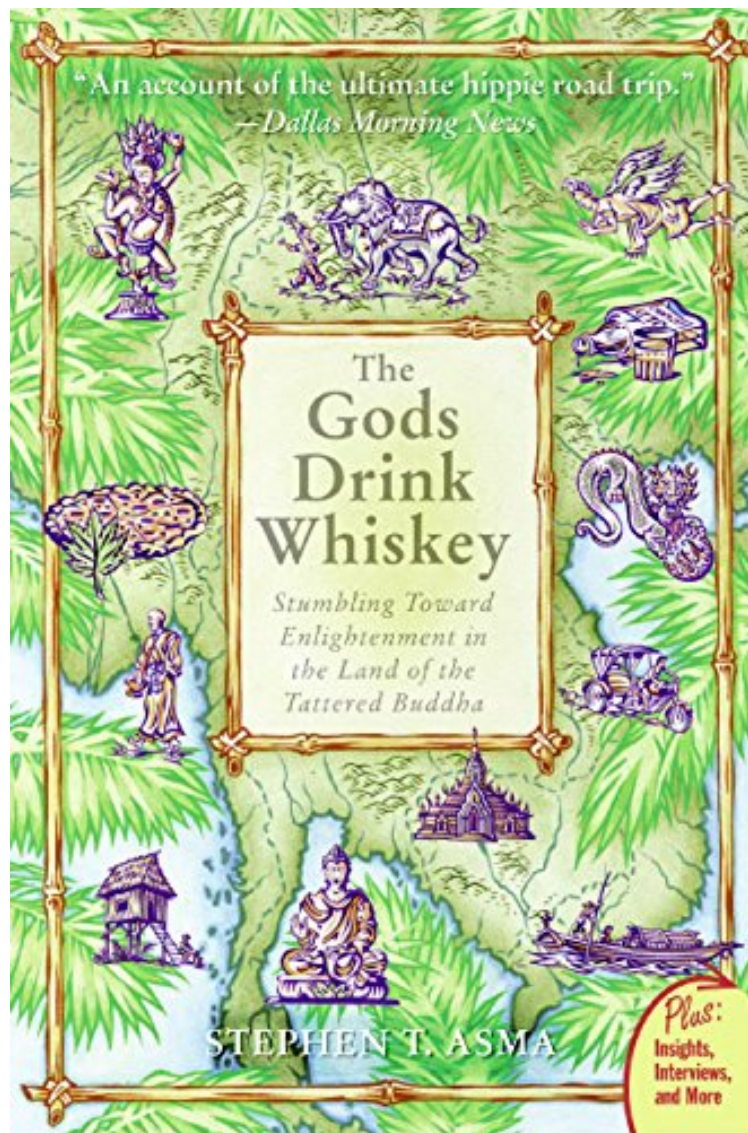


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The Gods Drink Whiskey: Stumbling Toward Enlightenment in the Land of the Tattered Buddha

Stephen T. Asma

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#384034 in Books Stephen T Asma 2006-04-25 2006-04-25 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.00 x .65 x 5.311, .57 #File Name: 0060834501288 pages The Gods Drink Whiskey Stumbling Toward Enlightenment in the Land of the Tattered Buddha | File size: 73.Mb

Stephen T. Asma : The Gods Drink Whiskey: Stumbling Toward Enlightenment in the Land of the Tattered Buddha before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Gods Drink Whiskey: Stumbling Toward Enlightenment in the Land of the Tattered Buddha:

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Buddhism, Booze, and the Four Noble Truths

From Publishers WeeklyAsma opens this memoirish spiritual travel guide with a central purpose: by journeying to Cambodia to see the collective manifestations of Theravada Buddhism, the tradition closest to that avowed by the historical Buddha, he will disabuse Western readers of the widespread misconceptions so prevalent in a privatized, narcissistic and consumerist Buddhist mentality. Asma, professor of philosophy and a practicing Buddhist who taught Buddhism in Cambodia in 2003, dispels the basic falsehoods common to all schools of Buddhism, e.g., that nirvana is heavenly bliss, that austere detachment from one's deepest feelings is par for the course or that karmic merit can be acquired by magical or superstitious practices. Curiously, he scarcely discusses the most basic schism between Theravada and Mahayana (the other great school of Buddhism), namely, the consequential difference between an arhat and a bodhisattva. Nor does he, in the field of practice, explain how the magical shamanism pervading Cambodian Buddhism is different from Western practices that also use, for instance, fortune-telling or individualized mantras as magical panaceas. Nonetheless, Asma's descriptions are skillfully interwoven with firsthand encounters from his time in Cambodia. His forays into Southeast Asian politics, violence and globalizing trends, colorfully entertaining as travel writing, illuminate the ways in which Buddhism plays a primary role in the collective welfare of the region. (June) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.From BooklistAsma, a professor of Buddhism at Columbia College in Chicago and the author of *Stuffed Animals and Pickled Heads* (2001), recounts his intense and revelatory Cambodian adventures while teaching at Phnom Penh's Buddhist Institute. In an electrifying and frank mix of hair-raising anecdotes and expert analysis, he explicates the vast difference between text-based Buddhist teachings and daily life in a poor and politically volatile Buddhist society. Amid tales of massage parlors, marijuana-spiced pizza, and bloodshed, he cogently explains how Theravada Buddhism, the form practiced throughout Southeast Asia, differs from the Buddhism Westerners are familiar with, and how entwined it is with animistic beliefs. This fusion of Buddhist rationalism with superstition is but one of many juxtapositions Asma relishes as he assesses the terrible scars left by the Khmer Rouge and the profound self-possession of the people he meets. His striking insights into Cambodian reality lead to a bracing critique of American pop culture and the manipulative tactics of Cambodia-based fundamentalist Protestant missionaries--and an incisive argument for learning about and respecting religions other than one's own. Donna SeamanCopyright American Library Association. All rights reserved Intense and revelatory . . . an electrifying and frank mix of hair-rising anecdotes and expert analysis. (Booklist)This may be an account of the ultimate intellectual hippie road trip. (Dallas Morning News)Gods is a raw, heartbreaking confluence of religion and adventure rarely encountered in works of nonfiction these days. (Shambhala Sun)Candid, funny, and insightful . . . an enjoyable read for both the practicing Buddhist and the casual seeker. (Beliefnet.com)A must-read for anyone with spiritual stirrings who finds organized religion wanting and Buddhism, American-style, deeply flawed. (Seattle Times)