digital voice recorder, then transcribed for future analysis. As per the terms of confidentiality agreed upon, the anonymity of my participants will be upheld when discussing the information they disclosed in their respective interviews.

My fieldwork began when I arrived in Jogjakarta, where I spent four days before arriving in Borobudur; throughout the entirety of my stay in Indonesia, I collected and photographed any materials having to do with Borobudur in order to

later analyze the various contexts in which it was mentioned. While on-site, I stayed at a guesthouse right outside Borobudur Park in order to observe the day-to-day interactions of locals with the temple. Upon arriving in Borobudur, I went on my first visit to the temple, unaccompanied; this was meant to recreate the tourist experience, and was purposefully conducted before any interviews or guided tour in an attempt to form a relatively unbiased interpretation of the tourist experience. It also served as a way to characterize the "built environment" that is Borobudur Park—and in analyzing my observations, to either reinforce or challenge the typologies I previously reflected on (AlSayyad, 2001). During my second week in Borobudur, after conducting several interviews, I went on a guided tour. The international-visitor pavilion within Borobudur's entrance contained a table with a government-trained and licensed guide available for hire; the guide who took me on my tour was assigned at random from this table. The tour lasted roughly an hour and a half, and, because all guides are trained to follow a government-prescribed narrative, the information my guide provided served as the nationalist narrative I would use as a basis for comparison with my observations and prior research, as well as a measure to which I would assess the degree of locals' internalization.

Prior to departing for my fieldwork, I had reached out to representatives from UNESCO and the Borobudur Conservation Office, which is run by the Indonesian Government, and had scheduled interviews with each of them within a few days of my arrival. These interviews were semi-structured and were guided by several questions I had developed that were related to each group's involvement in the temple's oversight, and were designed to gauge their respective priorities in

terms of Borobudur's conservation. However, as these interviews progressed, they became more unstructured and developed into a discussion about the value of the temple itself with respect to the work of each group. The UNESCO representative was able to put me in contact with another, more senior official from UNESCO who was based in Jakarta and oversaw the Borobudur-World Heritage Site project among several other heritage sites in Indonesia. During the last week of my stay, I flew to Jakarta to interview this participant; this meeting helped frame Borobudur's conservation within the national-level operation of Indonesia's heritage sites.

Additionally, through prior research, I had heard of an activist who ran a sustainable tourism organization around the temple that I intended to reach out to upon arriving on-site. I was able to connect with him, and he was eager to share his stories and experiences; through snowball sampling, he directed me towards seven other individuals who were part of a larger group of activists that I was able to interview as well. He accompanied me to several of these interviews, and in the case where the participant spoke minimal English, acted as a translator. These interviews were open-ended, informal and conversational, guided by several questions I had developed before arriving meant to help characterize the nature of the relationships and interactions between locals and Borobudur. From the beginning of my stay, I was upfront about my research and my desire to understand its value from a local perspective; this openness helped contribute to participants' eagerness to participate, which was also potentially due to their perception of my research as a platform to make their voices heard. News that there was a "researcher" in town who wanted to hear local perspectives, therefore, travelled fast. Additionally, though

I only stayed for several weeks, my length of stay was an obvious and appreciated contrast to the typical tourist who visited the temple as a day trip or only stayed for a night or two.

During my stay, I visited my primary interviewee everyday for an evening conversation and spent time with locals my age who included me in their daily activities; I was even able to sit in on impromptu meetings held with local activists. This helped me integrate into local life, and observe the role Borobudur played in day-to-day activities. This integration also helped foster a sense of trust between myself and the locals I met, which was crucial to allowing them to feel comfortable enough to be open and honest during interviews. I had my voice recorder on hand at all times, which I used to record all interviews—with my participants' knowledge and consent, and observations, as well as spontaneous conversations that would come to be critical to my analysis. The other eleven locals who participated in interviews were chosen through random sampling as I explored the area surrounding Borobudur and found myself conversing with restaurant owners, guesthouse workers, high school students, and vendors. These participants were not chosen along any particular criteria except a willingness to participate and Borobudur as their hometown. Although I came with a loosely guided set of questions, I found the most effective approach to my interviews was to simply ask interviewees what role Borobudur played in their lives, and listen to what they had to say and observe the direction toward which they steered the conversation. This relative autonomy of discussion in and of itself revealed much about participants'

values, as I picked up on what I found them discussing the most, as well as the most passionately about.

