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#### Keywords

Anna Leonowens  
*The King and I*  
Victorian women  
women of British India  
royal harem of Siam  
19th-century Siam

#### Highlights

- Original research uncovering the hidden facts of Leonowens's life
- Very readable and compelling style
- Engaging historical and social stage-setting for each new phase in Anna's life
- Two appendixes with full historical background on British India
- New appendix with facsimile copies of seven letters written by King Mongkut to Anna

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# Bombay Anna

## The Real Story and Remarkable Adventures of the *King and I* Governess

Susan Morgan

If you think you know the story of Anna in *The King and I*, think again. As this riveting biography shows, the real life of Anna Leonowens was far more fascinating than the beloved story of the Victorian governess who went to work for the King of Siam. To write this definitive account, Susan Morgan traveled around the globe and uncovered facts that have eluded researchers for years.

Anna was born a poor, mixed-race army brat in India, and what followed is an extraordinary nineteenth-century story of savvy self-invention, wild adventure, and far-reaching influence. At a time when most women stayed at home, Anna Leonowens traveled all over the world, witnessed some of the most fascinating events of the Age of Empire, and became a well-known travel writer, journalist, teacher, and lecturer. She remains the only foreigner to have ever spent significant time inside the royal harem of Siam.

Anna emigrated to the United States, where she mingled with *Atlantic Monthly* literati; crossed the entire expanse of Russia on her own just before the Bolshevik revolution; settled in Canada, where she raised eight children and publicly defended the rights of women and the working class. In addition to telling this inspiring story in full for the first time, *Bombay Anna* gives an engrossing account of how and why Anna became an icon of American culture in *The King and I* and its many adaptations.

#### What others are saying

"A lively, carefully researched, and loving biography of one who lived life to the full, covered her tracks brilliantly, and lied her way into genteel society with panache."  
—Philippa Levine

"Anna Leonowens's life (1831–1915) offers a perfect vehicle through which Morgan examines, not simply the absorbing capacity of one ingenious woman to invent and reinvent herself within the constricting confines of racial, gender, and class boundaries of the British empire in Asia, but also the resulting controversies about the value of Leonowens's contributions to scholarship on nineteenth-century Thailand (Siam)."  
—Tamara Loos

Named one of ALA's "Best of the Best from the University Presses" books for 2009

#### About the author

SUSAN MORGAN, Distinguished Professor of English at Miami University, is the author of *Place Matters: Gendered Geography in Victorian Women's Travel Writings about Southeast Asia*, among other books.

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