



Historically Speaking

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Greek Architecture



Egyptian Influence

Greek travelers, traders, pirates, and mercenaries started visiting Egypt at least as early as the mid-7th century BCE. The Greeks and Egyptians had many lasting impacts on each other. The early Greeks studied the Egyptians, and took many of their ideas, incorporating them into their own cultural evolution. The Egyptian language was decoded through the help of Greek texts, and as a result, the intermixing of the two Great Civilizations of the ancient world left a large yet subtle mark on modern society.

Ancient Greek architecture is best known from its temples, many of which are found throughout the region in various stages of ruins. The Parthenon is regarded by many as the most perfect building ever built.

Most remains are very incomplete ruins, but a number survive substantially intact, mostly outside modern Greece. Some are being restored as much as possible.

Another important type of building that survives all over the Hellenic world is the open-air theatre. Other architectural forms that are still in evidence are the processional gateway, the public square surrounded by colonnade, the town council building, the public monument, the monumental tomb and the stadium.

Ancient Greek architecture is distinguished by its articulated structure and decoration. This is particularly so in the case of temples where each building appears to have been seen as a sculptural entity, most often raised on high ground so that the elegance of its proportions and the effects of light on its surfaces might be viewed from all sides.

Historians divide ancient Greek civilization into two eras, the Hellenic period (from around 900 BCE to the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE), and the Hellenistic period (323 BC to 30 AD). During the Hellenic period, substantial works of architecture began to appear around 600 BCE. During the later (Hellenistic) period, Greek culture spread as a result of Alexander's conquest of other lands, and later as a result of the rise of the Roman Empire, which adopted much of Greek culture.

The rectangular temple is the most common and best-known form of Greek public architecture. The temple did not serve the same function as a modern church, since the altar stood under the open sky, often directly before the temple. Temples served as the location of a cult image and as a storage place for the treasury associated with the cult of the god associated with it.

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The Parthenon is a beautiful marble temple built between 447 and 432 BDE. during the height of the ancient Greek Empire. It's estimated that 13,400 stones were used to build the temple, at a total cost of around 470 silver talents (roughly \$7 million U.S. dollars today).

Dedicated to the Greek goddess Athena, the Parthenon sits high atop a compound of temples known as the Acropolis of Athens. It was the largest and most lavish temple the Greek mainland had ever seen. Throughout the centuries, the Parthenon withstood earthquakes, fire, wars, explosions and looting yet remains, although battered, a powerful symbol of ancient Greek culture. Today, it is one of the most recognized buildings in the world and an enduring symbol of ancient Greece.

The Athenian sculptor, Phidias, worked along with architects Ictinus and Callicrates to design the Parthenon, which became the largest Doric-style temple of its time.

The structure has a rectangular floor plan and is built on a 23,000-square foot base. Low steps surrounded each side of the building, and a portico of Doric columns standing on a platform create a border around it. There are 46 outer columns and 19 inner columns.

The columns are tapered and fluted. Taper adds to the optical illusion of height. Fluting accentuates the cylindrical element. In addition the columns have entasis, that is they swell toward the center to offer the sensation of breath. There are no straight lines in the building. The curvature of line counters the curvature introduced by the curvature of the lens of the eye. Even the floor of the temple is a low dome, six inches higher in the center than on the sides.



Egyptian Buildings

The temple complex of Karnak is the largest religious building ever built, and was constructed over a span of 2,000 years. Construction started in the Old Kingdom and was continuously added to up until the Ptolemaic era, with approximately 30 different pharaohs contributing.



Constructed around 1400 BCE (more than 3,400 years ago), Luxor Temple differs from most other ancient Egyptian temples due to the fact that it wasn't built for worship of a particular god or pharaoh. It was mainly used as a place where pharaohs were coronated and crowned.



The capital (top) of Greek columns have three styles.

Doric

Ionian

Corinthian