Each interview was transcribed roughly a day or two after it took place, although as random conversations arose unexpectedly, it became difficult to keep up with transcription on a daily basis. In my analysis, I reviewed interview transcripts and looked for key themes in participants' responses as well as recurring words that came up in describing attitudes towards the temple; I also sought to find patterns between the characteristics of participants who held certain opinions. I reviewed all the pictures and pamphlets I had taken and sorted them according to the manner in which they presented Borobudur—as an educational resource, a part of promotion (for example, as part of a regional heritage-site tour), an advertisement for an activity taking place at the temple, and so forth, and whether they presented Borobudur in a more religious (i.e., Buddhist) or cultural light. I also correlated the data that supported these themes against my own observations, and then compared them to previous assumptions I had made through my literary research prior to my arrival on-site. Because my goal was to learn about the different narratives surrounding Borobudur's value as cultural heritage, which involved observing locals' everyday interactions with the site and listening to their stories, this study was inherently qualitative; no quantitative methods would be appropriate in characterizing the nature of one's feelings towards their heritage. Subjectivity was valued here, and could not have been reflected in numbers. This is also this reason that I chose not to revise the quotes from interviews in my analysis, and kept them in their exact original words.

There were, undeniably, several limitations to my study. One key restriction was my limited knowledge of Bahasa Indonesia, the national language; I had studied Indonesian independently for several months before departing for my fieldwork, but my knowledge was still rudimentary. This limited the scope of participants I could speak to, and the contextual depth of the conversations we had. This was critical for a research project that focused on the idiosyncratic perceptions of individuals' connection to their heritage. Additionally, though I had translation assistance from several friends I made in the temple area, their knowledge of English was limited; my interviews, and the data I sought to obtain, would have greatly benefitted from a professional translator with extensive knowledge of both English and Indonesian. Additionally, the short time frame in which I conducted my fieldwork was also a limiting factor; life around Borobudur was very relaxed and moved at a slow pace. Because I would only be in the area for several weeks, I sought to schedule interviews with people I had been advised to meet so as to ensure I would speak to them before departing; however, what I took to be a set agreement for an interview at a specific time and date was often, instead, interpreted as a general agreement to possibly meet within a range of hours over several possible days. This informality, though unavoidable, nonetheless limited my ability to meet with certain participants over the course of only a few weeks. Additional time in the field would also, more generally, have allowed me to interview more people in the area and increase my sample size, which would contribute to a data set that is representative of a wider range of perspectives. A small sample size of twenty participants inevitably detracts from the reliability of

the study. Considering the validity of the data is not particularly appropriate in the context of this investigation; this is because, as an interpretivist study, the subjectivity of participants' narratives was valued, and indeed, sought out. Though there is a possibility that participants lied, the measures I took to integrate into the community and develop friendships with locals contributed to an overall sense of trust that minimized the risk of fictitious data. Finally, though I approached my fieldwork with an open mind and a willingness to understand different points of view, I was somewhat biased coming in with knowledge of the site's history and some of the hardships the people who lived there endured in the construction of Borobudur Tourist Park. I was, inevitably, more sympathetic towards the cause of locals, which likely impacted the nature of my observations and my overall analysis.

Results

My study of Borobudur began roughly half a year before I made the trip to Central Java to do my fieldwork; the Temple's history, cultural context, and sheer beauty were reason enough to find it fascinating. However, it was in my standing at the top of Borobudur, the Biggest Buddhist Temple in the World, and hearing the Islamic call to prayer booming over the loudspeakers, that its profound magnificence and extraordinary nature truly sunk in.

The Site

My first glimpse of the Temple came as I arrived in Borobudur village from Jogjakarta; on a clear day, it can be easily viewed from quite a distance, perched on top of a hill and lending the appearance of being situated in the clouds. Comprised of ten tiers arranged in a pyramidal structure, with six square terraces, three circular

platforms, and one dome-shaped stupa on top, it is truly remarkable in size. Viewed from above, Borobudur takes the form of a mandala; vertically, its overall structure is divided into three levels, representing the three "worlds" that comprise the universe according to Buddhist cosmology. The base level is referred to as *Kamadhatu*, the middle, *Rupadhatu*, and the top, *Arupadhatu*, signifying the worlds of desire, forms, and formlessness, respectively. The teachings of the reliefs on each level guide the student along a gradual ascendance to nirvana, which is represented at the topmost tier. Stone walls enclosing each level are decorated with over 2,000 reliefs, depicting the story of the Buddha and his teachings; additionally, over 500 Buddha statues line the temple's circumference. The top tiers of the temple hold 72 hollow stupas, each of which enclose a statue of the Buddha; these smaller stupas collectively encircle a larger, central dome-shaped stupa at the top of the temple. Borobudur itself was constructed in the 8th and 9th centuries under the Sailendra Dynasty, which observed Mahayana Buddhism—although many interpretations of its architecture and theories of its original function claim a significant influence of Hinduism as well as Javanese Buddhism, which is characterized by a hybridity of different religious and spiritual practices and beliefs. Borobudur is actually one of three temples that comprise what is referred to by UNESCO as the "Borobudur Temple Compounds." The other temples, Mendut and Pawon, are positioned in a straight line along the main road into town leading to Borobudur and are believed to have been built during the same time period and be spiritually unified.

