





Fig. 2  
Head of a bodhisattva  
from Candi Plaosan,  
andesite, h. 40 cm.,  
Central Java, 9th  
century, Rijksmuseum,  
AK-MAK-242.

listed in Westendorp's letter was the statue of a seated Manjushri from Candi Plaosan (fig. 1) and 'a very important, over-life-size Bodhisattva head' from the same site (fig. 2).<sup>5</sup> It should be emphasized however, that none of these sculptures had been taken down from the temples themselves; indeed, Bosch's main role was to ensure that no sculptures intended for future restoration work would be included in the selection.<sup>6</sup> After Westendorp's return to the Netherlands, the list of sculptures from Indonesia was presented to the Society at its annual general meeting on Tuesday 31st March 1931 and the final choice of twelve pieces was sent by letter to Bosch on the 25th April.<sup>7</sup> This selection included a lintel with *kala* face from Candi Sewu (fig. 3) and a *makara* from Candi Bubrah (fig. 4).

The importance that such a group of Central Javanese sculptures would bring to the future museum displays of the Society was not lost on its members, but these final negotiations coincided with the greatest single disaster in the history of the Archaeological Service in Indonesia. The 'Exposition coloniale internationale' had opened in the Bois de Vincennes east of Paris on 6th May 1931 to great acclaim. The Netherlands Pavilion had been designed as a fusion of Asian and Dutch colonial architecture and housed a rich collection of artefacts from the museum of the Royal Batavian Society (now the Museum Nasional in Jakarta), including many of the most important archaeological finds from the previous thirty years. This was the first time that the Batavian Society had allowed objects in its collection to be sent abroad. However, on the night of the 28th June, tragedy struck. Through unknown causes, the pavilion caught fire and burnt down, destroying a large number of unique items and damaging many more. A new pavilion was subsequently raised in its place and re-opened on the 17th August, but the loss of its contents proved irreplaceable.<sup>8</sup> The mood of the time was accurately reflected by the French archaeologist Henri Marchal, in a letter to H. K. Westendorp on 12th September:

**Fig. 3**  
Lintel with the face of a *kala* and two holy seers from Candi Sewu, andesite, l. 160 cm., Central Java, 9th century, Rijksmuseum, AK-MAK-246.

The burning down of the Dutch Pavilion at the Exposition in Paris, which was a true marvel in the opinion of everyone who had visited it, is an irreparable disaster. The reopening of a new pavilion concludes a great effort on the part of your government. The Balinese dances are said to be much appreciated, but necessarily lack the depth and ambience.<sup>9</sup>





**Fig. 4**  
**Makara from the**  
**entrance of Candi**  
**Bubrah, andesite,**  
**h. 95 cm., Central Java,**  
**9th century, Rijks-**  
**museum, AK-MAK-248.**

A report on the objects destroyed or damaged in the fire was prepared by F.D.K. Bosch and C.C.F.M. le Roux, as director and curator respectively of the Batavian Society's museum, and was published under the sad title, 'Wat te Parijs verloren ging' (What was lost in Paris).<sup>10</sup> At the same time, a proposal was made to forbid the future loan of objects outside the museum by statute.<sup>11</sup> However, it is noticeable that Bosch makes no mention of the fire in his letter to Westendorp regarding the sculptures to be sent from the Archaeological Service to the VVAK, a stoic restraint remarked on by Westendorp himself.<sup>12</sup> Even more remarkably, the sculptures themselves were sent to Europe on July 22nd, barely a month after the conflagration in Paris and less than a week before the proposed statute in Batavia forbidding future loans from the museum.<sup>13</sup> It is possible that Bosch was merely complying with his earlier spoken agreement, but the timing of the delivery is nevertheless astonishing. While the reasons behind Westendorp's desire to acquire the statues for the Vereniging are evident, what possible advantage could this have been to the Archaeological Service in the Dutch East Indies?

