

head of the elephant is placed a royal crown, his tusks are encircled with precious rings, and a royal umbrella is carried over him when he goes to bathe.

When the animal dies, the hairs of the tail are reserved as relics of a divine incarnation, and the body is buried with royal honors. The hairs of the tail are set in golden handles, profusely adorned with precious stones; and the reader may possibly remember that the First King, Somdet Phra Mongkut, sent one of these tufts to Queen Victoria, as a priceless proof of the estimation in which he held her. The King also gave the ambassador, Sir J. Bowring, a few hairs from the tail, as a gift about equal to that of the Garter in England, and when, to the great grief of the nation, the elephant died in 1855, the King sent Sir J. Bowring, as a further mark of his favor, a small piece of the skin preserved in spirits of wine.

The color of the elephant is not really white, but a sort of pale, brick-dust red. Albino animals of all kinds are venerated by the Siamese, the white monkey being in rank next to the white elephant. This veneration is so marked that a talapoin—a sort of preaching fakir—who will not condescend to salute the King himself, bows humbly if he should see even a white cock, much more a white monkey.

The architecture of Siam deserves a brief notice. It possesses some of the characteristics of Chinese, Japanese, and Burmese, but has an aspect that belongs peculiarly to itself. Ordinary houses are of comparatively small dimensions, but the temples are often of enormous size, and in their way are exceedingly beautiful. They are full of lofty and gabled roofs, five or six of which often rise above each other, in fantastic beauty, so as to lead the eye upward to the central tower. This is always a sort of spire or pinnacle, which is made of a succession of stories, and is terminated by the slender emblem of sovereignty, namely, an ornament that looks like a series of spread umbrellas placed over each other, and become less and less as they approach the summit. The whole of the tower is profusely adorned with grotesque

statues in strange attitudes, and there is scarcely a square foot which is undecorated in some way or other.

The palaces are built on much the same model, and their gates are often guarded by gigantic figures carved in stone. At the door of the Hall of Audience at Bangkok are two figures made of granite. They are sixty feet in height, and represent men with the tails of fish projecting from the spine. In fact, they are almost exact reproductions of the Assyrian Dagon, as it is represented on the Nineveh sculptures.

The funeral pile on (or rather in) which is burned the body of a king or any of the royal family, is built on the same principle as the temples, and is in fact a temple, though made of combustible materials. There is before me a photograph of the funeral pile which was made for the body of the First King's son, and another of a pile erected for the purpose of consuming the body of his wife. They are very similar in appearance, being temples made of wood and canvas, covered with gilt paper. They are about a hundred and twenty feet in height, and on the photograph, where the nature of the material is not shown, look like magnificent specimens of Siamese architecture.

The central spire, terminated with its royal emblem, rises in the centre, and round it are clustered gables, roofs, pinnacles, and pillars, in bewildering profusion.

The door is guarded by two gigantic statues, and the body lies in the centre of the building, hidden by curtains. On account of the flimsiness of the materials, to all the pinnacles are attached slight ropes, which are fastened firmly to the ground, so that they act like the "stays" of a ship's mast. Inflammable as are the wood, paper, and canvas of which the edifice is made, they are rendered still more so by being saturated with oil, tar, and similarly combustible substances. Vast, therefore, as is the building, a very short time suffices to consume it, and the intense heat reduces the corpse to a mere heap of ashes, which are gathered together, and solemnly placed in the temple dedicated to that purpose.

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