Creating a National Icon

The development of Borobudur into a tourist-oriented heritage site had

significant effects not only on the temple itself, but also on the surrounding community and the livelihoods of local residents. My interviews indicated a divergence in attitudes towards the temple divided between those who grew up before the construction of the Tourist Park and its inscription as a World Heritage Site, and those who grew up after. Further, I learned that Borobudur has largely lost most of its religious value and now primarily serves as a Buddhist icon, as well as a symbol of Indonesia's cultural heritage. It follows that although Borobudur is famed as a Buddhist temple, the park area in which it resides has become somewhat of a spectacle.

A Changing Landscape

Though celebrated as the Biggest Buddhist Temple in the World, most of Borobudur's religious value is lost today, and it mainly serves as a tourist attraction popularized for its symbolism of both Indonesian heritage and Buddhism. While the guided tour I took comprised of an explanation of Borobudur's Buddhist significance, the park that enclosed the temple did little to promote its religious significance or acknowledge its relationship with the local community. Entering Borobudur Park, one would think it resembled more of a theme park-tourist destination than the site of a religious monument.

My tour mainly consisted of a discussion of the evolution of the temple's restoration, and an overview of its Buddhist symbolism as well as a synopsis of the story of the Buddha. As little is known about Borobudur's origins, its original function, and its role in society at the time of its construction, there is little else in the park area that alludes to its religious value other than the temple itself.

The park seemed relatively commercialized and contained several other attractions aside from Borobudur, including an elephant safari, a maritime museum (which one local resident deemed "irrelevant and unnecessary"), and a museum detailing Borobudur's restoration. "Borobudur Butterfly Park" was also promoted as a nearby attraction. Events are routinely held at the temple, including, most recently, the starting point of a marathon. Herds of tourists, mostly comprised of domestic visitors, crowded the park and temple, and took a seemingly endless amount of group pictures and selfies while shouting "Borobudur" on the count of three; these pictures, I was informed, are extremely popular on social media. In this way, Borobudur appeared to be a spectacle, possessing its own celebrity for its status as the Biggest Buddhist Temple in the World (Debord, 1994). Even more, Borobudur has recently developed an expanding social media presence, and now has Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube pages managed by PT Taman, a state owned corporation that oversees the day-to-day management of the park's tourist facilities as well as its overall tourism promotion.

In discussing the apparent lack of Borobudur's contemporary religious value with a Buddhist Monk studying at a nearby monastery, he shared that "...Borobudur is more for tourism. There is not very much spiritual activity there. But I always dreamed of coming to Borobudur because I learned it was one of the Seven Wonders of the World and am so proud for Indonesia." This reinforces the theme of Borobudur's celebrity based on its value as both a religious and cultural icon. Borobudur, however, is not completely devoid of contemporary religious value; Waisak Day, an international holiday celebrating the life of the Buddha, is celebrated

annually in Indonesia at Borobudur, attracting thousands of monks from across the

country who gather and repeat mantras, meditate, and perform rituals. However,

this ceremony has become a tourist attraction in and of itself, and regulations were

recently passed to ensure Buddhists' ability to carry out their rituals in peace. These

changes, along with an increase in foreign investors in the area and the rapid

development of upscale hotels, as well as a recently dismissed proposal to erect a

shopping mall near the temple, have been met with disapproval by local residents;

one participant revealed that many in the area have come to, albeit jokingly, refer to

park area as "Borobudur Disney."

Another participant I interviewed suggested that this commercialization has

contributed to visitors' exhibiting a lack of respect for the temple due to its primary

role as a spectacle-like tourist attraction, and insisted that more efforts should be

made to educate the public about its cultural significance (Debord, 1994). This claim

is not unfounded; people touched and climbed on the stupas despite signs warning

not to. At the proposal of several members in the local community, a stand was

erected next to the temple renting out sarongs to tourists that weren't dressed

appropriately. Earlier this year, Red Bull filmed a commercial involving parkour

(acrobatic stunts) on top of the temple; the backlash from the local community

prompted them to later issue an apology.

Shifting Relationships

Roughly half of my participants were between the ages of 17-25, meaning that

they grew up knowing Borobudur as a tourist destination and World Heritage Site.

