

ANGKOR AND THE KHMER EMPIRE (802 - 1327)



Glossary

<i>Acarya</i> (Sanskrit)	A spiritual guide or teacher, instructor of religious mysteries.
<i>Anak sanjak</i> (Khmer)	Also pronounced <i>neak</i> – the general Khmer word for ‘a human being’. They also appear to have been members of an equivalent ‘praetorian guard’.
<i>Angkor</i> (Khmer, from Sanscrit <i>nagara</i>)	‘town’, or more strictly ‘capital’. Variant: <i>nokor</i> .
<i>Apsaras</i> (Sanskrit)	Heavenly nymphs, the wives of the <i>gandhavra</i> (heavenly musicians). Often shown dancing.
<i>Asura</i> (Sanskrit)	A class of demons and the ‘heavenly princes’ (gods) foremost enemies.
<i>Avalokiteshvara</i> (Sanskrit)	‘The Lord who looks down’ - best known of the <i>bodhisattva</i> of Buddha. Variant: <i>Lokeshvara</i> .
<i>Avatar</i> (Sanskrit)	Usually used to refer to one of the various incarnations of a god.
<i>Banteay</i> (Khmer)	Fortress/precinct/enclosure.
<i>Baray</i> (Khmer)	A reservoir made with dikes, rather than being excavated.
<i>Bodhisattva</i> (Sanskrit)	According to Mahayana Buddhism, someone who has attained enlightenment, but has postponed their entry into <i>Nirvana</i> to help others gain enlightenment also.
<i>Brahma</i> (Sanskrit)	The creator god. He was born from a lotus growing out of Vishnu’s navel and is depicted with four faces looking towards the 4 cardinal points. Part of the Hindu Trinity (Trimurti).
<i>Chakravartin</i> (Sanskrit)	Universal monarch – a title used for the kings of Angkor.
<i>Cham</i>	A people who inhabited the coastal regions of southern Vietnam. The arch nemesis of the Khmer during the time of Angkor.
<i>Churning of the Sea of Milk</i>	‘Desiring immortality, the gods churned the Ocean of Milk to generate <i>amrita</i> – the elixir of eternal life. The snake Vasuki was used as a churning device. Vishnu, incarnate as the turtle <i>Kurma</i> , formed the pivot for the churning. – frequently represented in Khmer art.
<i>Corvée</i> (French)	Mandatory work required of peasants for a period of time, similar to feudal obligations.
<i>Deva</i> (Sanskrit)	‘Heavenly Princes’ (minor gods).
<i>Devaraja</i> (Sanskrit)	‘King of the gods’ or ‘god who is king’ – Khmer translation: <i>kamraten an ta raja</i>
<i>Dharma</i> (Sanskrit)	The Hindu doctrine of moral duty or ‘good order.’
<i>Dharmasala</i> (Sanskrit)	A shelter for the free use of travellers – still a feature of Khmer villages.
<i>Dhuli jen vrah kamraten an</i> (Khmer)	The highest title a Khmer king could bestow (<i>Dhuli jen</i> – literally ‘dust of the feet’)
<i>Dvarapala</i> (Sanskrit)	Temple door guardian.
<i>Ganesha</i> (Sanskrit)	Shiva’s son – the elephant headed god. ‘The Lord of Obstacles’ and the god of intelligence.
<i>Garuda</i> (Sanskrit)	A mythical being, half-man, half-bird. The natural enemies of <i>nagas</i> .
<i>Guru</i> (Sanskrit)	‘Master’ or ‘Spiritual Guide’
<i>Hanuman</i> (Sanskrit)	General of the monkey army who fought for Ram in the <i>Ramayana</i> .
<i>Hotar</i> (Sanskrit)	A priest.
<i>Indra</i> (Sanskrit)	The Hindu god of War and tempests.
<i>Kamraten</i> (Khmer)	A high religious title, more exalted than a <i>kamsten</i> .

