
The Buddhists of Burma

by Eugene V. Debs

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Accounts have it that the Buddhists of Burma spare no expense in beautifying the temples of their gods, and in proof of this a description of a new vane of a pagoda a Rangoon is given as follows:

The vane is about three by one-and-a-half feet broad, and thickly crusted with precious stones and lovely fans of Burmese gold. One ruby alone is worth 6,000 rupees, and there are several hundred rubies alone on this beautiful thing. On the tip of the iron rod on which works the vane is a richly carved and perforated gold ornament called the Semboo. It is somewhat egg-shaped and a foot in height, tipped by an enormous diamond encircled by many smaller ones, crusted on like barnacles. All over this exquisite oval object are similar clumps of diamonds, no other stones being used for this part.¹

After all, it is difficult to define a distinction between pagan and Christian in the matter of decorating temples of worship. The pagan idea is, that such things please their gods; just what the Christian idea is, when they lavish their wealth upon temples of worship, may be a little more difficult to ascertain.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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¹ Debs probably found this widely-reprinted snippet in *The Mechanical News* (New York), vol. 20, no. 1 (March 15, 1890), pg. 3.