

Title	St. Stephen's Basilica and Ananda Temple
All Authors	Moe Moe Oo
Publication Type	International Publication
Publisher (Journal name, issue no., page no etc.)	The Central European University Weekly Journal, Year 6, Issue 66, pg-3
Abstract	After four months of living in Hungary and attending Central European University, we routinely walk past churches and statues, which all have their own symbolism. These historical sites have become part of our everyday lives, but we still do not know what all they mean. The following article is an opinion piece by the author between the St. Stephen Basilica (Budapest, Hungary), which most of us pass by on the way to CEU each day, and Ananda Temple (Bagan, Myanmar), in the author's native country.
Keywords	St. Stephen's Basilica , Ananda Temple, historical sites
Citation	
Issue Date	2016

Jan  
31

## St. Stephen's Basilica and Ananda Temple

After four months of living in Hungary and attending Central European University, we routinely walk past churches and statues, which all have their own symbolism. These historical sites have become part of our everyday lives, but we still do not know what all they mean. The following article is an opinion piece by the author between the St. Stephen Basilica (Budapest, Hungary), which most of us pass by on the way to CEU each day, and Ananda Temple (Bagan, Myanmar), in the author's native country.

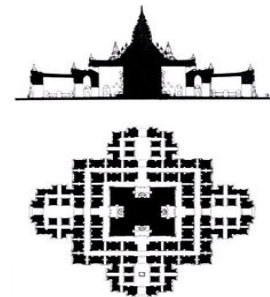


St.Stephen's Basilica

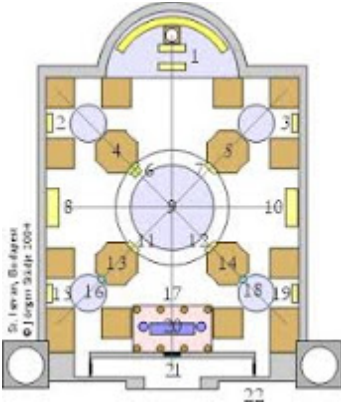
St. Stephen's Basilica is named after Saint Stephen I of Hungary, the first King of Hungary (c. 975–1038), whose "incorruptible" right hand is said to be housed in the reliquary. It fits the a common description of Roman Catholic churches. In early Christian, Byzantine and other Eastern Orthodox forms of church architecture, this commonly means a Greek cross (cruciform) plan, with arms of equal length or, later, a cross-in-square plan, more like a square. In Western churches it usually, though not exclusively, means a church built with the layout developed in Gothic architecture. It is a place of prayer, worship, study, learning, and a social center where Hungarian people come together.



The Ananda Temple



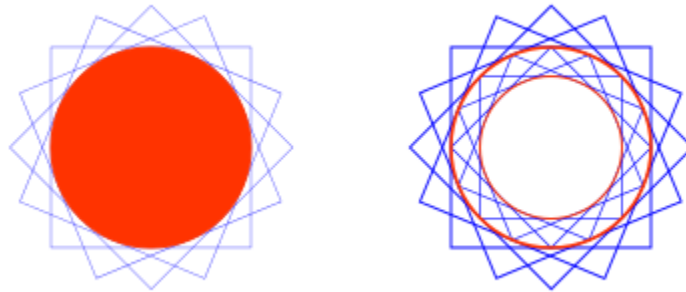
Greek Cross Floor Plan,  
Ananda Temple



Greek Cross floor plan,  
St. Stephen's

Ananda temple was completed during the reign of King Kyanzittha (r. 1084-1113). It is a symmetrical masterpiece of the Mon architectural style and, with some North Indian influence, reflects the transition from the Early to the Middle period of Bagan architecture. The Ananda is a perfectly proportioned Greek cross (cruciform) structure and beautifully symmetrical in form, including its vestibules and gabled portico entryways with stupa finials. Ananda Temple is like a museum. We can study all kinds of Myanmar arts here—architecture, stone sculpture, stucco, glazed plaques, terra cotta, wood carving, metalworks, and more. It provided the cultural, political, and religious model for all subsequent Myanmar kingdoms and became the symbol of the Myanmar nation-state

The Mandala, a spiritual and ritual symbol in Indian religions, represents the cosmos metaphysically or symbolically, and is commonly found in religious art and architecture. In Bhramanic Hindu and Buddhist belief, the earth's sacred center is unusually not near at hand, but far off to the north, on a separate, unattainable continent, the center is Mt. Meru, the fixed point about which the heavens revolve. According to the "four continent earth" model, the earth's continents (Macro Cosmos) are arranged in the form of a lotus flower (Micro Cosmos). Mt. Meru stands at the center of the world, the seed-vessel of the flower, as it were, surrounded by circular ranges of mountains.



A Hindu temple has a spire that rises symmetrically above the central core of the temple. These spires come in many designs and shapes, but they all have mathematical precision and geometric symbolism. One of the common principles found in Hindu temple spires is the circle and turning-squares theme (left), and a concentric layering design (right) that flows from one to the other as it rises towards the sky.

St. Stephen's Basilica and Ananda Temple are each topped with a dome, with stairs symbolizing the way to heaven (the ascent). Another common element is the shape of mountains represented in temple architecture; the steps represent spiritual ascent and the link between heaven and earth. By studying these temples, we can not only analyze the social and cultural considerations, ritual function, cosmology theory, symbolism and architecture

concepts, but also find connections between Western and Eastern cultural heritage and history.

**By**  
**Dr. Moe Moe Oo**  
**Associate Professor**  
**History Department**  
**Visiting Research Fellow at CEU**  
**Myanmar**

Posted 31st January 2016 by [The CEU Weekly](#)

Labels: [architecture](#) [Budapest](#) [faculty](#) [Myanmar](#) [St. Stephens](#)

<http://ceuweekly.blogspot.com/2016/01/st-stephen-basilica-and-ananda-temple.html>