Traveling through Siam, now known as Thailand, Elizabeth Roys concludes that the only authentic Siamese gardens are found surrounding the country's many Buddhist temples, or wats. An influx of Europeans and an embrace of Western “progress” had too strongly shaped the gardens of the wealthy in Bangkok, while the rural gardens of the poor, if they existed at all, consisted only of modest vegetable patches.

Roys underscores the importance of Buddhism to Siamese culture and records the great number of wats dotting the landscape. She describes their prevalent coating of gleaming white stone and stucco set off by black lacquered windows and doors, brilliantly colored roof tiles, and the shade of fig trees. No flowers appear. Instead, courtyards are adorned with venerable old trees, clipped shrubs, rockeries, figures of lions, horses, and elephants, and many statues of the Buddha. Numerous highly decorated stupas, or small pagodas, contain the ashes of the dead.

In Bangkok Roys visited the famous Wat Phra Keo, or Chapel of the Emerald Buddha and recorded her impressions of the Wat Arun, or Temple of the Dawn. She also carefully investigated the temples of northern Siam, including the Wat Phrathat Doi Suthep, on the mountaintop above the city of Chiang Mai. Most striking is Roys' lamentation over the great number of ruined temples and overgrown gardens she encountered during her visit. Today many of these may exist only through her photographs.