

Angkor Wat

Chou Ta-kuan, a Chinese Buddhist traveler who visited Angkor Wat, Khmer Empire in 1296 CE

"The educated are called Pan-ch'i [Brahmins], the bonzes [Buddhist monks] Ch'u-ku and the Taoists [Hindus who worship Shiva] Pa-ssü-wei. I do not know whom the Pan-ch'i worship. They have no schools and it is difficult to say what books they read. They dress like other people except that they wear a white thread round their necks, which is their distinctive mark. They attain to very high positions [in government as advisors to the rulers]. The Ch'u-ku shave their heads and wear yellow clothes. They uncover the right shoulder, but the lower part of their body is draped with a skirt of yellow cloth and they go bare foot. Their temples are sometimes roofed with tiles. Inside there is only one image, exactly like the Buddha, ornamented with vermilion and blue, and clothed in red. The Buddhas of the towers are different and cast in bronze. There are no bells, drums, cymbals, or flags in their temples. They eat only one meal a day, prepared by someone who entertains them, for they do not cook in their temples. They eat fish and meat and also use them in their offerings to Buddha, but they do not drink wine. They recite numerous texts written on strips of palm-leaf. Some bonzes have a right to have the shafts of their palanquins and the handles of their parasols in gold or silver. The prince consults them on serious matters. There are no Buddhist nuns. The Pa-ssü-wei dress like everyone else, except that they wear on their heads a piece of red or white stuff similar to the Ku-ku worn by Tartar [Turkish or Mongol] women. Their temples are smaller than those of the Buddhists, for Taoism is less prosperous than Buddhism. They worship nothing but a block of stone [possibly a lingam], somewhat like the stone on the altar of the God of the Sun in China. I do not know what god they adore. There are also Taoist nuns. The Pa-ssü-wei do not partake of the food of other people or eat in public. They do not drink wine. Such children of the laity as go to school frequent the bonzes, who give them instruction. When grown up they return to a lay life."

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