<i>Kamsten</i> (Khmer)	A religious title.
<i>Khlon</i> (Khmer)	Officials: <i>Khlon Glan</i> – chief of the storehouse; <i>Khlon karya</i> – chief of corvée labour; <i>Khlon visaya</i> – chief of boundaries, land distribution & ownership; <i>Khlon sruk</i> – village administrator.
<i>Khnyum</i> (Khmer)	‘Slave’, especially slaves of the gods when in temple service.
<i>Linga</i> (Sanskrit)	An icon in the shape of a phallus, representing Shiva.
<i>Mahabharata</i> (Sanskrit)	Great Indian epic, primarily concerned with the power struggle between the 5 Pandava brothers and their cousins the Kaurava. Often depicted in Khmer art.
<i>Maharajadhiraja</i> (Sanskrit)	‘Supreme King of Kings’ – the title first adopted by King Jayavarman II in AD 802 and used by subsequent Khmer kings.
<i>Mahayana</i> (Sanskrit)	‘The Great Path’ – a later development of Buddhism. The Buddha and Bodhisattvas are worshipped with rituals similar to Hinduism. Now dominant in China and Vietnam, but no longer adhered to in Cambodia.
<i>Meru</i> (Sanskrit)	Cosmic mountain of Hindu mythology, home of the gods and the axis of the world. Its summit has 5 peaks. Khmer temples often replicate this with 5 main towers.
<i>Mratan</i> (Khmer)	An official appointed by the king in central and regional administration. <i>Mratan Klon</i> – an official appointed to govern a region. <i>Mratan Kurun</i> – Higher in status to a <i>Mratan Klon</i> .
<i>Naga</i> (Sanskrit)	Mythical serpent-guardians of the underworld. Seen as the origin and protector of Angkor.
<i>Nirvana</i> (Sanskrit)	The state of bliss/enlightenment attained by the Buddha and <i>Arhants</i> (enlightened beings).
<i>Pali</i>	Indian language used in Theravada Buddhist scriptures.
<i>Phnom</i> (Khmer)	Mountain/ hill.
<i>Prasat</i> (Sanskrit)	Shrine, usually topped by a tower.
<i>- pura</i> (Sanskrit)	A suffix meaning ‘town’.
<i>Purohita</i> (Sanskrit)	‘Superintendent’ – the king’s close assistant, the Brahmin priest in charge of royal ritual.
<i>Rajakulamahamantri</i>	A title meaning great advisor.
<i>Rama</i> (Sanskrit)	The 7 th and best known <i>avatar</i> of the god Vishnu.
<i>Ramayana</i> (Sanskrit)	Great Indian epic poem. It narrates the adventures of Rama and his spouse Sita, whose kidnapping by the demon Ravana and imprisonment in (Sri) Lanka sparks a ferocious war with Rama and his monkey army commanded by its semi-divine general Hanuman. Often depicted in Khmer art and dance.
<i>Ravana</i> (Sanskrit)	A powerful demon-king, depicted with 6, 8 or 10 heads and 12, 16 or 20 arms.
<i>Sanskrit</i>	Indian language in which all the Hindu scriptures and epics are written. The Khmer used it in preference to their own native language when writing temple inscriptions.
<i>Senapati</i> (Sanskrit)	General
<i>Shiva</i> (Sanskrit)	The Hindu god of Creation and Destruction. Angkor’s most popular Hindu god and part of the Hindu Trinity.
<i>Sruk</i> (Khmer)	A territorial division, possibly the size of a village.
<i>Stela/Stelae</i> (Latin)	A free-standing stone, often with an inscription.
<i>Stupa</i> (Sanskrit)	Buddhist relic shrine in the shape of an upturned begging bowl.
<i>Tamrvac</i> (Khmer)	Centrally appointed agents for the government in the provinces.

<i>Theravada</i> (Sanskrit)	'The teaching of the ancients' Older form of Buddhism, according to Buddha's original teachings.
<i>Thom</i> (Khmer)	Great, big.
<i>Vahana</i> (Sanskrit)	'Vehicle' – term for the animal which a god rides - Shiva & Nandi (bull), Vishnu & Garuda.
<i>Vap</i> (Khmer)	An honorific title meaning father.
<i>-varman</i> (Sanskrit)	'Protection, breast-plate' – a suffix for the royal names of almost all the Khmer kings: Jaya-varman means 'Protected by Victory' & 'Indra-varman' means 'Protected by (the god) Indra.'
<i>Vishnu</i> (Sanskrit)	Hinduism's supreme god, but less widely worshipped than Shiva by the Khmer. He is the divine preserver of the earth and the heavens. Through his <i>avatars</i> , he intervenes to restore order when there is chaos. In Khmer art, he is shown with 4 arms, holding a conch shell, discus, orb (representing the earth) and club.
<i>Wat</i> (Khmer, from Pali)	Theravada monastery consisting of the religious buildings and the monks' cells. Angkor Wat, once dedicated to Vishnu, has since become known as 'the city which is a (Buddhist) monastery.'
<i>Yuvaraja</i> (Sanskrit)	Crown Prince.