Collectively, this group's general attitude towards the temple was characterized by

an immense amount of pride for living near it, and a sense of gratitude for the employment opportunities with which it provides them. The pride they expressed, however, was more about the Borobudur's fame than anything else. One participant stated "Borobudur is very important because it is a symbol of Indonesia. We have the largest Buddhist temple in the world, and it is one of the reasons why people around the world know us." Another participant shared this sentiment, and expressed that Borobudur was important to her because "Westerners will learn about Magelang, and we are very proud of the Temple and want the world to know it belongs to Indonesia." This notion of ownership in relation to Borobudur was also mentioned when several participants stated that they consider it to be part of their identity because it "belongs" to Indonesia, and they are Indonesian. Further, most participants agreed that Borobudur was a symbol of Indonesia; when prompted on why this was, I was told it was because they thought it was a good representation of the country's diversity. There was also near constant reference to Borobudur as a World Heritage Site, as well as its previous status as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Additionally, every participant in this group consistently said that Borobudur was most important to them because it gave them a job; several also expressed that "our community is Muslim, so Borobudur is not important for us except for giving us employment from tourism." In light of this, one participant stated that Borobudur was a "historical reminder" and a part of her past, a notion that several others also articulated.

The second half of my participants expressed having a distinctly different relationship to Borobudur than the first half; though not asked for their ages out of

respect, I assumed these participants to be at least in their mid-thirties, for they all recalled growing up during the temple's second restoration period, from 1971-1983, and experiencing a forced relocation from their homes to accommodate the development of Borobudur Park. These participants also expressed a sense of pride regarding their relationship with Borobudur; however, their pride was characterized by feelings of privilege in knowing its "real value," and of their responsibility to pass this knowledge down to future generations. These participants also recognized the difference in attitude toward Borobudur that existed between them and today's younger generation; one participant stated, "Because it is our heritage, it is from our ancestors, we have a responsibility to teach them the ways of the Temple so they will know its value. We are proud to know Borobudur's secrets and that it is more than a monument" Further, they derived a sense of belonging from the temple, and several participants referred to Borobudur as "home." Additionally, though most participants were Muslim, they expressed that they shared a "special connection" with the temple. When asked whether Borobudur was a good symbol for Indonesian culture as a whole, all but one participant responded "no"; their reasoning was that people outside Borobudur don't truly understand its significance or why it's so special.

The Construction of Cultural Heritage

An analysis of the effects of Borobudur's development into an archaeological park and World Heritage Site on the nature of the site and local livelihoods, as well as the dynamics of the Temple's management and the focus of conservation efforts, sheds light on the deliberate shaping of Borobudur's image into an icon of Indonesia's

cultural heritage. It also reveals much about the dynamics of its contested value as heritage.

Tourism and Local Livelihoods

In 1973, at the request of the Indonesian Government, a Master Plan was drafted outlining the construction of an archaeological park around Borobudur as part of restoration efforts leading to eventual tourism developments around the Temple. In the following years, residents of two local villages, *Kenayan* and *Ngaran*, were forced to sell their land to the Government and relocate to accommodate the Park's construction—a process that came to be characterized by hostility, and resulted in a lack of trust on both ends. A former resident of Kenayan recalled how "...they blocked the streets with trucks so people who had carts couldn't bring them home. They moved the market from our village and cut the electricity off so we were isolated, and put a fence in front of my house so we could not open the door."

This process of relocation not only affected residents' emotional connection to the temple, but also upset the existing social structure of the community as well as local livelihoods. Prior to the Park's construction, there was a market located near the temple that served as the center of community life and was the source of income for many villagers; however, the market was cleared to make way for the construction of the Park, leaving many without an income, and scattering a once tight-knit community involuntarily across the area. Another former resident of Kenayan recalls the rapid increase in tourism to Borobudur shortly after their relocation, for which locals were greatly unprepared. As a result, many people,

particularly those that were uneducated and spoke no English, were forced to turn

to street hawking or to become vendors.

