

Wat Si Chum

Wat Si Chum situated outside the town wall at the northwest corner, this ancient monument is well known for a sitting Buddha Image of large size. A monument of importance northwest of the city is Wat Si Chum. There is the mondop, which was built by King Mahadharmaraja II (last quarter of the 14th century). Wat Si Chum contains a monumental stucco-over-brick Buddha image in the attitude of Subduing Mara called "Phra Achana", mentioned in King Ram Kamhang's inscription. By *ajana* is probably meant 'immovable'. This Buddha measures 11.30 meters from knee to knee. The mondop is 32 meters square and 15 meters high, and the walls are 3 meters thick. There is a tunnel which has been meter leading to the temples south wall, where there is a stairway to the roof. Once one could enter a passageway in the southern wall and climb up stairs to the roof, but now the Fine Arts Department closed the entrance already. On the ceiling of this passageway are more than fifty engraved slate slabs illustrating scenes from the Jataka tales, stories of the Buddha's previous lives. Over the ceiling are twenty stone pillars, with inscriptions in the Thai alphabet of the Sukhothai period. Though the slabs are generally believed to have been originally placed elsewhere, their function here is to turn the ritual of circumambulation into a symbolic ascent to Buddhahood. A sloping wooden roof probably once covered the Mondop. In front stands a Vihan with walls of cross-pierced bricks. A small Vihan and a Mondop containing a Buddha image lie to the north. A moat serves as the boundary of the monastery enclosure.

In a book entitled Phra Ratchaphongsawadan Krung Si Ayutthaya written in the late Ayutthaya period, the temple is referred as a place where King Naresuan and his troops assembled before the army marched on Sawankhalok and from which the legend of talking Buddha Image (Phra Achana) derives.



Archana Bhudda

