

FACT OF THE DAY #8

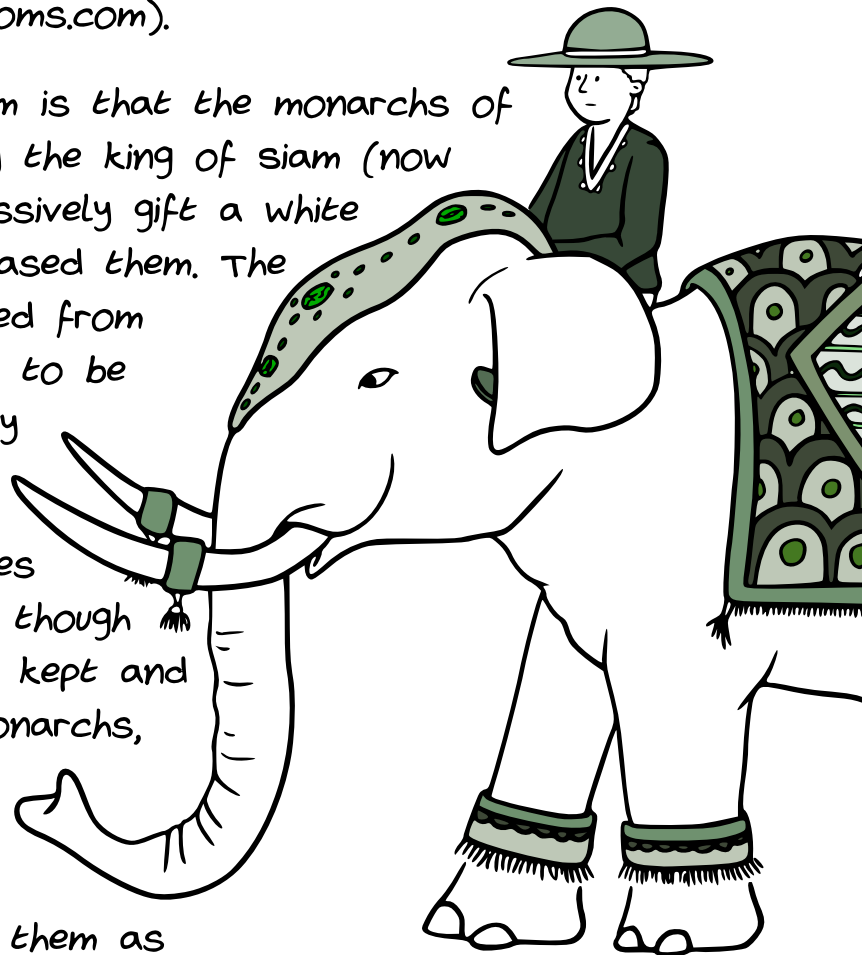
THE IDIOM "WHITE ELEPHANT" ORIGINATES FROM ACTUAL WHITE ELEPHANTS

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The modern 19th century idiom "white elephant" refers to "any expensive, burdensome and worthless possession that is much more trouble than it's worth" (theidioms.com).

The popular story of this idiom is that the monarchs of southeast Asia, most popularly the king of siam (now Thailand), would passive-aggressively gift a white elephant to anyone who displeased them. The elephants were legally protected from performing any labour and had to be kept in such opulence that they were very expensive to keep.

The idiom evolved over centuries through various iterations, and though white elephants were definitely kept and revered by southeast Asian monarchs, they were most likely never given as gifts. They were however a burden on everyone except the monarch, who used them as a source of income.



DR JONES