Planning and Management

An interview with a representative from UNESCO revealed that "of the World

Heritage Sites in Indonesia, Borobudur has always been a particular challenge," due

not only to the competing interests of stakeholders, but also to locals' responses to

their actions. Controversy has characterized the temple's oversight for decades,

which undeniably reflects the implications of the top-down approach to the site's

management; the Master Plan developed in the 1970s was the result of efforts at the

international and national levels, and current management is primarily in the hands

of Indonesia's Ministry of Culture and Tourism, PT Taman, and the Magelang

Regional Government Agency, all of which are either branches of or owned by the

Indonesian Government. Many locals I interviewed, in turn, shared that they have

largely been excluded from the planning of the site and expressed the need for more

integrated management that would allow local residents to have more of a say in the

Borobudur's oversight. Additionally, several participants not only expressed feelings

of increased detachment from their heritage as a result of their marginalization, but

also of exploitation. For example, one resident expressed that "…It's all about

money. The Government gets all the money from the admission tickets, but where

does it go? We get nothing back." In 2001, a group of local activists began

networking with each other in response to their dissatisfaction with the temple's

planning and the rise in tourism without any kind of return to the community; this

group now works to promote sustainable tourism through the development of local

industries and the education of visitors about Borobudur and its surrounding communities. Several of the activists offer specialized tours of the surrounding villages; others developed a radio talk show that features monthly topics of importance to locals in an attempt to connect with residents of the surrounding villages and raise awareness for their cause. These activists also communicate with members of UNESCO, PT Taman, and the Borobudur Conservation Office to discuss their concerns about anticipated developments in the area. However, several members expressed that such efforts, which are ongoing and often fruitless, are exhausting.

Even more, many expressed a lack willingness on the part of the Indonesian Government to understand the cultural value of Borobudur, instead focusing on its material preservation. My interview with an official from the Borobudur Conservation Office confirmed this sentiment, in which the participant stated, "The priority of the government has always been the material preservation of the temple itself. Only recently UNESCO has tried to change that and brought to our attention the need to preserve the cultural landscape." While UNESCO has indeed been doing so through the development of community empowerment programs to improve local livelihoods, there still remains little recognition of the role Borobudur plays as the cultural heritage of the local community.

Characterizing the Connection: The Cultural Plurality of Borobudur

Key to understanding Borobudur's cultural significance is grasping its relationship with the local community; this, in turn, sheds light on its value as

cultural heritage beyond its status as the Biggest Buddhist Temple in the World and a World Heritage Site.

Borobudur as a Center of Inspiration

According to local residents, Borobudur has always been the heart of cultural life for the surrounding community, and has continued to maintain an ongoing relationship with those who live near it. As one participant stated, "people are inspired by the temple, which is why there is such a strong connection between Borobudur and the community. The local culture wouldn't exist without the temple itself." Further, the key here is that the culture of the community is derived from its connection with and study of the temple. The unique art and dances produced by surrounding villages, as well as their traditional techniques in areas such as agriculture and herbology, are inspired by temple's reliefs, making Borobudur not only a source of inspiration, but also of education. One resident shared that "there are many villages surrounding Borobudur, each with different foods, dances, and rituals, all unique to that village and inspired by the temple everyday from the past to the present." Additionally, before restrictions were imposed on locals' access to Borobudur during the development of the archaeological park, the temple served as a place of village gatherings and performances.

Spiritualism, Mysticism, and Religious Pluralism

One local resident shared that at the end of Idul Fitri, a holiday celebrating the end of Ramadan, "all members of the community, of all religions and backgrounds, took part in a ritual cleansing of the temple and brought food as an offering." Several participants shared that, even though they are "officially" Muslim,

they incorporate practices and beliefs of Buddhism into their lives, and were taught

Buddhist practices as children. Further, many local residents carry out their ritual

prayers at Borobudur, and regularly bring offerings to specific statues inside that

bear different meanings.

       After a month speaking with locals about their religious values and their

spiritual connections with Borobudur, it became clear that superstition, spirituality,

and mysticism were defining features of the belief systems of the ancient Javanese,

and continue to be distinctive features of the Javanese today. For example, I was

warned not to say anything offensive or disrespectful about the Buddha while inside

Borobudur, for if I did, I would be cursed and have bad luck until I returned to the

place where I made my offensive statement and apologized; this was based,

apparently, on previous experience. I was also warned of a student who visited the

temple dressed inappropriately, and as a result, went into in a trance for three days.

       There were also several myths that surrounded Borobudur; these, I was told,

had been passed down from generation to generation by those living around the

temple. One example is *Kunto-bimo*, a popular myth that says that anyone who is

able to reach far enough inside one of the stupas in Borobudur to touch the Buddha

statue inside will be granted a wish; another says that Borobudur was built in one

day, using eggs to glue the stones together. One myth offers an explanation as to

why Borobudur was built in Magelang; apparently, each Indonesian island is said to

have a "nail" keeping it from floating away, and the nail of Java is Borobudur,

because it is located in the center of the island. This, in addition to its location

between two sacred rivers that run nearby, makes Borobudur a powerful center of

energy; this energy is believed to be contained in the stones of the temple, and is released in response to visitors' prayers.

