

Decide if you agree with the considerations below

1.

Tuptim's execution is the strongest sequence of the film. Roger Bondelli's editing juxtaposes the public execution of the lovers with Anna praying in her English home and Mongkut praying at a temple. Instead of showing the failure of Siamese culture, Tuptim and Mongkut accept their culture and the consequences of their actions. However, Anna's Bible offers her no solace, and in her frustration she knocks over her tea service: Christianity isn't without value, but it's inappropriate in Siam and leads to destruction.

I agree

☐

I do not agree

☐

2.

In this postcolonial retelling of the relationship between the English teacher Anna Leon Owens and King Mongkut, the film does not make the common mistake of overvaluing or mystifying Eastern culture. The Siamese are not portrayed as "inscrutable" or "mysterious" or innately superior. Though the minor English characters are shown as treacherous and hypocritical, treachery also exists within Siamese culture--and is revealed to Mongkut by a self-serving English merchant. Buddhism is portrayed neither as pagan superstitions (as in the earlier movies) nor as more spiritual than Christianity. The respective religions are presented instead as separate paths. The King is shown to be a caring and loving husband to his many wives and concubines. When Anna's son, Louis, asks his mother "Why doesn't Queen Victoria have more than one husband?"--it is less a ridiculous thought than an honest questioning of cultural assumptions.

I agree

☐

I do not agree

☐

DISCUSSION TOPICS - Siam, Siamese traditions, conflicts between cultures, concubines, colonization, love, murder, death of loved ones, grieving, betrayal, courage.

MESSAGES - Tradition should not be followed blindly, without thought or examination; Leadership is about doing the right thing, not inspiring fear or appearing to be strong.