In fact, the Archaeological Service was at a crucial point in its history. Founded in 1913, after the success of the first restoration of the Borobudur by Theo van Erp (1874-1958) between 1907 and 1911, the service had initially concentrated on maintenance and research under its first director N.J. Krom. After Bosch took charge as acting director in 1915 however, he gave fresh impetus to full restoration projects, beginning with Candi Panataran in 1918-1919. When this policy was questioned in the mid 1920's by more conservative specialists in the Netherlands, who doubted the significance of such projects for the general population, Bosch had galvanized local Javanese support, placing local dignitaries on the advisory committee and presenting the results of the Service's work to university students and teachers.<sup>14</sup> At the beginning of the 1930's however, he faced a new and more difficult challenge. The crash of the New York stock market in October 1929 had led to the onset of the Great Depression, marked by a steep decline in world commodity prices, in particular for agricultural products from the tropics such as coffee, tea, sugar and rubber. This rapid decline in prices inevitably led to a drastic reduction in the income available for the Dutch colonial administration in the East Indies. Temple restoration was not considered a priority and the Archaeological Service was forced to reduce its activities from 1930 onwards. In this context, Westendorp's request to Bosch for sculptures to be displayed at the Society's proposed museum in Amsterdam would undoubtedly have been seen as an opportunity to present the results and significance of their restoration work in Central Java before a European and specifically Dutch audience. Although the fire in Paris must have dramatically increased Bosch's anxiety regarding the wisdom and safety of sending another consignment of antiquities abroad, it nevertheless reinforced the need and importance of this delivery, allowing the work of the Archaeological Service to be seen by leading members of Dutch society, culture and administration.

In this regard, the Vereniging did not disappoint its friends. At the opening of the Society's galleries at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam on Saturday 16th April 1932, the twelve sculptures from Indonesia were featured prominently in the displays.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, in his opening speech to an audience of international delegates that also included the Dutch Minister of Education, Arts and Sciences, H.K. Westendorp gave a glowing tribute to the





<< Fig. 5 (pages 68-69)  
Candi Lara Jonggrang  
at Prambanan, Central  
Java. Photo: William  
Southworth.

help given to him by the Archaeological Service in the Dutch East Indies.<sup>16</sup> A detailed description of five of the largest pieces, including explanations of their original architectural context, was subsequently published by Theo van Erp in 1934.<sup>17</sup> To what extent these displays and reports from the Vereniging in Amsterdam were able to influence the cultural debate in favour of the Archaeological Service in Indonesia is impossible to determine. However, when financial assistance was finally granted by the government of the Netherlands to its colonial administration in Indonesia in 1935, the agreement included a clause specifically reserving part of the funds for support of the Archaeological Service. In this way, the restoration programme was allowed to continue up to and beyond the struggles for Indonesian independence, culminating in the inauguration of the Siva temple at Prambanan in 1953. Although this colonial legacy is not accepted uncritically in Indonesia, the work of F.D.K. Bosch, Theo van Erp and other early pioneers is rightly honoured at the site today, while restoration and consolidation of the temples (fig. 5) continue under the modern Archaeological Service (the Dinas Purbakala Indonesia), which celebrated its 100th anniversary this year.

## Literature

- Marieke Bloembergen and Martijn Eickhoff, 'Conserving the Past, Mobilizing the Indonesian Future: Archaeological Sites, Regime Change and Heritage Politics in Indonesia in the 1950s', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (BKI)* 167/4 (2011), pp. 405-36.
- Marieke Bloembergen, *Colonial Spectacles: The Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies at the World Exhibitions, 1880-1931*, translated by Beverly Jackson, NUS Press, Singapore, 2006.
- F.D.K. Bosch and C.C.F.M. le Roux, 'Wat te Parijs Verloren Ging', *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 71 (1931), pp. 663-83.
- Th. van Erp, 'Hindoe-Javaansche Steenplastiek in het Stedelijk Museum te Amsterdam', *Maandblad voor Beeldende Kunsten* 11/9 (1934), pp. 259-72.
- Menno Fitski, 'De Blauwe Boekjes van Mr. H.K. Westendorp', *Aziatische Kunst* 38/4 (2008), pp. 39-47.
- H.F.E. Visser, 'Het Museum van Aziatische Kunst in het Stedelijk Museum te Amsterdam', *Maandblad voor Beeldende Kunsten* 9/5 (1932), pp. 131-9.