Discussion

This study took shape through an attempt to explain why Borobudur, a Buddhist temple in Central Java, Indonesia, has become a cultural icon of a country that is predominantly Muslim, and has been for centuries. Through my research, I have come to argue that during the New Order regime, the development of Borobudur into a tourist-oriented heritage site, as well as a symbol of the country's cultural heritage, reflects nationalist efforts to promote political stability and establish social control through the construction of an "official" culture. Further, through on-site ethnographic fieldwork and interviews, I found evidence to substantiate this claim by answering the following questions: What is the nationalist narrative portrayed at the sight, and how has it been internalized by locals? In the absence of religious affiliation, how can the relationship between local residents and Borobudur be characterized? What are the implications of the politicization of Borobudur as a tourist site on its value as local cultural heritage?

Question 1: What is the nationalist narrative portrayed at the site?

Although Borobudur has, technically speaking, always been world's largest Buddhist temple, it was only recently popularized as such through its growth as a tourist-oriented heritage site; I consider this to largely be a consequence of its restoration and subsequent inscription as a World Heritage Site in 1991. Additionally, Borobudur has also been declared an "Icon of Indonesian Cultural Heritage"—the linking of these two labels serves as the foundation for what I

interpret to be the nationalist narrative surrounding Borobudur, and has been effective in the Temple's popularization as a tourist site. Further, the way Borobudur has developed into a spectacle-like attraction emphasizes the pride Indonesians have for the temple (Debord, 1994); this pride, rooted in the prestige associated with having the Biggest Buddhist Temple in the World "belong" to Indonesia, exemplifies how cultural heritage can be used to define, as Winichakul (1994) states, the "we-self" of a nation. However, it is worth addressing this apparent duality as an icon of both Buddhism and Indonesia's cultural heritage; further analysis has led me to conclude that Borobudur's value as a religious icon is not only secondary, but also instrumental to its value as the nation's cultural heritage. This is due to the fact that the pride most people expressed was mainly derived from the grandeur and prestige Borobudur brought to the country's identity.

The nature of the archaeological park that surrounds Borobudur further supports this claim. The restaurant located in Manohara Hotel, the only accommodation located within the park area, advertised itself by posting signs that display the restaurant's slogan, "Nikmati sajian dengan nuansa heritage," or, "each dish with flavors of heritage," thereby marketing itself on the basis of its association with authenticity and heritage. This further contributes to the theme of "Indonesian-ness" portrayed throughout the temple area. Additionally, the presence of two museums inside the park, which provide information about a ship built based on a carving of a boat on one of the temple's reliefs, and the history of the temple's restoration, respectively, do nothing to support either Borobudur's value as a

Buddhist icon or as local heritage. Instead, they portray elements of Indonesian culture and history, which, I argue, is intentional, and exemplifies Benedict Anderson's (1991) argument that museums are powerful instruments in establishing tradition and expressing cultural identity. Further, the broader significance of these museums inside the park, which effectively connect the temple to larger Indonesian culture and history, is their contribution to the deliberately constructed nationalist tourist "gaze," in which Borobudur is portrayed as a symbol of Indonesia's cultural heritage (Urry, 1990).

Question 2: How have locals internalized this narrative?

The internalization of the nationalist narrative is best evaluated through a comparative analysis of the diverging attitudes towards Borobudur along generational lines. Further, participants who grew up around Borobudur after its inscription as a World Heritage Site and growth as a tourist destination appeared to demonstrate not only acceptance of Borobudur as a cultural icon and symbol of the nation, but also extreme pride for the prestige of having the "Biggest Buddhist Temple in the World" belong to Indonesia. For these reasons, we can assume that this group of participants has effectively internalized the nationalist narrative. Additionally, these sentiments support Heidi Dahles' (2008) claim that the New Order regime's development of tourism reflected a larger political agenda aimed at shaping an image of Indonesia as a culturally unique and unified nation, thereby acquiring national prestige and recognition amongst the international community and attracting foreign tourists; the development of Borobudur as a

tourist-oriented heritage site, and the apparent internalization of the nationalist narrative by a sect of my interview participants, therefore, reinforce this claim.

In contrast, my interviews with local residents who lived through Borobudur's second restoration and were affected by the changes brought by its development as a tourist site did not appear to have internalized the nationalist narrative. Instead, having experienced such a close connection with the temple before being relocated, the notion of Borobudur as a World Heritage Site and a "national icon of Indonesia's cultural heritage" appeared to, instead, raise feelings of resentment and marginalization from their own cultural heritage.

While each perspective is significant in and of itself, the contrast that is presented between the two groups' responses is perhaps even more important in reinforcing my research claim. This is because their divergence suggests a causal link between the development of Borobudur as a tourist-oriented heritage site and a change in attitude towards the value of Borobudur as cultural heritage, thereby indicating the deliberate construction of cultural heritage as part of a larger nationalist strategy.

Question 3: What alternative cultural significance does Borobudur possess, and how can its value to the local community be characterized in the absence of religious affiliation?

My fieldwork, and particularly the interviews conducted with locals, revealed that Borobudur has long served as a source of inspiration for the communities surrounding it; each of their cultures were uniquely influenced by their interactions with the temple and their interpretations of its reliefs. Even more, many villages'

specific cultural practices were derived from the information depicted on certain reliefs. However, Borobudur also possessed great personal value to those who grew up in the surrounding area, and many residents developed sentimental ties to it; this not only arose due to the close proximity in which they resided to the temple, but also from their privileged knowledge, as locals, of the stories, myths, traditions and rituals surrounding Borobudur that they inherited from previous generations. These narratives, in contrast to the constructed and simplified representation of Borobudur as Indonesia's heritage, comprise the complex and dynamic nature of Borobudur as a cultural estate and its true value as local cultural heritage (Graburn, 2001).

Through my interviews, I learned that Javanese culture is highly pluralistic; one's religion is merely one of many masks a person wears. In fact, Javanese culture is characterized by a hybridity of religions and belief systems, with an emphasis on spirituality and mysticism that dates back centuries. This became clear as many locals I interviewed described Borobudur as a "source of energy" as well as "part of a chain of prayer with nature." Further, just as this demands reflection on what it means to be a "Javanese Muslim," it also necessitates a consideration of Javanese Buddhism in understanding the spiritual connection between local residents and Borobudur, as well as the origins of its value as a symbolic estate (Graburn, 2001). This helps to explain why many locals adhere to elements of both Buddhism and Islam, why they go to the temple to meditate, and why many Javanese celebrate the end of Ramadan at Borobudur. It also makes clear that Borobudur's constructed identity and promotion as the Biggest Buddhist Temple in the World represents a

simplification of its cultural value; this phenomenon can be further elucidated by an analysis of Nezar AlSayyad's (2001) description of tourist sites as built environments, and particularly, a dream landscape, in which "icons are reduced to their basic representation" and there exists a simplification of heritage (p. 9). Heidi Dahles (2008) also specifically relates this to the Indonesian case in her explanation of the New Order's "standardization" and "aestheticization" of culture and heritage in its effort to construct a solid cultural community by stripping away outdated ethnic practices and traditions in an effort to shape the "imagined political community" that is Indonesia (Anderson, 1991).

Another critical consideration to be taken into account is that not all participants described sharing this "special connection" with the temple. In fact, several participants exclusively stated that because they were Muslim, they do not feel connected to the temple, and it only bears importance to them as a source of employment and national pride. I offer an explanation for this by considering the implications of the ages of these respondents, who were among the younger participants I interviewed; as described earlier, these individuals grew up after the inscription of Borobudur as a World Heritage Site and its growth as a tourist destination, which I consider a possible cause of their internalization of the nationalist narrative surrounding Borobudur. Further, I contend that just as AlSayyad (2001) refers to the reduction of icons to their basic representations at tourist sites, the construction of Borobudur into a tourist-oriented heritage site resulted in the simplification of its value as cultural heritage into, simply, the Biggest Buddhist Temple in the World, despite its lack of contemporary religious value. In

doing so, the previously blurry line that characterized Borobudur's pluralistic value as cultural heritage to locals was solidified into a defining boundary between "Buddhist" and "Other"; to the youth that internalized this discourse, therefore, it would simply be illogical to, as a Muslim, spiritually connect with Borobudur, a Buddhist temple.

Question 4: What are the implications of the politicization of Borobudur as a tourist site on its value as local cultural heritage?

The development of Borobudur into a tourist-oriented heritage site, and specifically a World Heritage Site, has largely been a result of efforts at the international and national levels. In taking a top-down approach to Borobudur's conservation, therefore, its management is largely a reflection of the values of the Indonesian Government and UNESCO, which perceive Borobudur as a site of "national" and "world" heritage, respectively. Consequentially, little is done to preserve its value at the local level, which has resulted in feelings of detachment and marginalization of locals from their heritage.