## Unpublished Correspondence, in the archives of the VVAK, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

VVAK 127

6. Letter from H. Marchal to H.K. Westendorp, Siem Reap to Amsterdam, 12th September 1931.

VVAK 329

1. Letter from H.K. Westendorp (Voorzitter der Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst) to F.D.K. Bosch (Hoofd van den Oudheidkundige Dienst in Nederlandsch-Indië), 25th April 1931.
2. Letter from F.D.K. Bosch to H. K. Westendorp, 22nd July 1931.
4. Letter from H.K. Westendorp to F.D.K. Bosch, 5th August 1931.

- 1 *Maandblad voor Beeldende Kunsten* 8/5 (1930), p. 158.
- 2 See Fitski 2008.
- 3 Fitski 2008: 158.
- 4 'Immers een hoofddoel van die reis was, een aantal Hindoe-Javaansche sculptures te verkrijgen voor ons aanstaand Museum, en door de niet genoeg te waardeeren medewerking van den Oudheidkundigen Dienst ben ik daarin geslaagd. Dr. F.D.K. Bosch, Hoofd van dien Dienst, heeft de groote vriendelijkheid gehad naar Djokja te komen, en met ons het Prambanan-complex te bezoeken, terwijl wij de Oost-Javaansche oudheden hebben kunnen bezichtigen onder leiding van Dr. Van Stein Callenfels.  
Met Dr. Bosch mocht ik een aantal stalen van Hindoe-Javaansche plastiek uit Midden-Java uitzoeken, om daaruit voor ons Museum een keuze te doen; daaronder zijn eenige zeer importante stukken.' *Maandblad voor Beeldende Kunsten* 8/11 (1930), p. 352.
- 5 '... een zeer belangrijke, meer dan levensgrote Bodhisattva-kop', *Maandblad voor Beeldende Kunsten* 8/11 (1930), p. 352.
- 6 'Op Java is Mr. Westendorp op de aangenaamste wijze door den staf van den Oudheidkundigen Dienst ontvangen; met het Hoofd van dien Dienst, ons Correspondeerend Lid Dr. F.D.K. Bosch, heeft hij de verschillende monumenten bezocht en een twaalfstal Hindoe-Javaansche sculptures, waarvan het vast staat dat zij bij de restauratie niet noodig zijn, uitgezocht, welke onze Vereeniging in bruikleen verkrijgt.' *Maandblad voor Beeldende Kunsten* 9/5 (1931), p. 157.
- 7 VVAK 329, 1.
- 8 See Bloembergen 2006: 302-12.
- 9 'C'est un désastre irréparable que l'incendie du pavillon Néerlandais à l'Exposition de Paris qui de l'avis de toutes personnes qui l'avaient visité était une pure merveille. La réouverture d'un nouveau pavillon témoigne d'un bel effort de la part de votre gouvernement. On dit les danses Balinaise très appréciées, mais il doit manquer le cadre et l'ambiance.'
- 10 See Bosch and Leroux 1931.
- 11 'Dr. Bosch en Mr. Schrieke achten zulks noodig, nu het Genootschap aan den lijve heeft ondervonden, dat het onverantwoordelijk is museumstukken uit te leenen. Voor de toekomst ware statutair vast te leggen, dat museumvoorwerpen het gebouw nimmer mogen verlaten.  
Dr. Bosch verklaart zich bereid de noodig geachte wijziging in de statuten te ontwerpen en op de eerstvolgende vergadering voor te brengen.' *Jaarboek van de Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* 1933, p. 146 (vergadering van 27 juli 1931).
- 12 VVAK 329, 4.
- 13 Under the heading: 'Oldenbarneveldt elf kisten', VVAK 329, 2.
- 14 Bloembergen and Eickhoff 2011, pp. 414-21.
- 15 H.F.E. Visser 1932, Afb. 1, 2, 3 & 4.
- 16 *Maandblad voor Beeldende Kunsten* 9/5 (1931), p. 155-8.
- 17 Van Erp 1934.