Through preliminary research as well as interviews with representatives from UNESCO and the Borobudur Conservation Office, it remains clear that the management and preservation of Borobudur has consistently been a challenge due to the competing interests of the multiple stakeholders involved, preventing action from being taken towards the effective preservation of the site's cultural integrity with respect to the local community. Controversy surrounding Borobudur's management is also a result of locals' reactions to Management's plans and an overall distrust of the motivations behind the Government's involvement in

Borobudur's oversight. This is understandable, considering that ever since plans

were enacted in the 1970s to develop an archaeological park around the temple,

locals were excluded from participating in the planning process. This has resulted in

the construction of a tourist park that reflects the values of those who planned it; in

essence, it represents the results of negotiations to preserve Borobudur's value as

national and world heritage by the Government and UNESCO, respectively, and in

doing so, its value as local cultural heritage has been marginalized. Further, the

priority of the Government has primarily been on the material conservation of the

temple itself as well as the development of tourist facilities inside the Park; this

sheds light onto the commercialization of Borobudur and its rapid development as a

tourist destination at the expense of its cultural value. In turn, UNESCO's priority has

been twofold, with a dual focus on local community empowerment to reduce the

number of street-hawkers outside the temple, and on fundraising to facilitate the

Government's restoration and conservation efforts. However, in an interview I

conducted with a UNESCO representative, when asked what prompted the creation

of UNESCO's community empowerment program, the representative's reasoning

was that a report had been issued on the effects of the increasing number of vendors

around the site on tourists' experiences—namely, that it was resulting in tourists'

discomfort. Though there is no doubt that efforts to improve local livelihoods

through this program would be beneficial, the fact that action was only taken on this

issue because it began to negatively affect the "tourist experience" reveals how the

appropriation of Borobudur's value as heritage has come at the expense of local

livelihoods, and contributed to feelings of marginalization.

Conclusion

My research was an attempt to understand a phenomenon—why Borobudur, a Buddhist temple in Central Java, Indonesia, has become a cultural icon of a country that is predominantly Muslim, and has been for centuries. I argue that during the New Order regime, Borobudur's development into a heritage tourist site was part of a nationalist strategy to establish social control and political unity through the construction of an "official" culture. Through on-site ethnographic fieldwork, including open-ended interviews and participant observation, I was able to substantiate this claim; I contend that although Borobudur is a Buddhist monument, its contemporary significance is primarily rooted in its value as local heritage and cultural inspiration, as well as in the unique narratives surrounding it that have been passed down by local residents for generations. Despite this, its development into a tourist-oriented heritage site has caused its value as a Buddhist site to be "revitalized" in the name of Indonesia's national heritage; however, though Borobudur is promoted as the Biggest Buddhist Temple in the World and a World Heritage Site, it has largely been secularized, and these distinctions have served to cultivate national pride for it as an icon of Indonesia's cultural heritage. By transforming Borobudur into a national icon, which was facilitated by the construction of a park around the temple, the nature of locals' relationship to their heritage changed as well, leading to feelings of detachment and exploitation. Though it has been reframed from a part of local cultural heritage into a national icon, Borobudur's local value hasn't been fully eradicated, and still persists in the

counter-narratives told by locals as well as their efforts to combat changes at the site.

Although I was able to support my claim through my findings, my work doesn't even begin to fully reckon with the complexity of my original question. If one thing has become clearer through my research, it's that there are countless other stories to be told about Borobudur, and many different ways of approaching my question. My research attempted to understand Borobudur's transformation from local cultural heritage into a secularized icon of national heritage; though I found my observations and interviews to support my claim, critical to understanding why Borobudur's transformation is so significant is a consideration of the essence of its local value. Borobudur has been integrated into the livelihoods of the communities surrounding it for centuries—so much so that their cultural identities are arguably a reflection of the temple itself. Exploring Borobudur's significance beyond Buddhism reveals much about local residents and their history. It tells us more about the nature of "Indonesia" than the values embedded in the constructed identity that holds it together as an imagined political community (Anderson, 1991). The counter-narratives surrounding Borobudur that I began to explore through my fieldwork, are what, I argue, truly encompass the heart, spirit, cultural value and significance of the temple. Additional research might entail an analysis of the sense of place attached to Borobudur by locals, as well as an exploration of the varieties of Javanese religion and spirituality and their connection to the narratives I gathered surrounding Borobudur. Further fieldwork may involve interviews with residents from other villages around the temple, which would help develop a more holistic

perspective on the site's transformation as well a better understanding of the extent and reach of its cultural value throughout the area.

This study, and justification for further research involving this particular site, extends beyond the case of Borobudur itself. Borobudur's transformation raises concern about whether the politics involved in making this site into a tourist destination, and the effects of its popularization as such, reflect a larger pattern of heritage politicization, particularly surrounding the creation of World Heritage Sites. Even more, it begs consideration of whether all heritage sites are constructed representations of heritage, and further, if they don't reflect local realities, the implications of such construction for the cultures, beliefs, and traditions that are integral to the identities of communities across the world.

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